

Sochi Opening Ceremonies Present Daunting Challenge

By [Ivan Nechepurenko](#)

October 10, 2013

The  Moscow Times

Millions of viewers will lean toward their television screens Feb. 7 to watch more than 2,000 performers present a snapshot of today's Russia during the opening ceremonies of the Sochi Winter Olympics.

While dozens of nations will compete in the games for sporting glory, the opening ceremonies will provide the host country an opportunity to showcase its own achievements.

And just as the athletes will face off against one another, Russia's opening show will inevitably be compared to that of previous Olympics.

Related story: [With 4 Months Left, Main Sochi Stadium a 'Disaster'](#)

Given the success of the ceremonies that opened the two most recent Summer Games, Sochi 2014 organizers face a tough challenge. The program at the 2012 London Olympics dazzled the

world with a dramatic cameo by the Queen of England and a parade of British rock and pop acts, while the massive opening show at Beijing 2008 was lauded as one of the best ever, a bold demonstration of national confidence.

A source involved in the ceremonies told The Moscow Times that organizers have faced difficulties trying to come up with content that will resonate with international audiences.

“In the case of London 2012, they could use their rock bands, while Russia faces a much tougher challenge,” the source said.

Responsibility for matching the exploits of past games has been given to Konstantin Ernst, the head of state-owned Channel One television and Russia’s top media executive. The Sochi Organizing Committee put him in charge of planning the opening and closing ceremonies last year.

Ernst has dealt with the preparations for many huge televised events but has never organized a spectacle of this scale. President Vladimir Putin wants to present Russia as a nation advanced and prosperous enough after his 13 years in power to host an Olympic Games, so Ernst will likely feel pressure to put on a highly memorable show.

The content of the ceremonies has been largely kept under a veil of secrecy, but a few details have been leaked to the public.

According to a report in Kremlin-connected newspaper Izvestia, the opening ceremonies will occupy three stages inside the Fisht Olympic Stadium and concentrate on Russian history presented through the lenses of the country’s nature, culture and science. For its information, the newspaper cited a source close to the state agency responsible for staging the ceremonies.

The diversity and size of Russia will be represented by a variety of famous historical figures, such as Tsar Peter the Great, and natural landmarks, including Mount Elbrus in the North Caucasus, the White Sea in the Arctic, the Ural Mountains and Lake Baikal. Iconic Russian avant-garde architecture and art will also play a role.

Show Canada, a Montreal-based firm that “operates worldwide, participating in production of very complex, grandiose events,” has been retained by the organizers to help plan out the show.

When contacted by a reporter, the Sochi 2014 project manager at the firm, Dan Sobel, said he could share information on the ceremonies but first had to consult with the organizers. Later, he did not answer repeated phone calls seeking comment.

Andrei Nasonovsky, head of the state agency planning the ceremonies, refused to comment when reached by phone.

Contact the author at i.nechepurenko@imedia.ru

Original url:

<https://www.themoscowtimes.com/2013/10/10/sochi-opening-ceremonies-present-daunting-challenge->

a28509