

The Gay Games are neither an aggressive political gathering nor a social event, where the local nightlife is being tested to the limit, and - as you can see by the attached pictures - they are not a photo competition either: they are a sportive event, open worldwide to anyone who is in possession of a license in a sports discipline.

With my Registered Partner Ron Rubey (as this is so poetically called in Swiss German / we celebrate our 35 years of togetherness in September) and my figure skating trainer Katharina Brunner (of the elco ice skating club Olten, Switzerland), after months of preparation (also with my second coach and choreographer Richard Furrer), we departed for Paris per High Speed Train TGV on Sunday. Right after our arrival we checked into our living quarters, followed immediately by a visit to the high security accreditation center to get our badges which permitted us access to all venues and events, plus an electronic transit card for use of all public means of transportation. Then we started our journey to the ice rink for the first training session, as figure skaters are like dancers: Training Every Day.

The rink was/is situated in Cergy, which is right next to Paris ... on the map. Going by Metro and RER (train system for suburbs), we soon found out that this is a trip of almost two hours. When I pre-checked in Basel the way from the RER final station to the ice rink, I already had certain doubts concerning the Google map info. To be brief: on this first day we were not able to find the ice rink. Also the colorful locals couldn't help us either, as they had never ever heard of an ice rink (untranslatable French: " Patinoire ? " - " Patinoire ? " - - - " Quoi : Party noire ? ? ? "). And not a single taxi in sight!



The next morning, Monday, was my first competition day. We left the RER train one station before the last as it seemed to be a much larger station. We found a taxi (a Mercedes limousine) and arrived happily at the hyper modern ice complex (with two ice fields of Olympic dimensions). Unfortunately, the huge shopping mall next to the rink was still under construction. And there we found ourselves practically in the middle of the desert.



A leetle beet of Off Ice Training and here we go.



Each group of skaters has a warm up of six minutes before executing their programs in a preselected order. My coach Kaethy had given me very precise instructions as to what to do during this short time (edges, three turns, some elements from the program, etc.). BUT as usual these 6 minutes were an absolute psycho terror for moi, where I can only try to stabilize my wobbly knees. My trainer was pulling her hair, rather loudly, and prontissimo some coach colleagues told her: "My, you are severe!"



The program went quite alright, it is never perfect. Most of all, one is always surprised and annoyed and furious that when one performs, everything is different: things that always seemed easy are now all of a sudden almost insurmountable. Oh well. Actually, I should be used to this from my stage work and the opera performances.

The music for this programm was a Sinatra Song (I Get A Kick Out Of You), sung by myself (recorded on CD, not live ... to sing and skate at the same time doesn't work, believe me, I have tried it).

Here is the costume of my second program:





The second program on Tuesday morning was a so-called Artistic program, which means that the technical elements don't count towards points, only musicality, choreography, skating skills, transitions, etc. are given points. One has to skate the required elements just the same (pirouettes, jumps, etc.), they simply do not count as technical elements. As you can see, my costume is some kind of bird outfit with huge sleeves (sewn on petticoats) and a high pointy black hat. In figure skating you have a thousand rules: here e.g. you are allowed to skate with a hat, but under no circumstances should you take it off your head, otherwise it becomes a prop, props are forbidden and you will get deductions in your score.



I have won two gold medals: in the category Free Skating Men IV Bronze with 23.45 points (next placed skater Scott Davies USA with 15.6 points) and in the category Artistic Free Skating Men IV Silver with 25.33 points (next placed skater Alan Lessik USA with 15.74 points).



The big ice gala with all the winners (including *moi*) was on Thursday, with an opening and closing number with everybody participating, choreographed by some ice skating choreographers especially flown in from New York. We had to suffer thru a three (!) hour rehearsal (pics below) just prior to the actual show. It seems like a miracle that I was still able to lift a leg during my solo program.

For the gala performance I thought I should enhance my participation a bit, as it was after all an event for adults. I therefore decided to skate without my pants on (only in black briefs and the top with sleeves, plus hat). UNFORTUNATELY there is no photo of this but I think it is quite OK to only tickle the readers imagination a bit.







Oh yes, then this: after the ice gala there were no more RER trains going from Cergy to the center of Paris. Luckily we were not all by ourselves in our misery and after a quite eventful three hour erring trip thru very "interesting" suburbs (never visited by any tourists before) we were able to somehow reach Paris.

On Saturday there remained the Closing Ceremony, in front of the Hotel de Ville, in the middle of Paris this time. There were the unavoidable speeches, of course, the handing over of the flag to the next place of the Gay Games in four years - Hong Kong - followed by a gigantic show program and very, very loud boom-boom music. I have perhaps slowly become too adult for this kind of Disco noise.





Sunday we returned to Basel with the TGV train, totally packed with travelers as always, and now it is time to do laundry.

For us Trio Infernal it was an extremely intense week, a bit brutal at moments, never boring. I would like to thank Ron and Kaethy at this point for having accompanied and supported me on this adventure.



With Sporty Greetings,  
Andreas