

Monday, 26 July 2021

**A Letter to The Edinburgh Festival Fringe Society Chief Executive And Board
concerning the Future of Street Event's Management.**

Dear Shona and Fringe Society Board,

In cutting the Street Events Team, the Fringe Society has lost all the hard work, fine tuning and relationship building that the Street Events Team have done over the last 10+ years. We are really afraid about the direction of the management of the spaces that are so important to us and the public.

We appreciate that this year is unique and difficult and that you are working with very few resources. This letter addresses a history of concerns and shares the feeling that we are a bolted add-on to the Street Events rather than the beating heart.

We support genuine measures to ensure the health of staff, audiences and performers at this year's Fringe, and we support moves that The Fringe Society can make to ensure the future of street performing at the Edinburgh Fringe Festival.

1. Consultation with the Street Performing Community. There appears to have been a pretence of a consultation process with us, this year and in previous years. This year, after several meetings of supposed consultation with performers, our feedback was again disregarded. Yet again, the final decisions made by the Fringe Society negatively impact the historic street performance spaces. They are uninformed by our contribution. Dismissing over 20 years of experience in this Art form These decisions ultimately impact our ability to entertain the public and, we feel, the overwhelming contribution we make to the public and festival as a whole.

Because of this there is a real loss of faith and trust in what the new organisational structure is going to be. Especially now that the Fringe Society is bringing in an external for-profit corporate organisation to support delivery of the event.

We have years of experience performing Street Shows across the world at hundreds of festivals and busking pitches. We want to make sure our expertise is listened to and heard moving forward, with transparent communication so we can genuinely help shape the event.

2. The Johnnie Walker Fringe Club Bar on The Mound. The solution from the Fringe Society to Covid compliance, licensing and funding problems for Street Events is to place a Johnnie Walker Fringe Club Bar on a historic pitch on the Mound. We are outraged and really uncomfortable that the solution was to enclose a family performance space within a bar. The justification that without Johnnie Walker's sponsorship Street Events could not take place misses the irony that this is now going to be an unworkable space for most performers. The Fringe Society is not offering a Street Event performance space on the Mound, but essentially giving a large multi-national company a venue on an historic performance space that it is expecting performers to work in, for free.

When infrastructure such as stages, arenas, bars and seating are placed on the spaces we perform, the very nature of 'Street' show is lost along with the ability to deliver our art form to our audiences.

3. Edinburgh on the Global Street performing Map. The Royal Mile is a world famous street performing pitch. The West Parliament Square pitch is recognised internationally as one of the best places to perform street shows. It is unlike any other space, and international performers travel to the festival just for the opportunity to perform on that pitch. The street performing pitches during the Fringe are a central hub on a global network of festivals, drawing performers from around the world. The reason they come? Because the spaces are so good to perform in and the audiences are so appreciative of this art form.

4. The history and importance of Street Performing at the Fringe. Street shows have been happening on the Mound since the 70's, predating the Fringe Society's official involvement by decades. Street performers then moved up to the Royal Mile building audiences year on year. The Royal Mile is now worked by local Edinburgh performers all year round. With growing audiences permission was requested to start

doing shows on The West Parliament Square. As audiences for street theatre grew and the Fringe Society's Street Events team came in to develop and manage Street Events the Royal Mile became the central focus of the Fringe.

Thousands of people enjoy street shows everyday of the Fringe, with performers working come rain or shine. It is the most accessible art form at the Fringe and can be enjoyed by all for free. So often it is the images of street performers that are used by the Fringe, in media and branding to promote the Edinburgh Fringe Festival. On the first day of the Fringe, Shona comes to our daily allocation of performance spaces to tell us we are the valued heart of the festival. In press releases we are celebrated by the Fringe.

Yet despite this we do not have a voice at the table when decisions are made that negatively impact our ability to entertain the public.

Moving forward, we make the following requests;

1. As the artists the Fringe Society supposedly supports, we'd like to be recognised as stakeholders in what happens to the spaces that we perform in. We want to publicly ask the Fringe Society to ensure no decisions will be made in the future that impact on these historic street theatre spaces without truly listening to and acting on the input of the street performing community. We suggest a recognised council of street performers be at the table when decisions are being made. We want to be an equal stake-holder in what happens to the performance spaces.
2. A promise that from 2022 onwards there won't be a bar placed on any street performing spaces.
3. A promise that street performance spaces won't be sold off to anyone, keeping the spaces for artists.
4. We suggest a series of meetings to set out a framework for future events as well as meetings throughout the year so there is time for genuine collaboration.
5. We want there to be an agreement that no infrastructure be placed on or around the pitch, such as signs, staging, arenas and seating.

6. An arena venue has been placed on West Parliament Square for Covid compliance. We want a cast iron commitment that this doesn't roll over into future years when Covid no longer necessitates additional safety procedures.
7. A commitment that Street Events will remain 'open access' to all.
8. A written agreement between the Fringe Society and the street performing community agreeing to the above points.

Signed by the following performers from the international street performance community and their supporters:

STREET PERFORMERS

Aaron Jessup	Blake Habermann	Dan Craig
Abraham Arzate	Brian Bielemeier	Daniel Oldaker
Adam Scott	Brian Hulse	Daniel Zindler
Al Millar	Brian Reid	Dave Southern
Amelia Cadwallader	Charlie Caper	David 'Splatt' Rosenblatt
Amy Saunders	Charmaine Childs	David Wyatt
Ananta vangmai	Chayne Hultgren	Dimitri Zabuta
Andrew Elliot	Chris Cross	Dwayne Andrew
Andy Christie	Chris Visser	Elaine Davidson
Andy Sumpton	Christopher Stewens	Elliot Bibby
Anna Wolf	Ciara Thorburn	Francisco (Kiki) Vita Roldan
Anthony Campbell	Conrade Rivalland	Frodo Santini
Asaf Barsella	Dado Show	Gareth Jones
Billy Watman	Damien Ryan	

Gareth Williams	Jemadeekara	Lisa Lottie
Gary Justin Sane Knights Gazzo	Lewandowski-Fowler-Porter	Logy Logan
Geno DeVille	Jeremy Ansley	Louise Clark
Gordo Gamsby	Jessica Arpin	Maja Nilsson
Goronwy Thom	Jessica Jules	Mark Beltran
Greg Frisbee	Jon Hicks	Mark Jagger
Guy Collins	Jon McKenna	Mark Watson
H.K Vermeulen	Jonathan Goh	Markon Harkel
Hannah Cryle	Joseph May	Mat Ricardo
Heather Burns	Josh Smith	Matt Barnard
Herbie Treehead	JP McKendry	Matthew Keys
Hunter Way	Julian Bell	Michael-Anthony Ave
Ian Deadly	Kacper Mysiorek	Maria Bonnici-Erichsen
Ian Kendall	Kate Mior	Mr Freak
Iulia Benze	Kate Ryan	Natasha Mcghie
Jack Shepherd	Katie Wright	Nathan Bonner
James Farrimond	Kozo Komatsubara	Nick Stein
James Hessler	Kristien Harris	Niko Leo
Jas Jobsland	Kurt Murray	Noel Byrne
	Kwabana Lindsay	Orshi Joni
	Léa Rovero and Frank Powlesland	Patrick Adderley
		Patrick McCullagh

Paul Bezaire	Rugg Tomcat	Tabatha Ladbrook-Hutt
Pete Anderson	Sam Goodburn	Tahmour Bloomfield
Peter Kolofsky	Samuel Hogarth	Tash Bird
Phillippe Dreyfuss	Samuel Peñastro	Thomasina Adamson
Pop Edie	Scott Hutchison	Tim Motley
Rani Huszar	Sharon Mahoney	Timon Timon Timon
Reuben dotdotdot Kuan	Shep Huntly	Todd Various
Rex Boyd	Signe Marie Aamand Bonnici-Erichsen	Tom McCowie
Richard Garaghty	Simon West	Tommy "Fireboy" Everson
Richard Handley	Simon Wood	Toni Smith
Rob Collins	Sparky Clarky	Tony Roberts
Robbie Cockburn	Steve Rawlings	Uiliames Bispo Almeida
Rosabelle Danielle DeLune	Stuart "Pockets" Crout	

FRIENDS AND SUPPORTERS

Ananta vangmai	Keep Streets Live	Stuart Every - CFO Dolphin Events
Ian Dean	Rory Bremner - Impressionist and Comedian	
Natasha De Fonseca		