

# Free Fringe looking for purveyors of the spoken word

*Peter Buckley Hill's Free Fringe is back in 2012 with a new venue and needs more shows to fill it*

Scots poets are being invited to reconquer the city of R.L. Stevenson, J.K. Rowling and Norman MacCaig by taking part in the largest arts festival in the world, but without having to pay for venue hire or indeed their inclusion in the brochure.

Free Fringe, where performers charge nothing for entry, rattle a bucket at the end and ask for nothing towards the costs of running the organisation, have secured a whole new venue in Edinburgh's New Town. They are now looking for storytellers, spoken worders, poets and Makars to fill it, from 12 noon till 10pm, from the 4-25 August 2012 (or at least hour-long parts thereof!) Now they have secured a new space at the Fiddler's Elbow to add to their 2011 collection of 34 stages in 30 venues, but they need acts to perform there.

The Free Fringe has now been going for seventeen years, and it has become a Fringe within a Fringe. Last year approximately 20% of the shows at the Fringe were at the Free Fringe. Unsurprising, when performers need not pay the £295-£395 to go in the official brochure, but are included in Free Fringe's own brochure (with a circulation of 100,000) for free.

Its spoken word section has been going for three years under its head, the red-headed Richard Tyrone Jones, of 'Utter!' spoken word, who said: "I wouldn't be able to afford to go to Edinburgh and appear in a paid venue. Instead it makes me proud to have programmed poets from around the world to do their shows with us, often debuts, including Tim Turnbull, Helen Mort, Aisle 16, Baba Brinkman and Peterborough's Dead Poets, who got five four star reviews. But many awesome

Scottish performers such as the Chemical Poets won't be performing this year, and it meks me sair dulesome."

"But with this new venue, the 40-capacity [Fiddler's Elbow](#) on Picardy Place, we can give probably another 24 poets their own one-week run. You have to be prepared to chip in with helping keep the venue happy, and to give out Free Fringe programmes with your flyers, but you'll get to meet other writers from around the world – and audiences are bigger than for paid shows. The disadvantage is you are less likely to be reviewed but it is more about the sense of camaraderie, and the other shows you get to share. All you have to lose is your flyer-photocopying and accommodation costs – which is nothing if you live here already! And if you do, can I rent your sofa please? I've still not got my accommodation sorted."

Those interested are invited to read the Terms & conditions on the Free Fringe website to decide if it is for them, then to contact [schedules@freefringe.org.uk](mailto:schedules@freefringe.org.uk) with a show title, proposal, a few samples of work in video, audio or documents, how long a run they would like to do, when during the festival and at what time of day and they will try to meet your preferences.

And if you're not Scottish, they insist you're almost just as welcome.