

# Les 4 Ecoles D'Art Equestre



**Spanish Riding School Rider Herwig**

*Gene and Rachel Wehrheim traveled to Paris, France to be able to attend one of the greatest classical horsemanship gatherings in modern times. **Les 4 Ecoles D'Art Equestre**, held November 23-25, 2007, in Paris, was a rousing success with the four classical European schools (France - Le Cadre Noir de Saumur; Austria - Spanish Riding School of Vienna; Spain - the Royal Andalusian Riding School of Jerez; and Portugal - the Portuguese Riding School of Lisbon) playing to sold out crowds whose enthusiasm could hardly be contained. A summary of their trip to Paris follows.*

Early last year it was announced that the four classical riding schools of Europe were going to host an event in Paris in the fall.

We debated long and hard about whether we could take the time, make all the arrangements and fit such a trip into our budget. As we got closer to 'crunch time' we began to wonder if we were crazy to travel to Paris for a horse show.

Things didn't start too smoothly. We arrived at the airport for departure in a dense fog. Our flight was diverted. We jumped in the car and headed for another airport, changed our itinerary and luckily caught another flight for Amsterdam, then changed planes for Paris. We were running about six to eight hours behind our original schedule. We had planned to use the trains for our transportation. When we got to Paris we found that the

trains were not running because of a strike. What a start to our trip.

The trip was well worth the effort, however, to witness such a historic performance. This was the first time that the world's four great schools of classical horsemanship had performed together.

The event was held at the Palais Omnisports Paris-Bercy, located right in the heart of Paris, about a block from our hotel. It was a great facility. It was filled to standing room only for all of the performances. There were so many people attending the event it caused traffic jams in downtown Paris.

This presentation was the most incredible horse exhibition we had ever been to. It was overpowering. The crowd was spellbound and very emotional, with some audience members in tears. Gene said it reminded him of seeing Elvis Presley perform at a concert. The Europeans love their horses. The music, the setting, the horses and riders were spine-tingling perfect.

Each act showcased the performing schools' talents and left the crowd in awe of the relationship the riders had with their horses. There were a total of ten acts: a signature performance from each school, the airs above ground in hand, each school's quadrille, and the airs above ground under saddle.

The Portuguese rider's signature performance was filled with pirouettes, a two-beat piaffe, and a two-beat canter on a

sheet of plywood. The horses used in their school are Lusitanos.

The Royal Andalusian Riding School of Jerez uses Andalusians in their school and their performances showcased the training necessary for the bullfighting arena. The crowd went crazy when the riders performed moves similar to America's reining horses - sliding stops and spins.

The Cadre Noir primarily uses Selle Francais in their school and their signature performance was jumping. Two Cadre riders challenged each other in a friendly jumping competition. The first jump was a table, the second a chair, the third a foot-wide "T" post made of PVC, and the fourth jump, a vertical four-by-four inch wide post.

Andreas Hausberger, chief rider at the Spanish Riding School of Vienna, performed in the spotlight on long-rein with his Lipizzan stallion. The pair performed all of the Grand Prix movements in-hand flawlessly. Members of the Spanish Riding School later rode a harmonious and accurate quadrille.

The event concluded with the all of the riders riding four abreast around the arena for the final ovation. The finale lasted a good ten to fifteen minutes with the riders coming out for an encore salute.

Our trip to Paris created a lot of memories and we are grateful to have had the opportunity to witness such a historic event.



**The World premier**

**Finale**