

Nightmares in East London

Opening Olympics Ceremony, Little to Applaud

by Charles Strohmer

Apparently the opening ceremony of the London Olympics is about half over. I'm taking a break from it while the countries file into the stadium. I'm watching this on NBC-TV here in the States. It's been taped. NBC did not start showing it until 7.30pm, Eastern Time. Earlier today, to get a feel for what the ceremony was like live, I found an interesting piece on ESPN that puffed it pretty well. So with a sense of anticipation I began watching at 7.30, a couple hours ago. I hope when I'm finished here at the keyboard and get back to watching it that I find something to applaud. So far, I have found little. I certainly don't blame the Brits. England is my home away from home, and I know many very talented artists of all types there. They certainly could have put on an event worth applause. So I guess I'll blame the guy who's been called the Olympics mastermind, filmmaker Danny Boyle.

But there's blame to go around. Let's start here in the States with Matt Lauer and Meridith Vieira, the two NBC presenters who kept interrupting the art of the ceremony to explain what was going on. Nice going guys! I don't mind getting the odd clue about art, but don't tell me what to think about it. Keep your experience to yourself and let me have my own. Next, still in America, we have to stop ever 7, 8, or 9 minutes "for a commercial break" that last 3-4 minutes. Another professional way to showcase the art! Let's sell cars, hamburgers, and cokes instead.

Jumping across the Pond, Boyle's romantic treatment of the industrial revolution was revolting, because it was a cheat. His glorification of the carnal nature through much of the music was uncalled-for. And the nightmares he dwelt on? Of both the children and the adults? The NBC presenters called them dreams. Come on, mastermind, we've got enough real demons in our world to deal with. At about this point in the ceremony, Meridith, whom I usually like, told us that we had been looking at the theme of "generosity and respect" that was the theme of the ceremony. Pardon? I could hardly believe my ears. I must have missed something when I went outside during a commercial break to move the garden hose.

I did applaud occasionally. The children's choirs were lovely at the get-go, and I was glad to see James Bond keeping the Queen safe, and to learn that Rowan Atkinson could outrun Eric Liddell and Harold Abrahams. And I thought the forging of the rings pretty neat. Well, the ESPN piece said Sir Paul was going to perform, so I'm thinking that will be something else to applaud. So its back the telly. Cheers.