

WATCHED BY THE WORLD



*Greek Theatre and the Atreids on
the Cultural Programme of the
XVI Winter Games.*

By Olivier Schmitt

The Rhone-Alpes Region and Albertville, its Olympic heart, have come up with an Arts Festival that brings together some of the main European artists of the moment, who represent contemporary creativity in France. There is no doubt that such an important happening will have international impact, as a prelude to the sporting feats which are bound to bring the Alps into the limelight.

What other French institution could have imagined a “season” of this standard! In about twenty towns, starting from 20th October 1991 to 23rd February 1992, there are countless evenings not to be missed on any account.

On 20th October, Jordi Savall opened the Olympic Arts Festival, at the head of the “Concert of Nations” which he founded in 1989. As the best gamba player in the world and an enthusiastic organizer of the Festival of Ambronay in Ain, where for ten years the abbey has been resounding to his patient research on early music, Jordi Savall put together a series of concerts which bring us the three ensembles that he directs, Hesperion XX, the Capella Reial de Catalunya and the Concert des Nations. Mozart, Handel, Bach, Couperin, composers and poets of Spain’s Golden Century serve as pretexts for sumptuous baroque festivals accompanied by instrumentalists and singers, such as the soprano Montserrat Figueras, guests and celebrities in every continent.

Jordi Savall, in love with voices, says that his favourite instrument, the gamba viola, “expresses pain, pleasure, and its bow has the length of a singer’s windpipe!”. This is demonstrated by two of today’s most beautiful lyrical voices: those of Jose Van Dam, one of the four singers of “The Damnation of Faust”, by Hector Berlioz of the local Dauphiné region played by the Orchestre National de Lyon, led by Emmanuel Krivine, as part of a concert dedicated to Romantic Music; and of Barbara Hendricks, the beautiful Francophile American soprano for whom the Festival arranged an evening, within the context of a series of concerts of Chamber Music bringing together exceptional instrumentalists and the New European Strings for a programme where the singer shines once again in one of her most remarkable successes: “The Shepherd on the Rock” by Franz Schubert.

This musical journey would not be complete without the world premiere of two works, “Asrnara” and “Avoaha”, proposed by the Festival under the title “XXth Century Music”, commissioned by the

State, and composed by Jean-Louis Florentz and Maurice Ohana. Beside their elders, Stravinski and Dutilleux, they give Kent Nagano, leading the Orchestra of the Opera de Lyon, the chance to come together with Jose Van Damme and one of the most convincing young French singers, the mezzo-soprano Helene Perraguin.



An Olympic Festival that will feature new works by the contemporary composers Florentz, Dutilleux and Ohana.

COUP DE THÉÂTRE !

On the theatre side, the invitation to the provocative, bubbling, brilliant producer from Berlin, Matthias Langhoff, is a gesture of appreciation to the present-day excitement of the European stage. All those who were thrilled by last year’s production of ‘The Duchess of Malfi’ will follow him back through theatre to Sophocles and ‘Oedipus’. At a time when the century’s certainties are falling apart, the theatre turns to its Greek source. Like Ariane Mnouchkine and her Théâtre du Soleil, whose “Atreids” are presented at the festival, three tragedies for a breathtakingly barbarous quest. Finally, in inviting the most spectacular fringe theatre groups of the world - Els Comediants from Barcelona, the English with Welfare State, the Dutch with Degtroep - the festival should display some of its most impressive talents, in the very heart of the Olympic resorts.

*Dance created by Gallota, from
Grenoble*



Another great man of the stage, this time a choreographer, is offering his latest creation to the festival. A citizen of Grenoble... and of the world...Jean-Claude Gallotta has written the dance score for "The Legend of Romeo and Juliet" for the occasion, a world premiere ballet with a promising international future. The festival will go down as the very best commemoration of the intellectual and political influence of Andre Malraux thanks to an initiative dedicated to him and named "La Voie Royale" (The Royal Way). Standing along the main road arteries of Savoy, two monuments will be unveiled to the public and will contribute to the already rich sculpture heritage of the Olympic Area.

The first is signed by the German Ulrich Rijckriem, undisputed master of massive work in granite, and will mark the centre of the new Albertville. The second is by the American Robert Irwin, a transparent archway across the motorway A43 at Aiton.

Walking in the footsteps of his prestigious predecessors, the Olympic Games Organizing Committee and its partners - the Ministry of Culture and Communications, the Rhone-Alpes Region, the Savoy General Council, the Maison de la Culture de Chambéry et Savoy, Albertville and Chambéry - have conceived an Arts Festival which, by its ambitions and the chances it is taking, should delight connoisseurs of art and sport alike, in all their diversity. Demanding and popular, brave and broad-minded, it should give a clear indication of the intense cultural flowering in a region about to spend several months watched by the eyes of the world.

O.S.