

## Traditional spectacle

### **We should call upon our finest traditions as spectacles for the London Olympic Games**

Sir, Even before the financial calamities of the past few weeks, Boris Johnson admitted that the organisers of 2012 would have to prepare for the opening ceremony of the London Games with a careful eye on cost. Rather than the estimated \$100 million spent in Beijing, he said that London would instead rely on its “ingenuity and resourcefulness”.

We applaud that sentiment, and would go farther. Before millions are given to various artistic consultants to pursue ingenious and resourceful solutions, may we suggest that the foundations for a spellbinding opening ceremony already exist that have a proven track record in attracting huge crowds and massive international television audiences.

No one does “ceremony” better than Britain, as events such as Trooping the Colour and the Edinburgh Tattoo illustrate. Edinburgh commands a television audience in excess of 100 million, and more than 200,000 people, half of whom are overseas visitors, attend the tattoo’s sell-out performances.

The tattoo’s spectacle is reminiscent of the finest traditions of the Royal Tournament, axed by this Government as part of the 1998 Strategic Defence Review. Sadly, today’s young people have been deprived of the electrifying display of the field gun competition and of the magnificence of the musical drive by The King’s Troop Royal Horse Artillery. 2012 should call upon the legacy of Britain’s traditions, and stage an affordable ceremony that will be truly unforgettable, rather than a multimillion-dollar pastiche. The task of amplifying the vision and sound of Britain’s great tradition of pageantry — and more — is surely scope for the ingenuity and resourcefulness of the team planning for 2012.

There will no doubt be some in the IOC who question whether the “artistic section” of the opening ceremony should lean too heavily upon Britain’s ceremonial and military past. But the patron of the Edinburgh Tattoo also happens to be one of Britain’s most committed Olympians. We hope that the Princess Royal may be persuaded that we can, in this way, welcome the world in a manner befitting the glorious traditions of the nation — and to do so without selling the family silver or putting the taxpayer into hock.

Baroness Rawlings

Lord Ashcroft

House of Lords, London SW1