

***One Hundred Years of Olympic Music: Music and Musicians of the Modern Olympic Games, 1896-1996*** by William K. Guegold (Mantua, Ohio: Golden Clef Publishing, 1996). Reviewed by Robert K. Barney, The International Centre for Olympic Studies, The University of Western Ontario, London, Canada.

One day, ten years ago, William Guegold was driving his car through the Ohio countryside enjoying the scenery when he was suddenly struck by the music emanating from his car radio tuned to Station WKSU in nearby Kent. Despite being a musician for most of his life, a teacher of band music, and an appreciator of almost every genre of music in existence, he could not identify the piece. But he liked it so much he called WKSU and the piece was identified to him. It turned out to be Josef Suk's *Toward a New Life*, played by the Czech Philharmonic Orchestra. Investigating its availability, he eventually was able to purchase it in long-play format. On the recording's dust-cover jacket was the message that Suk's piece had won first prize in the music category of the 1932 Olympic Games Arts Competitions. That was enough for Guegold! Off he went on a new research bent.

When one views things Olympic, whether they are seen in the stadium and other competitive venues or on television, it's a good bet that the proceedings are punctuated throughout by musical fanfares, interludes, crescendos, you name it. That's the way it's been for a hundred years, and that's the way it will be for another hundred, and a hundred more after that. The nature of Olympic cultural production is such that music plays as large a role as do athletes. Hard to believe? Think about it! What would the Olympics be without music? All these thoughts, and more, contributed to William Guegold's mission to research and write *One Hundred Years of Olympic Music*.

Rallying the expertise of various archival repositories, including the IOC Library and Archives in Lausanne and the Amateur Athletic Federation's Ziffren Library in Los Angeles, Guegold laboriously drew together the facts surrounding the music played at each Olympic Games, the composers who composed, and the musicians who played. It was a mind-boggling task. Queries went out to scores of former host cities of Olympic Games (Winter and Summer), to National Olympic Committees of host countries, to libraries, archives, and knowledgeable individuals in music history. Slowly, the history presented in the book by Guegold emerged, at least in framework form.

Guegold's book is organized into nine chapters, followed by several appendices. Although it is not altogether evident, there is a trace of theoretical structure in Guegold's work. After an introductory overview, the author's discussion centers on Olympic music in the following veins: (1) ceremony and protocol, and (2) arts competitions. Unlike the themes noted directly above, the remaining genre of Olympic music that the author isolates: festival music (cultural festivals), sporting accompaniment music (figure skating, women free exercise gymnastics, etc.), and

mass media music, are melded in hodgepodge fashion into chapters arranged in the traditional approach to recounting Olympic history: The Early Years--1896-1920, Between the Great Wars, and Post-World War II. In each of these chapter sections, the music and musicians of each Olympic festival occurring therein is discussed. There are some interesting notations. For instance, we learn that at Stockholm in 1912 the athletes marched out of the stadium following the opening ceremonies to the music of Richard Barthelmy's *Olympic Games Triumphal March*, which won for the composer the gold medal in the music category of the Stockholm Olympic Games Fine Arts Competitions. We also learn that adjudicating music compositions in the Fine Arts Competitions was not an exercise taken lightly. The great names in music of a given era were sought for judging the entries, for instance, Paul Dukas, Maurice Ravel and Igor Stravinsky in 1924 for the Paris Competitions. One might be surprised to learn, too, that some of modern history's best known composers tried their hand at composing music for particular moments in Olympic ceremonies and rituals, such as Richard Strauss's *Olympische Hymne* for the 1936 Games in Berlin and Jean Sibelius' *Song of the Athenians* for the closing ceremonies of Helsinki's 1952 Olympic Games.

Certainly one of the most striking features of Guegold's book is the text of a lengthy interview that he conducted with the individual who perhaps can be regarded as the most visual Olympic music composer of all time, the celebrated John Williams. Williams, well known to Americans and other fans of "pops" music around the world, and the successor to the storied Arthur Fiedler as conductor of the Boston Pops Orchestra, composed the major musical compositions surrounding the events of both the 1984 and 1996 Games celebrated in Los Angeles and Atlanta, respectively. *Olympic Fanfare* and *Summon the Heroes* will long be remembered by television and live stadium-viewing audiences alike. There is much thoughtful grist in the Guegold/Williams interview which took place in Boston on December 27, 1995, the day following the premier performance of *Summon the Heroes*. I share a few excerpts with the reader.

Guegold: . . . I'd like to begin with a question about Baron Pierre de Coubertin, as founder of the modern Olympic Games. He stated that he believed 'music and the mind should be united in an allegiance between sport and art'. How do you see the union of these two ideals?

Williams: I think of music and art as being mind/spiritual and sport being physical. Those are dissimilarities. There are strong reflections of artistic or spiritual things that get into athletic performances. They come together in ballet, taking it literally. Ballet is, to us at least, all of these. It is athleticism, it is art and it's all this brought together. I saw in *Forbes* magazine a picture of Steffi Graf, stretching for a ball, frozen in a still shot. There is something in this moment that is artistic and poetic as if you could frame it and paint it. And it comes from the reach and all that. It comes from a creature in flight in a way in which she wouldn't have been

aware. Plus, there's some sort of spiritual, non-corporal (sic.) aspect of all of this that gets us close to what art is in some way.

Guegold: . . . Do you find similarities in writing programmatic music for the Olympics, an event rich in visual imagery, . . . and writing film music? What connections or similarities do you find in writing for the different type of media in which you will hear your music performed?

Williams: I think, it seems to me, that all composers should be (even if they aren't) interested in doing film music. They never used to be. There used to be this snob thing., even Stravinski, alas they couldn't get him to write for film and he would have been fantastic. And he was living right there in Hollywood. But I think that's changing. If you go around to the conservatories, the young people want to come to this. The idea of 'audio-visual' shouldn't be unnatural to musicians, although the purist will say if you want to play Beethoven, you don't want to have any visual aids, why distract the eye. And I'm aware of that problem and that contradiction. But if you get around that, just as music seems right in athleticism and in tempo--all the things we talked about earlier--it seems to be very right to accompany beautiful things that you can see. It may not be the highest level of musical art when you want to put it into abstract, absolute musical terms and not have visual distractions, but I live with the visual distraction every day and they usually cover up whatever good phrases I can conjure. But I'm attracted to it because it's a source of rich imagery in the visual sense and in the spooky mythological sense that we feel.

There is pageantry and history in film. You can do a horrible film about Richard III, but you get the Chavalard's, and the flags and the trumpets and all this history that we seem to remember and the way we remember mythology and resonate with it . . . This sense of history and heraldic things and pageant things, you get an almost adolescent turn-on with these things in the film world that is fun for the composer and can provide an inspiration for him. That may connect with the Olympic kind of pageant and all of that.

But then we talked earlier about television and media. This one-hundred-year anniversary is something special. I don't think Baron de Coubertin could have imagined what's happened. What's really happened is that this event has become a really unifying thing around the world, a theme about the oneness of humanity and has meaning for us in so many political and cultural levels of all kinds . . . very valid, very important.

The media gives us this huge opportunity to communicate this ideal to others. You don't write the same kind of piece that you're going

to play for an audience of 1,000 as you're going to play out on the Esplanade for an audience of 250,000. You can still have a lot of notes. It doesn't have to be simple. But it seems to me that the line has to be like a big arc. Rather than a lot of pointillistic little aspects of expression. So, I think the media is involved. What we think of Olympic and pageant music has developed a certain kind of idiom that is partly the result of the cross-cultural thing we're doing, the size of the audience, and the reach of it all.

To conclude, William Guegold's book is certainly not the last word in terms of literary craftsmanship, definitive research, organizational genius, nor is it one of superb physical attractiveness; but the effort, in general, has to be considered as the seminal work of its kind, one from which all others pursuing the same subject will necessarily have to proceed in their quest to improve our historical knowledge of a facet of the Modern Olympics that we simply can not do without. And, the price is right, \$19.95 U.S. for the soft-cover edition. Write to Guegold at the University of Akron in Ohio where he is currently Associate Director of the School of Music. He'll be glad to arrange a copy for your interest and enjoyment.