

# Comedian tribute raises thousands

A heart-warming Edinburgh Fringe show organised by comedians to raise money for the young family of a fellow stand-up who died after a car crash earlier this year, has raised almost £23,000, it was announced on Wednesday.

Stars including Frank Skinner, Dara Ó Briain and Jack Whitehall rallied after much-loved comic and radio presenter Gareth Richards died on 7 April after a crash on his way home from a gig.

Richards, 43, was looking forward to performing at the Fringe, and had booked a 4pm slot each day at Whistlebinkies pub on Edinburgh's South Bridge.

Close friends and fellow top comedians Mark Simmons and Danny Ward decided to keep Richards' slot and put on "A Show For Gareth Richards" to celebrate his life and raise money for his young family.

A host of household names then volunteered to do a turn in a heartwarming tribute to the comic whose own debut Edinburgh Fringe show in 2010 was nominated for the best newcomer award.

Each day featured a different line up of stars determined to pay tribute to Richards and raise thousands of pounds for a JustGiving page set up to start a trust fund for Richards' two

sons, aged 11 and 13.

More than 80 leading comics from the UK stand-up circuit, including Skinner, Ó Briain and Whitehall as well as Stewart Lee, Shaparak Khorsandi, Glenn Moore, Troy Hawke, Nick Helm, Iain Stirling, Mark Nelson, Hal Cruttenden, Susie McCabe and Ivo Graham among others, performed for free, with audience members encouraged to make donations at the end of each show.

The show, which was packed to capacity every day throughout the Fringe, was also awarded the Victoria Wood Award, which carried a £5000 prize and the inaugural (ISH) Edinburgh Comedy Awards Panel Prize.

Simmonds said: "Including the prize fund from The Victoria Wood Award the grand total raised for Gareth's sons' trust fund is £22,869,25."

Scots comedian Jojo Sutherland, who compered the final show on Sunday [AUG 27], said: "When Gareth passed away there was an outpouring. Comedians have really come together not just to 'do something' but to celebrate Gareth.

"Something like this, for Gareth's family, I hope is a crumb of comfort."

Comedian Sarah Bowles, co-ordinator of the (ISH) Edinburgh Comedy Awards, who presented A Show for Gareth Richards with its inaugural Panel Prize, added: "A Show for Gareth Richards was monumental. It changed the whole of the Festival to have something so lovely that has united everyone, and changed Edinburgh for the better. It was lovely to be able to support them."

Simmons, who was compere at several of the shows in tribute to his late friend, said: "Gareth was meant to have this slot and Danny (Ward) and I said 'let's use that space to keep Gareth's spirit alive at the Fringe and celebrate him'.

“To start with we thought we would just do it ourselves but when comedians found out about it the comedy community just pulled together. It’s been amazing. It’s a competitive industry but when it matters people come together.”

Simmons added: “Gareth was a top comedian but he was also just a lovely, kind hearted bloke. In lockdown he trained to be a counsellor and started working in schools counselling teenage kids dealing with mental health. He was the best.”

Richards, who appeared on TV shows like Russell Howard’s Good News and 4 Stands Up, was also co-host of the Frank Skinner Show on Absolute Radio.

Skinner, who headlined one of the shows, said: “I wanted to do it because I loved Gareth. I’d known him a long time, we did a radio show together and he supported me on tour twice. I didn’t feel I could be in Edinburgh and not do this show.”

