

IAPS 2003

Conflict between the Olympic ideal and the national interest: Symbolic meaning of the cultural performance in the Opening Ceremony of the 2002 Salt Lake Winter Olympic Games

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Abstract

It is said that there were three political issues in the Opening Ceremony of the 2002 Salt Lake Winter Games, that is, the entrance of the world trade center flag, the promotion of national prestige by President Bush's opening declaration, and the choice of "Miracle on Ice" for the final torch litter. It is fresh in our memory of the Ceremony that the 2002 Salt Lake Game was colored with the nationalism and patriotism of U.S.A.

Moreover, there were other political and philosophical issues related with the opening cultural shows performed by the host city as the grandeur. Especially, the cultural and symbolic meaning of the opening shows, 'Light the Fire Within,' has problematical and meaningful issues. For example, the symbolic meaning of the 'Fire' and 'Child of Light' and the situations of their appearance, non-reconciliation performance with the native Americans and the nostalgic representation of the West era by white immigrants, showed the kind of conflicts between the localism and internationalism related with the Olympic philosophy, Olympism.

In this study, following issues are interpreted; what kind of messages were these cultural shows tried to transmit? What kind of symbols does the 'Child of Light' have? What is the meaning of the 'Fire Within'? What were the special positions of the fires?

Conflict between the Olympic ideal and the national interest

Symbolic meaning performance in the of the 2002 Salt Lake Games

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Salt Lake City 8 February 2002. Climax of the Opening Ceremony

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Introduction :

Opening ceremony of the 2002 Salt Lake Winter Olympic Games. What is the meaning of the ceremony?

- The raising of the new WTC flag during the opening of the Games by President George W. Bush
- Lighting the Olympic Flame by The Miracle on Ice gold medal winners in 1980 Lake Placid Winter Olympic Games
- Olympic Oath by Jim Shea: Three Olympic generations

THE CEREMONIES OF SALT LAKE CITY 2002 (2003 IAPS)

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The objects of the Interpretation:

"Light the Fire Within"

- "Light the Fire Within" by Child of Light
- The meaning of "the Fire Within" in the show
- The meaning of "the Child of Light" in the show
- The meaning of "The Fire Within" in the show
- What is the message of "The Fire Within"?
- Consideration for the children's intentions
- Interpret the symbolic meaning of the show according to the context

Salt Lake City, 8 February 2002. Opening Ceremony: the "Fire Within" show, Child of Light.

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The Fire Within

- The program of this part represented the power of human spirit.
- "The sole purpose of human existence is to light a lamp in the darkness. To mere darkness, we bring light."

(Salt Lake Games Opening Ceremony Program)

"Deep within all of us, there is a power to rise above and beyond what we once thought possible. Perhaps the world's greatest untapped resource is this fire within. Only by sharing this light can we embrace the essence of the human spirit"

(2002 Salt Lake Games Opening Ceremony Program)

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The Fire Within

- The storm is universal and representing the conflicts and challenges of life every day. The Child of Light, bearing lanterns, symbolizes the strength of the human spirit and the struggle against problematic situation. Though he is beaten and exhausted by the storm, with the appearance and support of the Olympian, he finds the inner strength to persevere and overcome the storm.
- This force, the Fire Within, appears to him as a vision, a blurry, fiery figure who joins the Child of Light. Victorious, the child shares his light with others, who help to transform the stadium into a beacon of hope and fellowship"

(2002 Salt Lake Games Opening Ceremony Program)

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The children of Light

- The children carried lanterns in the "Children of Light" show.
- The Children played a role to light and lead the parade of athletes

Salt Lake City, 8 February 2002. Opening Ceremony: the "Fire Within" show, children carrying lanterns.

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Finale: "Light the Fire Within"

- "The most glowing successes are but reflections of an INNER FIRE." — Kenneth Hill, 1996
- "After an epic journey from Olympia, Greece, through the world, the Olympic flame arrives in the stadium. These messengers of hope and unity have spread the ideals of the Olympic Movement and the theme of the Salt Lake 2002 Games—*Light the Fire Within*—throughout the land. With each step, the power of the flame to inspire has grown greater. As the Olympic Cauldron is lit, we see its beauty radiate from within, casting its glow over the Salt Lake Valley, the Wasatch Mountain Range and the world" (2002 Salt Lake Games Opening Ceremony Programより)

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Finale: Lighting the Cauldron

- Appearance of the Olympic flame
- USA, USA Chant
- Individual hero to team
- Inevitably USA Chants
- Chant for uplifting the patriotism
- Theme song: "Light the Fire Within"



Salt Lake City, 8 February 2002. Opening Ceremony: the former American hockey team, Olympic champions in 1980, lit the cauldron of the Olympic flame.

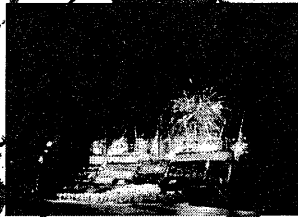
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Finale: Fire Works; as the succession of the Fire

- "Light the Fire Within"
- "Child of Light"
- Lighting the parade of athletes
- "Light the Fire Within"
- Kindling the fire on cauldron
- Finale with the fire works



Salt Lake City 8 February Opening Ceremony: Fire works lighting the athletes' stand. Credit: Getty Images

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Context 1: peace philosophy: Olympic flag

- the Olympic Flag is brought into the stadium by eight bearers:
- 5 continents: Africa (Ethiopia), Asia (China), Europe (Germany), Oceania (Australia), South America (Brazil)
- 3 others: Jean-Claude Killy (France representing sports), Steven Spielberg (USA representing arts and culture), and Jean-Michel Cousteau (France, representing the environment).



Credit: Getty Images/RAW Harry

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Context 2: Patriotic Games

- Appearance of the Olympic flag
- National anthem
- Jumping the cauldron
- Heeding Games?
- Message only from USA?
- The Games for U.S.A?
- Fearful world sport festival?
- Universal dream or American dream



Salt Lake City, 8 February 2002. Opening Ceremony: American athletes hold the American "Ground Zero" flag from Manhattan, New York.

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Context 3: Intentions of Producers

- After the terrorist attack, they tried to keep no change
- In 1997, after the rehearsal on the February 5th "you have to be very careful not to concentrate too much on the United States. This is a worldwide event"
- Scott Givens, showed a opinion, that the opening ceremony would introduce the world to a child who as a character, would be a theme throughout the games.
- What kind of world did he imagine there. American central world, or Olympic central world?

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Producer: Don Mischer

- Emmy award. Thirteen times
- Producer of the 1996 Atlanta Games Ceremony
- “From the very moment in time, the Olympic Games bring the world together and give us an extraordinary opportunity to celebrate the best of the human experience...freedom, equality, fair competition, passion, perseverance and excellence. The opportunity to contribute to the celebration of the Olympic Movement and the athletes of the world has attracted and inspired a talented production team credited for producing tonight’s event. (2002 Salt Lake Games Opening Ceremony Program)

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Discussion

- Localism: the Olympic show of the host city
- Globalism: Olympic Dreams
- Localism and nationalism: Reproduction of the American dreams
- Apparently universalism: children’s dream
- Patriotism: dominant message
- Olympic education combined with patriotic education

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Concluding remark

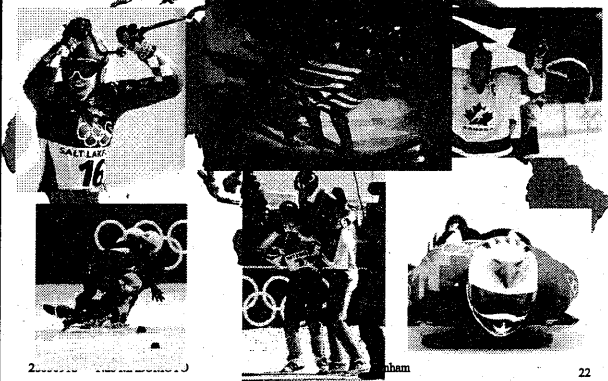
- Don Mischer’s children’s dream performance and its meaning
- The role of children in the ceremony
- The role of children’s celebrity, patriotism and nationalism or globalism and universalism
- These performances patriotism or the hope for the future
- The double standard used in the the cultural program and the modification of the original rites in the Opening Ceremony.
- It is important for us to reconstruct the cultural performance for the re-unification of the world under the transnationalism philosophy.

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Thank you: Which one do you remember?



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