

# Richard Demarco receives The Edinburgh Award on Monday



*Richard Demarco is to receive the Edinburgh Award on Monday evening in a ceremony at the City Chambers. Roddy Martine offers his view of the man behind The Traverse and so much else on the Edinburgh arts scene.*

IT is difficult to imagine what the cultural life of Edinburgh would have been like today were it not for Professor Richard Demarco, CBE.

For over fifty years his nomadic galleries have been at the hub of creativity and inspiration internationally, from the Georgian town house of Melville Crescent in the 1960s, to Blackfriars Street, Albany Street, the Royal High School, a barn at Skateraw in East Lothian, Craigcrook Castle, and now at Summerhall, the former Dick Vet premises on the Meadows.

Would the first Traverse Theatre in Victoria Street have ever got off the ground in the 1960s without the unlikely collaboration of Ricky Demarco, Jim Haynes, Terry Lane, Nicky Fairbairn and Michael Shea, among others? Perhaps, but from such seedy surroundings it would never have projected such a big personality. Nor would it have attracted the likes of Lotte Lenya.

Who else could have persuaded the worthies of Edinburgh to turn out in the rain with their umbrellas for his unforgettable Festival Fringe productions of the Scottish Play on Inchcolm Island and on the windswept clifftop of Ravenscraig Castle in Kirkcaldy? And in Belarusian!

Only four weeks ago the octogenarian was up in Perthshire for a chilly open-air performance of A Mid Winter Night's Dream in the gardens of Fingask Castle. The shivering young actors of the Highland Shakespeare Company were enthralled at his attention and enthusiasm, and they hung on his every word.

The man who as an art student painted a young Sean Connery posing in a jock strap at Edinburgh College of Art has been a vibrant, controversial, dynamic, exhausting, sometimes infuriating but always lovable force of nature in our city since his schooldays in Leith.

Professor of European Culture at the University of Kingston, entrepreneur behind Demarco Rocket Productions and the Demarco European Arts Foundation, and the impresario who introduced the German Joseph Beuys, the Polish Tadeusz Kantor, the Romanian Paul Neagu and the Serbian Marina Abramović to Edinburgh, Richard Demarco's career has been the stuff of legend.

Following Poland, Italy, Germany, Romania, Europe has already recognised him with its Citizen's Medal. The only criticism surrounding his nomination for The Edinburgh Award, an engraved Loving Cup, is that it was not given to him a half century ago.

But then it is only the seventh time that it has been presented. So better late than never.

Submitted by [Roddy Martine](#)

