



– Olympics in Paris 2024, *Fluctuat nec mergitur*

The opening ceremony of the Paris Olympic Games takes place on Friday, July 26, 2024, on the Seine. It was entrusted to an exceptional troika - Tony Estanguet, chairman of the organizing committee (multi-medaled champion of kayak) Thierry Reboul, executive director of ceremonies (the man of challenges like a giant jersey by Tony Parker on the Statue of Liberty), Thomas Jolly, artistic director, director (Molière in 2015).

The ceremony is called «Revolution» in echo to the French Revolution but also to its unusual character, literally revolutionary. The most extraordinary idea suggested is that the ceremony would take place on the Seine river between the Austerlitz bridge and the Iéna bridge, both of which evoke Napoleonic victories. The route along the Seine recalls the most prestigious history of France- Louvre Museum (largest museum in the world), Notre Dame de Paris (cathedral symbol of Paris and France, and not only the Christianity), Institut de France (seat of the French Academy) or even Grand Palais and Eiffel Tower, both monuments erected on the occasion of the Universal Exhibitions in Paris in the late 19th century. The banks of the Seine belong to the UNESCO World Heritage since 1991. The French organizers mean to break the many clichés and stereotypes about Paris, since always open to all diversities- religious, cultural, artistic...

French authors and a historian were involved in the preparation of the “storytelling” of the event – Leïla Slimani & Daniel Laubiach (novelists), Fanny Herrero (screenwriter), or the historian of the Collège de France, Patrick Boucheron. The organizers brought sport into the city. Paris becomes a living setting. The 12 paintings designed by Thomas Jolly offer a total spectacle featuring monuments, bridges and cultural establishments that border the Seine. The parade takes place on almost 100 boats dedicated to national delegations, equipped with cameras to allow viewers to be as close as possible to the athletes. Sailing from East to West through Paris, the 10,500 athletes will roam the middle of their playground for sixteen days.

The ceremony, a veritable “Stade de France” outside the walls, is expected to attract 100,000 people, 15,000 athletes from 200 countries and 120 heads of state. To secure the event, 30,000 policemen and gendarmes are mobilized, in addition to 15,000 military personnel and between 17,000 and 20,000 private security agents. The delegations expected will arrive on boats (Bateaux Mouches) that also symbolize the capital. The seven-kilometer crossing will end in front of the Trocadero, where the final stage of the shows and ceremonial ceremonies will take place. The choreographer Maud Le Planec proposes a show dressed by Daphné Burki (stylist), and part of which is danced by the star dancer of the Paris Opera Guillaume Diop. The music is composed by Victor Le Masne, a representative of the French touch (House music),

The only unknowns remain time- weather could spoil the retransmission (and all helicopters mobilized) and terrorism. Paris knows how to take on challenges, as it has proven in the many terrorist attacks (and several wars since 1870) it had to overcome in its long history. « *Fluctuat nec mergitur* ».

- (1) Documentaire de Mickaël Gamrasni « Olympiques ! La France des Jeux », France, diffusé le 16 juillet 2024 sur France 2
- (2) Site officiel du COJO-<https://olympics.com/fr/paris-2024/les-jeux/ceremonies/ceremonie-d-ouverture>
- (3) Jules et Gédéon Naudet « Au cœur des jeux », France , 2024- **Cérémonie d'ouverture : premiers secrets - Partie 1** - <https://www.france.tv/sport/les-jeux-olympiques/6324884-ceremonie-d-ouverture-premiers-secrets-partie-1.html>
- (4) vidéo designed by iriv for its European project Think Diverse (Erasmus +, 2021-2023) ; the video is dedicated to Paris's diversity - <https://youtu.be/W86Q1zGuyD8>

© dr Bénédicte Halba, Doctor of Sports Economics (University of Paris I Panthéon Sorbonne, January 1996), Paris, 26 July 2024