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China defends Olympic show miming

A senior Olympics official in China has defended the decision to replace a girl in last Friday's opening ceremony with another deemed to look more suitable.



Yang Peiyi (L) had the perfect voice, but Lin Miaoke had the perfect face

"I don't see anything wrong with it, if everybody concerned agrees," said Wang Wei of the organising committee.

Lin Miaoke was hailed a star after performing at the ceremony, but it was later revealed she was miming to a song voiced by another girl, Yang Peiyi.

Miaoke's father has told reporters he thinks Peiyi is also cute.

"Yang Peiyi's looks are OK," Lin Hui reportedly said. "In my opinion, she's not ugly."

'Theatric effects'

Mr Wang - executive vice-president of the Beijing Games organising committee (Bocog) - said the last-minute decision to substitute nine-year-old Miaoke for seven-year-old Peiyi had been taken jointly "by the group of directors".

"Together they are discussing with the broadcasters," he told reporters at Wednesday's news conference.

"They are to achieve the most theatric effects for the benefit of the whole performance, the whole opening ceremony," he said.

Nonetheless, the story had disappeared from several leading Chinese news websites on Wednesday, including that of the broadcaster which broke the story.

The show's musical director, Chen Qigang, told Beijing Radio that Peiyi was pulled from the show at the last moment, after a senior Politburo member said she did not look the part.


BBC staff in Beijing found that references to the story had been removed from the Beijing Radio website on Wednesday.

The story was similarly absent from other major news sites, including the China Daily and Xinhua sites - suggesting that Chinese authorities are indeed uncomfortable with the story.

Chinese media and websites are policed by the central government, which has frequently censored access to content deemed unflattering or counter to the national interest.

But the story had not been totally expunged from the web, with extensive coverage still remaining on sites such as the Chinese

“ What should we make of the two bits of the opening ceremony that weren't what we thought they were? ”



The BBC's James Reynolds

James Reynolds: Not quite what we thought

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commercial web portal sina.com.

Empty seats

The miming incident is one of a number of stories thought to have caused some private embarrassment to Olympic organisers.

In another disclosure, it was revealed that parts of the footage of the opening ceremony fireworks were pre-produced.

Organisers have also been trying to explain why so many empty seats have been visible at purportedly sold-out events.

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