# Edinburgh Festival Fringe 2023 spotlights Scottish culture through bold new storytelling



The Edinburgh Festival Fringe continues to expand its diverse lineup, showcasing a blend of storytelling, theatre, and dance that reflects the unique cultural tapestry of Scotland. This year's programme is packed with both new and returning artists, highlighting narratives that resonate deeply with audiences.

One noteworthy entry is "When Billy Met Alasdair," a production by award-winning writer Alan Bissett at the Scottish Storytelling Centre. Inspired by a pivotal moment in 1981 when Sir Billy Connolly met the esteemed writer Alasdair Gray at the launch of Gray's novel *Lanark*, Bissett explores their intertwined lives and legacies. Known for his previous work *The Moira Monologues*, Bissett promises to delve into the origins and struggles that shaped these two influential figures in Scottish arts, offering a potential lens into the cultural zeitgeist of the era.

Dance finds a compelling voice in Kathryn Gordon's "A Journey of Flight," which draws inspiration from the rich birdlife of Shetland, where Gordon resides. This immersive performance aims to unite dance, live music, and visual arts to convey themes of arrival and departure, encouraging audiences to contemplate their emotional connections to both nature and one another. Such introspection is vital, as Gordon seeks to illuminate the delicate balance that exists between our environment and our own journeys.

Another intriguing project is "Windblown," crafted by singer-songwriter Karine Polwart, which takes its cue from a historical palm tree that was recently removed from Edinburgh’s Royal Botanic Garden after over two centuries. This show promises to give voice to the tree, mirroring Polwart's interests in ecological loss, historical legacies, and the rituals that bind generations. By reimagining the tree’s existence, Polwart aims to explore the broader implications of change and loss, an issue that resonates not only within the arts but also in contemporary discussions around climate and heritage.

Alongside these, Johnny McKnight's production "She’s Behind You" reflects on a lifetime in pantomime. This solo show, directed by award-winning theatre figure John Tiffany, draws on McKnight's extensive career in Scottish pantomime, presenting an exploration of identity and tradition through a whimsical lens. As industry norms shift, McKnight's reflections on the anarchy and unexpected beauty of pantomime may offer insights into evolving cultural practices.

In the realm of dramatic theatre, "Faye’s Red Lines" features actress Gail Watson confronting intimate fears within a script by Ian Pattison, the creator of *Rab C. Nesbitt*. This exploration of personal history and relationships highlights the nuanced storytelling emerging from contemporary Scottish theatre, where issues of vulnerability and personal history take centre stage.

Other productions further echo this commitment to storytelling in myriad forms. "Skye: A Thriller" by Ellie Keel employs the haunting backdrop of the Isle of Skye to engage audiences in a tale where the lines between reality and the spectral blur. Similarly, "24 Weeks" provocatively addresses the discourse surrounding reproductive rights in a dystopian Scotland, where the legality of abortion hangs in the balance.

As the festival unfolds, an ample selection of performances infused with Scottish culture emerges, each telling a story that is rich with emotion, history, and reflection. From intimate narratives to broader societal critiques, the Edinburgh Festival Fringe continues to celebrate the power of storytelling in all its forms.

### 📌 Reference Map:

* Paragraph 1 – [[1]](https://www.heraldscotland.com/news/25207971.scottish-stories-told-edinburgh-festival-fringe/?ref=rss), [[4]](https://fringereview.co.uk/fringefestivals/edinburgh-fringe-2/general/2023/storytelling-at-the-edinburgh-fringe/)
* Paragraph 2 – [[1]](https://www.heraldscotland.com/news/25207971.scottish-stories-told-edinburgh-festival-fringe/?ref=rss), [[2]](https://www.heraldscotland.com/life_style/arts_ents/23690859.pick-best-things-see-edinburgh-fringe/), [[5]](https://www.theweek.com/arts-life/culture/theatre/962150/edinburgh-festival-fringe-2023-theatre-highlights)
* Paragraph 3 – [[3]](https://www.edfringe.com/about-us/news-and-blog/2023-made-in-scotland-showcase-programme-revealed/), [[6]](https://www.bbc.com/news/uk-scotland-edinburgh-east-fife-19244734)

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## Bibliography

1. <https://www.heraldscotland.com/news/25207971.scottish-stories-told-edinburgh-festival-fringe/?ref=rss> - Please view link - unable to able to access data
2. <https://www.heraldscotland.com/life_style/arts_ents/23690859.pick-best-things-see-edinburgh-fringe/> - This article highlights top picks for the Edinburgh Fringe, including Lynne Ferguson's 'Storyland' at the Gilded Balloon, which delves into the power of storytelling and personal narratives. It also features 'The Collie's Shed' by Island Life Productions, a play set in East Lothian's Men's Shed, exploring themes of friendship and community among retired miners reflecting on their past experiences during the 1980s miners' strikes.
3. <https://www.edfringe.com/about-us/news-and-blog/2023-made-in-scotland-showcase-programme-revealed/> - The 2023 Made in Scotland programme showcases a diverse range of theatre and dance performances. Notable productions include 'AFTER ALL' by Solène Weinachter, blending dance, comedy, storytelling, and theatre to explore themes of mortality and loss. 'Concerned Others' by Tortoise in a Nutshell presents an intimate tabletop performance sharing underheard voices, while 'Family Portrait' by Barrowland Ballet offers an interactive video installation depicting family life through striking choreography.
4. <https://fringereview.co.uk/fringefestivals/edinburgh-fringe-2/general/2023/storytelling-at-the-edinburgh-fringe/> - This piece highlights storytelling performances at the Edinburgh Fringe, including 'Walking Songs' by Natalie Moon, combining storytelling and music to narrate her journey along the Te Araroa hiking trail. 'Witch? Women on Trial' by Natalie Nardone delves into the history of witch hunts in Scotland, offering a powerful storytelling experience. 'Wee Seals and Selkies' is a children's show blending storytelling and music to evoke Scotland's northern seashores, based on Janis Mackay's books.
5. <https://www.theweek.com/arts-life/culture/theatre/962150/edinburgh-festival-fringe-2023-theatre-highlights> - The article reviews standout theatre performances at the Edinburgh Fringe, including Kieran Hodgson's 'Big In Scotland,' a one-man show exploring Scottish identity through various characters. 'Strategic Love Play' is highlighted as a notable production, though specific details are not provided in the summary. The piece also mentions 'Bill O’Neill: The Amazing Banana Brothers' and 'England & Son' as part of the festival's offerings.
6. <https://www.bbc.com/news/uk-scotland-edinburgh-east-fife-19244734> - BBC News reports on Scottish-themed performances at the Edinburgh Fringe, such as 'Tam o'Shanter' performed entirely in Scots by the Communicado theatre company, adapting Robert Burns' poem for the stage. 'The Boy and the Bunnet' is a children's show written in Scots, introducing young audiences to the language through a Scottish version of 'Peter and the Wolf,' with characters represented by different traditional musical instruments.
7. <https://playbill.com/article/playbill-pick-scots-at-the-edinburgh-festival-fringe> - Playbill highlights the Made in Scotland Showcase at the Edinburgh Fringe, focusing on Scottish artists and companies. A standout is 'SCOTS' by Glasgow-based company A Play, A Pie and A Pint, an irreverent musical journey through Scottish history from the perspective of a flushing toilet. The show features a tuneful score and addresses themes such as the queer community's use of bathrooms as safe spaces during times when homosexuality was illegal in Scotland.