

Gaited Horses Entertain in EquiTheater

A new show comes with added entertainment value.

By Kim Abbott

Friends of Sound Horses' (FOSH) EquiTheater gives versatility show classes a whole new meaning. Offered as an open gaited-breed class, EquiTheater is focused on fun, entertainment and awareness. Participants develop routines with their horses using costumes, choreography, music, props, storytelling and music.

"We want to get more audiences into horse shows and develop more interest in equestrian activities," says Teresa Bippen, FOSH vice president. "EquiTheater is expanding what people can do with their horses. It's a breath of fresh air for horse and rider to do something different."

All gaited breeds are welcome, from Tennessee Walking Horses to Rocky Mountain Horses, Missouri Fox Trotters and more. Horses can be driven, ridden or shown in-hand. While there are a few required elements and rules to provide structure and keep the class running smoothly; Bippen stresses that EquiTheater is not a rail class or riding a pattern to music, such as in a dressage freestyle routine. In fact, the rules state that "riding in figure-eight type patterns, or riding exclusively on the rail will be penalized."

"It's supposed to be like a skit," says Bippen, who suggests using songs from musicals. "They have great words and meaning to them. It seems like there's a story to them."

Any horse show can offer EquiTheater, but only FOSH provides rules and scoring sheets. Judges are licensed by the Independent Judging Association (IJA).

For more information about EquiTheater, visit www.equitheater.com. For rules, visit www.fosh.info.