PRINCIPLES OF FESTIVAL MANAGEMENT

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David Hill is Founding Director and Chair of ArtReach, which has a 20 year plus track record as a cultural consultant and creative producer. ArtReach works across the UK and internationally, delivering strands of its work with partners in 10 other European countries. David trained in Drama (Hull University) and worked in different parts of the theatre sector, as actor, director and manager, before establishing ArtReach in 1996. He has been Associate Director at Cheltenham Everyman, Artistic Director of Theatre Station Blyth and Marketing Director at Birmingham Hippodrome. Honorary positions have included being Vice Chair of Curve (Leicester), Chair of *Leicester Arts Festivals*, Chair of *Hat Fair* Winchester, and Vice Chair of Winchester Theatre Royal.

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Introduction

by Chris Newbold

Principles of Festival Management was conceived and designed to be a single-source for the knowledge and practical skills needed in successful festival production. It takes a multi-disciplinary approach to understanding festivals and festival organisations and engages with the principles, key concepts and debates in contemporary festival management. Festivals are complex, social and commercial events, so mixed economy models, social entrepreneurship and stakeholder networks are highlighted as are the symbolic roles festivals play in communities. *Principles of Festival Management* aims to provide a step-by-step guide to all aspects of festivals production from inception through operation to evaluation. The discussions in each chapter are illustrated with a wide range of examples, case studies and actual festival management experiences drawn from contemporary festival managers. The advice provided is supported by templates, models, illustrations and exemplars of the materials needed to manage a festival. There is also direction to further reading, other sources of information and contacts.

Festivals are unique environments in which to enjoy cultural events and experiences; each is different from the next, yet there are features that distinguish the festive from the everyday and festivals from other forms of cultural production and events. Immersive and spectacular environments, celebratory arts and performance, and fewer distinctions in status between artists, audiences and participants, have been the hallmarks of festivals. That they are often time-specific, culture-specific and place-specific events has been the traditional expectations of festivals and why they are uniquely appreciated, eagerly anticipated and growing in number.

The word festival is said to derive from the Latin *festa* meaning feasting, joy and revelry, it is also said to come from *feriae*, meaning time off for honouring the gods. A festival is thus something that is different to or outside of the norm, and is a cultural celebration of some kind, usually of a defined or limited duration. They are exciting, creative, expressive, emotional, educative and often challenging. They are the moments when people and places become most animated, most alive, when they express and display their deepest held values, relationships and hopes. To put it another way, festivals are something special to look forward to, a peak in an otherwise routine world. Falassi calls them a 'time out of time' and sees them as ever-changing and evolving, however he says that:

> "With all its modifications, festival has retained its primary importance in all cultures, for the human social animal still does not have a more significant way to feel in tune with his world than to partake in the

special reality of the festival, and celebrate life in its 'time out of time'"
(1987: 7).

Other authors such as Van Gennep (1961) and Turner (1969) discussed how
special events or rituals have the capacity to deliver liminal experiences,
whilst Roy (2005) pointed to festivals' suspension of 'normal time' being
related to the 'play element in culture'. The desire to celebrate, to break away
from the everyday, is arguably part of human DNA. But how we celebrate
changes from culture to culture and time to time (Ehrenreich, 2007).

Religious festivals remain important to the various faiths they serve; *Eid*,
Diwali, *Passover*, the *Summer Solstice*, *Chinese New Year*, etc. are important
markers in the religious year, but they are also community festivals and are
increasingly becoming open to wider audiences, and promoted as tourist
attractions. Globalisation has meant that many traditional cultural festivals
have been adopted far beyond their areas of origin, so *Holi*, *Carnival*, *Dia de
los Muertos* are familiar festival themes to many around the world. The South
Asian *mela* is seen to have travelled the globe with Asian diaspora, with the
key to its success being its ability to adapt to the host culture whilst still main-
taining its core values (Kaushal and Newbold, 2015). It is arguable that in at
least some parts of the world as life has become more secularised, we still
want and need to celebrate, but now we do it differently. Arts and cultural
festivals have grown in significance, just as some religious festivals like the
Christian *Harvest Festival* have declined in importance and visibility. Arts,
performance and culture form a key part of many religious festivals, espe-
cially through music, song and dance. However, secular arts festivals seem to
be in the ascendant in terms of numbers and profile, there has been a prolif-
eration of biennials that add festivity through competition, and street art, or
graffiti festivals, use the making of the work as a form of performance. Music
festivals have also mushroomed and grabbed many of the headlines, as the
music business itself has had to change its business model due to technologi-
cal developments. The number of specialist festivals have also grown; these
tend to focus on a particular artform or genre, although some may even focus
on a particular artist. The list of specialisms is extensive. In music alone, the
specialisms can include folk festivals, jazz festivals, blues festivals, opera fes-
tivals, early music festivals, baroque music festivals, contemporary music fes-
tivals. Then there are film festivals, fashion weeks, book and literature festi-
vals, dance festivals, street theatre festivals, poetry festivals and even history
festivals. Festivals don't have to be restricted to the arts and culture. There are
myriad flower festivals, village festivals, festivals of ideas and even festivals
of shopping. The other significant growth area has been food festivals, which
may not be artistic, but they are without a doubt cultural. Clearly, there is
now a much wider variety of festivals in existence than ever before, provid-
ing a diversity of festival content and festival experiences.

Elsewhere (Newbold et al., 2015; Newbold and Jordan, 2016) we identified the contemporary process of festivalisation, whereby cultural products as well as a wide variety of events were using the festival form as their favoured mode of delivery. The five key dimensions of festivalisation were identified by Jordan (2016b: 6) as:

♦ **Festivity**: a time and space for celebration and play that is distinct from everyday life.

♦ **Experimentation**: opportunities for audiences, producers and artists to try out new personas or artistic approaches.

♦ **Spectacularisation**: highly visual or sensual, surprising and often large-scale art works and performances.

♦ **Theming**: a method for establishing an intelligible identity for disparate activities.

♦ **Participation**: experiences that are immersive or co-created by audiences.

Festivalisation is a response to and a cause of new audience expectations that pose challenges and offer different opportunities to those facing venue managers and touring companies. Creating celebratory social spaces, often in sites not usually used for cultural activities, working collaboratively with communities, volunteers and opening up parts of the production process means thinking and working creatively not just in the festival design, but as innovative social and cultural entrepreneurs (Jordan, 2016a).

Understanding the process of festivalisation with its concern for the delivery of arts and culture provides important markers for festival managers in assessing the 'festivity' of their events. It also speaks to a desire and belief that festivals can deliver a whole range of social, cultural and economic benefits, this has particularly drawn in, as we shall see, all tiers of government wanting to encourage, support and promote festivals. However, this involvement does not always prove as helpful as you might think; some years ago, an English local authority decided it wanted to become a 'city of festivals'. After a few years of various festival activities, it approached this by linking all the festivals into a *Summer Festival* that lasted three months. Another city combined a number of individual festivals into one *City Festival* that took place over a 10-day period, making it difficult to notice the special parts of each. This first approach flattened the peaks, and the second killed the differentiation between the individual festivals. It *is* possible to have too much of a good thing.

There is no doubt that festival provision is firmly established on the agenda of all sections of society – it is important in a myriad of ways:

♦ Promoting artistic innovation and vitality

♦ Providing liminal and liminoid experiences

♦ Experiencing – it can be transformative and educational with moments of challenge and ambiguity

♦ Enhancing, reputedly, local cohesion, citizenship, *Pride*, sense of identity and recognition of place

♦ Sustaining and developing to tourism development and city/regional marketing

♦ Enhancing the quality of urban life, celebrating cultural diversity

♦ Encouraging intercultural dialogue and intercultural competence

♦ Providing a source of entertainment, pleasure and experience

♦ Providing, reputedly, positive impacts – culturally, politically, socially, economically and environmentally

♦ Providing significant permanent, temporary and casual employment and work for suppliers and contractors

Clearly there can be seen to be a largely positive environment for festival provision, and as such the need for good festival management has never been higher. Long et al. observed:

> "Alongside the growth in the number of festivals, there has also been a general increase in the degree of professionalism in the occupations that are linked with festival planning, management, organisation and operations reflecting their social, political and, importantly, their economic roles" (2004: 2)

Festivals have been with us since ancient times, yet the shift from religious and symbolic events to iconic cornerstones of popular commercial culture has been comparatively recent and mostly post-1945. The growth of what we now know and think of as festivals is the product of a changing social and economic environment in which artists and creative people have had enough time and resources to create new artistic work, and audiences have had enough leisure and desire to view the work and enough disposable income to purchase it or access to it.

The route to today's plethora of festivals, especially music festivals, has been anything but straightforward and has been marked by a period of distinct historic social divisions between the 'established arts' and 'counterculture'. Ironically, there are signs in recent years that these opposing strands are now starting to merge. Traditional arts festivals like *Brighton*, *Edinburgh*, *Bath* and *Cheltenham* started on a diet of classical arts, with orchestras, opera and recitals. Yet in 2017, the long-established *Bath International Festival* promoted the former Led Zeppelin singer Robert Plant, 50 years after Led Zeppelin played the nascent *Bath Blues Festival*. Others like *The Brighton Festival* have brought in guest artistic directors who have broadened the artistic programme.

Some would argue that it was the very growth of counterculture in the 1960s and 1970s that created the festival culture we enjoy today. In Britain, the origins can be traced to an annual jazz festival at Beaulieu, Hampshire, a *National Jazz and Blues Festival* founded in 1964 which used a number of venues in South East England before winding up in Reading where it became the *Reading Festival,* and a large but short-lived rock festival on The Isle of Wight that ran from 1968 to 1970, attracted international artists like Bob Dylan and Miles Davis and an estimated audience in 1970 of 600,000. All of these initiatives pre-dated the iconic *Glastonbury Festival* and also the celebrated American *Woodstock Festival* (1969). They have also been well documented in films like *A Message to Lov'*, *Woodstock* and the BBC's *Festivals Britannia* documentary (Lerner, 2005; Wadleigh, 1970; Bridger, 2010).

Whilst all of the above created cultural landmarks, celebrated to this day, they also flagged up significant problems in managing the popularity of this new-emerging culture and significant tensions between the enthusiasm of youthful enterprise and establishment values and practices. These were challenges not just of scale and logistics but also of values. The 1970 *Isle of Wight Festival* led to the passing of an Act of Parliament preventing overnight open-air gatherings of more than 5,000 people on the island without a special licence from the council. It took 32 years, until 2002, for someone to find a way of satisfying the Act's requirements and bring a large-scale festival back to the Isle of Wight.

This one instance is symptomatic of a running battle that took place through the 1970s and 80s between authority in the shape of local councils and the police and countercultural festival organisers and the artists they booked. Many of these had a very different concept of society, one that ran counter to the political values of the time which through the 1980s focused on defining success increasingly through financial success and monetary value.

The Public Order Act of 1986, which regulated public gatherings of anything more than 20 people, was a game-changer. It required festival organisers to obtain police consent for their events. That meant that if they were to survive, festivals had to professionalise themselves. That process of professionalisation also involved financialisation. If you had to meet more demands to get a licence to stage your event, you had to find a way of paying for the extra costs incurred. This all took some time to develop. It wasn't until the early 2000s that the issues of managing the large audience numbers that this new breed of rock festivals had created were fully addressed.

The new millennium also heralded technological change that had a huge impact on music festivals. The digitisation of music and resultant file-sharing meant that established music revenues from physical sales declined dramatically, which led to musicians reverting to live performance as a primary

means of earnings. The increased availability of live bands was part of the reason for the growth in music-fuelled festivals.

That in part explains the incredible increase in the number of festivals over the last 20 years. But music is just one part of the equation. The breadth of festival offerings also increased with a growth of book and literature festivals, street theatre festivals and many other types. All of these have had to contend with changing times and legislation. As the ambitions and scale of festivals have grown, so have the risks. In an increasingly crowded market that has led to one or two festivals failing. Others, after an honourable period of spectacular growth, have decided to quit the market altogether. *Secret Garden Party*, one of the first boutique music festivals started in 2004 with an audience of just 500 (Square Mile, 2017). It ended up attracting around 26,000 people when it finished in 2017.

In 2016, the *Financial Times* reported in 2015, "more than a thousand festival events took place across Britain, a figure that has doubled over the past decade". In 2015, they continued "UK Music, the industry campaigning organisation, calculated that 3.5m people attended a festival, with the market estimated to be worth £2bn to the economy" (McNulty, 2017).

McNulty also asked whether the festivals market had reached saturation point and noted "a marked rise in the number of city-based and one-day events and a decline in traditional camping weekends" (ibid). She also reported "the growing dominance of multinational promoters such as Live Nation (*Reading*, *Latitude* and this year a majority stake in the *Isle of Wight*) and AEG (Hyde Park's *British Summertime*)" (ibid). Smith (2013) drew attention to the increasing number of festivals in urban parks, and to the tension this causes as cash-strapped local authorities attempt to balance the needs of local residents and with their need to find new income streams. These issues of growth in attendance and number of festivals, increasing legislation, professionalisation, possible saturation and corporatisation mean festival promotion is much more complex than in past times and festivals management needs a much more carefully considered and rigorous approach.

This book is a result of that growth and the need in the industry for a clear and precise set of principles guiding festival producers, would-be managers and students in all related subjects. As previously stated, this book is about the principles of festival management; it provides a single port of call for developing and running a festival; it covers all aspects of festivals management and discusses the key central issues and contemporary debates such as the use of volunteering, sponsorship and the impact and use of digital technology in festival management.

The chapters are organised such that readers begins in Chapter 1 with an understanding of their roles as leaders and managers, particularly in the face

of the unique challenge's festival management provides. Here the importance of having values and a vision are emphasised alongside the importance of having a solid organisational structure behind you.

The second chapter builds on your enthusiasms and ideas, pointing out the importance of having a clear vision and rationale, and knowing what is involved and the possibilities of festival design and programming. It looks at the processes and practicalities of festival design, and the details of good programming. Chapters 3 and 4 then have the daunting task of discussing how you find the money to start and run your festival (funding and investment); and how to manage your money once you've got some (budgeting). Following on from this, Chapter 5 starts by helping you understand the factors involved in producing a good festival, looking at several project management planning processes and all aspects of planning and logistics.

Chapter 6 then takes a moment to stand back and examine festivals and the law, looking at legislation affecting festivals and ensuring that you understand the types of licences you may need and where to get them. It also considers other areas such as copyright, insurance and drawing up contracts. Further chapters will also ensure that you have a grounding in your basic legal responsibilities, whether that be staffing, health and safety, or wherever necessary.

In Festival Operations (Chapter 7) we assume that you now have a viable plan, that you have the licenses and insurance you need and that you are now ready to put that into operation pre-festival and on-the-day. This chapter then looks at the processes and key operational documentation such as the event management and operations plans you will need. It also looks at health and safety and risk management. Two other key operational areas are discussed here: logistics and communications, and the chapter emphasises that operations management requires a great deal of planning and attention to detail.

In Chapter 8 it is the management of people that is recognised as being crucial to the success of your festival, thus it provides you with an overview of the principles of human resources management as it relates to festivals. Designing an organisational structure and job roles is discussed alongside team working, motivation and development needs. Motivations are also central to Chapter 9, but rather than workers, the focus is on audience members' motivations. Why would someone decide to attend your festival? Marketing's strategic role within your festival organisation is discussed and an overview of the principles of festival marketing provided. The chapter also helps you to understand and apply marketing tools such as segmentation and targeting, branding, customer relationship management, the marketing mix and marketing research.

Chapter 10 argues research is at the heart of good festival management and is essential to the development and success of festivals. It relates the key methodologies that are available to festival managers, and discusses their advantages and disadvantages. Practical advice is given on designing questions, and all aspects of research are explained from sampling, piloting, and data analysis to triangulation. The increasing importance of evaluation is emphasised both within the festival organisation and from without.

The final chapter examines managing festivals in a digital world and is designed to help festival managers make the most of developments in digital technology. First, by helping them understand the key developments and theories surrounding digital media, second by giving them insights into how it can be most effectively used, and third by looking at the opportunities it presents and how to manage the potential pitfalls. One of the largest areas the digital world has impacted on in festivals is marketing, particularly social media marketing, this chapter provides a much-needed guide to working in these areas. It also deals with digital public relations and communication. Finally, it recognises the contribution that digital technology is making to festival content and creativity itself.

Of course, these eleven chapters can also serve you well as stand-alone points for reference, advice and help. The authors of this book believe festivals are an important part of the fabric of modern society, and that festival management whenever or wherever you find it is rewarding and fulfilling. We hope that this book provides its readers with a set of guiding principles that helps them not only to develop and manage successful festivals of their own, but also enjoy and appreciate the work of other festival managers around the world.

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