

The Edinburgh Festival
fringe

Chair of Board of Trustees



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*Supporting
Year of Creative
Scotland 2012*

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About the Edinburgh Festival Fringe

The Edinburgh Festival Fringe is the largest arts festival in the world as well as the leading open access arts festival and takes place every August for three weeks in Scotland's capital city.

Every year thousands of performers take to a multitude of stages all over Edinburgh to present shows for every taste. From big names in the world of entertainment to unknown artists looking to build their careers, the festival caters for everyone and includes theatre, comedy, dance, physical theatre, musicals, operas, music, exhibitions and events.

Our story dates back to 1947, when eight theatre groups turned up uninvited to perform at the (then newly formed) Edinburgh International Festival, an initiative created to celebrate and enrich European cultural life in the wake of the Second World War. Not being part of the official programme of the International Festival didn't stop these performers – they just went ahead and staged their shows anyway. Year on year more and more performers followed their example and now each year the Fringe consists of over 2,500 shows in over 250 venues across the city with over 20,000 performers taking part and with an audience of around 2 million. Today the most important characteristic of the Edinburgh Festival Fringe is still our open access ethos which is why the Fringe Society is a truly unique organisation.

About the Edinburgh Festival Fringe Society

The Festival Fringe Society (as it then was) was created in 1958 in response to the success of the Fringe.

The Society formalised the existence of this collective of performances, provided information to artists, published the Fringe Programme and created a central box office. Its constitution was written in line with the ethos that brought these theatre companies to Edinburgh back in 1947: that the Society was to take no part in vetting the festival's programme. To this day that policy remains at the core of our festival and we're proud to include in our programme anyone with a story to tell and a venue willing to host them.

Fundamentally the Society is a service organisation that supports all the creative talent that makes the Edinburgh Festival Fringe happen each year. Our role is to provide all the infrastructure that allows that explosion of talent to emerge constrained only by the boundaries of their vision and creativity.

The three core functions which we were established to carry out are still our main areas of work: providing support, advice and encouragement to all participants of the festival; providing comprehensive, accurate and up-to-date information and ticketing to as wide a range of people in as many ways as possible; and raising the profile of the Edinburgh Festival Fringe on a local, national and international stage.

The Fringe Society is registered as a charitable company.

Constitutional Review

A major review of the Society's governance was undertaken between 2009 and 2010. This was the first such review since the Society was incorporated in 1969.

The changes introduced were shaped by the findings of the biggest ever consultation carried out by the Fringe Society. Over 2,000 people completed online surveys or attended special meetings to discuss ideas for updating structures that had remained largely untouched for forty years.

Amongst the key changes agreed were:

- The establishment of a Participants' Council designed to give performers, producers and venue operators a right to be consulted by the board for the first time ever
- Reserved places on the Fringe Society board for performers and venue operators
- Appointing additional members of the board to ensure the highest possible levels of expertise.

The Edinburgh Festival Fringe Society is a membership based organisation. Following the constitution review, membership is now open to anyone with an interest in the Fringe and there are currently over 700 members. We are actively trying to maintain that high level of membership.

Job Description

Chair, Edinburgh Festival Fringe Society

The Festival Fringe is recognised throughout the world as the leading, largest, open-access arts festival in the world. Fundamental to the work of the Society is maintaining and upholding that founding principle along with ensuring that the Edinburgh Festival Fringe continues to make a significant contribution to the cultural and economic well-being of Edinburgh and Scotland.

Following the successful implementation of a new senior management structure and appointment of new Chief Executive in 2009, a comprehensive review of the governance structure of the Society after an extensive consultation and the adoption of a new constitution in November 2010, the current Chair of the Society's Board, Baroness Smith of Gilmorehill, has decided to stand down after 17 years at the helm. The search has begun for a replacement.

The Edinburgh Festival Fringe Society is both a registered charity and a registered company and benefits from the strategic leadership of a board that comprises up to sixteen individuals from a diverse range of backgrounds and experiences, three quarters of whom are elected from the Society's membership. This represents a great opportunity for an exceptional individual to guide the organisation that underpins the world's largest arts festival as it takes on the challenges of the next few years.

The Role

The Chair of the board has the ultimate legal responsibility for the organisation and is not a duty to be undertaken lightly. This position is not remunerated, although expenses are covered.

- Ensure that the organisation complies with its governing document, charity law, company law and any other relevant legislation or regulations
- Lead the Board in meeting the aims, vision and goals of the Society
- Contribute actively to the Board of Trustees' role in giving firm strategic direction to the organisation, setting overall policy, defining goals and setting targets and evaluating performance against agreed targets
- Promote the Edinburgh Festival Fringe as a whole
- Play an active part in fundraising activities on behalf of the Society
- Safeguard the good name and values of the organisation
- Ensure the effective and efficient administration of the organisation
- Ensure the financial stability of the organisation
- Give support to, and challenge, the executive team
- Appoint the chief executive and monitor his/her performance

Additional Duties of the Chair

- Planning the annual cycle of board meetings and setting agendas for board meetings in conjunction with Chief Executive
- Chairing and facilitating board meetings
- Giving direction to board policy-making
- Representing the organisation at functions, meetings, launches, etc
- Bringing impartiality and objectivity to decision-making
- Facilitating change and addressing conflict within the board and within the organisation, liaising with the Chief Executive to achieve this
- Attending and Chairing the Annual General Meeting during the Edinburgh Festival Fringe

Person Specification

- Experience of a complex organisation of some scale probably in the role of Chair or Director and with acknowledged success in a leadership role
- Enthusiasm for the performing arts and empathy for the Edinburgh Festival Fringe and its open-access ethos
- Excellent communication, relationship and networking skills
- Willingness to devote the necessary time and effort to the role including chairing five board meetings a year and attending meetings of sub committees and working groups of the board in an ex officio capacity as well as other ad hoc meetings and events – understanding that as the role is ultimately responsible for the Society, it may take up more time than planned
- Understanding and acceptance of the legal duties, responsibilities and liabilities of trusteeship
- Commitment to the organisation
- Understanding/knowledge of the cultural sector
- Strategic vision
- Good, independent judgment
- An acceptance and understanding of the Nolan Committee's seven principles of public life: selflessness, integrity, objectivity, accountability, openness, honesty and leadership

How to apply

If you are interested in the role of Chair of the Board of the Edinburgh Festival Fringe Society and you feel that your skills and experience would fit with the challenges of the position then please write to:

Kath M Mainland
Company Secretary and Chief Executive
Edinburgh Festival Fringe Society
180 High Street
Edinburgh
EH1 8QS.

If you have any queries about this role, please email Pip Utton, Vice-Chair, on pip.utton@edfringe.com

