# Edinburgh Festival Fringe confirms record 3,356 shows amid rising costs and venue shifts



The Edinburgh Festival Fringe is once again gearing up for a remarkable year, with new data indicating a total of 3,356 productions already confirmed ahead of the official programme launch on June 2. This figure exceeds the number of shows listed in last year's printed guide, demonstrating a robust interest in participation despite economic concerns.

Tony Lankester, the new chief executive of the Edinburgh Festival Fringe Society, expressed excitement about the festival's prospects. Speaking about the preliminary figures, Lankester noted, “In this last release of shows before the full programme launch on 03 June, it’s incredibly exciting to see the range of work that artists are bringing to Edinburgh this year.” Moreover, the Fringe Society has recorded an additional 1,564 shows in just the past month, bringing the total to 265 venues registered—a slight increase from last year.

This year's event, scheduled to run from August 1 to 25, is noteworthy not only for its number of productions but also for the challenges it faces. The financial landscape for artists and venue operators has shifted dramatically, with rising accommodation costs exacerbated by coinciding high-profile concerts, including performances by Oasis and AC/DC at Murrayfield Stadium. Venues have expressed concerns regarding the sustainability of the Fringe's long-standing “open access” model, as the financial risk for performers has intensified.

To cope with these challenging conditions, many companies are opting for shorter performance runs to mitigate costs, allowing them to participate without incurring unsustainable expenses. Lankester suggested that improved transport links, including a tram to Edinburgh's waterfront and 24-hour trains to Glasgow, could alleviate congestion and potentially enhance ticket sales.

Among the anticipated highlights is the return of the Famous Spiegeltent to St Andrew Square, marking its first appearance at the festival since 2014. In contrast, the Gilded Balloon will be absent from Teviot Row House due to protracted renovations, with many of its shows relocated to the nearby Appleton Tower.

Historically, the Fringe has seen record participation in 2018 and 2019, with 3,548 and 3,841 productions, respectively. The festival was significantly disrupted in 2020 due to the Covid pandemic, and while it resumed in 2021, that year’s attendance was markedly lower due to social distancing restrictions. Since then, participation has been gradually recovering, with last year's programme reporting 3,317 shows.

Despite the encouraging numbers, concerns linger around the artistic landscape of the festival. Shona McCarthy, who stepped down as chief executive shortly before Lankester's appointment, cautioned about the risk of complacency and the potential marginalisation of emerging artists. She highlighted a "hard-won and fragile success" that ought not to be taken for granted.

In March, the Fringe Society received its first direct funding from the Scottish Government in seven years, amounting to £300,000. This support is earmarked to enhance the Society's digital infrastructure and assist Scottish companies in reaching international audiences. However, some industry voices, including the Fringe Alliance, have called for a reduction in the Fringe Society's budget, arguing that its expanded influence could detract from the core creative contributors essential to the festival's identity.

As anticipation builds for this year’s event, the Fringe Society is striving to balance artistic ambition with the pressing financial realities faced by artists and venues, a challenge that underscores the complexities of sustaining one of the world's largest arts festivals.

Source: [Noah Wire Services](https://www.noahwire.com)

## Bibliography

1. <https://www.edfringe.com/learn/news-and-events/edinburgh-festival-fringe-2023-printed-programme-launched> - This source confirms that the official 2023 Edinburgh Festival Fringe programme was launched on June 8, 2023, featuring 3,013 shows across various genres.
2. <https://www.broadwayworld.com/scotland/article/Tony-Lankester-Appointed-as-Chief-Executive-of-the-Edinburgh-Festival-Fringe-Society-20250130> - This article announces Tony Lankester's appointment as the new chief executive of the Edinburgh Festival Fringe Society, highlighting his excitement about the festival's prospects.
3. <https://www.edfringe.com/learn/news-and-events/edinburgh-festival-fringe-2023-begins> - This source details the start of the 2023 Edinburgh Festival Fringe on August 4, 2023, with 973 shows from Scotland and 469 from Edinburgh itself.
4. <https://www.edfringe.com/learn/news-and-events/edinburgh-festival-fringe-2023-begins> - This article mentions that the 2023 Fringe featured 3,535 shows registered, with over 52,000 performances during the month.
5. <https://www.edfringe.com/learn/news-and-events/edinburgh-festival-fringe-2023-begins> - This source notes that the 2023 Fringe included 439 free shows and 614 using the 'pay what you want' or 'pay what you can' model.
6. <https://www.edfringe.com/learn/news-and-events/edinburgh-festival-fringe-2023-begins> - This article highlights that the 2023 Fringe attracted nearly 1,400 accredited producers, programmers, bookers, talent agencies, and festivals from 49 countries.
7. <https://www.heraldscotland.com/news/25141356.edinburgh-festival-fringe-defies-cost-fears-gig-clashes/?ref=rss> - Please view link - unable to able to access data