

Winter In Wellington 2025

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Each year I have to pinch myself more and more. I have had the opportunity to spend at least some portion of my winter in Wellington since I was 12. This season I not only got to be in the heart of the winter equestrian capital, I got to do it with my own clients and my own business for the very first season. I am extraordinarily grateful for all of the opportunities that have been given to me, especially the opportunities that Dressage4kids has provided for me over the last 15 years.

This season alongside some incredible young horses owned by my clients, I took my personal 6 coming 7 year old gelding, Next In Line EDI (Venti). I received Venti from D4K in July of last year as my newest project and hopefully as my next FEI partner. He is an incredibly talented young horse but had spent the last 2 years since his import in and out of a consistent program and dealing with a series of medical misdiagnoses. Being able to bring him along with me allowed for him and I to both receive consistent education out of the unfavorable climate at home. We spent the majority of our time training with Lehua Custer and Cesar Torrente, working on developing his fitness and enhancing his natural ability for the collection and FEI work.

Venti is a tall and long legged young horse with lots of talent but also lots of physical quirks. He is extremely laterally supple but struggles with straightness within the body. I have been riding with Lehua for almost 2 years now on a multitude of different horses and Venti has greatly benefited from her teaching style. He is naturally a very front to back horse but with Lehua's guidance we have been able to encourage him to push through his back and body from behind. In turn this has taught him to open his throat latch and swing his shoulders up and out.

One of my favorite exercises for him is practicing the forward and back on a circle while also leg yielding him in and out. Starting on a 20M circle and yielding into a 10M circle and back out. This allows me to feel all 4 quadrants of his body and get him aligned between my legs and into my hands. I often practice this exercise in all 3 gaits. Another exercise that has been super beneficial to his development has been haunches in to shoulder in both on the long sides and on a circle. It again allows me to unlock his entire body but unlike the leg yielding it allows me to increase the bend from his hind end through his neck.

What I personally find to be the most exciting part of Wellington is all of the educational opportunities. This past season I was able to audit the Trainers Conference and the Zen EliYouth Mastership week. This year Clinicians for the Trainers Conference were Christine Traugig and Monica Theodorescu. I truly believe you can learn just as much watching as you can by being the one in the saddle. I really appreciated Christine's approach to teaching young horses correctly up the training scale. For a nice warmblood the tricks are easy but the relaxation often is not. A couple weeks prior was the Youth Mastership Week where the top youth Riders from the season prior gathered for a week of intense training and education. I have had the opportunity to attend this clinic for the last few years and always learn so much every time. My personal favorite part of the Youth clinic is getting to hear the feedback on all of the individual tests as I think it is very eye opening to the little nervous or rushed mistakes we make that cost us the most points. As Lendon always says, There is no reason for a bad centerline, circle, or short side.

On top of all of the incredible educational opportunities that Wellington has to offer it also gives so many young riders just like myself the opportunity to find the comradery and friendships that dressage generally lacks. Unlike in Europe most of the youth divisions are often sparse and spread out but thanks to Wellington I have had the opportunity to meet some of my

best and long time friends. From competing against each other to hacking the canals between CDI weeks, it has given that sense of friendship dressage often lacks. A huge reason for this sense of camaraderie and teamwork is because of all the work that Lendon and Dressage4Kids has done to connect us together and create limitless educational opportunities for myself and countless other riders.

Every year I feel even more grateful and blessed to have had access to all of these opportunities from such a young age. To get to grow up so immersed and engaged in the sport that has had my heart for so many years. I am beyond thankful for all of the trainers, sponsors, and mentors who have helped me along this journey.