

New festival coming to Edinburgh in August

The charity Deaf Action is behind the new festival being held in Edinburgh this August. The Deaf Festival will celebrate language and culture and is a Scottish first.

More than 100 people involved in the arts and politics gathered at the official launch earlier this week and were told that the event will be led by deaf people in the organisation and production. There will be drama, magic, comedy, cabaret, tours and exhibitions. A deaf rave is also on the agenda.

Philip Gerrard, CEO of Deaf Action, said: "A few years ago there was a debate organised by the Fringe about whether we should have a deaf festival. At the end of that session I stood up and said 'I will make this happen'. And three years later, here we are. It is so thrilling.

"It is lovely to see such a range of people here tonight to join us to celebrate the programme launch.

"The festival will be a real celebration of our language, culture, heritage and the variety of people that make up our community.

"What's more the programme we have tonight is just the first edition and we have more events to add in the coming weeks."

The programme launch, at Bonnie & Wild, St James Quarter, brought together performers and supporters including Fringe CEO Shona McCarthy, plus representatives from EventScotland, the Scottish Government and St James Quarter.

Shona McCarthy, CEO of Edinburgh Festival Fringe said: “The Edinburgh Fringe is really proud to be associated with the first deaf festival in Scotland.

“I am completely thrilled to see this happen. It’s amazing to see Deaf Action, and the all the community, come together to put together such a comprehensive programme. And they’re still adding to it.

“I’m just so proud of everybody in this room tonight. I think this is something that’s going to continue into the future and I hope it becomes an annual addition to the festivals landscape.”



Pictured signing “festival” are (from left) Jamie Rea (a deaf British Sign Language user and member of Solar Bear, producing

a deaf cabaret show entitled “Spill Your Drink”), Edinburgh Festival Fringe Society chief executive Shona McCarthy and Philip Gerrard (chief executive of the Deaf Action charity). Photography for Deaf Action from: Colin Hattersley Photography

Festival highlights will include:

- *Perspectives with Gavin:* International standup Gavin Lilley shares his experiences as a deaf person navigating a hearing world.
- *SPILL YOUR DRINK:* Deaf cabaret from Glasgow’s Solar Bear theatre company which works with deaf and hearing actors, theatre makers, artists and young people.
- *Deaf Rave:* with leading deaf DJs including DJ Chinaman, MC Geezer, DJ Ceri Karma, Jia McKenzie and Billy Reid in an underground car park in the St James’ Quarter.
- *The Funny Punny Magic Show:* with the acclaimed Tricky Ricky.
- *Once Upon A Raindrop:* Cheerful, funny, magic show for toddlers with a walkthrough performance with sensory games and magic tricks.

Christina McKelvie, Minister for Equalities and Older People, said: “I warmly welcome the Edinburgh Deaf Festival to Scotland’s festivals family this year and thank Deaf Action for their work in organising.

“This inaugural festival will highlight the wonders of deaf culture and its arts which will be a showcase of how communities can come together to enjoy inclusive and accessible entertainment, stories and cultural enrichment.

“In our Culture Strategy for Scotland, the Scottish Government set out our goal of supporting everyone, regardless of background, language or disability, to lead a cultural life of their choice, with all aspects of cultural engagement available to them.

“This festival will be fully aligned with our government’s intention to ultimately make Scotland the best place in the world for people who sign to live, work, visit and learn – so that people whose primary language is BSL will be fully involved in all areas of daily and public life in Scotland.”

The festival will also feature an exhibition and screening as part of Scotland’s Year of Stories 2022, which has been designed to spotlight, celebrate and promote the wealth of deaf-led stories inspired by, written, or created in Scotland.

- Performances will be at Deaf Action, 49 Albany Street, Edinburgh, and other venues across the city.
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- The programme and tickets are available through the Edinburgh Fringe box office at <https://www.edfringe.com>
- <https://edinburghdeaffestival.co.uk>



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Deaf Action from: Colin Hattersley Photography