

OPENING CEREMONY



Chen Weiya, director of the Nanjing Youth Olympic Games' opening and closing ceremonies, runs in the torch relay in Nanjing on Aug 8. Chen hopes a lasting memory will be left after the shows. PHOTO BY XINHUA

Director of ceremonies aims for a lasting spectacle

By SUN XIAOCHEN
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For Nanjing native Chen Weiya, the director of the Nanjing Youth Olympic Games' opening and closing ceremonies, putting on two spectacular shows will be his way of paying back the people who put their faith in him.

"When people review the events years later, I hope they think they made the right decision (of choosing me and my team). Not because I am a local citizen, but for the job I did," Chen said.

In preparation for the ceremonies, Chen and his team have worked for more than a year to perfect the shows' overall artistic design, including the music, choreography and audiovisual effects, since winning the bid in July 2013.

The 58-year-old said the 90-minute opening ceremony on Aug 16 at the Nanjing Olympic Sports Center will feature youth, vitality and the city's special characteristics in an exceptional but frugal way.

"I want to make the people in the

stadium that night feel like they've become younger," Chen said in a recent interview.

To highlight the International Olympic Committee's principle of a vibrant Youth Olympic Games, the directing crew recruited 4,000 young performers for the ceremonies and even took suggestions from Nanjing's youths on the shows' art direction.

Massive projection screens, virtual videos and mechanical props will play major roles in the shows' artistic effects and will transform the stadium into a fantastic stage, Chen said.

"All the high-tech shows and the futuristic scenes will present the vision of youth to the unknown future," Chen said.

He said bringing Nanjing's 2,000-plus-year history and rich cultures to the stage was challenging but that the ceremonies will present Nanjing's traditions and customs in an understandable display for foreign viewers.

To spark inspiration in his crew, Chen led them on visits to a number of historical and cultural sites around the city. Chen said his team will recreate scenes from Admiral Zheng He's expeditionary global voyages from the early Ming Dynasty period (1368-1644) with modern audiovisual technologies.

"Zheng's expedition started from Nanjing and his fleets were built here. He eventually reached as far as Africa

and made his name in global maritime history," Chen said. "We will for sure demonstrate features like this."

He said Nanjing local folk music will also play a big part in the ceremonies.

For any opening ceremony of a major sporting event, how the cauldron is lit has always been surrounded by huge anticipation. But with the position of the cauldron atop the Nanjing Olympic Sports Center, affixed there in 2005 for the 10th National Games, Chen and his crew had little room for imagination. Still, Chen said the team has found a creative and inexpensive way to light the cauldron.

"The Games' frugal principle dictated that we couldn't spend too much on making big mechanical devices to deliver the torch, but we've created another way to impress the crowd," Chen said.

In response to IOC's call for frugal and sustainable Games, the budget for the Nanjing ceremonies is one-tenth the total amount of money spent for the elaborate Beijing Olympics' opening ceremony. Chen also said the number of performers is one-third the number used in 2008.

"Spending a lot of money and manpower might produce spectacles but that doesn't necessarily guarantee wonderful shows. I am proud to say that we spent the least among any major opening ceremony but we are confident we will present equal or even better effects," Chen said.

OPENING CEREMONY HIGHLIGHTS

ABBREVIATED PARADE

Setting itself apart from traditional opening ceremonies of major sporting events in which a national or regional delegation presents every athlete available, the Nanjing opening ceremony will feature a simplified arrangement. Each nation or region will be represented by one athlete who carries his or her respective National Olympic Committee flag to march by the lectern in about 10 seconds. Organizers said this will reduce the parade to between 32 and 35 minutes. Delegations will situate the rest of their athletes in the stands.

LOCAL ELEMENTS

The opening ceremony of the Nanjing Games will provide a glimpse into the city's local arts and folk culture. The popular folk song *Jasmine*, the Nanjing Yunjin brocade handicraft specialty, landmark relics and the Ming Dynasty city wall will be just some of the local elements presented in the ceremony.



Nanjing Yunjin brocade

SILK ROAD

A group performance combining dance and ground-based projection film will demonstrate the wonders of the ancient Silk Road with modern technology. Dancers and performers will dress up in ancient costumes to reflect the civilization and art during the Tang Dynasty (618-907).

MODERN DANCE

During the second half of the opening ceremony, a group of 500 students from the Nanjing University of the Arts will perform a dance that reflects modern China's reform and opening-up.

AERIAL WIRE STUNTS

In the high-flying performance called the "Dream-building Tower", 120 highly trained students from Tagou Martial Arts School will perform aerial stunts and formation shifts during the second half of the opening ceremony. The high-difficulty performance will combine sound and lighting to embody the young generation's pursuit of its dreams.

MINI-MUSICAL

A three-minute musical will show the young generation's dreams of the future. All of the performers were selected from the Nanjing University of the Arts.

GLITTERING CAST OF SINGERS

At the end of the opening ceremony, four pop stars, including Chinese singer Zhang Liangying and South Korean star Kim Soo-hyun, will sing the Games' theme song *Light Up the Future Together*.

CHAMPION TORCHBEARER

Six young athletes, including Olympic champion paddler Zhang Jike, female diver Chen Ruolin and Youth Olympic champion swimmer Tang Yi, will run the last six legs of the torch relay inside the stadium. Chen, who is from Nanjing, is expected to light the cauldron.



Chen Ruolin

— SUN XIAOCHEN