

Conclusions and Recommendations

International Symposium on Olympic Ceremonies *Historical Continuity and Cultural Exchange*

Introduction: the Symposium

Meeting under the auspices of the International Chair of Olympism and the Olympic Museum, over fifty representatives of the IOC, Olympic Organizing Committees, Olympic candidatures, past and future directors and producers of Olympic ceremonies, academic researchers from the several disciplines, university officials, and media have intensively explored the importance and role of Olympic ceremonies in the total life of the Olympic Movement.

Conclusions

Nature of Olympic ceremonies

The latest academic research has clearly demonstrated that the Olympic ceremonies attract the widest and most focused attention of any regularly scheduled cultural performance events in human history. This extraordinary phenomenon requires respect and attentiveness from all parties.

Importance of ceremonies in relation with Olympic Movement

Broad agreement was reached in measuring the Olympic ceremonies' importance in four main dimensions:

1. The ceremonies are a principal means through which the IOC becomes visible and meaningful to mass audiences, distinguishing it from other sports agencies, and thereby helping to maintain its authority and leadership in the sport movement.
2. The ceremonies are a chief avenue for intercultural exchange in the world system today, thus contributing to Olympism's mission of promoting international understanding and peace.
3. The ceremonies maintain historical continuities in the Olympic Movement, and powerfully express these factors in the context of present global realities.
4. The ceremonies present an opportunity for popular education and professional research into the institutions and dynamics of the Olympic Movement and of the broader global system.

Recommendations

Athletes in ceremonies

Believing with Coubertin that the ceremonies must honor the athletes above all, the Symposium wishes that every effort be made to assure a sense of participation by athletes in the ceremonies, while preserving the special character of ritual events, and

Recognizing that there are many countries with scarce broadcast resources, a fairer distribution of opportunities to experience their athletes in the ceremonies must be achieved, and

Believing that participation of all Olympic athletes in the opening ceremonies and closing ceremonies parades is their historical right, the Symposium insists that this Olympic tradition be maintained, and furthermore that the IOC, OCOGs, and NOCs accept responsibility for insuring that every athlete who so wishes can participate.

Olympic flame relay

Recognizing that the Olympic flame relay has become the chief centre of popular and accessible celebration of the Olympic Movement and an important mechanism of intercultural education, the Symposium strongly urges all Olympic authorities to be more mindful and supportive of this key Olympic ritual, and,

Taking note of the fact that few international broadcasters ever cover the rituals of Olympic flame lighting and delivery at Olympia and Athens, the Symposium strongly encourages that new ways be found to assure that people around the world have the opportunity to experience these important Olympic ceremonies, and,

Being inspired by new scientific research documenting the cultural complexity and intellectual significance of the flame relay internationally and in the host country, the Symposium urges support for a continued program of comparative research and publication on this topic.

Victory ceremonies

Understanding the victory ceremonies to be as important as any other ceremony for preserving the special meaning of Olympism and the authority of the IOC, but also that the various national broadcasters treat the victory ceremonies with different degrees of integrity and respect, the Symposium urges that all broadcasters be encouraged to cover victory ceremonies without reduction or interruption.

Opening and closing ceremonies

Analyzing the various forms of relationship between OCOGs and ceremonies producers, and noticing the different sectors from which producers and directors are drawn, the Symposium believes that OCOGs must be strongly encouraged to insure that the producers they select will respect and understand the special nature of Olympic ceremonies, since,

Worrying that the ceremonies, and the opening ceremonies in particular, are in danger of emphasizing entertainment and show at the expense of Olympic ritual, the Symposium deeply believes that the IOC and OCOGs must protect the distinctive historical capital, intercultural nature, and moral value of Olympic ceremonials, and therefore

Learning that ceremonies producers and artists are sometimes not given the opportunities to sufficiently inform themselves about the complexity and responsibility of the Olympic ceremonies tradition, the Symposium urges the IOC and the Olympic Museum to join with OCOGs to provide such opportunities to these key actors, and, further

Understanding that ceremonies organizers, particularly in the artistic segments of the opening and closing ceremonies have an extremely difficult job to educate and enlighten without giving any offence to audiences from almost 200 national communities, the Symposium urges that culture and communications specialists be made available well in advance to ceremonies producers and directors, and

Noticing that there are certain tendencies to pay closer attention to opening than to closing ceremonies, the Symposium wishes remind all parties that the closing ceremonies are just as important for the athletes, Olympic authority, and intercultural understanding.

Television and Olympic ceremonies

Recognizing that it has become a reality of the modern Olympic Games that television plays a crucial role in the interpretation of Olympic ceremonies and, as such, in the encouragement of intercultural exchange and promotion of the Olympic Movement, and

Appreciating that research has demonstrated that broadcasters display great differences in willingness and ability to present information about the Olympic Movement and host culture, the Symposium wishes to underscore the critical need to assist and encourage broadcaster responsibility in their preparation for producing and commenting on the ceremonies by providing interpretive information in a timely manner, in languages they understand, about both the Olympic rituals and the host culture. Moreover,

Understanding that there exists a significant disparity in resources and access that broadcasters have to the Olympic Games, resulting in important differences in the presentation of the ceremonies, the Symposium strongly encourages that these issues be addressed so that broadcasters in all parts of the world may be better able to convey the experience and emotion of the Olympic ceremonies. Furthermore,

Recognizing that the combination of new television technologies and commercial media structures can result in a variety of broadcaster alterations to the flow of the official ceremonies in the form of advertising breaks, picture manipulations, and on-screen graphics, the Symposium would like every effort be made to encourage broadcasters to respect the presentation of Olympic rituals when programming the ceremonies.

Ceremonies archives, museum curation, and research

Achieving complete agreement from Olympic organizing committee officials, ceremonies producers, and academic researchers on the necessity of specific, organized and localized information on the history, production, and scientific analysis of Olympic ceremonies, the Symposium urges that the Olympic Museum, in cooperation with other relevant parties, develop such audio-visual and written archives, and

Understanding what is necessary for ongoing curation and research, the IOC is further urged in its negotiations with rights-holding broadcasters to insure supply to the Olympic Museum of full video and audio copies of their individual broadcasts of the Olympic ceremonies.

Continuation of ceremonies consultative meetings

Recognizing the deep appreciation for the practical results of this Symposium on Olympic Ceremonies, expressed by Organizing Committee officials, Olympic ceremonies producers, academic researchers, and press representatives present in Barcelona and Lausanne, and

Being informed about the difficulties OCOG ceremonies officials have suffered in the past in efficiently meeting experienced colleagues from previous Games, together with the archivists, academic researchers, and Olympic authorities necessary to assist them, and

Remembering the extreme importance of the ceremonies to IOC authority, intercultural education, and host city initiatives,

The Symposium unanimously encourages the Olympic Museum to organize every two years a consultative meeting for Olympic ceremonies officials, producers, historians, and researchers.