



On June 29, 2007, when Albrecht Wagner told an assembly of nearly 1800 people to go to lunch and return at 2 p.m. for a surprise, nobody could have expected what was coming.

Wagner, director-general of the Deutsches Elektronen-Synchrotron in Hamburg, was master of ceremonies at HERAfest, which marked the closing of the Hadron-Electron Ring Accelerator after 15 years of operation. For two days, participants heard talks highlighting the history and achievements of HERA and its four experiments, HERA-B, HERMES, H1, and ZEUS. While those talks were entertaining and often amusing, they paled in comparison to Wagner's surprise.

At 2 p.m. exactly, the crowd, which had been enjoying German delicacies and beer, turned to see a truck carrying a pantheon of Greek gods and goddesses, Hera herself played by a 6-foot drag queen in high heels, with servants and attendants in waiting. Other actors played Zeus and Hermes; lacking a tie to Greek mythology, the H1 experiment was represented by a bottle of Heinz-brand sauce.

After parading through the DESY site, the procession mounted the stage at the front of the enormous tent set up for the event. There the DESY staff performed a show—part cabaret, part pantomime—that had the audience laughing uproariously, even those who didn't speak fluent German.

As day turned to evening, the festivities continued. The tent was transformed into a human table-football arena, and Greek-god-themed cocktails were served to those dancing among gold-painted human statues until well after midnight.

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