

# Fringe 2024 – From Edinburgh Suffragists to the Fringe

A century after Sara Wesker won better pay for women workers the battle for equality in the workplace goes on.

Lottie Walker, who plays the pioneering 20<sup>th</sup>-century trade unionist in the Fringe show ***Chopped Liver and Unions***, highlighted the point when she joined with women on the front line of today's struggle for equality.

They met outside the former Edinburgh home of the Stevenson sisters, 19<sup>th</sup>-century campaigners who fought for women to get the vote and access to university education.

Lottie said: *"Sara is an inspiration. She understood that women's calls for decent pay and conditions would be ignored if they didn't join together and campaign.*

*"Her story is also a warning from history. She led women workers in the 20s and 30s, when there was a massive financial crisis, a shortage of jobs, inadequate housing for the working class and unhealthy, unethical working environments.*

*"Global political turmoil was leading to an enormous migration. And the extreme right was on the rise, intent on persecuting anyone perceived as "different".*

*"Sounds familiar doesn't it!*

*"The women trade unionists of today are fighting battles every bit as important as those of Sara Wesker in the 20<sup>th</sup> century and the Stevenson sisters before her. They deserve our support and admiration."*

As women had little effective trade union representation, Sara Wesker set up her own organisation The United Clothing

Workers' Union.

One of her key lines in the play is: *"You cannot expect to be invited to the table; you must demand they set your place."*

The trade unionists Lottie met up with were former firefighter Denise Christie and Liz Taylor, the health and safety social care representative with UNITE the Union.

**Commenting, STUC General Secretary Roz Foyer said:** *"Trailblazers like Sara Wesker fought for better pay and conditions. We follow in her footsteps and all those who have come after her. It's damning that the fight for equality, parity, and recognition – the same values that Sara and the Stevenson sisters demanded 100 years ago – must continue to this day."*

*"We see this in workplaces across Scotland. From local government workers in Edinburgh City Council, who look set to strike during the Fringe itself, to predominantly female care workers demanding the return of their 'Missing Millions', workers across the country are still fighting for a fair deal."*

**"Chopped Liver and Unions** tells the story of those who fight for the persecuted and demand equality. These are the traditions of our movement. They are principles of our people. We are delighted this has been brought to life in this show and look forward to a hugely successful run at this year's Fringe."

**Chopped Liver and Unions** returns to the Fringe after a highly successful run in 2023, an OffFest award nomination and a transfer to New York as part of the Brits Off Broadway season at 59E59 Theaters.

This time round performer **Lottie Walker** and director **Laura Killeen** will present a specially adapted and extended version of **J.J. Leppink's** play.

It takes audiences deeper into the struggles of one of the most dynamic and colourful figures in the history of trade unionism and the battle for women's rights.

Music was of especial importance as one of Sara's most momentous acts was to lead the "singing strikers" of 1928 – female garment workers who, lacking any strike pay, sang on the picket lines in return for donations from passers-by.

- "Lottie embodies Sara with just the right accent, passion shining out of her eyes" *British Theatre Guide* ★★★★★
- "Lottie Walker didn't just play Sara Wesker, she became her," [FringeReview](#) Highly Recommended.

Sara's nephew, the celebrated playwright Arnold Wesker, wrote a fictionalised version of her into *Chicken Soup with Barley*.

- Tickets: <https://tickets.edfringe.com>