In my talk I will describe neural and behavioral correlates of ticklishness and playfulness in rat somatosensory cortex. Rats greatly enjoy being tickled, as evident from approach behaviors, 50 kHz vocalizations and joy jumps (Freudensprüinge). At the same time, rats fight the tickling hand, show escape behaviors and, under some circumstances, also emit 22 kHz alarm calls. Cells in the somatosensory cortex are involved in the generation 50 kHz vocalizations during tickling. Somatosensory cortical responses to tickling predict responses to play behaviors, suggesting a neural link between tickling and play.

Finally, I will discuss behavioural and neural correlates of hide and seek in rats. The evidence suggests that rats have elaborate cognitive and neural capacities for role play.

Those interested in meeting with the speaker please contact desdemona.fricker@parisdescartes.fr