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The 17th FINA World Championships kicked off in the course of a gigantic multidisciplinary show

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Budapest has welcomed those attending the 17th FINA World Championships in the course of a gigantic multidisciplinary performance involving approximately 700 artists, 220 volunteers and young athletes taking place on four floating barges of 1600 tons in the heart of Budapest. The spectacular show -worthy of an international sporting event- was followed by millions of viewers worldwide showcasing Hungarian culture and attractions of the city.

The opening ceremony of the 17th FINA World Championships - the greatest sporting event of all times hosted by Hungary- held on Friday was a huge success. The gigantic show staged on 4 pieces of 1600-ton barges (80x10m) transformed into a stage depicted highlights of the history of Hungary and its cultural heritage. The spectacular multidisciplinary show involving approximately 700 artists, 220 volunteers and young athletes was received with huge applause by the audience. The event was followed by tens of thousands of viewers on the spot, standing and seated in the lower embankment Pest side, Buda Castle and Erzsébet Bridge. Millions of TV spectators could amaze at the attractions of Budapest and one of its most beautiful monuments, Buda Castle serving as the background for the settings of the impressive show thanks to over 55 international channels reporting on the broadcast by MTVA. The opening ceremony was broadcast online live by CNN.

The principal director of the show, Csaba Káel film and opera director and chief executive director at one of the most important cultural centres of Central Europe, the Palace of Arts (MŰPA) aimed at depicting the relation of water to life, Hungarian culture, sport and future with the contribution of the institution's permanent staff, hundreds of participants as well as ECA2, the French company in charge of vision plans and never-before-seen multimedia techniques in a show divided into 4 thematic sessions.

Such renowned Hungarian artists contributed to staging this incredible show as **Péter Eötvös**, whose choral work received new lyrics written specifically for the FINA World Championships by one of the most popular young contemporary poets **Dániel Varró**. The

show featured scenes about Aquincum, the era of the Hungarian conquest of the Carpathian Basin, Buda during the renaissance recalled by a wonderful renaissance folk song sung by the internationally renowned folk singer **Ágnes Herczku**

This was followed by insights into the era of Hungarian hussars through Hány János, the suite by Zoltán Kodály. The performance was choreographed by **Sándor Román**, Art Director of ExperiDance in cooperation with the most outstanding Hungarian dance companies and solo dancers, while the music producer of the performance was **László Gőz**.

Hungarian Rhapsody No. 2, most renowned piece by our world famous composer Ferenc Liszt was played by Hungarian virtuoso pianist **Gergely Bogányi** on the highly impressive Chain Bridge.

Balatonfüred – hosting the open water swimming tournament of the World Championships – has been staging the famous Anna Ball every year for 191 years now. The highlight of the eve is selecting the Belle of the Ball and her maids of honour from the debutants. The atmosphere of this prestigious event was recalled with the help of models –including such internationally acknowledged beauties as **Enikő Mihalik** – wearing the collection designed specifically for the event by **Kati Zoób**.

Champions of the 60 most successful disciplines in Hungary entered the stage while the Hungarian anthem was being played, then flag bearers of participating countries entered the stage solemnly.

In his ceremonial speech István Tarlós, mayor of Budapest, quoting Dénes Kemény, former head coach of the three-time Olympic champion national water polo team, current President of the Hungarian Water Polo Federation, said: *„The limit to our capacity is way further than we thought. We had to prove we are capable of organising a gigantic international sporting event in barely two years. We have fulfilled a highly demanding undertaking, Budapest is ready to host the 17th FINA World Championships.”* He said, adding that Budapest will not only be an organiser but a real host of the event.

In his ceremonial speech Dr. Julio C. Maglione, President of the International Swimming Federation (FINA), emphasized that Budapest was a perfect choice on their part to serve as the venue of the 17th FINA World Championships. Duna plays a central role in the tournament and most competition venues are located directly by the river. This way the international sporting event chimes with the official motto of FINA: *„Water is our world!”*

In his opening remarks János Áder, Hungary’s President of the Republic invoked Alfréd Hajós, highlighting the fact that he was not only the gold medallist of 100m in Athens at the 1896 Olympics, the first Olympic champion of our country but the first gold medallist swimmer of Modern Olympics. Furthermore, in addition to several public buildings he was the architect of the swimming complex – bearing his name now- which had the largest indoor pool at the time and having staged several international tournaments this will be the

venue of the water polo tournament at the World Championships, as well.

On behalf of athletes **Ajna Késely** ten-time European junior champion, senior European champion, member of the Hungarian national swimming squad as well as **Tamás Kenderesi** Olympic and European bronze medallist, youth Olympic champion, youth European champion, member of the Hungarian national swimming squad took an oath, whereas on behalf of judges and officials it was five-time youth European champion, World Championships 6th placed swimmer, two-time Olympian, starting judge of the swimming finals **Viktor Bodrogi** swore an oath of fair judgement.

The opening ceremony of the top sporting event was special also because for the first time in the history of the event, in an analogy of lighting the Olympic flame, an aquatic symbol indicated the start of the competition. The new symbol of the FINA World Championships named Fontana was launched by one of history's best ever female swimmers, five-time Olympic gold medallist **Krisztina Egerszegi**.

The internationally renowned guest performer of the event, American singer, producer, songwriter **Cee Lo Green performed two of his greatest hits, Bright Lights Bigger City and Crazy.**

„Life was created from water; water is the source of our future. Water is energy, vitality, the eternal playfellow of mankind - for sport and entertainment alike. We are aware that protecting our treasure - water - is a huge responsibility of ours. The most important key to our future is water, let the World Championships be the celebration of water, as well!”- this was the concluding message of the ceremony for all.

For more photos visit the Gallery.