



**Events need content
and dramaturgy.
Content is King,
drama is Queen.**

If you are in a huge hurry, you only need to read one page of this chapter.

But that would be a shame because you would miss quite a bit. For example what Romeo and Juliet have to do with your management conference and why mental rests are important.

Idea is a term that everyone thinks they can explain. But if you ask around, you will find that people’s definitions vary hugely. To make sure we are working on the same basis and a common understanding, let’s start by defining an ‘idea’ as a ‘guiding thought’.

Where events are concerned, the idea is a whole lot more than just a ‘notion’. The idea is the overarching, determining conception that will (potentially) give the event its character. Meaning: the answer to the question of ‘what’. What shall we actually do to achieve the event’s objective, the reason ‘why’ we are having the event? As with all guiding ideas, you have to think about how to realize them. In the last sentence, the word ‘how’ sneaked in coincidentally. But it’s very apt, because in terms of event conception, ‘how’ means four important things: staging, dramaturgy, brand suitability and tailoring. This chapter covers the first two.

There are many ways to apply every idea – whether it is a good or bad one. For example, think about the myriad ways to present a product on stage. Raise the curtain on it, enshroud it in dry ice, drive it in, drop it down, unveil it, surround it with projections, make it magically appear – you’ve seen it all, right? Besides the original idea, the question of ‘how’, the way in which the guiding idea is realized, is decisive for an event’s success. Staging and dramaturgy play a key role here.

‘Staging’ and ‘dramaturgy’ are another two terms that mean something different to every event manager. Both are rooted in the arts, in the theater to be precise. If you are in a hurry, the following quick definitions will go a long way.

Dramaturgy denotes the art of building suspense. Staging means the style in which a director (or in this case, event manager) presents a play (or an event).

If that’s all you need to know, then please proceed to chapter 9 – but be warned that you will miss quite a bit.

Below, we will give these two terms, their origin and history, more thorough consideration. Plenty will be revealed to support you in your search for a good idea and how to realize it.

Back to the theater. Even in the ancient world, people loved to be entertained. Whether thoughtful love stories or raucous romps, action on stage has always fascinated audiences. The makers of those early plays made an enormous contribution to our cultural history. They quickly learned that plays that followed certain principles of composition, that had a definite structure, worked best. The audience laughed or cried at exactly the right moments.

Notice the analogy with events? Whether comedies or tragedies, plays that follow certain principles almost always hit the target. In a drama, this happens via ‘ups and downs’ in the plot. Every tragedy has five distinct phases: introduction, escalation, surprise development, de-escalation and final catastrophe. Comedies work in almost the same manner – just replace the catastrophe with a happy end. We find the same patterns in the composition of movies, music, literature and even computer games.

—> How do you apply all this to events?

From the perspective of an event manager, dramaturgy means “translating an event idea into a consistent plot that serves to convey the event’s message, to concretize the plot structure and timeline, and to play with the audience’s expectations by systematically building and reducing suspense.”

Clear enough, right? And very helpful for developing your next concept. Perhaps the bit about “playing with the audience’s expectations” is already sparking your imagination, reminding you of the key points in chapter 5 and leading you directly to new ideas about how to convey your event message.

Let’s think about the second aspect of staging an event.

In the theater context, the term ‘staging’ was coined as an equivalent to the French “mise-en-scène” in the early 19th century. In 1837, August Lewald delivered the first definition: “To ‘stage’ means to fully visualize a dramatic piece of work in order to supplement the author’s intentions and increase the work’s impact by external means.” So originally, the process of staging had a mainly replicative nature. Have you thought of everything? Performed the play fully and faithfully?

There is a striking similarity here to events. Remember the pearl necklace. One component follows the next, nothing is left out or moved out of place.

But staging can do a whole lot more. In the theater as well as in events. Since the early 20th century, people have expected more from staging, namely the performance of a story enhanced by the creative signature of the