

Beijing 2008 olympics opening ceremony



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The Olympic Games are one of the most important international sporting events for most of the world. The 2008 Beijing Olympics was especially one of particular focus and attention. China has long wished to show the world its greatness and, in June 2001, it finally got that chance. The Opening Ceremony as an event was the primary opportunity for China, besides the sporting events themselves, to demonstrate its power, wealth, and prosperity to the world; through visual and artistic spectacle. It would also allow the world to observe and witness how far China has progressed, as a country, to becoming more open and willing to being a bigger part in the global community. Aspects of the Opening Ceremony may be divided into three main categories; the Political, the Historical and Cultural, and the Ideals and overall Message.

The concept of 'Unity' is one of the main historical political ideas, presented throughout the Ceremony; which may be first interpreted in the mass-scale performances. Syncopation was essential during the highly choreographed displays of drummers, martial artists, and actors and dancers; in large formations. The theme of Unity has always been significant throughout Chinese history, since the unification of China under the first Emperor in 221 BCE. With rise and fall of subsequent dynasties, the prosperity of the land depended on that unity. The idea of 'Unity' in the new era may be more clearly displayed by the 56 children carrying the national flag, dressed in costume, representing the 56 ethnic groups of modern China; promoting China as a unified multi-ethnic, multi-cultural, nation. China's economic strength is implied by the ability to fund and organize the large-scale use of fireworks, lighting, and man power; in order to put on such a spectacular

mega-event. The Opening Ceremony may also be considered to be a promotion of Chinese pride and nationalism. It not only promotes Beijing itself as a city, or as the Capital, but as the center of the great country of China; as a while. This event is not only for China to impress all the foreign visitors, but may also prove to their own citizens, and to Chinese communities worldwide, how far they've come. They have the chance to make the best impression possible on the world; and to impress all with the speed and scope of China's development.

The Historical and Cultural aspects played a major part in the Opening Ceremony through the presentation and celebration of ancient Chinese culture. Chinese director Zhang Yimou was the creative mind behind the Ceremony. He is perhaps known to Westerners for his films *Hero*, *House of Flying Daggers*, and *Curse of the Golden Flower*. There is a strong focus on spectacle and aesthetic beauty, and artistic tradition and history of China, with the central theme of the four great Chinese inventions; the first being 'fireworks'. A brief film was shown during the ceremony, displaying the second of the four great inventions of 'paper making'. The showing of the traditional ink brush making was shown to segue way into the next performance, as a giant L. E. D. paper scroll was rolled out in the middle of the stadium. At the centre lay a canvas upon which dancers in black, with a sleeve dipped in ink, left trail marking as they moved on the paper; creating a landscape of mountains, a river, and the sun. The look of it was in the style of traditional ink painting. Their dance was accompanied by the music of a Guqin, the ancient Chinese seven-stringed zither. It was a blending of brush painting, dance, and music, and the connection of all the fine arts as part of

the same philosophical artistic process. In celebration of the Chinese language, of movable blocks were used in a large formation to present three variations of the character for “harmony”; another political ideal. The performance pays tribute to the third great invention of the ‘movable type press.’ Meanwhile, hundreds of costumed Han Dynasty feather-capped scholars, holding bamboo scrolls, sang out key excerpts from Analects of Confucius. Confucius was one of the most significant ancient philosophers that helped shape Chinese society, who still retains importance and influence in East Asia today. Other presentations artistic traditions of Beijing Opera and Puppetry were performed. A grounded map of the Ancient Silk Road was accompanied by Tang Dynasty dancers. The last of the great Chinese inventions, the compass, was held by the central actor in a performance presenting the voyages of Zheng He; the Ming Dynasty eunuch who led seven great naval expeditions to explore the world from 1405 to 1433. All these represent China’s glorious past. The following segment represented present day China, with a performance by pianist Lang Lang surrounded by luminescent performers; who arranged themselves into the Dove of Peace. The Dove’s wings took flight as the performers moved. A young girl, suspended by wire, ran in mid-air while flying a kite. 2, 008 of male performers, in white, took formation to display a mass performance of Tai Chi in fluid unison; a martial art based on the principles of the Yin and Yang, and harmony with nature. The ink painted landscape returned for a group of schoolchildren to add their marks by colouring over it, while chanting poetry; suggesting an environmental and Green Olympics. The in the landscape was filled in with a smiley face. The accompanying light presentation showed bright coloured birds, flying into the sky; possibly to further the thoughts of

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peace, or environmentalism. An astronaut, and a giant glowing ball representing Earth, came forth to represent modern, and possibly future, space exploration. The ball changed colour and glowed like a Chinese lantern, while acrobats tumbled rolled along its surface. Chinese and British singers, Li Huan and Sarah Brightman, stood on top of the ball which reverted back to showing the Earth, and sang the 2008 Olympic theme song “ You and Me”; in both Mandarin and English. It was a song of friendship and peace. The 2, 008 performers returned, with bearing parasols with images of the smiling children; and fireworks in the shape of smiley faces were ignited.

The Opening Ceremony was the event for Beijing to welcome the world. They were able to introduce, or share more of, Chinese culture and heritage to the world. It also showed a new sense of China, more built on unity, peace, harmony, and openness with the global community. These ideals were made clear throughout the Ceremony as part of the themes for the 2008 Olympics; the slogan being “ One World, One Dream.” China opening itself to the world is perceived in the Beijing Olympic Logo; a stylized representation of the character of Jing, meaning ‘ capital.’ The character resembles a dancing figure with arms wide open, and China’s invitation and welcome to the world. The Red in the emblem is the Chinese colour of good luck and fortune. The Mascots for the 2008 Games, called Fuwa, have five members; Beibei, Jingjing, Huanhuan, Yingying, and Nini. Their designs were inspired by a fish, a giant panda, a flame, a Tibetan antelope, and a swallow; each also representing one of the five Olympic rings. Put together, their names for a pun on the phrase *Beijing huanying ni* , meaning, “ Beijing welcomes you.” The Olympic Committee also chose three specific themes to promote for

2008. The first was “ technological Olympics”, as high-tech media broadcasting and promotion was important to a successful Olympics; the 2008 Beijing Olympics being the first in history to be broadcasted in high-definition. The second theme was “ humanistic,” and the original ideal that the Olympics is a cultural event; for all people. It not only refers back to the contributions by Ancient Greece, but is also gives the Chinese people the opportunity to share their own 5000 years of traditional and modern culture. Harmony of humanity also includes harmony with nature, which leads to the final theme of a “ green Olympics.” China worked hard to tackle this issue in preparation for the 2008 Olympics, to accommodate the arrival of so many foreign spectators and athletes; to be able to attend and perform in an agreeable environment. While pollution as one of the main criticisms China faces today, it remains a problem in many other countries; and was a question raised for many previous Olympic cities. The 2008 Games were used to continue to increase global awareness and the promotion of green consumption.

The 2008 Beijing Olympics was the means for China to demonstrate its wealth and power to the world. It was through art and creativity, demonstrated by the Opening Ceremony, that China was able to celebrate and share its culture with the rest of the world; while also supporting current day ideals of peace, harmony, progress, and environmentalism. It was a promotion of a new image of China as willing and ready to open itself to all, and to be accepted as among the world’s top respectable countries.

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