

# Summer festivals

The months of June, July, and August are the best months to experience some of Europe's most famous festivals. France's Festival d'Avignon (7–27 July) is known for its modern theatre productions, Switzerland has the Montreux Jazz Festival (2–17 July), while Germany has the Bayreuth Festival (25 July–28 August), dedicated to the operas of Wagner.

Making classical music available to everyone has always been the aim of the Proms, one of the biggest festivals of classical music in the world. This year's festival runs from 16 July to 11 September and includes over 70 concerts at London's Royal Albert Hall.

The first Proms concert took place on 10 August 1895 with Henry Wood conducting the orchestra. Although Wood's name is usually associated with the Proms, it was the impresario Robert Newman who first had the idea of attracting people who didn't usually go to classical concerts. He did this by making ticket prices low and creating an informal atmosphere. In the early days people could eat, drink, smoke and walk around during the concerts. The name 'Proms' is short for 'promenade', a place where people walk. People can still buy cheap tickets and stand at the concerts although they can't eat, drink or smoke.

This year's Proms started with a performance of Mahler's Eighth Symphony, also known as 'Symphony of a Thousand'. It was first performed exactly 100 years ago with more than a thousand performers on stage. It was a spectacular way to start the festival and to celebrate the 150th anniversary of Mahler's birth.

The Edinburgh International Festival (13 August–5 September) is Britain's biggest arts festival. In fact it's called the largest cultural event in the world. It started in 1947 to encourage the arts in Britain during the difficult years after the Second World War. While the first Festival was taking place, some other theatre companies staged their own unofficial productions. The idea grew and became the Edinburgh Festival Fringe, an unofficial festival with thousands of theatre productions, concerts and comedy shows.

Other festivals also take place in Edinburgh around the same time, making the Edinburgh Festival a collection of independent festivals. Apart from the 'official' festival with its classical and contemporary theatre, opera, music, dance, and visual arts, there's the Fringe, the Edinburgh Military Tattoo, the Edinburgh Jazz and Blues Festival, and the Edinburgh International Book Festival. The Edinburgh International Film Festival also used to take place in August but it moved to June to avoid clashing with the other festivals.

Edinburgh can be a busy place during the Festival, which is why many people who live in the city go away in August.

## 1 Use the words to continue the lists.

dance drawing film juggling magic music opera painting  
photography poetry sculpture short stories theatre video

### Performing arts

acrobatics, busking, \_\_\_\_\_

### Visual arts

architecture, design, \_\_\_\_\_

### Literature

novels, plays, \_\_\_\_\_

2 Read the article and complete the table.

Country	Festival name	Type	Dates
			7–27 July
Switzerland			
		Wagner operas	
	Proms		
		all the arts	

3 Decide if each sentence is about the Proms (P) or the Edinburgh Festival (E).

- 1 The festival started in 1895. P/E
- 2 The original aim was to encourage the arts in post-war Britain after the war. P/E
- 3 The opening performance is celebrating an anniversary. P/E
- 4 The festival includes theatre, opera, and music. P/E
- 5 It's more than just one festival. P/E
- 6 Some tickets are available at a special low price. P/E

4 Read the article and answer the questions.

- 1 Who started the Proms?
- 2 What did he want to do?
- 3 What could you do in the original Proms but can't do today?
- 4 What happened during the first Edinburgh Festival?
- 5 What's the Fringe?
- 6 Why do some local people leave Edinburgh at Festival time?

5 Write opposites of these adjectives and find your answers in the article.

- 1 expensive \_\_\_\_\_
- 2 high \_\_\_\_\_
- 3 last \_\_\_\_\_
- 4 old-fashioned \_\_\_\_\_
- 5 quiet \_\_\_\_\_
- 6 small \_\_\_\_\_

6 Answer the questions in your own words.

- 1 Which do you prefer: the performing arts, the visual arts, or literature?
- 2 Which of the festivals in the article would you most like to go to?
- 3 Have you ever been to a festival?
- 4 Imagine you are organising a festival. What kind of festival would it be and who would you invite to perform there?

### Glossary

**aim** (*noun*) – the thing you want to achieve

**atmosphere** (*noun*) – the feeling in a place and affects the people who are there

**available** (*adjective*) – able to be used

**busy** (*adjective*) – full of people

**clash** (*verb*) – to happen at the same time

**event** (*noun*) – an organized occasion such as a party

**fringe** (*noun*) – activities connected with a public event but not an official part of it

**impresario** (*noun*) – a person who organizes concerts, plays, or operas

**post-war** (*adjective*) – happening immediately after a war, especially the Second World War

**run** (*verb*) – to continue

**tattoo** (*noun*) – a military event where soldiers march and perform to music