

Autolycus

American initiative

In keeping with the ancient Greek traditions which considered drama competitions as integral a part of the Olympic Games as discus throwing, the organizers of the 1984 Summer Olympics in Los Angeles are arranging artistic events to accompany the athletics.

There will be exhibitions of dance, painting, theatre, music and photography, with dance – appropriately – given pride of place as the art form most closely associated with athletics. No fewer than 11 dance companies have been invited to an eight-week dance festival, including the Dance Theatre of Harlem (the marvellous all-black classical company), the Winnipeg Ballet, Merce Cunningham's company and the ever-inventive Twyla Tharp company.

There may even be a taste of opera as well, with the avant-garde composer, Robert Wilson, giving the world premiere of his new opera. The organizing committee has commissioned 15 artists, including Robert Rauschenberg and Roy Lichtenstein to create posters for the Games that are expected to be available in January.

Hollywood has made an effort to help, too, by postponing its usual spring movie festival, Filmex, to the summer so it can take place during the Games instead.

It seems appropriate that the Americans should initiate such a move, in a way, since they have long considered sport as an integral part of showbusiness. Look at the big-name boxers, footballers, baseball players and so forth next time you're in Joe Allen's, either in London or New York. With the growing power of the popular media, the difference between Jimmy Connors and Daley Thompson, Luciano Pavarotti (who also sings Italian love songs, remember, and made his first Hollywood movie recently) and Mikhail Baryshnikov, the so-called "sex bomb" and "darling" of dance in America, is getting smaller by the day. For instance, all of them have enormous showbusiness rating; all of them are used, in different ways, to throw weight, glamour or notoriety into events like gala evenings, chat shows, commercials and so forth. It is the cult of the personality. Sebastian Coe is making commercials; swimmer Sharon Davies is writing for women's magazines; Una Stubbs and Lionel Blair will spend the rest of their lives on TV quiz shows, playing charades; and opera singers and dancers are expected to become more and more "interesting" and glamorous for the benefit of *Daily Mail* and *Paris Match* readers. Where will it all end?

The 1984 Los Angeles Games may provide interesting pointers, since media coverage will no doubt be enormous – in-

cluding that of the cultural goings-on. Could it possibly set a precedent?

French initiative

Monsieur Mitterand's decentralisation of local government in France during the summer and the head-on battle he thereby brought upon himself with the likes of Jacques Chirac, mayor of Paris, (who understandably wasn't keen on being demoted to petty officialdom) must not be taken as proof that the French will always resist attempts at decentralisation. We've uncovered some heartening news of successful decentralisation, not merely in the arts, which has aimed at regional centres and companies for some time, but in the stuffy field of broadcasting.

The top brass decided to experiment this summer, and transmit live coverage of the top French music festival, that of Aix-en-Provence, for a whole month or more. So they moved whole fleets of lorries and trailers out of Paris down to Aix, not far from Marseilles, and turned France Musique, the French answer to Radio 3, into an enormous, sprawling electronic campsite, struggling against intriguing odds to turn out a day-long diet of music, just as if they were back at the studios in Paris. And the marvel is, it worked.

Traditionally, listeners (who include an Autolycus contributor) are offered a similar musical output to that of Radio 3 for some 19 hours a day, seven days a week. True, the addition of personal views and philosophizing on the varying merits of different scores (. . . "I would say that Beethoven sums up the deepest yearnings of the human soul . . ." etc. etc.) is unspeakably tedious compared to the drier, more analytical approach of the BBC, but this is a quibble, for it is the music that counts. Point being, France Musique undertook an enormous burden of live outside broadcasts – with interesting results.

For starters, their heavy cable lines got under everyone's feet, meaning that simple acts like closing a door became impossible a lot of the time. Engineers with headphones over their ears running about all day long, did little to soothe singers' or musicians' temperaments – especially since, thanks to France Musique, every performance was going out "live", instead of to the customary close-knit audience of music buffs. The audience had grown from a few thousand each night, to a few million – a disconcerting prospect for performers at the best of times, let alone every night of the week.

The heat in Provence is considerable, in the height of summer, and it can literally drain you if you aren't used to it. Which is exactly what it did to the performers. The

new artistic director of the festival found to his dismay, that many of the singers, especially, simply could not muster the energy to perform in the evening *as well as* rehearse the next morning. It was either one or the other: Result: performances did not all come together as they might have done, which was annoying when France Musique was standing there with microphones to pick up the slightest mistakes for listeners in Normandy, Alsace and Dauphiné (that's around Grenoble, actually). One or two star names were interviewed about this, and related how professionally embarrassing it had all been – mais qu'est-ce qu'on peut faire? Moral: never forget what a taxing business performing can be – even if the Côte d'Azure seems a blissful prospect.

The exercise was deemed a hit, all the same, and the French, who rightly argue that their best music festival (for which, they, the taxpayers must fork out, anyway) should be made available on the French airwaves, have agreed to try again next year. Just why France Musique deems it necessary however, to move everything, telephone switchboard, transmitters, the lot down to Provence for the festival, Autolycus finds hard to rationalise. Unless, why of course, they're all down on the coast getting away from the microphones!



If like most of us you don't aspire to owning original paintings there's still a lot of satisfaction and enjoyment to be had from those faithfully executed printed copies which modern printing processes are capable of producing.

Take the one shown here for example. It's a poster-size (31×23") reproduction from an original screen print by Anthony Benjamin. Full size it is a stunning abstract on a surrealist landscape evocative of the best modern scenography. A limited number of copies have been produced on heavy paper and are available at the remarkably modest price of £2.25 including postage and packing from Rosco, 69/71 Upper Ground, London SE1 9PQ.