

Tai Chi Rhenan

Hainfeld, Germany - September 2006

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Qigong practice in the garden

Late September saw Tai Chi Rhenan take place, not as usual, in either France or Switzerland but in the sleepy village of Hainfeld, Germany which lies close to the French border. The concept of Tai Chi Rhenan is to bring together internal arts practitioners in a spirit of open sharing. Having previously attended the Swiss meeting organised by Cornelia Gruber I anticipated a fairly grand event.

Hosted by Harald Hasenohrl and his wife Ilona at their studio complex which lay at the top of a main street in a village of 800 inhabitants, this low-key gathering provided a welcome contact to those of us who had attended a number of large-scale gatherings such as Recontres Jasnieres, now in its 19th year.

Entering a cobbled courtyard we arrived at the reception area where I met the organisers and their assistant. Up a wooden frame staircase I was shown the large studio which would comfortably hold 20 – 30 people and a smaller studio to hold 15 – 20. Beyond this we were led to an open tiled area which led to a large barn with cement floor and high, open ceiling; a short amble to your left, through the shrubs, fruit trees, tomatoes, herbs and flowers we came to a large area of lawn with a water garden at one end and space for an open fire at the end.

On Saturday morning we gathered in the barn for the opening ceremony where the local mayor was introduced and told us something of the area. In a village of 800 inhabitants it is encouraging to see the enthusiastic support of the local community. With 15 instructors in attendance we were sure to have a varied programme. They included: Karin Amberger, Austria, Cornelia Gruber & Cate Wallis, Switzerland, Luis Molera, Spain, Henk Jennsen, Netherlands, Frau Song, China and a large German presence in the shape of Christian Unverzagt, Michael Konarkowski, Rainer Scmitt, Gudrun Kapferer and, of course Harald and his good wife.

The workshops took place in the various halls, the barn and near the town square. The weather was very warm with

grapes full on the vine by the side of the roads. The village was alive with over 80 students practicing spear, fan, qigong systems, tai chi & bagua applications. In contrast to many of the busier internal arts gatherings the atmosphere was relaxed and highly conducive to pleasant social and working interchange. Food was served in local hostleries and was of high quality, being fresh and locally grown.

On Saturday evening we drove a few kilometres to the countryside and gathered in the local hall for the gala event. An excellent buffet was served and various individuals ably demonstrated their skills to an appreciative audience. Rather than appearing individually many of the teachers joined together so we were simultaneously treated to two different fan forms (Luis & Cornelia), qigong systems (Wild Goose & Crane) and tai chi demonstrations. As many of us had attended a number of such meetings Cornelia Gruber suggested an improvisational demonstration with all the teachers. Although somewhat sceptical of the end result I, along with the others agreed. Over a dozen teachers took the floor and, at various points in time, began their form. As space was tight they got very close to each other and began to free-play with san shou and pushing hands routines merging between the performers. It worked well, the audience enjoyed it and the instructors also has much fun.

Sunday lunch time saw another set of demonstrations take place in the local square much to the delight of the local church goers. In addition to the instructors many of the participants showed a very high level of proficiency as they performed a range of routines from a number of different approaches and styles of tai chi, qigong & bagua.

Overall the Tai Chi Rhenan was a highly enjoyable, relaxed event in a lovely environment which allowed us to train in fresh, natural surroundings. The organisation was impeccable and our hosts should be commended for their attention to detail which included local home-bakes and tea on Sunday afternoon. (www.inbalancenet.de)