

## QM Expedition Fund: Edinburgh Fringe Festival 2024

Every August, thousands of theatre-makers, comedians, and other performers all gather to showcase their work and support one-another in the annual Fringe Festival in Edinburgh, Scotland. The festival dates back to post-WWII, with an International Festival being launched to effectively relaunch the European cultural world. The word 'fringe' meaning the borders of an area or group became the descriptor of a group of artists who came to the festival to perform – uninvited. These performers on the fringes of the festival began this tradition of gathering international artists every Summer to form what we now know as an immense festival of culture and variety.



Queen Mary's own theatre company (QMTC) every year take four member-written up to Edinburgh to be performed as part of the festival, so this year as the society's social-media manager, I accompanied the groups of actors, directors, and technicians to be immersed in not only our work but the endless variety of performance found in the city.

As a company, we rented out Venue 39 of the official Fringe – theSpace on the Royal Mile. This is the second year we have been based in a space in the Radisson Hotel, situated conveniently right on 'The Mile', the central street in Edinburgh's Old Town and famously where performers and artists go to advertise their work via flyering – some putting on performances in the street to attract attention!

Through the time at Fringe, I participated in promoting our shows through not only flyering, but putting up posters and initiating conversations with other artists to persuade them to come to our shows – so much of Fringe is essentially about networking and self-promotion which is hard, repetitive work, but fun nonetheless.

In my social-media role, I created content live from the festival to promote our shows as well as helping the production team in-person.



Not only does Edinburgh Fringe offer fantastic opportunities for performance showcase, but also for spectatorship.

Being at the festival, I was able to engage with an array of performances – from traditional plays, to a one-woman musical, and a variety of (literally) underground comedians.

The beauty of Fringe is so much in the venues – plays are performed in the back rooms of hotels, basements of pubs, university-style lecture rooms, and even shipping containers... Darkfield, one of the companies I discovered this year at Fringe, creates immersive theatre set inside shipping containers. Their work uses 360 audio to immerse their audiences within the worlds they are creating. The experience I tried was called *Arcade*, and takes audience participation to a new level with members being invited to choose their own path. Going with friends was an interesting experience in working out how much the storylines varied between you – it was a fascinating framing of modern performance and the ways in which personalised, intimate performance can be created.

My time at Fringe was fabulous, thanks to assistance from the QM Expedition Fund.

