

Paris Olympics – Worst Opening Ceremony Ever

By Bruce Bawer

The opening ceremonies of Olympic games have always followed the same pattern. A parade of national teams enters the stadium, led by Greece, and followed by the other countries in alphabetical order, with the host nation coming last. When that's done, the stadium turns into a stage for an splendidiferous show of some kind, an extravaganza marked by lights, dance, fireworks, that is meant to reflect the very best of the host country, its culture and history. Over the years these displays have grown more and more ambitious.

Thomas Jolly, the man who put together last Friday's opening ceremony for the Paris Olympics, decided to take another route. First of all, the parade of athletes took place not in a stadium but along the Seine, where the nations' representatives rode in on yachts, barges, and other vessels. As usual, the parade was led by the Greek team. It was followed by something called the "Refugee Olympic Team." After that, the teams appeared in French alphabetical order, although the signs identifying them were in English, which made for some confusion, if you cared to give the matter any thought.

Indeed, the mixture of those two particular languages brought to mind the annual Eurovision song contest, and unfortunately this event, like that one, was not lacking in terrible music. Instead of holding off the entertainment, to use the word loosely, until after the parade, Jolly mixed it all together, cutting away from the parade repeatedly to focus on a wide range of performances, most but not all of them taking place along the riverbank. Almost every bit of it was absolutely horrible. Lady Gaga did an extraordinarily annoying (and

endless) song and dance number (in French) while being circled energetically but with very little in the way of artistry by a couple of dozen guys in black body tights. (It brought to mind Danny Kaye's "Choreography" number in the movie *White Christmas*, a wicked parody of some of the more pretentious varieties of modern dance.)

A row of eight women from the Moulin Rouge did a surprisingly slapdash version of the can-can. Another company of *femmes* play-acted at doing construction work on the scaffolding surrounding Notre Dame – which, of course, was burned down five years ago in what, if I had to bet on it, was a fire set by Muslims, who have similarly destroyed countless other churches in France – then hung from it in what came off as some kind of ridiculous circus act. A large corps of casually dressed young people who engaged in herky-jerky, uncoordinated movements along the riverbank looked as if they were competing to do the most awkward parody of a Bob Fosse number.

Every now and then the camera also cut away from the flotilla to follow the movements of a masked, hooded, and frankly creepy character who ran and jumped across the local roofs carrying the Olympic torch. This recurring segment seemed to fall in much the same artistic category as mime – i.e. something peculiarly French and utterly baffling that was apparently meant to be whimsical.

There followed an excerpt – the "Do You Hear the People Sing?" scene – from *Les Miz*, then some very aggressive hard rock (reportedly meant to celebrate France's several pointless revolutions), then the "Habanera" aria from *Carmen*, during which we cut away a number of times to the inside of a library, where three young dudes in fruity outfits removed from the shelves a number of French classics (most of them with erotically suggestive titles, e.g. *Les Liaisons dangereuses*), tossed loose pages into the air, and then found their way to what appeared to be an apartment where they

started to get it on with one another and slammed the door in the face of the cameraman. Large golden statues of famous French women, most of them activists (including sometime European Parliament president Simone Veil, not to be confused with the philosopher Simone Weil) rose, one after the other, out of huge pedestals alongside the Seine. A black woman on the roof of the Grand Palais sang the *Marseillaise*. A black guy on the riverbank rapped in French. Fashion models, both male and female, some of them quite corpulent, walked a runway, their outfits mostly garish and/or androgynous.

Then came the part that made the headlines. I saw it, but I could hardly believe it, and I wasn't entirely sure what the hell to make of it. The *New York Post* described it as follows: "A crew of drag queens and dancers performed an apparent 'parody of the Last Supper'" at a long table with the Seine and the Eiffel Tower as a backdrop. Apparently three of the 18 participants were "familiar Drag Race France queens" – *Drag Race France*, it appears, is a TV reality show – and the person in the middle of the group was a morbidly obese woman "with a large silver headdress that resembled a halo as depicted in paintings of Jesus." To many viewers, it was an outrageous insult to Christians. Elon Musk complained. Matteo Salvini, Italy's deputy prime minister, called it "sleazy." A British vicar called on the Archbishop of Canterbury, Justin Welby, to condemn it. Given Welby's own woke leanings, I wouldn't hold my breath.



Sorry, but how can anybody be surprised that an Olympics opening ceremony held in France in the year 2024 mocked Christianity? The country is being steadily Islamized, and its current leaders seem to be eager to ensure that the ultimate transfer of power, when it comes, be as peaceful as possible – and, in the meantime, to appease the anti-Christian totalitarians who are preparing to take their place.

To be sure, the Olympic authorities insisted that this spectacle had an entirely different meaning. At the center of the aforementioned table was a huge serving tray, and on top of it was “a scantily dressed man, painted head to toe in sparkling blue.” “Scantily dressed” is putting it kindly. He was just this side of naked. It was one of those sights that you wished you could unsee. The *Post* reported that according to Olympic officials, this clown was meant to represent Dionysus, the Greek god of wine, festivity, ecstasy, and madness, and the whole shebang was somehow intended to underscore “the absurdity of violence between human beings.” It was also quite obviously one more desperate effort to shove drag into the mainstream.

After this display, the word “*obscurité*” appeared onscreen, which seemed appropriate.

In any event, the negative reaction to this parodic tableau was so extreme and ubiquitous (this was one way in which the ceremony brought the whole world together) that a spokesman for the Paris Olympics actually apologized publicly – kind of. It was one of those non-apology apologies. “Clearly there was never an intention to show disrespect to any religious group,” said Anne Deschamps. *Clearly* was clearly not the *mot juste* in this case. “If people have taken any offense,” she added, “we are really sorry.”

Anyway, the show dragged on, no pun intended. There was a lot more bad dancing. Then, in a departure from all the French culture and French language, some woman on a small boat with a pianist sang, in English, John Lennon’s “Imagine.” (Surprise!) This was followed by a series of windy speeches by French officials and Olympic Committee big shots that were rich in the usual Olympic rhetoric about “solidarity” and “diversity.” The last few minutes of this four-hour slog were actually the best: a stirring light display at the Eiffel Tower and then another beautiful light show involving a hot-air balloon, which rose into the air to the strains of “La vie en rose,” sung beautifully by Céline Dion.

A British TV commentator pronounced himself delighted by the unique way in which the familiar parade of athletes was interrupted by all these different performances. To me, however, the whole thing was a dizzying mishmash, a ten-ring circus full of immensely irritating music and dancing that looked entirely unchoreographed. It was interesting to note that despite all the heavy PC messaging, the left-wing *New York Times* [gave](#) the show a thumbs-down, describing it as “bloated” and “heavy on pretense” and complaining that everything about it “worked to diminish the athletes.” (Indeed, Olympics opening ceremonies don’t have to be all about sport, but this one seemed to go out of its way to

celebrate people who are extremely out of shape.) Similarly, the left-wing *Guardian* [called](#) the show “patchy” and lacking in “class,” “disjointed,” and bereft of “unity or coherence.” Well, for once I totally agree with the *Times* and *Guardian*.

It’s strange: France – to an obnoxious extent – has always prided itself on its culture. But this bizarre mélange, with the exception of the brief touches of Bizet and Piaf, would almost have made an ignorant viewer assume that the place is a cultural backwater inhabited mostly by silly, narcissistic drag queens and transsexuals. The French fetish for their language was certainly on display, and Jolly was obviously eager to show off as many of Paris’s most famous sites as possible, but at the same time he seemed to be doing his best to put a staggeringly kinky, grotesque, multicultural, “queer,” “woke,” and altogether tacky spin on his country and its culture. At a time when France, and Paris in particular, are already going down the tubes, this rubbishy program didn’t do anything to help rescue its image

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