

A History of the Edinburgh Festivals

The first Edinburgh International Festival (EIF) took place in 1947. It was joined from its inception by what subsequently became known as the Fringe and by the Film Festival. Pipes and Dancing also took place in the early years, eventually becoming the Military Tattoo in 1950. The Traverse Theatre, which has greatly enhanced both the EIF and the Fringe, joined the Feast in 1965, to be followed by the Jazz festival in the late 1970s, the Book festival in the early 1980s, and more recently the Art Festival in 2004.

In The Beginning ...

The first festival was held in 1947 ... or was it? In fact, Edinburgh had hosted a number of music festivals during the 19th century. The first event was held in early November, 1815. The venues included Parliament House and Corri's Rooms (a circus and concert hall that was situated on the corner of Leith Walk and Broughton Street). A profit of £1,500 was distributed to the Royal Infirmary and other charitable institutions. A second festival followed in 1819 with the Theatre Royal taking over from Corri's Rooms. There have been a number of Theatre Royals – this is the first one that was situated at the east end of Princes Street. This festival produced a profit of £1,231 that was again distributed to charities. Further festivals followed periodically, viz. 1824, 1843 and 1871 although the 1843 venture lost £600.



**Theatre Royal, Shakespeare Square, Edinburgh
(reproduced courtesy of Matthew Lloyd)**

Coming forward to the 20th century, a number of individuals were instrumental in getting the 1947 festival off the ground. The original idea germinated in the mind of Rudolf Bing, the General Manager of [Glyndebourne](#), around 1943. Bing was an Austrian-born impresario who had fled Nazi Germany in 1934, bringing with him all that was good about German and Austrian culture. Glyndebourne was in need of additional funding and his idea was for a music festival in association with Glyndebourne, utilising its resources. The

idea was given impetus by the fact that it was extremely unlikely that music festivals would be possible on mainland Europe for some time after the conclusion of the Second World War. Oxford was his first choice as the venue, but this fell through and attempts to interest other cities began in late 1944.

Edinburgh was proposed by Henry Harvey Wood who was based in the city working for The British Council, an organisation that had been set up to improve international relationships through the promotion of education and culture. While Wood encountered local enthusiasm and apathy in equal measures, he found strong allies in Sir John Falconer, the Lord Provost at the time, and Lady Rosebery. They were extremely influential in moving the idea forward, ultimately resulting in the formation of a festival committee in late 1945. Bing, the proposed artistic director, advocated a 3-4 week festival, but he did not help his cause by suggesting to councillors in Calvinist Scotland that the festival should open with a High Mass in St. Giles Cathedral! It was decided, because of the preparatory work that was necessary, that 1947 would be the earliest possible date for the event.

In September 1946 the City Council agreed to a three week festival (24th August – 13th September 1947), voting £20,000 to a guarantee fund to go alongside equivalent sums from The Arts Council and from private citizens. There were plenty of problems to be surmounted. One of the first issues was the logistics of dealing with large numbers of visitors to the city. Hotels were requisitioned; hostels and student residences used; plus 6,000 beds were made available by private households. The Assembly Rooms in George St. became the home of the Festival Club, and it also served meals. There was also the question of venues. The Council owned the Usher Hall but other venues were in private hands, and none of the venues was technically well equipped. Then there was the problem of getting high calibre artists to appear. From the UK the Royal Liverpool Philharmonic, the Hallé Orchestra and Sadlers Wells Ballet agreed

to take part. In the field of drama *Taming of The Shrew* and Moliere's *L'Ecole des Femmes* were performed. Glyndebourne put on opera at the King's Theatre while the Royal Scottish Academy extended its summer exhibition of Vuillard. Associated events included pipes and dancing on the Castle Esplanade, a forerunner of the Tattoo.

In addition to the International Festival, two other important events took place. Firstly, a weeklong film festival was organised by the Edinburgh Film Guild, eventually to become known as the Edinburgh International Film Festival. Secondly, eight theatre groups arrived uninvited, and although officially excluded from the festival, they set up shop in venues away from the official festival and did their own thing. This was the start of the Edinburgh Fringe. It was belatedly given that soubriquet after Robert Kemp, a Scottish journalist, wrote during the second Edinburgh International Festival in 1948: 'Round the fringe of official Festival drama, there seems to be more private enterprise than before ... I am afraid some of us are not going to be at home during the evenings!'

The weather, which is prone to be problematic, was fine and concerns that Edinburgh's citizens might not enter into the spirit of the festival proved to be ill-founded. Overall, the 1947 festival was judged to be a success despite complaints that a number of areas were inadequately covered, viz. too little ballet, neglect of the visual arts and no choral music. From a financial perspective, the estimated deficit of £20,000 was not exceeded.

Edinburgh International Festival

There are a number of interconnected strands that run through the history of the Edinburgh International Festival (EIF): the individual arts and the competition between them; the ideas of the various artistic directors which were obviously influenced by their individual tastes; funding and politics (the two go together as much of the subsidy came from the City Council); the use of themes in certain years; ongoing problems surrounding the availability of suitable venues; and last but not least, attempts at trying to compete with the Fringe.

The Artistic Directors

While the International Festival has valiantly attempted to present high quality festivals that are balanced across the arts spectrum, it is probably true to state that over the 60+ years of its existence,

music and opera have received more attention than drama, dance and the visual arts. Arguably, the primary reason for this has been the passions of the individual artistic directors. Apart from Frank Dunlop in the 1980s who was a theatre man, all the directors have had a music or opera background.

Rudolf Bing (1947-1949). As discussed, the main instigator of the EIF. He was the director of Glyndebourne Opera who subsequently took up the post as head of management at the New York Metropolitan Opera when he left the EIF.

Ian Hunter (1950-1955) had been a colleague of Bing at Glyndebourne before World War II. He is arguably best known for his contacts in the artistic world. It was during his regime that the visual arts were accorded more exposure. After leaving Edinburgh he founded various festivals around the UK, including Bath and Brighton, and advised on festival planning around the world. During the 1980s he was chairman of the English National Ballet.

Robert Ponsonby (1956-1960) was an Oxford organ scholar and subsequently controller of music for the BBC. He introduced late night revues such as *Flanders and Swann* and *Beyond the Fringe* in an attempt to compete with the Fringe in the evenings.

The Earl of Harewood (1961-1965) aimed to give opera a higher profile. It is reasonable to say that prior to his regime the EIF was still in its honeymoon period. During his tenure matters became more noticeably difficult on the financial front. The concept of themes started during his tenure with a Russian theme in 1962 and a Czech theme in 1964. Also, the commissioning of playwrights to write for the festival commenced under his regime. He cancelled a show in 1964 after its first performance because he considered it to be substandard.

Peter Diamand (1966-1978) was a music man. He was director of Holland music festival prior to taking the Edinburgh post and became the general director of the Royal London Philharmonic Orchestra after he left Edinburgh. He wanted to have an EIF company and mount Festival productions; he succeeded in the latter.

John Drummond (1979-1983) was more eclectic in his tastes than the other directors with the possible exception of the visual arts. Many consider that the most successful themes occurred during his reign, particularly the Diaghilev theme (1979) on the 50th

anniversary of the impresario's death and *Venice 1900* (1983). He encouraged the Book Fair (1983), subsequently to become the Book Festival.

Frank Dunlop (1984-1991) was a theatre man. He had to battle with the Labour-dominated city council for a significant part of his tenure, particularly with their desire to reduce elitism and promote more populist events all the year round, not just during August.

Brian McMaster (1992-2006) came from an opera background. He moved the management of the EIF to Edinburgh; it had previously been based in London. His objectives were to: reduce fringe-style events, particularly in the field of drama; present high quality, large scale performances that Fringe groups could not afford; place a tighter control on quality, partly by insisting on EIF organised and promoted events; and reflect the best of Scottish culture.

Jonathan Mills (2007-present) is an Australian and another music man. His CV includes the composition of two small operas and artistic director of the Melbourne Festival. He was given a 5 year contract which has now been extended to 2014. So far, he appears to be a keen advocate of festival themes.

Individual Art Forms

Bing was correct in his assertion that Edinburgh would have the festival field to itself while Europe recovered from the devastating effects of World War II. This relative lack of competition helped to shape the Edinburgh experience in the areas of music and opera as it became a magnet for the leading figures and companies. Over the first 25 years of its existence many of the world's leading orchestras, opera companies and solo artists appeared. Apart from British companies the appearance of the New York Philharmonic in 1951 was one of the early coups. Other notable first appearances included: Vienna Philharmonic (1953); Yehudi Menuhin, Isaac Stern and Giaconda De Vito (1954) when the theme was four centuries of the violin; Boston Symphony (1956); Berlin Philharmonic with Karajan (1961) who had previously conducted the Philharmonia Orchestra in 1953; and the USSR State Orchestra's visit in 1968 when there was a degree of apprehension surrounding its reception in the light of the Prague Uprising earlier that year, fortunately misplaced. Popular solo artists included: Kathleen Ferrier who sang in all six festivals before her early death in

1953, Teresa Berganza and Maria Callas.

A significant development was Harewood's decision in 1965 to form the Scottish Festival Chorus, later named the Edinburgh Festival Chorus. It consisted solely of amateurs. Their lauded debut was in a performance of Mahler's 8th Symphony. After a performance of Bach's *Magnificat* with the Berlin Philharmonic Orchestra in 1967 Karajan placed them among the top three choruses in Europe.

Other music highlights have included: Mahler's *Resurrection Symphony* by the London Symphony under Abbado with Margaret Price and Janet Baker as soloists (1971), and the London Symphony with the Festival Chorus (1973); Verdi's *Requiem* with the London Philharmonic conducted by Giulini with Arroyo, Cassotto and Pavarotti (1973), and again in 1982 with the London Symphony; the Bolshoi Theatre Orchestra in 1987 as part of a Russian theme (70th anniversary of the revolution); and the concert by St. Petersburg Philharmonic as part of the Dvorak theme (1995).

The increased costs of bringing star names has led to the introduction of more up and coming artists in the recent past, including: Ian Bostridge, Bryn Terfel, Dmitri Hvorostovsky, Barbara Frittoli, Salvatore Licitra, Karita Mattila and Jonas Kaufmann; and conductors Gunther Wand, Claudio Abbado, and the young Philippe Jordan. Several attempts have been made to prevent the programme from becoming stale, notably by Drummond in the early 1980s. This continued with the introduction of more contemporary work by McMaster, e.g. the James MacMillan theme in 1993 and the 12 hour marathon *Fidelio* day in 1994.

Opera has often been caught in the middle between the devotees who inevitably crave the best performances with star names and those favouring other art forms who generally consider that opera is expensive and does not provide value for money, although the advent of concert opera (opera without costumes, scenery or an entire opera company) has gone some way to blunt this criticism. Notwithstanding this debate, prominent performances over the years have included: Glyndebourne's 1953 productions of Stravinsky's *The Rake's Progress*, Rossini's *La Cenerentola*, and Mozart's *Idomeneo*; Janacek's *Kata Kabanova* by the Prague National Theatre (1964), which was one of Harewood's favourites during his tenure; Florence Opera with Donizetti's *Maria Stuarda* and Verdi's *Rigoletto* (1969); Edinburgh Festival Opera's *La*

Cenerentola with Teresa Berganza (1971); Edinburgh Festival Opera's *Carmen* (1977); Opera de Lyon's *L'Etoile* by Chabrier (1985); Weber's *Oberon* directed by Dunlop (1986); Houston Grand Opera's *Nixon in China* (1988); *A Midsummer Night's Dream* by Opera Australia (1994); the Royal Opera's *Don Carlos* (1998); and the EIF production of Benjamin Britten's *Curlew River* (2005).

From the audience's perspective, the ability to see so many outstanding music and opera performances in such a short time span at very affordable prices has been extremely attractive. Over and above these elements, both performers and audience have undoubtedly been affected by the intoxicating atmosphere of the overall festival. This chemistry between performers and audience has continued up to the present day. One aficionado says "Performers have always been very professional and well prepared when they show up. There is something about the audiences at the Edinburgh Festival that make the performers want to put on their best show. I think there is an aura of excitement, enthusiasm, and appreciation at Edinburgh from both the performers and audiences that is unmatched anywhere else. While there are many other outstanding festivals there is an intimacy and shared experience at Edinburgh that is not evident elsewhere. I have gone to many other performances with great artists at the best concert halls, and often the performers seem to be just going through the motions. This has never happened to me in Edinburgh. The artists seem to be there because they truly choose to do so as artists. They seem to feel the same excitement about being with so many great artists, such enthusiastic audiences, and just seem to be enjoying themselves as well just doing what the rest of us are doing when not performing. Another remarkable thing about Edinburgh is the wonderful opportunity to see the beginning of so many wonderful professional careers. The artistic director is very adept in identifying the very best of new, young performers and it is an opportunity to see them at a stage before they become spoiled or too seasoned."

Dance has experienced something of a roller coaster ride in terms of exposure over the years, alternating good and bad periods that have possibly corresponded to criticisms of the lack of dance on the one hand with complaints that it was too expensive on the other. Notable performances in the early years included: Sadlers Wells with Moira Shearer in *Swan Lake* and *Ballet Imperial* (1951), plus Stravinsky's *The Soldier's Tale* (1954); *Le*

Bourgeois Gentleman by Comedie Francaise plus *Firebird* with Margot Fonteyn (both in 1954), and *Swan Lake*, again with Fonteyn in 1956. There was a gradual shift with the introduction of more contemporary dance performances with Martha Graham in the sixties, Twyla Tharp who first appeared in 1976, and the Australian Dance Theatre with their innovative *Flibbertigibbet* in 1980 when 13 dancers appeared in boiler suits. The 1990s were notable for the appearances of Mark Morris's Dance Group, including a combined opera ballet, Gluck's *Orfeo ed Euridice*. Overall, McMaster's tenure arguably saw an upturn in the fortunes of dance, as exemplified by *Swan Lake* (2005), choreographed by Christopher Wheeldon. More recently, *Matthew Bourne's Dorian Gray* was well received by punters in 2008, though less so by the critics.

The lack of attention that has been generally accorded to drama has been highlighted by many critics over the years; some directors have been accused of having little or no interest in the form. While it is somewhat facile to generalise, it is probably fair to say that, over the piece, the Fringe has a better track record on drama, helped immeasurably by the fact that the Traverse Theatre, apart from six appearances on the EIF, has been on its side of the fence. However, there have been some great successes at the EIF, albeit less than might be expected. Notable triumphs have included: *The Thrie Estates* (1948); *Playboy of the Western World* by the Abbey Theatre (1968); Ian McKellen in *Richard II* and *Richard III* (1968); Teatro Libero's *Orlando Furioso* (1970); a mini Beckett festival including an eleven day programme of talks, discussions and films (1984); Yukio Ninagawa's *Medea* (1986); *Observe The Sons of Ulster Marching Towards The Somme* (1995) written by Frank McGuinness; and most recently, *Blackbird*, commissioned by the EIF and written by David Harrower (2005).

After the criticism that it was not represented at the first festival, the visual arts enjoyed a golden period in the 1950s when it received considerable attention. Exhibitions of note included: Rembrandt (1949), Focus on Spanish art - El Greco, Goya and Velasquez (1951), Degas (1952), Cezanne (1954) and Braque (1956). Thereafter, it was pushed to the sidelines and exposure tended to wax and wane although the Epstein exhibition in 1961 was a huge success. Funds were curtailed in 1973 and there followed periods when it was treated as an associate, that is it simply appeared in the programme. The concept of a separate Art Festival

was eventually introduced in 2004 as the visual arts sought a separate identity. Mills started his tenure by reintroducing a visual arts strand, including *Jardins Publics* in the 2007 programme, installations sited at three locations around the city. However, a reduced programme in 2009 was a precursor to an empty 2010.

Supplementary events that may appeal to the aficionados have varied over the years with the current fashion being for lunchtime talks and late afternoon conversations with artists.

As mentioned above, themes have been used periodically over the years in attempts to provide a degree of coherence across the programme. They invariably meet with mixed receptions: some applaud the idea while others consider that in fact the overall quality of the programme suffers because of the attempt. Jonathan Mills has reintroduced themes recently: *Artists without Borders* in 2008, *The Enlightenment* in 2009, *The New World* in 2010 (focusing on the Americas and Australasia) and Asian influences in 2011.

Venues

The availability of suitable venues was a perennial problem for the EIF. In 1961 the Edinburgh Playhouse cinema, a huge building with over 3,000 seats which was opened in 1929, was being investigated as a possible venue but it was considered too expensive to convert at the time. It closed as a cinema in 1973, and it was eventually used as a venue for the first time in 1981.



Usher Hall

Meanwhile, the general situation had deteriorated in the mid-1960s when the Empire became a bingo hall while the Kings Theatre, the default home of opera, was becoming an annual problem,

exacerbated by criticisms from artists that it was too small. Matters came to a head when Professor Liebermann (Hamburg Opera) criticised it in 1968. The owners (Howard and Wyndham) retaliated by saying that they would no longer make it available to the EIF. A large grant from the Scottish Arts Council and a substantial donation from an anonymous Edinburgh citizen enabled the corporation to purchase the theatre and let it to the Festival Society for £1,000 per week. A new venue appeared in 1979 in the shape of the Queen's Hall. This was a disused church that was converted to become the home of the Scottish Chamber Orchestra. A tent was erected in the same year in the Meadows for ballet, a similar venture having recently been undertaken successfully in London's Battersea Park. There had been tentative plans, going back to 1960, to build a Festival Theatre. Castle Terrace, dubbed the "Hole in The Ground", was the preferred site, but an on-off saga developed, and in 1988 it was ultimately leased to Scottish Metropolitan Property for the building of a financial centre, The Saltire Complex, which also provided a new home for the Traverse Theatre. In 1991 Rank sold the Empire to the District Council after a less protracted saga. £11m was then spent in converting and refurbishing it, and in 1994 it opened as the Festival Theatre which now provides a home for opera and ballet. In recent times there have been threats to close both the King's Theatre and the Queen's Hall.

Funding

In the 1940s and early 50s funding had not been particularly noticeable as an issue. This was probably due in part to the willingness of governments around the world to subsidise visits to Edinburgh, as it was a means of "showing the flag".

However, the financial pressures gradually mounted as these subsidies lessened. Other factors included the increasing ease of travel, which naturally increased the amount of competition and the counter-attractions of recording, July to September being the peak period for this activity. Funding issues became particularly noticeable when the 1962 festival made a loss of £18,000 and there was an overdraft of £22,500. The problem was resolved on this occasion when the Council bought the festival office. However, it became a recurring theme with the first stand-off between director and the Council occurring in 1968 when the latter wanted to reduce the subsidy for 1968 and 1969, while the director, stating that it was not possible

to produce a quality festival for that sort of money, said that he was not prepared to organise it on that basis. The Council eventually backed down.



Festival Theatre

Opera, the most expensive art form, was frequently under the spotlight. In 1973 a proposed staging of *Don Giovanni* was under the microscope. It was estimated that it might lose £75,000, a risk that was exacerbated by the presence of Daniel Barenboim, who would be conducting an opera for the first time, and Peter Ustinov, an unknown quantity as an operatic director. In this particular case the risks proved to be exaggerated.

The price to be paid for increased subsidy from the City Council was greater political representation on the Festival Council, which in turn led to a degree of political pressure over the programme. In the 1980s Labour councillors, considering the festival to be too elitist, pushed for the inclusion of more populist events. The erection of The Dome in Pilrig Park during the 1986 festival was an attempt to attract "ordinary folk". It was a failure, attracting low attendances and losing £57,000. It was not repeated although smaller events such as juggling at the King's Theatre and jazz at the Usher Hall were slightly more successful.

The politicians were occasionally put on the back foot. During the 1987 festival they were put on the defensive when Glasgow announced that it was doubling its grant to the arts. This was followed in 1989 by an incident when Dunlop got himself into hot water through nonchalantly mentioning at a press conference that Edinburgh might benefit from closer ties with Glasgow, which was due to be the European city of culture for 1990. One Tory councillor wanted him to consider his position. In fact, Edinburgh had put in its own half-hearted bid to be European city of culture and consequently

lost out to Glasgow. This was a severe blow to its pride and caused the politicians to reconsider their attitude to the Festival and its funding. In part, this episode resulted in the District Council and the Arts Council agreeing to a guaranteed funding over a three year period. Lothian Regional Council was also interested in renewing support. In addition, an endowment fund was set up with the aim of raising £10m. The fund quickly reached £700K. Along with sponsorship of £550,000, it became possible for the first time to plan ahead and spend more money on music and opera with star names.

In 2009 the total cost of the International Festival was approximately £9.6m. Income was also £9.6m: £4.8m coming from public sector grants; and £4.8m from ticket sales (£2.2m), sponsors and donations.

Competing With the Fringe

The Fringe has generally been something of a thorn in the side of the International Festival although the pain is somewhat imaginary and largely unwarranted. It tended to reside more in the minds of those members of the Festival board who dislike any form of competition. Fortunately, at the artistic level there was a much more *laissez faire* attitude towards the Fringe.

Whatever, the EIF has made various efforts over the years to compete with the Fringe, some of which have been very successful. In 1959 Flanders and Swann, the comic musical duo appeared at the EIF, followed by the celebrated revue *Beyond the Fringe* in 1960.

The EIF was largely a daytime and early evening pastime, leaving the Fringe to mop up the late evening with light entertainment shows. *Beyond the Fringe* with Peter Cook, Dudley Moore, Jonathan Miller and Alan Bennett, all relatively unknown at the time, was a late night revue that was hugely successful and has been claimed to be a key forerunner to the subsequent boom of satire in the 1960s. It is somewhat ironic that many people now think that the show was on the Fringe, simply because the name appears in the title. It is interesting that a book celebrating 50 years of the Fringe somewhat shamelessly included a large picture of the foursome, albeit the "small print" mentioned quickly and very briefly that it was part of the EIF.

A successful Writers Conference in 1962, which included people who were more associated with

the Fringe, was followed by a Drama Conference in the following year. This event is largely remembered for an incident where a nude female model was wheeled across the organ gallery in the McEwan Hall as part of a "play with happenings" organised by Kenneth Dewey, an avant garde director from Los Angeles. This caused a storm and John Calder, who organised both the Writers and Drama conferences, and the model were prosecuted for indecency. Obviously, the swinging sixties had not yet arrived in Edinburgh at this point. Ideas for a Poetry Conference were shelved with finance being given as the reason although it is more likely that it was related to this incident as various councillors were unhappy.

On the subject of controversy, a production of Prokofiev's *The Fiery Angel* by Frankfurt Opera was planned in 1970. It had an orgy in the final scene with three nuns naked from the waist upwards. The Lord Provost and two councillors went to Frankfurt on a jolly to see it for themselves. After being wined and dined before the performance it was claimed (in the media) that at least one councillor dozed through part of the performance. The production was given their seal of approval.

In the same year there were some events of note at the Haymarket Ice Rink. Teatro Libero's *Orlando Furioso* was a great success with many scenes staged simultaneously in different parts of the rink, the audience wandering from one scene to another. Meanwhile, Orlando and his knights, mounted on horseback (well trolleys actually), charged at the audience, scattering them - promenading with a difference!

Attempts to compete with the Fringe were reduced when Brian McMaster took over the reins as artistic director in 1992. This was probably a prudent step.

The Thankless Job of the Artistic Director

The time and effort that is attributable to fund-raising must be disheartening for any director whose soul lies in the art rather than in administrative functions and the inevitable politics. It arguably makes it a thankless task; we should all be grateful for the work that they put in, notwithstanding that individual programmes may not necessarily square with our own desires.

The Edinburgh Fringe

It is fitting to commence by giving details of those original eight groups that appeared uninvited at

the inaugural festival in 1947 and did their own thing: Glasgow Unity Theatre (Gorky's *The Lower Depths* and *The Laird O' Torwatletie* by Robert MacLellan - both at the Pleasance); Christine Orr Players of Edinburgh (*Macbeth* at the YMCA); Edinburgh Peoples' Theatre (*Thunder Rock* by Robert Ardley at the Pleasance); Edinburgh District Community Drama Association (*The Anatomist* by James Bridie at the Pleasance); Pilgrim Players (Eliot's *The Family Reunion* and *Murder in the Cathedral* at Gateway Theatre in Leith Walk); Edinburgh College of Art Theatre Group (*Easter* by Strindberg at the YMCA); a series of short puppet plays (Manchester Marionette Theatre in the restaurant of the New Victoria Cinema in Clerk St., subsequently the Odeon); and a production of the morality play *Everyman* in Dunfermline Cathedral, sponsored by the Carnegie Trust.

Six of the eight companies were Scottish and the Fringe - which did not yet have that name - was known as the semi official element of the festival.

The history of the Fringe needs to be viewed from a number of perspectives: its general organic growth, including the necessary logistical and administrative processes; the obvious and sometimes quirky venues that have been used; most importantly, the art forms that it has supported over the years; relations with the EIF; its reputation; and the inexorable spreading of fringe theatre and festival concepts.

Fringe Organisation

Performing groups operated totally independently in the early years. The first sign of any communal activity occurred in 1951 when Edinburgh University students opened a drop-in centre at 25 Haddington Place. This was used by many Fringe performers as it provided cheap food and a bed for the night.

It was 1954 before Fringe groups held their first meeting to discuss the possibility of working together. "We are cutting each other's throats" was a quote from one of the groups. It was the logistics, the non-performance aspects that they saw as a problem and the establishment of a joint box office and publicity mechanism were given high priority. The first Fringe programme was produced in this year by C. J. Cousland, an Edinburgh printer.

In the following year Edinburgh University students set up a central box office and a café in a part of the Old College. However, not all of the 13

groups on the Fringe that year made use of the facilities and the box office lost money.

Eventually, the Festival Fringe Society was set up in 1959. A constitution was drawn up, stating that elected officers should oversee the running of a box office, produce a programme brochure that would include every event that was not on the International Festival, and run a club where performers could meet, eat, drink until late, and generally feel involved. The first president was Michael Imison of the Oxford Theatre Group.

Alistair Moffat (Fringe administrator 1976-1981) states "As a direct result of the wishes of the participants, the Society had been set up to help the performers that come to Edinburgh and to promote them collectively to the public. It did not come together so that groups could be vetted, or invited, or in some way artistically vetted. What was performed and how it was done was left entirely to each Fringe group".

At the 1959 festival the first Fringe club, box office and information bureau opened in the YMCA in South Andrew Street. There were 19 groups that year, along with the first murmurings that the Fringe may be getting too big! In 1962 when 34 groups were expected the University complained that their telephone system was struggling to handle Fringe-related phone calls and they urged the installation of a Fringe phone. Around this time Jim Gallagher, the first publicity secretary, wrote 'Fringe without Tears' in which he listed the various pitfalls and problems which Fringe groups were likely to encounter in Edinburgh.

The Society was run by volunteers, making a small surplus most years during the 1960s. However, as the Fringe continued to grow it became clear that this was rapidly becoming an unsustainable system, and that professional staff would have to be employed. A decision was made in 1969 to turn the Festival Fringe Society into a limited company, at which point there were 57 groups and 100 shows. Public funding was sought to set up an office.

It was apparent that the Fringe could not be run by committee and at the annual general meeting in 1970 the groups demanded an Administrator. John Milligan, who had worked for the Arts Council, took up the post at the beginning of 1971. Although it was initially thought of as a part-time role, it quickly became apparent that it was without doubt a full-time occupation. During his tenure the

Fringe produced monthly bulletins and booklets to help prospective groups with the myriad of non-artistic items that they needed to take care of, e.g. getting a temporary licence for the premises in which they intended to perform if the premises did not have a permanent licence (most venues did not).

In 1972 Allen Wright, Arts Editor of the Scotsman, and Ian Thomson of the Fringe Publicity Department came up with the idea of Fringe First Awards. The objective was to attract attention to new plays that needed publicity. Three critics from The Scotsman had to agree that a Fringe First was merited for a play. 45 new plays were premiered in 1973 and 10 awards were made.

Alistair Moffat, who took over as Administrator in 1976, succeeded in getting a much higher profile for the Fringe, managing to agree sponsorship deals with local firms, particularly breweries, and inaugurating Fringe Sunday (an opportunity for performers to advertise their wares to the public). Claims that the Fringe was the Festival began to appear, no doubt touted by somewhat biased advocates of the Fringe and egged on by the media. During Moffat's tenure the Fringe grew rapidly to 494 groups in 1981, a growth that saw a similar proliferation in the number of venues. Fringe Sunday was introduced in 1981. The idea was that Fringe groups could advertise their wares by performing free snippets from their shows for punters. The popularity of this concept led to it being moved to Holyrood Park in 1983 where it was soon attracting 40,000 people.

Moffat was succeeded in 1982 by Michael Dale. His tenure saw the arrival of the super-venues: Assembly Rooms, Pleasance, Gilded Balloon and the Circuit (which no longer exists). He totally revamped the appearance and layout of the programme and worked to get the Fringe accepted as an integral part of the commercial and tourist life of Edinburgh.

Mhairi Mackenzie-Robinson, who took over in 1986, oversaw the necessary fund-raising to finance the move to the Society's current location at 180 High St. in 1988. There were 4 full-time staff at this time, supplemented by many temporary staff in and around festival time. In the following year the Fringe was threatened by a dispute which led to a strike by the council office staff who issued temporary theatre licences. Last minute discussions fortunately averted the crisis with 10 days to go. In 1992 the Fringe belatedly joined the 20th century

when it discovered computer-based booking systems! This allowed bookings to be made at satellite locations such as Waterstone's bookshop in George St. Eventually, the age of online booking via the Internet arrived as the 21st century dawned.

Hilary Strong arrived in 1994 at a time of intense debate about the size of the Fringe and its open-door policy. The term "Administrator" disappeared, being replaced by "Director". This change caused occasional sniping from some EIF protagonists who equated it with "Artistic Director". Strong was followed by Paul Gudgin in 1999, and the Fringe's inexorable growth continued. He in turn was succeeded in June 2007 by Jon Morgan.

Unfortunately, Morgan's arrival signalled the start of the most calamitous period in the Fringe's history. A new box office system had been procured, an immature software system that appeared to have functionality issues and one that had not been adequately tested. The problems manifested themselves as soon as the box office was opened in June 2008: punters experienced difficulties when booking while there were also ticket printing problems. After battling to resolve the problems the Fringe eventually admitted defeat in late July when they decided to make use of the VIA system that was being used by the super-venues. Post mortem reviews were commissioned but Morgan, who probably inherited some of the problems, dutifully fell on his sword, resigning at the end of the 2008 festival.

The Fringe decided to revert to an administrator, to be called Chief Executive, thus dropping any pretence of the need for artistic experience. Kath Mainland was appointed to the post in early 2009. The accounts for 2008-2009 showed the disastrous effect of the box office debacle with the balance sheet showing liabilities of £672K against assets of £49K.

The period since the debacle of 2008 has seen a recovery in the Fringe's fortune sextupled for the demise of Fringe Sunday in 2009 after the failure to attract a sponsor for an event which was costing in the region of £70k to stage. However, this has coincided with the super-venues attempting to flex their muscles, principally by trying to get the concept of a comedy festival launched. They have claimed (or should that be they have protested?) that such a festival would still be part of the Fringe but these claims have been treated with a fair degree of cynicism. In truth, it is all somewhat

academic while they continue to fail to attract a sponsor for a comedy festival and the prevailing economic climate is unlikely to assist their efforts in the short term.

Meanwhile, the debacle in 2008 had convinced the Fringe that it was time to review, and where necessary, amend its constitution. A committee was set up in 2009, led by writer and actor Pip Utton, and it spent over a year working on the project. A series of lively and occasionally acrimonious public sessions eventually culminated in an extraordinary meeting in Edinburgh on November 21st, 2010. At this meeting it was decided that the following changes should be made to the constitution: no artificial cap on the number of members of the Fringe Society or restrictions on the criteria for membership; a "participants' council" to be created for artists, producers and promoters to help tackle major issues and lobby the board - it will comprise a maximum of 12 society members, with four each from members who are performers, producers of Fringe shows or are nominated by a registered fringe venue; the make-up of the board will be four performer members, four members nominated by venues and four members who have "an interest in the furtherance of the charitable objectives of the society"; the board will be able to co-opt a further four directors to make up for any skills gap. Council and board members will be elected by all members of the Fringe.

To give some idea of the current size of the Fringe, the organisation's quoted statistics for the 2011 festival include 41,689 performances of 2,542 shows. It is by far the largest festival on the planet.

In summary, the Fringe has become organised in the logistical sense but it is still anarchic, or do I mean that it adheres to the principles of the free market? "Anybody can appear if they can drum up the money for the venue and other related expenses. Students still come in their droves (British and foreign), groups from all over the world who are attracted by the reputation of the fringe. Many will lose money on the venture but that will not stop them coming, as they seek fame and fortune, or at least be able to put it on their CV".

Venues

No history of the Fringe would be complete without a brief mention of the venues; there were reputedly 258 in 2011 although this probably refers to the number of performing spaces which is not

the same thing as the number of venues. In essence, use is made of every conceivable space from proper theatres (Traverse), custom-made theatres (Music Hall in the Assembly Rooms), to lecture theatres (Pleasance and George Square), other university rooms and spaces, (disused) church halls, schools, the back of a taxi, a public toilet on one occasion, a flat in the New Town or even in your own home / place of rest.

In the 1950s and 1960s there was typically one hall per group. Sharing then became popular as a means of cutting costs with a single performing space being used for up to 6 or 7 different shows per day. Super-venues with many performing spaces, such as Assembly Rooms, Pleasance and Gilded Balloon, took this idea further in the early 1980s. The Circuit, a now defunct super-venue, came to set up a tented "village" (including one space with room for 400 punters) at the previously mentioned "Hole in The Ground", where the Saltire complex, which now houses the Traverse, was subsequently built.



Pleasance Courtyard

The ranks of the super-venues gradually expanded with the growth of C and the rapid rise in the early 2000s of Underbelly.

Meanwhile, Assembly Rooms became known as Assembly (or Assembly Theatre) as it added other venues, most notably the Free Church of Scotland headquarters which it called Assembly on the Mound. Recent plans by the city council to carry out a major refurbishment of the Assembly Rooms building were vigorously opposed by Assembly, as it would mean that the building would be closed for 18 months and it would ultimately end up with less space due to the proposed creation of shops and a restaurant. The city council eventually managed to get the go-ahead for a reduced refurbishment project and the venue was

unavailable in 2011.

The bad blood that was engendered by this prolonged episode has led to the council agreeing in principle to The Stand (another venue) using the venue at festival time for three years (2012-2014). Assembly moved its headquarters to George Square in 2011 and presumably will remain there, at least in the short term.



Assembly Rooms

Art Forms

Until 2008, when comedy overtook it for the first time, drama had been the dominant art form since the inception of the Fringe in 1947. Looking over the lifespan of the Festival, it is also generally agreed that the Fringe has served drama somewhat better than the EIF. It has been responsible for many seldom produced works and many new plays. Key moments have included: the premiere of Tom Stoppard's *Rosencrantz and Guildenstern Are Dead* by the Oxford Theatre Group in 1966 which few raved over at the time; Communicado's *Cyrano de Bergerac* (1992); *Moscow Stations* with Tom Courtney (1994); and the National Theatre of Scotland's *Black Watch* (2006).

Apart from individual plays, there are several strands that have contributed to the success of drama over the years.

Firstly, there was the birth and subsequent flowering of the Traverse Theatre (as described in the next section). It is the stalwart of drama on the Fringe, indeed on the Festival as a whole.

Secondly, there have been a number of companies that have brought quality productions to Edinburgh consistently, including: the London Club Theatre Group (1950s), 7:84 Scotland (1970s),

National Student Theatre Club (1970s and various other periods), *Communicado* (1980s and 1990s), *Red Shift* (1990s), and *Grid Iron* more recently.

Thirdly, there is the creature that is the one-man (or woman) show. While the concept may not have been created in Edinburgh, although it would naturally claim it, it has undoubtedly become its home. The main attraction from the performer's side is that every actor has a favourite personality that she could readily turn into a show. The fact that it is relatively easy to set up and has minimal overheads gives it great appeal. From the punter's perspective, while these shows are seldom vying for five star ratings, they are generally enjoyable and well acted, and importantly, they can generally be relied upon. Early examples of the genre included: Elspeth Douglas Reid doing her *One Woman Theatre* (1955) and John Cairney's Burns show *There was a Man* (1965). More recent examples have included: Eileen Page's *Eleanor of Aquitaine*, Gareth Armstrong's *Shylock*, Pip Utton's *Adolf* and *Only the Lonely* (about a look-a-like Roy Orbison), George Telfor's amusing and poignant *Gielgud: a Knight in the Theatre*, Tam Dean Burn's *Venus as a Boy*, Justin Butcher's spellbinding *Scaramouche Jones* and Gerard Logan's excellent *The Rape of Lucrece*.

Alongside drama, comedy is the other mainstay of the Fringe. Although the International Festival put on late evening comedy revues starting in the late fifties, they were eventually seen to be somewhat staid, similar to west-end revues, while the Fringe was seen as more innovative. The most notable exception was the EIF's *Beyond the Fringe*. Student theatre groups started adding late night revues to supplement their more serious offerings. Many names came through this route from the late 1950s up to the early 1980s: Dudley Moore, Alan Bennett, Michael Palin and Terry Jones (all Oxford); The Cambridge Footlights turned out Richard Eyre (subsequently director of National Theatre), Eric Idle, Graeme Garden, Rowan Atkinson, Stephen Fry, Hugh Laurie, and Emma Thompson.

Mention must be made of the renowned Théâtre de Complicité (now simply Complicite). They appeared on the Fringe in 1985, performing *More Bigger Snacks Now* and *A Minute Too Late*; the latter was very successfully performed again in 2005 with the original actors at the National Theatre in London. They won the Perrier Award, which had been going since 1981 and was given to the revue that put most "fizz" and "sparkle" into the Fringe. While I am a big fan of Complicite, I am not sure which I find the more surreal - the fact that they

won the Perrier in 1985 in the first place - or that anybody but them has ever won it? While on the subject of eccentric, off-beat humour mention should also be made of the National Theatre of Brent who have appeared periodically on the Fringe. It is difficult to know how to describe them - a skit on the theatre played as pantomime possibly.

Since the mid 1980s comedy has become a general free-for-all with many comedians using it as a platform to try to make it into the big time. The standard can be very variable and very generation specific. This host of "wannabes" tends to be interspersed with periodic appearances by established performers such as Rory Bremner and Bill Bailey.

Other art forms are included in the Fringe, albeit they are not as popular as drama and comedy. Puppets were there in 1947. Other art forms did not appear until the mid-late 1960s when Lindsay Kemp gave mime and dance performances. Dance and Physical Theatre has had a variable history in terms of popularity, coming and going in waves. It has recently enjoyed a period of popularity, particularly at the Aurora Nova venue (alias St. Stephen's Church) although this venue has not operated since 2008. Music of all types has a very large showing on the Fringe although it seems to warrant little attention in the media, particularly outside Scotland.

Finally, mention should be made of those groups from other shores that have appeared at the Fringe. The first American group came in 1966; it had the somewhat indigestible title of The University of Southern California School of Performing Arts Drama Department Festival. Other American groups soon followed. Nowadays, they come in large numbers, especially school groups. Other groups that spring readily to mind include: Wierszalin (Poland) with their imaginative use of statues; and Theatre Credo (Bulgaria) with its wonderfully inventive version of Gogol's *The Great Overcoat*. Richard Demarco, a co-founder of The Traverse, who set up his own gallery in 1966, subsequently strove more than anybody else over the years to bring an international dimension to the Fringe at this and other venues.

Relations with the International Festival

In the early years many people on the Fringe were looking for acceptance by the official festival, probably seeking integration with it. However, the

International Festival did not want to integrate with it, seeing the Fringe purely as complementary to the official festival. The members of the EIF board tended to be particularly insistent that no other performances should detract from its own programme. In fairness, individuals at the artistic level were much more likely to view the Fringe sympathetically.

It has been said that the battleground was drama. In fact, there was no battle here. As mentioned previously, EIF artistic directors seemed to show little interest in this art form. With several notable exceptions, such as *The Three Estaites*, their offerings were all too often staid and dull. This left a yawning chasm for the Fringe to fill which they managed to do. It was much more adventurous, frequently putting on seldom performed works and new plays.

The Fringe also managed to monopolise the late evenings – the EIF was largely a daytime and early evening activity in the formative years. It did this by introducing late night revues, the first taking place in 1952 when the New Drama Group put on *After the Show*. University groups soon latched on to this, with the likes of Ned Sherrin writing revues. As discussed in the EIF section, the International Festival eventually started to compete in this area, leading ultimately to *Beyond the Fringe* in 1960.

Relations with the EIF continued to be periodically fractious right through to the end of the 1980s. It is arguably reasonable to say that Brian McMaster's decision not to compete with the Fringe, even if this was from a somewhat superior stance, led to a reduction in hostility. The position today is one of tacit acceptance of each other. The EIF continues to consider that it holds the artistic high ground while the Fringe tends to rest content in the knowledge that in terms of size it dwarfs the International Festival.

Reputation

The Fringe has engendered much debate in the serious media over the years: some love it and some hate it. This was personified several years ago when the Guardian drama critics, Michael Billington and Lyn Gardner, did a "good cop bad cop" routine. Billington expressed his horror of the inexorable growth of the Fringe so that it now dwarfed the International Festival. Whereas the Fringe once complemented the International festival, albeit precariously, it was now a

grotesquely outsized and highly commercialised beast that swamped the International Festival. He criticised the power of the super-venues and their inevitable playing safe. Lyn (the good cop) played on the thrill of the chase, the joy of finding those golden nuggets, of first coming across Complicite, The Right Size, Steven Berkoff and Grid Iron, of her first exposure to international work, e.g. Dario Fo, Phillipe Gaullier and the Abbey Theatre of Dublin. I veer much more to Lyn's camp.

The Fringe has played a part in the success of many actors and comedians over the years, although as Alistair Moffat said "Many highly successful performers first made a critical success on the Fringe, but it would be fatuous to claim that the Fringe made anyone's career. All it did, and does, was to provide a platform for anyone who, if they are good enough, can enjoy national, and even international, critical and popular acclaim".

Other Fringes

The concepts of fringe theatre and fringe festivals have been freely adopted in various parts of the world.

The Adelaide Fringe began in 1960, fringe activities in Brighton from 1967, Edmonton in 1982 and Vancouver in 1984. In recent times, London and Dublin have both got in on the act but the real growth area is the USA and Canada. [Here is a list of fringe festivals.](#)

Traverse Theatre

With regard to drama The Traverse, Edinburgh's own repertory theatre, plays a pivotal role in the Festival. It stages around 12 shows at the festival each year, comprising two of its own productions while hosting the remainder. It tends to provide an overall seal of quality if such a thing is possible on the Fringe. A case can ironically be made that it breaks the spirit of the Fringe where, in theory, any company can take part. However, the festival, as a whole, would be much diminished without its commanding presence.

Described as "the Fringe venue that got away", the Traverse surfaced in the early 1960s out of a common desire among a core set of individuals to maintain the spirit of the festival in Edinburgh for the rest of the year. Various ideas were floated, including a gallery space and a bookshop, as well as a theatre. Some of the original players who were

involved include:

- Jim Haynes, a soft-spoken, relaxed, genial American. He loved Edinburgh and the Festival but hated provincialism. He had bought a junk shop in Charles Street, and opened it as a paperback bookshop
- Richard Demarco was an Edinburgh art teacher who hated teaching but loved organising exhibitions and was passionate for a vibrant Edinburgh life outside the Festival
- Tom Mitchell was a designer and property developer from Northern England who was in love with the actress Tamara Alferoff who lived in Edinburgh. He had bought the Sphinx club in James Court (off the Lawnmarket), formerly a doss-house and brothel known as Kelly's Paradise. His original intention had been to convert it into studios and flats for struggling artists
- John Malcolm, an actor appearing in a Fringe production at Haynes' bookshop
- John Calder who organised the EIF's Writer's and Drama Conferences in the early 1960s, and became "infamous" for the nude model scene in a play at the Drama Conference
- And Sheila Colvin who went on to become Associate Director of the International Festival.

Cambridge University Theatre Co. had rung Demarco in 1962, looking for a Fringe venue. The Sphinx Club was eventually used. It was around this time that Haynes and Demarco were pushing the idea of a general meeting place. However, Malcolm saw it as a theatre and he managed to persuade Mitchell to use the club for this purpose.

Terry Lane, an actor / director and friend of Malcolm, became involved. The available theatre space consisted of a long narrow room, only 15 feet wide and 8 feet high. Lane's idea was to have two banks of seating at either end of the room with the playing space in the middle. He thought that this arrangement was called Traverse, when in fact it was called Transverse.

It was decided that the Traverse should be a private members club as this would make life easier on several fronts: fire regulations, licensing, and most importantly it would help to steer clear of the Lord Chamberlain's office (the official censor of British theatre from 1824 until its eventual demise

in 1968). Demarco appointed himself as recruitment agent and 300 members were quickly recruited at a guinea – half-price for students.

The Traverse opened on a cold night in early January 1963 to a capacity audience of 60 invited guests with performances of Sartre's *Huis Clos* and Fernando Arrabal's *Orisons*. In the second performance actress Colette O'Neil was accidentally stabbed on stage with a paper knife. She "almost bled to death", which brought tremendous publicity with the result that bookings soared and the membership rapidly grew to 2,000.

In the first three and a half years of its existence the Traverse put on 110 productions. Its success was greatly helped by the fact that during the Festival many of the great and the good of the theatre world visited this small yet intimate space. In 1965 it produced *Macbeth* for the International Festival, the first of six appearances on the EIF (1965-68, 1979 and 1986).

The success of the early years was interspersed with the arguments and resignations that are inevitable among young and passionate individuals. Malcolm left just before the Traverse opened while Lane resigned twelve months later, complaining about the "amateurs". After a six month stint from Calum Mill (actor and director), Jim Haynes took over as artistic director in addition to his duties as chairman. His forte was the ability to be an excellent front of house man, representing the club to the press and public with his laidback all things are possible persona. However, he was not a team player and after financial problems and the failure to deliver a presentable production at the Commonwealth Arts Festival in 1965 he eventually resigned in 1966 over his attempted appointment of a friend and associate, Jack Henry Moore. Gordon McDougall followed (1966-1968) to steady the ship after the thrills and spills of the Haynes era, and he was succeeded by Max Stafford-Clark (1968-70) who was dedicated to the idea of the Traverse as an experimental theatre. He wanted a more leisurely Peter Brook style method of working with long term research, needless to say a more expensive approach.

An Arts Council capital grant had come through for building improvements but a surveyor's report in March 1969 indicated that the internal floors were unsafe, and that the building was unsuitable for use as a theatre or restaurant. This precipitated a move to the bottom of West Bow where there was

room for 100 seats. This coincided with the arrival of Michael Rudman (1970-73) who was older than previous incumbents and more mature at the grand old age of 31. He was the first orthodox artistic director. A Texan who was good at getting publicity, he had a keen and discriminating eye for marketable talent, audience preferences, and visiting productions that would strike a chord.

The 1970s was a period of uncertainty when financial problems, compounded by the inflation of the mid-1970s, saw the Traverse threatened with closure. On the artistic front, the latter half of the 1970s saw an emphasis on Scottish plays from new writers on working class themes of aggression and hidden tenderness. The first half of the 1980s was punctuated by successful festivals, interspersed with periods of darkness during the winter months, a state of affairs that did not please the Arts Council whose £200,000 subsidy in 1981 amounted to 65% of income. By 1987 the District Council was giving £40,000.

Two major events took place in the late 1980s and early 1990s. At the end of 1987 the club was wound up and the Traverse became a theatre company. In 1992 the infamous "Hole in the Ground" which had been mooted as a possible site for the Festival Theatre ultimately became the Saltire Court complex, primarily an office development with the Atrium and Blue Bar restaurants, but most importantly it provided a new home for the Traverse, incorporating two theatre spaces and a wonderfully atmospheric bar.



The current Traverse Theatre

The artistic policy up to the mid 1990s had two main strands: the development of Scottish work with Scottish actors; and the search for the best international new writers. Latterly, the mission statement has been to focus on new Scottish writing. At the 2010 festival there were 18 productions under the Traverse banner.



Traverse Bar

Edinburgh International Book Festival

With the encouragement of the International Festival a committee was formed under Lord Balfour of Burleigh to organise a book fair with funding from the Scottish Arts Council. The first fair took place in 1983 and was an instant success with 120 authors attending, including John Updike and Anthony Burgess. "Meet the author" events, and the inspired decision to have a children's fair, attracted 30,000 visitors. The fair became a festival, held biennially until 1997 when its growing popularity warranted the transition to an annual event. Nick Barley, appointed in October 2009, is the sixth festival director, succeeding Catherine Lockerbie who occupied the role for nine years.

The 17 day festival is sited in Charlotte Square Gardens, at the western end of George Street, converting it into a tented village for the duration. The 2010 festival, with an attendance of circa 200,000, boasted of appearances by over 750 authors from 50 countries. High profile debates have been introduced in recent year on subjects such as terrorism and multi-cultural Britain to supplement the staple diet of "meet the author" and author reading sessions. Tickets for the more popular authors can be sold-out very quickly, sometimes within a couple of hours of going on sale in June.

In 2010 *Unbound* was introduced. This is a free late night programme of performance, music and literature which is produced in association with The Skinny, the Edinburgh arts magazine.



Book Festival Entrance - Charlotte Square

Edinburgh International Film Festival

The Edinburgh Film Guild, established in 1930, was responsible for the creation of the festival which now claims to be the longest continually running film festival in the world. The original aim was to present unusual films that were not usually seen in ordinary cinemas. In 1947 the weeklong festival concentrated on documentaries. It expanded rapidly in the following year, showing in excess of 100 films from 25 countries over three weeks, extending beyond documentaries. Expansion continued in 1950 with 170 films from 24 countries, including 14 feature films and 5 premieres. Classics in the early years included Robert Flaherty's *Louisiana Story*, Roberto Rossellini's *Germany Year Zero*, Jacques Tati's *Jour de Fête* and Kenji Mizoguchi's *Ugetsu Monogatari*. It quickly became a meeting place for directors and producers. The early 1950s saw the introduction of education and children's films - 7 in 1955. A magazine entitled "The Living Cinema" was introduced in the winter of 1956. In the following year a milestone was reached with the appointment of Calum Mill as the first director, previously there had only been honorary officials and part-time workers with one full-time official. Around this time, the festival was extended in scope "to recognise and encourage all new ideas and developments which contribute to a vital and vigorous cinema".

As the years went by the festival was faced with issues including "commercialism versus art" and the danger of publicity that surrounded star names, including authors and directors. During the 1960s, retrospectives were introduced when the festival re-evaluated and paid tribute to the diverse talents

of the likes of John Huston, Sam Fuller, and Douglas Sirk. The advent of the 1970s heralded financial crises: in 1971 it was rescued by Edinburgh Corporation and the Scottish Film Council. On the artistic front the programme in the 1970s and 1980s included: films from the New German Cinema and the new wave of American Independents, homage to the masters of Japanese Cinema, and pioneering studies of black and feminist filmmakers.

The last ten years have seen a strengthening of the critical fortunes of the Festival through the artistic direction of Mark Cousins, Lizzie Francke and Shane Danielsen. Some of the notable films screened in the last few years have included: *Mrs Brown*, *The Full Monty*, *La Vie Revée des Anges*, *Seul Contre Tous*, *Love is the Devil*, *Ratcatcher*, *East is East*, *Run Lola Run*, *Billy Elliot*, *Amores Perros*, *Amélie*, *16 Years of Alcohol*, *Young Adam*, *Infernal Affairs*, *American Splendor*, *Motorcycle Diaries*, and *Old Boy and Hero*.

The 12 day festival ran from mid to late August, usually finishing on the Sunday of the late summer public holiday weekend. The 2005 festival was hosted at five main venues, three in Edinburgh and two in Glasgow, comprising over 160 items.

In 2007 the new artistic director, Hannah McGill, took the bold decision to move the film festival to June, starting in 2008, in an attempt to gain a higher profile. While the first two years went reasonably well the global financial recession led to the film industry cutting back on festival appearances and it may be that in the current climate the June date is too close to that of Cannes.

2011 proved to be a disastrous year. It actually started with The Centre for the Moving Image (CMI) assuming responsibility for the Film Festival, the resignation of Hannah McGill in August 2010 and the subsequent failure to find a new artistic director. A series of announcements followed, each with a different cast of names / roles who would be responsible for the 2011 programme. This only served to convince outsiders that the festival appeared to be rudderless. James Mullighan eventually took charge ... arguably he drew the short straw. Somewhat inevitably, the festival was slated by the critics. In September 2011 Gavin Miller, CEO of CMI resigned and Chris Fujiwara, an American film writer, author and critic, was appointed as the Film Festival's new artistic director.

Edinburgh Jazz & Blues Festival

This is a 10 day festival, spread over a dozen venues, which spans late July and early August. It usually ends around the time that the Fringe starts.

The Jazz festival started in August 1979 at the Adelphi Ballroom, Abbeyhill, which had a capacity of 500, and it was held over a single weekend. In the following year Mike Hart, the festival director, approached Dryburghs brewery with a view to them sponsoring the event. They agreed to finance performances in eight pubs around the city, admission free, plus a Jazz band ball that was held in Tiffany's ballroom. This sponsorship arrangement continued until 1983. At this point Scottish Brewers came in with a reduced sponsorship, but the festival managed to continue along similar lines. Eventually, economic reasons, including the appearance of bigger names who obviously demanded larger fees, resulted in the free venues being taken out and replaced with pay venues. Funding over the years has come from various sources, including a much increased figure from the City Council, the Arts Council, and the lottery, while heavy use of sponsors continues. Stylistically, the Festival has moved on to include contemporary Jazz and Blues while still maintaining its Traditional base. It includes education workshops, e.g. in 2005 they were "Sing Jazz" and "Play Jazz".

Hart wanted to maintain the festivals showcase of lesser known artistes, so he tried to provide some free or inexpensive events, i.e. "Mardi Gras" and "Jazz on a Summer's Day" which are both held on the first weekend, attracting an audience of 20,000 people. Mardi Gras is a vibrant musical spectacular that starts at 12.30pm with a colourful parade from the City Chambers via Victoria Street to the Grassmarket, which provides the setting for three hours of non-stop music. "Jazz on a Summer's Day" attracted a bigger crowd than any other single jazz event in the UK. It was set in Princes Street Gardens, under the shadow of the Castle, providing an opportunity to sample the older musical styles on offer in the festival. However, the presence of a Spiegeltent (Assembly Rooms) in the gardens prevented it being held in 2010. It was not held in 2011.

The Military Tattoo

Pipes and dancing took place on the Castle Esplanade from 1947, the year of the first International Festival. It was eventually

superseded by The Edinburgh Military Tattoo in 1950. Under the direction of Brigadier Alasdair Maclean, there were eight items in the first programme. There were no stands in that first year, the audience watching from the side of the Esplanade. Stands were erected from the following year, growing to its current size when it houses an audience of around 9,000. The first overseas regiment to participate was the Band of the Royal Netherlands Grenadiers in 1952, when there were also performers from Canada and France. Over 30 countries have been represented.

Pipes are an integral part of the Tattoo; there are usually 5 or 6 pipe bands each year, not forgetting the lone piper on the castle ramparts who traditionally closes the show. The music theme continues with military bands and the choir. Dance includes international performers, as well as the traditional Highland dancing. Military displays are extremely popular, including competitive elements and short dramatic features, e.g. re-enactment of battles, complete with all the pyrotechnics, including explosions.

The Tattoo very quickly became extremely popular with both British and overseas visitors, eventually appearing to sell-out crowds every year; the annual audience is circa 217,000. In 2005 tickets were sold out by the end of March. It is estimated that 70% of the audience are non-Scottish, being either English or overseas tourists. Many further millions watch the Tattoo each year on international television. The Tattoo was set up and run for charitable purposes, having gifted over £5 million to service and civilian organisations.

Edinburgh Art Festival

As described in the International Festival section art exhibitions had been a fixture in the International Festival programme during the early years, the early 1950s arguably being the golden period. However, funds were withdrawn in 1973 and the visual arts were relegated to "associates", i.e. linked to but not directly part of the International Festival. In more recent years the associate tag gradually disappeared and it began to rely on The Fringe programme to provide external advertising of its wares.

The concept of a separate Art Festival was first piloted in 2004 in an attempt to provide a central focus for the visual arts. The Edinburgh Art Festival, supported by the Scottish Arts Council, The British Council and Edinburgh City Council,

represents 30+ galleries and runs from late July to early September. They include all the public galleries which (slightly confusingly) come under the auspices of the National Galleries of Scotland all the year round.



Scottish Royal Academy (during the Warhol exhibition in 2007)

They embrace: The Royal Scottish Academy (at the foot of the Mound), The National Gallery of Scotland (also on the Mound), The Scottish National Portrait Gallery (Queen Street), and the Scottish National Gallery of Modern Art (Belford Road - a 30-40 minute walk from the east end of Princes Street or on the no. 13 bus). In addition, there are numerous other smaller galleries. Of particular note are the City Centre Art Gallery (2 Market Street) and the Fruitmarket Gallery (45 Market Street), while private galleries also have exhibitions at festival time.



Scottish National Gallery of Modern Art

Notwithstanding the banner under which the visual arts have operated, major exhibitions have continued to be put on. Notable exhibitions at festival time in recent years have included: Miro (1992), Giacometti (1996), Monet (2003), Dutch Masters (2004), The Age of Titian (2004), Bacon (2005), Mueck (2006), Warhol (2007) and Impressionist Gardens (2010).

... and the Future?

Edinburgh's great summer festival feast has entered its seventh decade facing a number of threats.

On the financial front the state of the national and global economies will inevitably make sponsors harder to come by and reduce the number of punters, particularly those who travel to Scotland for the events. The increasing cost of visiting Edinburgh for the festivals - for both performers and punters alike - is only likely to exacerbate this problem.

The position of the Fringe is one of gradual recovery after the box office debacle in 2008. Its current problems are its over-bloated size - it is simply too large; and the veiled threat of a breakaway comedy festival.

We can only hope that all the festivals will eventually sail through these choppy waters as they have done for over sixty years, and that there will be much more material to add to their history as 2047 is approached.