

Category: Open

Candidate: Darrell Martin

For more than 30 years I have been involved in the Edinburgh Fringe as a performer, producer, promoter and venue operator. Those experiences have given me an understanding of the festival from many different perspectives and a strong belief that the Fringe Society should be an effective advocate for the people who create the Fringe.

I first became involved in 1996, when I attended in the role of flyerer/tech for several shows. I could not believe such a thing existed and immediately fell in love with it.

In 1999, I became compere of a new talent show, *The Big Value Comedy*. In 2021, I took over producing the show, and it has continued under my direction ever since. It is now the longest-running mixed-bill new talent show on the Fringe and has helped discover many of today's comedy stars.

In 2023, I took over the venue at Café Royal (now VOODOO ROOMS), and since then I have continued producing shows and venues, with Just the Tonic now hosting 17 performance spaces and over 220 shows.

Outside the Fringe, I am a comedy producer and promoter, running comedy clubs throughout the UK, operating one of the major venues at Leicester Comedy Festival, and producing a series of outdoor comedy festivals.

Over the years, I have seen the many changes that people involved with the Fringe have had to navigate. I am passionate about ensuring that the Fringe Society is aware of, and responds to, the increasing challenges faced by all of its stakeholders.

Those challenges include the overwhelming cost of accommodation, increasing ticketing fees, and improving communication and relationships between the Fringe Society and the performers, producers, venues, technicians, promoters and volunteers who create the festival. I want to help improve the Society's advocacy so that it truly represents the present and future needs of participants and audiences alike, whether dealing with the media or with organisations such as Edinburgh Council (who want the visitor tax spent on ten Fringe ambassadors—not something I support).

I would also like to see the Society continue to excel in its core roles of ticketing and marketing the festival. Alongside that, I recognise that many external organisations see the Society as the representative voice of the Fringe. If it is to fulfil that role effectively, then it must listen more closely to the people who make the festival happen and ensure that their views genuinely shape its advocacy and decision-making.

I don't claim to have all the answers, but I do believe the Society should listen more closely to the people who create the festival and ensure that decisions are informed by their experience. Good ideas come from every part of the Fringe, and I believe one of the

Board's most important responsibilities is to ensure those voices are properly heard and represented.

Having devoted more than 30 summers of my life to this festival, I have a genuine passion and desire to see it maintain and strengthen its position as the greatest arts festival in the world. That position is increasingly under pressure, yet too often those pressures are ignored by people who could help address them.

I believe I could be an effective representative and voice for many different parts of the Edinburgh Fringe. My passion for the Fringe has not diminished since the first year I arrived. I love the grassroots productions that often become the launch pad for major stars and television productions. Watching venue technicians, producers, performers and writers develop from modest beginnings into household names—and often internationally recognised figures—is one of the great privileges of being involved with this festival.

The Fringe is unique. It deserves to be protected, strengthened and preserved. I would welcome the opportunity to help shape its future and contribute to its continued growth and development as it adapts to the challenges it faces. It remains the greatest arts festival in the world, and I am proud to play my part as a venue and show producer. I believe I would bring not only over 30 years of experience but also an independent voice, practical knowledge and a genuine commitment to ensuring that the Society listens to and represents the people who make the Fringe possible. It would be an honour to contribute that experience as a member of the Board.