

chapter six

# the programme



## Events take many different forms but are likely to fall into one of these broad categories:

- ▶ **Sporting**
- ▶ **Arts & Culture**
- ▶ **Heritage**
- ▶ **Lifestyle & Leisure**
- ▶ **Industry/Business**
- ▶ **Awards/Competitions**

Regardless of event type, a strong event programme is essential for success. If the programme is insubstantial or of poor quality it will not live up to the expectations of the audience/participants.

When deciding on the elements that will make up the programme, consider the following questions. Your answers will provide a solid base from which to start forming the programme or building around critical elements already in place:

- ▶ What are the event's vision and mission?
- ▶ What are the event objectives?
- ▶ What are the essential programme elements?
- ▶ What elements could support or enhance the core programme?
- ▶ What is the theme of the event?
- ▶ What standards of quality apply?
- ▶ Who is the event aimed at?
- ▶ How many are expected to attend?
- ▶ What are their expectations?
- ▶ When and where will it take place?
- ▶ How long will it last?
- ▶ Have there been past successes or failures?
- ▶ What is the programming budget?
- ▶ How will you maintain interest and keep it fresh?

Every event is different and a publication such as this is not designed to give specific advice in terms of the quality and development of your programme. If you require advice in relation to your programme you should seek it from the appropriate bodies or individuals that are relevant to your particular interests. However, in general terms it may be useful to think of an event programme as made up of component parts:

- ▶ **Main entertainment/event focus** – in line with the theme of the event, the main entertainment or event focus is what attracts the audience
- ▶ **Secondary entertainment/focus** – often a similar type of entertainment or activity to the main attraction or a different type that appeals to the core audience
- ▶ **Support entertainment/activities** – usually a different type of entertainment or activity to the main attraction that still appeals to the audience and fits with the theme
- ▶ **Ancillary activities** – additional fillers or things for the audience to do during the event or at scheduled intervals

Aside from the above, certain events will have key essential elements as part of their programme e.g. opening events or previews, medal presentations, closing ceremonies, etc.

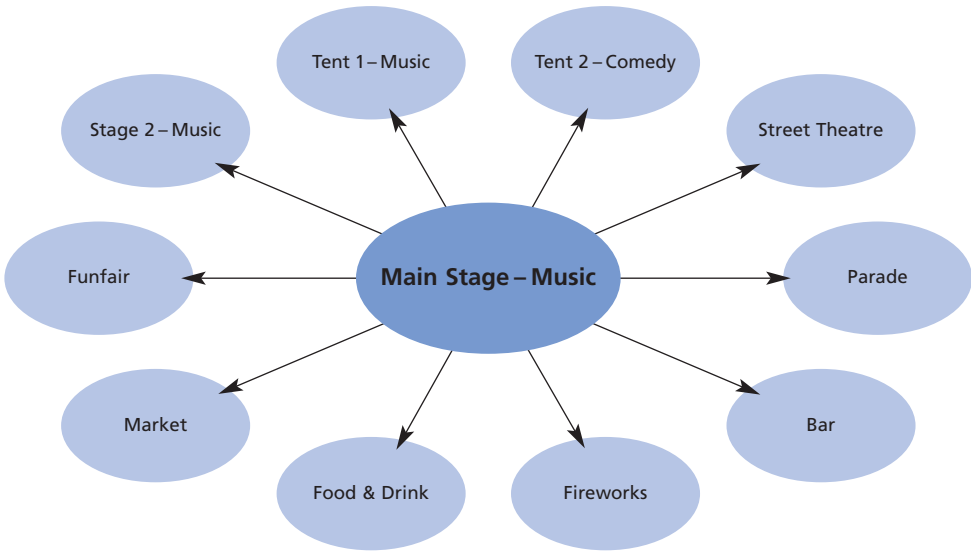
To help you focus on different elements that make up your event programme, we have illustrated a couple of models (opposite) that could apply to:

**1) A mid-scale multi-arts festival**

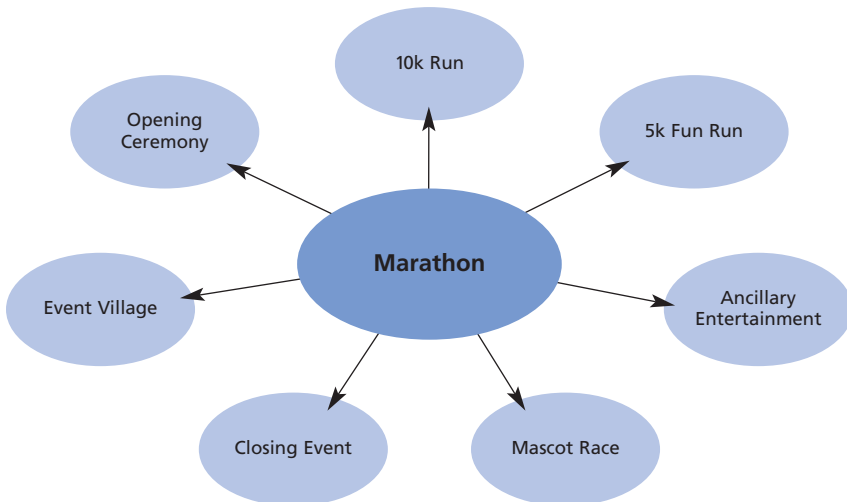
**2) An athletics/running festival**

Once you've established the different programme components that you'll require, you can focus on the specific acts/shows/features, etc that would be appropriate for the event. Remember, a strong programme content and structure are essential to the success of the event.

## 1) A mid-scale multi-arts festival FIGURE 6.1



## 2) An athletics/running festival FIGURE 6.2



## Timing the Programmed Activity

It's crucial that your programme is timed so that each element works with the whole. The considerations below will help you determine how much content you require and when to schedule particular entertainment or activities:

- ▶ Does the event require a clear beginning, middle and end?
- ▶ How long will each programme element last?
- ▶ How much time is required between elements?
- ▶ Will people have enough time to get from one programme element to another?
- ▶ Are you providing enough of a programme to sustain the audience's interest?
- ▶ If the same act/competitor performs more than once, make sure there is enough time to rest or relocate between performances/competitions
- ▶ Does the event need a march, parade or opening ceremony to draw people into the venue or to mark its start?
- ▶ Should the entertainment be competitive – *i.e.* should different elements take place at the same time or would this be detrimental to the main purpose of the event?
- ▶ Are intervals a necessity and, if so, is entertainment required during the intervals?
- ▶ Is audience/participant retention required at particular times (think about patterns of attendance, expected quiet times, intervals, etc and programme accordingly)?
- ▶ Do particular audience/participant groups require special consideration (e.g. children)?
- ▶ Is time required for audience/participant and/or equipment relocation?
- ▶ Have you provided areas where people can relax, eat or drink in between programme elements in which they are taking part?

When programming shows, acts or entertainers always try to see the work for yourself before making a booking. Failing that, ask to see showreels, photographs and always ask for references. Don't forget to visit other festivals and events throughout the year – perhaps you could adapt or pick up an idea to fit your event. Build a database of potential acts – a handy resource for the future.



