

by Philip Barker

*"Give life to noble games"*

Older than the rings, older than the flame, the playing of the Olympic hymn is one of THE great moments of any Olympic Opening Ceremony. The arrival of the Olympic Flag, trooped in as the Olympic Anthem is played. As legendary BBC Radio Commentator Peter JONES described it in the most reverential terms.<sup>1</sup>

The Olympic anthem was part of the ceremonial at the first Olympic Games of the Modern era. And yet it remains little known. The official reports make perfunctory reference, or even ignore it.

Christian ORTLOFF was closely involved with the Lake Placid ceremonies in 1980 and he confirmed just how little recognised it was.<sup>2</sup>

Olympism and Music have always been closely linked. By far the best most detailed analysis of ceremonial music has been conducted by scholar Elizabeth SCHLÜSSEL in her doctoral dissertation *Zur Rolle der Musik bei den Eröffnungs- und Schlussfeiern der Olympischen Spielen von 1896-1972*. Her magnificent treatment of the subject deserves a wider audience.

Others have made their own contributions. For example, The March of the Wenlock Olympians played at the Penny BROOKES inspired Much Wenlock Olympian Games was re-discovered recently and through the influence of Dr Don

ANTHONY, it was played at Great Britain's *National Olympic Academy* in 2001.

Although Olympism is a secular movement, the ceremonies have an air of religious ritual about them.

## Hymn to Apollo

In 1893, as COUBERTIN was laying his plans for the revival of Olympic Games, the *Hymn to Apollo* was discovered by Theodore REINACH. Gabriel FAURE'S arrangement of the words was completed in time for that famous gathering in Paris.

At the opening of the Sorbonne meeting on 16th June 1894, shortly after four o'clock in the afternoon, twelve choristers and soloist Mme Jeanne REMACLE performed FAURE'S Hymn...<sup>3</sup>

## The First Olympics

Two years later, the Athenians were determined to put on a great show for the first Olympic Games of the Modern Era. Spiro SAMARA was commissioned to write some appropriate music the words came from the Greek national poet, Kostis PALAMAS.<sup>4</sup> Come opening day of the Olympics. As the King declared open the games SAMARA himself conducted it.<sup>5</sup>

The SAMARA hymn was played again at the 1906 Intercalated games and it was evidently ringing in the ears of COUBERTIN.<sup>6</sup>

- 1 BBC Radio Opening Ceremony Broadcast - Commentator Peter JONES, July 17th 1976. He described the Olympic Anthem as *"perhaps the most moving music of all."*
- 2 *"In my country because the Olympic anthem is restricted in its use, most people think that the television theme which identifies ABC Olympic Programmes (Buglers Dream) is the Olympic anthem. When they hear that piece of music they instantly identify it with the Olympic games. When if ever they hear the Olympic anthem, they don't identify it with anything because they don't even recognize it."* Cp. G. C. ORTLOFF, in: *International Olympic Academy Proceedings*, Olympia 1980.
- 3 *"Gabriel Faure lent a hand with good grace. [...] The playing of this sacred piece of music created the desired atmosphere among the huge audience. A subtle feeling of emotion spread through the auditorium as if the ancient eurhythmy were coming to us from the distant past. In this way Hellenism infiltrated the whole hall. From this moment the congress was destined to succeed"* Cp. MÜLLER, N. (ed.), *Pierre de Coubertin. Olympism. Selected Writings*, Lausanne 2000, p. 318-319. COUBERTIN, Pierre de, *Olympic Memoirs*, Lausanne 1979.
- 4 *"The amount of 5000 drachmas is accepted as expenses regarding the invitation to Spiros Samaras to perform the Olympic hymn, the music of which he would write himself. [...] They decided to send a letter to the musician [To Samaras] expressing their preference for having the hymn of the contests with both orchestra and vocal music. [...] It was decided to have the Musician S[Spiros] Kesaris to go to all the Greek cities escorted by a member of the committee in order to arrange the co-ordination of the musicians"* Cp. TARRASOUELAS, Th. (ed), *The Annals of the Pre-Olympic Games Period 1895-1896*, Athens pp. 83. His translation from the original minutes of the Organizing Committee note.
- 5 *"All the different philharmonic societies arranged themselves in the middle of the arena, and being joined there by a great many performers on string instruments and a chorus of singers, began to play the Cantata for the Olympic games [...] these words sung in the open air under streaming sunlight ...had a marvellous effect. The harmonious strains of music floated on the air and kindled a fire of enthusiasm [...] everyone was profoundly touched and the spirit of antiquity seemed to hover around the stadium and was applauded as it deserved. Frenetic applause resounded [...] its repetition was unanimously demanded and the King himself expressed his approval by applauding vigorously and after it having been played a second time, renewed cheers greeted the composer. [...] the melody is slow and soft at the commencement, becomes gradually more lively and ends in a tremendous crescendo swelled by the voices and every instrument in the orchestra."* Cp. COUBERTIN, P./PHILIMON, T. J./POLITIS, N. G./ANNINOS, Ch. (eds.), *The Olympic Games. B. C. 776 -A. D. 1896*, Athens/Leipzig/London 1897, p. 59-60 [being the Official Report of 1896 Olympic Games].
- 6 *"The ears of the Athenians still ring with the harmonies of the Olympic hymn"*. Cp. MÜLLER, *Olympism*, p. 545. COUBERTIN, Pierre de, "Why I revived the Olympic Games", in: *Fortnightly Review* 84(July 1908), p. 110-115.

Sadly the ears of Londoners didn't ring to the harmonies of SAMARA'S wonderful paen.

Although in Florence on April 11<sup>th</sup> 1908, SAMARA'S opera *Rhea* opened. The overture was the Olympic hymn, the opera itself incorporated variations on the familiar tune and was set during a mythical "Olympic Games" The librettist was Paul MILLET.

COUBERTIN lamented the absence of a considered music plan at the London Olympics.

It is perhaps surprising as Chief Organiser Lord DESBOROUGH attended the Interim or Intercalated Games in 1906 (as a competitor in Fencing) so it is not unreasonable to imagine he may have heard the SAMARAS hymn whilst there.

Whatever the reason, this first Olympic anthem was not to be heard in an Olympic context for almost fifty years.

### The Inter War Years

But that is not to say there were not attempts at finding an Olympic hymn.

In the run up to the 1932 Olympic Games in Los Angeles, a competition was established at the instigation of IOC member Count CLARY.

Entries were to be sent to the American Arts Festival at the Barr Building in Washington by 1<sup>st</sup> May 1932.<sup>7</sup>

The *Official Report* details the precise arrangements for the Los Angeles Opening ceremony. After a fanfare and lighting of the Olympic flame 3.37 pm local time.<sup>8</sup>

Baron de BLONAY was apparently much taken with KEELER'S work and proposed it be adopted by the IOC as the Olympic hymn. Though KEELER'S work was performed at the IOC session in Vienna the following year, the German members of the

IOC were determined their nations rich musical heritage should be recognised.

Count CLARY and Theodor LEWALD proposed a second competition.<sup>10</sup>

But in late 1934 Richard STRAUSS was already composing his Olympic hymn but with considerable ill will.<sup>11</sup>

Though STRAUSS lived in Garmisch-Partenkirchen, it seems highly unlikely that he saw any of the Winter games. But he did attend the opening ceremony of the Summer games to personally conduct the Olympic hymn he had written, and whatever his misgivings, musically it is a splendid work.

It is said that his only visit to the cinema was in 1937 to see RIEFENSTAHL'S film *Olympia*.

His hymn could be heard twice in the RIEFENSTAHL film, at the climatic moment when the flame has been lit in Berlins Olympiastadion and then as the film closes.

It was subsequently adopted by the IOC as the Olympic hymn for all time, but within three years of that decision the world was at war.

### A Very English Hymn

After the war, preparations for the London Olympics were necessarily hurried. The Olympic opening ceremony was far from the spectacular seen today but discussion turned to the use of an Olympic hymn.

There may well have been an unwillingness to use a German hymn. It would have been consistent with the prevailing attitude, neither Germany or Japan were invited to take part in the games.

Lieutenant-Colonel T.P.M (Temple Percy Molesworth) BEVAN (late of the Grenadier Guards) had joined the Organizing committee early in 1947 and

7 Noted by BUSCHMANN, J./LENNARTZ, K. "From Los Angeles (1032) to Melbourne (1956). The Olympic Torch's Protagonism in Ceremonies", in: MORAGAS, M. de/MACALOON, J./LLINES, M. (ed.), *Olympic Ceremonies. Historical Continuity and Cultural Exchange. International Symposium on Olympic Ceremonies. Barcelona - Lausanne, November 1995*, Barcelona 1996, p. 111-130 (originally from IOC Archive 25th April 1931).

8 The instructions for the Opening Ceremony included "Start band and chorus on Olympic hymn". Hymn by BRADLEY KEELER, unless new Official Olympic hymn is furnished. Cp. X<sup>th</sup> Olympiade Committee (ed.), *The Games of the X<sup>th</sup> Olympiad. Los Angeles 1932. Official Report*, Los Angeles 1933.

9 Walter BRADLEY KEELER'S *Olympic Hymn* - Quoted in Elizabeth SCHLÜSSEL, *Rolle*.  
*"Now sing of virile games, come athletes to our field, like those  
 by which the body's beauty is made of storied Hellas  
 to live once more, where gods who looked that  
 let every thoughtful mind saw graceful forms at play,  
 fulfill the thinkers duty as songs and statues tell us,  
 and strength of arm restore all agile blithe and gay"*

10 "The proposal of Clary and Lewald was carried by 14 to 7 and the composition of an Olympic hymn will be part of the arts competition (Music in 1936)- even if the prize is awarded, Bradley Keeler's hymn will be played at the 1936 Games." Cp. *IOC Bulletin* (September 1933)24, pp 6-15.

11 WILHELM, K. (ed.), *Richard Strauss: An Intimate Portrait* (English translation by Mary Whittall), 1989, p. 239. The book notes the attitude of STRAUSS. "I kill the boredom of the advent season by composing an Olympic hymn for the proletarians - I of all people who hate and despise sports", he wrote to the author Stefan ZWEIG on 21st December 1934. Theodor LEWALD angrily replied to STRAUSS "Your letter shocked me greatly you compare the Olympic stadium to a recreation ground [...] and refer to our festival as an amateur orgy".

he is credited with the decision to use a hymn called *Non Nobis Domine* by Roger QUILTER with words from Rudyard KIPLING.<sup>12</sup>

The work had in fact been written for the *Pageant of Parliament* an event staged at the *Royal Albert Hall* in 1934, ironically the same year STRAUSS composed his Olympic hymn. (Not as stated in the *Official Report*, 1936).

Sir Malcolm SARGENT arguably the most famous, certainly the most flamboyant English conductor of his generation wrote to QUILTER in glowing terms about the composition.<sup>13</sup>

SARGENT was chosen as a member of the Music Sub Committee to direct the Olympic choir.

He conducted the hymn in the purple robe of Durham University where he'd earned his doctorate.<sup>14</sup>

After conducting the choir in the Olympic hymn, SARGENT led the singing of "The Hallelujah chorus".<sup>15</sup>

QUILTER'S music was also heard in the official film to the Glory of Sport but at the IOC meeting in Copenhagen, the STRAUSS and QUILTER were both played to the members to help them decide. The decision was eventually taken to give each Organizing Committee freedom.<sup>16</sup>

The QUILTER hymn was performed in Oslo but the Finns decided to find their own hymn. It is thought that Jean SIBELIUS was approached but he was already approaching his 87th birthday it is understandable why any request was declined.

So a competition to find lyrics was begun with a deadline of 30th September 1951.

It was won by Niilo PARTANEN. For the music competition, the organisers allowed the composers to select one of the prize winners in the verse

competition. Jaako LINJAMA'S winning composition set the words of the second place poem by Toivo LYY to music.<sup>17</sup>

Then singing tests were held throughout the country to find members of the choir. The chorus eventually number 310 men and 216 women.

The choirs were rehearsed in splendid isolation throughout Finland but were brought together just a few days before the games under the direction of Matti TURUNEN.

When it came to the performances at the opening and closing ceremonies, the women wore the national dress of Finland whilst the men wore white shirts.

### International Competition

But there remained a burning desire to have an Olympic hymn composed for the Olympic movement. Prince PIERRE of Monaco chaired an IOC Commission.<sup>18</sup> There was to be no age limit. The composers were given a text to work to and the closing date for entries would be 20th December, which meant they had seven months.

The entries flooded in to Mon Repos. In all there were nearly four hundred.<sup>19</sup>

The judging panel of twelve was distinguished indeed. It included Nadia BOULANGER, Pablo CASALS and Aaron COPLAND whose Fanfare for the Common Man has so often been appropriated to the Olympic setting. Dimitri SCHOSTAKOVICH was also asked to take part but without success.

The vast number of entries was first shortlisted and then came the final decision.

The judges were almost unanimous, eleven of them voted for a work by Michael SPISAK a Pole living in Paris.

12 "Previously towards the end of 1946, the committee had already given consideration to the choice of Olympic hymn, [...] various possibilities were discussed. It was suggested that an established British composer might be commissioned to write the hymn or that a competition be held. There were however some practical difficulties. Should a new work be written it would require to be printed, orchestrated and of course rehearsed. Also time was short [...] both words and music when heard by the committee made a deep impression and it was agreed, with the approval of Mr Kiplings family and Mr Quilter to adopt the work." Cp. *Olympic Newsletter* (July 1947)1.

13 SARGENT to QUILTER 10 July 1934 quoted in LANGFIELD, V., *Roger Quilter: His life and Music*, 2002, p. 88.

"For years at almost all country festivals it has been the custom to end with Parry's Jerusalem and in many cases, people are asking for a change but I have found no suitable alternative. I found it last night."

14 REID, Ch., *Malcolm Sargent*, 1968, pp. 346-347.

"the Olympic opening... was quite trying for Sargent... He was confronted by a choir that could not hear itself sing, and a band whose instruments had gone out of tune in the hot sun". After conducting the choir in the Olympic hymn, SARGENT led the singing of "The Hallelujah chorus".

15 "What's it like conducting a crowd in such a vast arena ? he was asked [...] like taking a jellyfish for a walk on an elastic lead." Cp. ALDOUS, R., *Tunes of Glory*, 2001, p. 139.

16 MAYER, Otto, *A travers les Anneaux Olympiques*, Geneva 1960.

17 Information from the *Finnish Music Service*.

18 "An open international competition which is accessible to all authors and composers(sic!) [...] shall take place in March or April 1955 in Monte Carlo. [...] The author of the chosen text shall receive [...] a commemorative medal or a work of art, as well as 1000 US Dollars." His work shall in all likelihood be performed publicly at the 1956 Olympic games. Two full pages of rules followed. There was to be no age limit, and the composition must "be strictly original and never performed before". It set out timings "over three minutes but not exceed four". "It shall be in the style of a composition which is to be performed by a symphony orchestra and may include a full vocal score". The composers were given a text to work to and the closing date for entries would be 20th December, which meant they had seven months. Cp. *IOC Bulletin*, June/ July 1954 No 46 pp. 66-67.

Appropriately perhaps it was unveiled to the IOC members in the Sorbonne where FAURE'S hymn to APOLLO had been heard sixty years before. Approval was asked for so the hymn could be played in Barcelona at the upcoming Mediterranean Games, due to be staged the year before the Olympics.

Juan Antonio SAMARANCH noted the performance.<sup>20</sup>

Interest in the new hymn grew.<sup>21</sup> In 1956 there would be three Olympic celebrations.

It was played by the *Guardia Di Finanza* at Cortina, with the choir of the *Societa Alpinisti Tridentini*.

At the Stockholm Equestrian Games, three military bands and a male voice choir of 250. The official programme shows for Melbourne, the arrival of the torch preceded the playing of the Olympic hymn, the choir accompanied by the band of the *Royal Australian Air Force*.<sup>22</sup>

But if the IOC felt this was an end to the quest for an Olympic hymn they were mistaken.<sup>23</sup>

In the meantime there was an angry correspondence between Avery BRUNDAGE and SPISAK about the hymn.<sup>24</sup>

### Restoration of the Original Samara hymn

Ioannis KETSEAS, IOC member in Greece, now took a major hand in events.

The next IOC session would be in Tokyo and Japan's member Dr Ryotaro AZUMAH was responsible for many of the details of the session which was to lead to the restoration of SAMARAS great work to the Olympic fold.<sup>26</sup>

The performance by the NHK orchestra was conducted by Kazuo YAMADA.<sup>27</sup>

Prince AXEL of Denmark proposed its official adoption as the Olympic hymn and this was passed unanimously.

SAMARA'S widow had been contacted and replied to KETSEAS.<sup>27</sup>

In the highly politicized cold war atmosphere of the 1950s the Olympic anthem was often suggested as a way of defusing excessive nationalism<sup>28</sup> and as the two Germanies competed under one flag they used BEETHOVEN'S *Ode to Joy* as their victory anthem.<sup>29</sup>

The Winter Olympic ceremonies in Squaw Valley 1960 offered a hint of the showbiz to follow. Walt DISNEY became chairman of the Pageantry committee.<sup>30</sup>

19 MAYER, *Anneaux*.

20 *IOC Bulletin* (November 1955)52, pp.47-48. "The Flow (of the fountain) was gradually stopped whilst the Olympic hymn was played the first time. It was played at a sports manifestation." (sic!)

21 *IOC Bulletin* (May 1956)54, p. 60. "On all sides enquiries reach us as to where the new Olympic hymn can be obtained." A list of the various publishing firms and even a recording of the hymn was made in Paris.

22 *Official Programme Opening Ceremony -XVI Olympic Games Melbourne 1956*

"Happy the man chosen for fame,  
the palm of victory on his brow  
shows him to the crowds acclaim."

23 "The present hymn does not meet with the general approval of everybody, a discussion ensues and the following members take part. President, Dr von Halt, Mr Ketseas, the Marquess of Exeter, Mr Massard, Prince Axel and Mr Pietri, when they propose to ask the Rome organizing committee to have a march composed to be performed in 1960. The final decision as to the definitive acceptance of this march will be taken at the 1961 session". *IOC Bulletin* (May 1957)58, pp. 45-51. "the hymn...had been copy written by the composer and as a result a royalty must be paid each time it is used". *IOC Bulletin* (February 1958)61, pp. 78-80.

24 Noted in SCHLÜSSEL, *Rolle*.

25 Dr Ryotaro AZUMA DOKUZEN DKUGO - *Self Satisfied Monologue* (quoted with assistance from William MAY and Isao ITOH): "Somehow or other Jean Ketseas a Greek IOC member uncovered the Samaras score and sent it to Japan. The NHK arranged it for orchestral music with Mixed chorus and famous Japanese poet Akira Nogami wrote the solemn words for the chorus [...] all of the attending members of the IOC were deeply impressed with the hymn. We don't need any other music for a hymn, we already have such a fantastic one. Let's accept this as our official hymn. This was everyone's comment."

26 The performance by the NHK orchestra was conducted by Kazuo Yamada. The minutes of the IOC Session record how "Mr Ketseas expressed his appreciation for the perfect execution of the paen." *IOC Bulletin* (August 1958)63, pp. 37-41.

27 "I Declare that I make no claim to the authors rights due to me through inheritance and I would be very happy if this anthem were adopted as the international Olympic hymn" (Anna Samaras, the composers widow). Cp. *Olympic Newsletter* (March 1969), "The Olympic Hymn throughout the Games", pp. 141-144.

28 "Lately the flag controversies have taken on grotesque forms [...] I would therefore like to ventilate the following proposal at the distribution of prizes during the Olympics, the winners are honoured by the Olympic flag and by the playing of the Olympic hymn" and as the two Germanies competed under one flag they used BEETHOVEN'S *Ode to Joy* as their victory anthem. GFC WITT Letter 23 Jan 1960 to MAYER at IOC.

29 "It is a great pity that the International Olympic Committee allowed such a fine opportunity to slip as it would have secured at last an Olympic hymnorthy of the noble Olympic cause." SCHLATTER, F., "A better Way than Politics", in: *IOC Bulletin* (November 1959)56, pp. 45-46.

30 "The largest choral group in Olympic history...A 1,000 piece band combining with the largest choral group of 2000 voices to present the Olympic anthem." Cp. *Squaw Valley Olympic NewsLetter* 1(1958)3.

The games would be declared open by Vice President Richard NIXON.<sup>31</sup> The choir was to be composed entirely of Nevada and California High school students. Basil SWIFT translated the Olympic hymn into English for the first time and the arrangement was by American composer Robert LINN.<sup>32</sup>

For the summer games that year, the *Hellenic Olympic Committee* passed a copy of the SAMARAS score to the Italian organisers. Sigfrido TROILO translated it into Italian and the *National Academy choir of St Cecilia* performed the hymn at the IOC session and the games<sup>33</sup> accompanied by the band of the Carabinieri. The conductor was Maestro Bonaventura SOMMA.<sup>34</sup> His Olympic involvement had a tragic post-script. He was taken ill with sun stroke and died shortly after the games.<sup>35</sup>

SAMARA'S Olympic hymn was now here to stay, no doubt to the delight of KETSEAS and in 1961 another of his dreams was fulfilled with the inaugural session of the *International Olympic Academy* in Greece. Mr. Georgios PAPASTEFANOU the founder of Olympia's museum and enthusiastic supporter of Olympism made sure a special postmark in Olympia celebrated the centenary of the birth of the composer SAMARA.<sup>36</sup>

Akiro NOGAMI'S translation of the *Olympic Hymn* which had so impressed the IOC six years before in Tokyo was used once again at the Opening Ceremony of the Tokyo Olympic Games in 1964. The flag was born into the stadium *Japanese Maritime Self Defence Force*.

When the Winter Games came to Japan in 1972 and 1998, the same arrangements were used.<sup>37</sup>

A further variation on the hymn came from Alfred GOODMAN who handled the arrangements for Munich 1972, the performance here was by the *Federal Army Band*.<sup>38</sup>

Canada staged the summer and Winter Games in the space of twelve years. Montreal's difficult games were in stark contrast to the vibrant celebration of Calgary's Winter Olympic Games in 1988. But they had one thing in common the performance of the Olympic Anthem in Greek.

In Montreal the Olympic hymn was performed in front of the Queen by an orpheus choir formed of Canadians of Greek origin or ancestry, who sang it unaccompanied in the vernacular.<sup>39</sup>

In Calgary twelve years later the hymn was also performed in the original Greek.<sup>40</sup>

With President JIMMY CARTER'S threatened boycott of Moscow, the Lake Placid Olympic Winter Games in 1980 were far from a happy occasion. But the ceremonies were the end of an era, on a smaller scale before the massive television spectacles became the norm. The opening displayed a quiet dignity<sup>41</sup> and the hymn was performed in English with a new and pleasing arrangement from the *Crane School of Music* at the *State University of New York* in Potsdam.

A choir of 400 and orchestra of 120 were gathered under the direction of Chris ORTLOFF and Brock Mc ELHERAN was the conductor.

The musical score was at least more faithful to Samara's original composition than subsequent arrangements for the English language. It gave full value to the wonderful fanfare at both opening and closing ceremonies.

31 Richard NIXON declared the games open and the pageantry committees notes describe "*immediately following the Vice President's speech, The US Marine band, the Massed bands and chorus play and sing the Olympic hymn.*" Extracts from Pageantry Committee for Opening Ceremony (ed.), *Olympic Winter Games 1960*.

32 *Organizing Committee (ed.), VIII Olympic Winter Games. Squaw Valley, California. Final Report. Official Report Olympic Winter Games 1960.* Squaw Valley:

*"Immortal Flame of Fire and Hope,  
let shine thy light this day  
Make stay our will, inspire us still  
with valors wreath we pray  
And as the torch from hand to hand  
shall pass through ages bright,  
Mankind in peace shall ever stand to take thy golden light."*

33 Organizing Committee of the Games of the XVII Olympiad (ed.), *Olympic Bulletin* (1960)18-21.

34 Organizing Committee of the Games of the XVII Olympiad (ed.), *The Games of the XVII Olympiad. Rome 1960. The Official Report of the Organizing Committee*, Rome 1960.

35 *Olympic Message. The Olympic Games and Music* 15(1996)2.

36 *IOC Bulletin* (May 1962)78, p. 72.

37 *Official Programme 1998 Olympic Winter Games Opening Ceremony*

38 Organisationskomitee für die Spiele der XX. Olympiade München 1972 (ed.), *Die Spiele. Der offizielle Bericht*, 3 vols., Munich 1974.

39 Organisationskomitee für die Spiele der XX. Olympiade München 1972, *Spiele*.

40 "*Many IOC members remarked it was the best presentation of the anthem they could recall. The colours were brilliant in the winter sunshine which had broken through the patches of cloud.*" KING, F., *Its how you pay the Game - the inside story of the Calgary Olympics*, Script Calgary 1991, p. 270.

41 Letter from G.C. ORTLOFF to author, December 2000, "*to announce the beginning of each evening's victory ceremonies the Olympic flag was raised and the Olympic hymn played by a fifty piece band. The version was an abbreviated arrangement (2min 30sec).*"

ORTLOFF later made a plea for the anthem to be given a wider audience<sup>42</sup>.

Ironically the Olympic anthem did become better known because of the boycott.

Its use alongside the Olympic flag was a central issue in helping to bring about a compromise.

As the CARTER and THATCHER governments heightened their attempts to force no attendance at the games the NOCs met and worked out a way of registering their protest at Soviet aggression in Afghanistan whilst still attending the games.<sup>43</sup>

Although The Federal Republic of Germany did not in the event take part in the games, they are listed as signatories to the agreement.

At the Games Swimmer Duncan GOODHEW of Great Britain became the first to take part in a ceremony in which the Olympic anthem was played in lieu of national anthem.

Though television cameras tended to focus not on the flag but those wearing British colours in the crowd and even the BBC commentators referred to crowd singing "*God save the Queen*".<sup>44</sup>

Two days later the gesture was even more stark at the velodrome. In the 4000m pursuit Robert DILL-BUNDI (SUI) Alain BONDUE (FRA) and Hans-Henrik ORSTED (DEN) were the medallists and three Olympic flags went up.

At the closing ceremony there was a further problem. The American boycott had left the LAAOC without a presence in Moscow and the ceremony of the three flags past present and future demanded the hoisting of the Stars and Stripes to symbolise the next hosts.

He credits Monique BERLIOUX with suggesting that the Los Angeles City flag be used to the accompaniment of the Olympic anthem. It solved a tricky situation.<sup>45</sup>

By a strange irony the next teams to march under the Olympic flag were those of the former Soviet Union. The Unified team CIS competed in 1992 at Albertville and Barcelona marching under the rings and with the Olympic anthem in lieu of national anthems at the victory ceremony.

At ceremonies the instrumental version of the hymn would be used and this would be limited in

duration by an IOC decision taken in Delhi 1982.

In the meantime the Los Angeles Olympics of 1984 set to outdo the Moscow Games. The ceremonies were as spectacular and when it came to the Olympic hymn a new arrangement in English by Earl Brown was heard. Gone was the stunning Samaras fanfare to be replaced by different choral setting.

The hymn was performed at opening and closing ceremonies by Olympic Choir and this version formed the basis of an accepted English version of the hymn.

Though PALAMIS was still listed as the lyricist, the words were by no means a translation of the original Greek work.<sup>46</sup>

In Seoul 1988 the arrival of the Olympic flag saw the colour party accompanied by a band playing traditional Korean instruments Chitadæ before the familiar fanfare of the Olympic anthem was heard as the flag arrived at the base of the flagpole. On this occasion the Hymn was translated into Korean.<sup>47</sup>

The success of the *Three Tenors* at Italia 90 gave operatic performance a major boost and sure enough Spain drew on her rich tradition in Barcelona. The stunning ceremonies at Montjuic were illuminated further by performances from the late Alfredo KRAUSS and Plácido DOMINGO and in 1994 Lillehammer staged glorious Olympic opening ceremonies.<sup>48</sup> In the dark of a Norwegian winters night, the crystal clear singing of Sissel KYRKJEBO accompanied by a children's Choir - 417 youngsters recruited from 16 local choirs all over the Oppland County (in the same region as Lillehammer).

They were dressed from head to toe in the colours of the Olympic rings which added to the fantasy world and they were accompanied by the *National Defence Ceremonial Band*.

The hymn was translated into Norwegian by poet Haldis Moren VESAAS but the original extended fanfare was played, just as SAMARA intended.

The Centenary games of 1996 followed the trend with another evening ceremony. The Olympic flag was born into the stadium to the SHAKER hymn

42 "The Olympic anthem ought I suggest at least to be permitted in the repertoire of concert bands orchestras and choruses. [...] At all times and on all occasions, the flag of particular delegations will be the Olympic flag. At all ceremonies, opening, victory and closing the anthem will be the official Olympic anthem." Cp. ORTLOFF, G.C., in: *IOA Proceedings*, Olympia 1980.

43 The countries which signed the declaration were FR Germany, Andorra, Austria, Belgium, Denmark, Finland, Great Britain, Ireland, Italy, Liechtenstein Luxembourg, Malta, Holland, San Marino, Switzerland, Turkey. *Olympic Review* (May 1980)151, p. 273

44 BBC Radio Interview with Duncan GOODHEW, 22nd July 1980: "I feel it is necessary for the sake of sport now to become devoid of politics and I personally am prepared to forfeit the Union Jack and the national anthem for the sake of sports. I trust and hope other athletes will agree."

45 "As the Carter administration refused to allow the US flag to fly [...] before going to Moscow I had asked Cutler many times to reconsider, but each time he adamantly refused [...] Berlioux saved the day. She asked if I could arrange to have the LA city flag". UEBERROTH, P., *Made In America*, 1985, p. 74.

46 *Olympic Grandstand* BBC TV July 28th 1984.

*Simple Gifts*. As it reached the flagpole the orchestra began to play the Olympic hymn.

But there was no traditional SAMARAS fanfare, instead the choir sang the hymn in English, with words modified slightly from those used twelve years before in Los Angeles. The adaptation was by Patrick Russ and Clayton URB.

At the Closing ceremony, the hymn was performed by the local soprano Jennifer LARMORE accompanied by the *Atlanta Symphony Youth Orchestra* and *Morehouse Glee Club* under the direction of Jere FLINT.<sup>49</sup>

Australia's diverse population was the catalyst for an original performance of the Olympic hymn in 2000.

First a choir had to be assembled.<sup>50</sup>

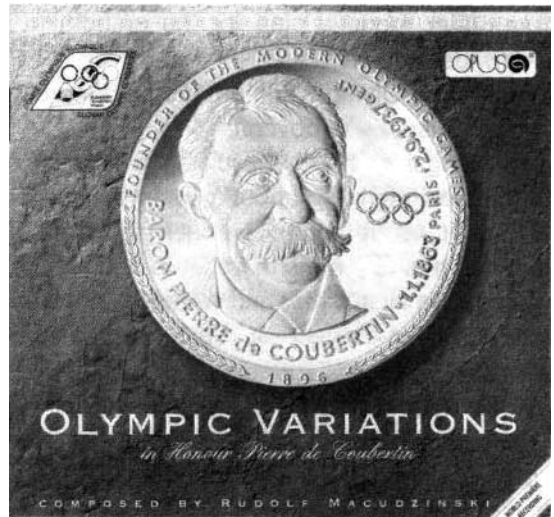
The Greek Arch diocese came together to set up a magnificent choir which worked under the direction of George Ellis. He confirmed that 10 months of rehearsal were available.<sup>51</sup>

East Timor competed at the games for the first time as Individual Olympic athletes and they marched beneath the Olympic flag. In the event of a gold medal, the Olympic anthem would be played at their victory ceremonies. Sadly it was never needed.<sup>52</sup>

The spectacular closing ceremony of the Sydney Games saw a reversion to but with a further subtle customisation of the English words sung by Yvonne KENNY.<sup>53</sup>

The longstanding tradition of the *Mormon Tabernacle Choir* made it an obvious choice to perform the Olympic anthem at the ceremonies in Salt Lake.

But for one of their members Laura Garff LEWIS, the closing ceremony was the focus for a memorable night. In fact she had only a week to rehearse her solo performance. Again the English version was used, arranged by Lawrence ASHMORE. The lyrics were adapted by Shirley RUSS.<sup>54</sup>



### Olympic Variations

The Olympic hymn is also played at every IOC Session and at the opening of the *International Olympic Academy*.

Away from the olympic arena the SAMARA hymn has also provided inspiration.

In the fifties a Croatian born musician Rudolf MACUDZINSKI began work on his Olympic variations. They drew heavily on the score of SAMARA and developed the familiar theme with a movement dedicated to each Olympiad from 1896 to 1944.

It was clearly a work which fascinated him with the last movement being completed on his birthday in 1985. However failing health meant the work was unfinished when he died. His son Silvio made sure the work did not go to waste.<sup>55</sup>

The Olympic hymn even made it to Hollywood in the sixties. The film *Downhill Racer* starring Robert REDFORD and in the final scene the Olympic anthem may be heard *Rhea The Olympic Opera*.

SAMARAS' opera *Rhea* apparently lost for ever in a wartime fire at the Milan publishing House which held the only known complete score<sup>56</sup> was painstakingly pieced together by the Chief Conductor Byron FIDETZIS of the *Greek National Opera*.

47 *Official Report Olympic Games 1988*: "The anthem was originally played by wind instruments but the SLOOC readapted it to an orchestra to intensify the musical sensation at the raising and lowering of the flag."

48 Information from Tormod Holdbrekken, Archivist Lillehammer Olympic Museum.

49 *Media Guide Closing Ceremony Olympic Games 1996*: "the Greek church has no great tradition of choral music".

50 Author's Interview with Father Steven SCOUTAS, October 2000: "This was a wonderful luxury, as a conductor you normally have just a few weeks to rehearse a piece but this meant we could go through the piece, line by line, bar by bar. It was the most important performance of our lives."

51 Author's Interview with George ELLIS, October 2000: "In the event of victory by an athlete the Olympic flag will be hoisted on the central pole and an abridged version of the Olympic anthem will be played."

52 *IOC Press Communique* (26 May 2000).

53 *Official Media Guide Closing Ceremony Sydney*. In Sydney, Yvonne Kenny sang: "Unite inspire bring honour to these Sydney Games". The wording was changed from "these Olympian Games" Los Angeles (1984). In Atlanta the phrase "These Centennial Games" was substituted.

54 Author's Interview with Laura Garff LEWIS, February 2002.

55 *Sleeve Notes Olympic Variations Opus Records 1996*: "He evidently planned to finish with the 100th anniversary of the modern Olympics. Whilst inspecting the artistic heritage of my father, I found this work in the form of a clean written score. I considered it my duty to offer this work for publishing."

He contacted SAMARAS relatives and discovered Anna SAMARAS had donated part of her husbands collection which included scores from *Rhea* to the publishing house to mark the centenary of his birth.<sup>57</sup>

He discovered fragments of manuscript and after leading a concert performance of the surviving score in 1983.

In November 1999 *Rhea* was finally restored to the stage at the *Greek National Opera*.<sup>58</sup>

The late Lord KILLANIN offered his appreciation of SAMARAS work and a plea for it to be left untouched.<sup>59</sup>

This summer it will be played again in Athens just as it was 108 years ago. Changes in Musical tastes mean its unlikely that an encore will be called for this time but stranger things have happened at the Olympic Games.

SAMARAS' hymn has enjoyed more adventures than most scores but it undoubtedly maintains the ability to inspire.<sup>60</sup>

### Biographical Notes

Spiros SAMARA 1861-1917

Born in Corfu, studied in Athens and later in Paris with DELIBES. He spent much of his life abroad and his first opera *Flora Mirabilis* was performed in 1886, four years before MASCAGNI'S *Cavalleria Rusti-cana*, and was considered by some to be even more popular. He lived most of his life in Italy returning to live in Greece in 1911.

Walter BRADLEY KEELER

1856-1932

Very little is known about him. He composed church music and the words to his Olympic hymn were added by Louis BENSON. KEELER himself is thought to have died in Switzerland in November 1932 and a prize for composition at *Yale School of Music* was inaugurated by his widow Susan.



Richard STRAUSS 1864-1949

Born in the Olympic city of Munich, STRAUSS had begun to play the piano at four, was seriously studying music by the age of ten and conducting by 21. He remains one of the most celebrated composers of the late 19th and early 20th centuries.

He was 70 by the time he composed the Olympic hymn and living in Garmisch Partenkirchen though it is not thought that he visited the Winter Olympics in 1936.

Roger QUILTER 1877-1953

QUILTER made his name by settings of SHAKESPEARE for voice and his songs used the texts of many noted British poets. His orchestral works were performed by Sir Henry Wood, the moving spirit of the Promenade concerts. His Olympic hymn was not written with the games in mind. It was composed fourteen years before.

Jaako LINJAMA 1909-1983

The hymn for Helsinki has been described as Linjama's breakthrough in Classical music. He was

still working as a schoolteacher when he wrote it.

He studied at *Jyvaskyla Music seminary* under Eino ROIHA a pupil of SIBELIUS. His son was also a composer.

Michael SPISAK 1914-65

Polish composer who studied with Kazimierz SIKORSKI. He moved to Paris in 1937 and was to spend the rest of his life in Paris. He studied with Nadia BOULANGER one of the judges in the Olympic hymn competition of 1954-1955.

56 *The Times of India* (26th November 1999).

57 Author's Interview with Byron FIDETZIS: "I felt like Christopher Columbus discovering America each time I discovered a piece of the opera I'd originally thought lost. I found there was an orchestral score in Athens and one in Washington and in the end I managed to piece together the lost third act" he said.

58 *ATHOC Press Bulletin* (November 10 1999). ATHOC Managing Director Costas Bakouris characterised the opera as "a musical game, the subject of which is the Olympic anthem. All shall work to make this opera widely known, for it carries down to our time the spirit of Greece and its contribution to the Olympic movement."

59 KILLANIN, M., *My Olympic Years*, London 1983, p. 141: "I am pleased this hymn has not been changed in spite of efforts to this end over the years. It is very moving, especially when performed as it usually is, by a good orchestra and choir. Whatever else in the Olympic movement and protocol may need changing, the hymn should be left alone. It is already a tradition."

60 *Olympic Grandstand* BBCTV, February 21 1998, Commentator Barry DAVIES, "The Olympic hymn continues to evoke a feeling of warmth of man's humanity to man."

61 With thanks to Susan Eggleston and Erin Connorat *Yale Music Library*.