

## Versailles, the Olympics and Louis XIV: Philip Mansel

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In summer 2024 three Olympics events will be held in the park at Versailles: dressage, eventing and pentathlon (swimming, fencing, running, horse riding and shooting). Versailles is recovering for a few weeks its role as a sports centre, which it had all year round under Louis XIV. Louis XIV, the king who made Versailles the largest palace in Europe, would have won many Olympic medals. One of the finest riders, shots and dancers of his age, until he was 40 he danced every day (dance was a seventeenth-century version of gym), encouraged courtiers to do so and helped invent choreography. He was often painted on horse-back, mastering a rearing horse, He was Olympian as well as Olympic. Louis XIV was frequently depicted, in pictures and sculptures, as Hercules, or as a god of Olympus: Jupiter, Mars or Apollo. Versailles under Louis XIV was a centre of riding, hunting, shooting and dance, as well as of power and display.



Dr. Philip Mansel's latest book is *King of the World; the life of Louis XIV* (Penguin 2019), which won the Franco-British book prize and has been translated into French, German, Dutch, Italian and Mandarin. He is a founding committee member of the Society for Court Studies [www.courtstudies.org](http://www.courtstudies.org) and the Levantine Heritage Foundation [www.levantineheritage.com](http://www.levantineheritage.com) and President of the Conseil scientifique of the Centre de Recherche du Chateau de Versailles. In 2012 he won the London Library Life in Literature award. Six of his books have been translated into French.

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