

**IRISH THEATRE INSTITUTE PRESENTS A GUIDE TO
Edinburgh Festival Fringe**

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Project Arts Centre

PANEL:

Paul Fahy – Artistic Director, Galway Arts Festival

Leroy Harris – Press & Marketing Officer, Edinburgh Festival Fringe

Hartley T A Kemp – Director C venues, Edinburgh

Jo Mangan – Artistic Director, The Performance Corporation

Eileen O'Reilly – Promoter Liaison Officer, Edinburgh Festival Fringe

Chaired by: **Jane Daly** – Irish Theatre Institute & Independent Producer

Jane Daly – Good afternoon. Thank you very much for taking the time out to come to this session this afternoon. This is an information session presented by the Irish Theatre Institute, which is essentially a very practical guide to taking work to the Edinburgh Festival Fringe, either as a company or as individual performing artists.

It came about as a result of an event that Irish Theatre Institute did last year in August in partnership with Culture Ireland, where we managed and presented a networking event in the Assembly Rooms which was largely aimed at the international presenters who go to Edinburgh every year in their hundreds to see work, with a view to programming it into their own festivals, venues or seasons. Last year Culture Ireland provided financial support to ten organisations or individuals to take work to Edinburgh to a number of different venues. In the course of the time we spent in Edinburgh over four days it became clear to us that there was a lot about the Edinburgh Festival Fringe that we think we might know, but in fact on the ground the reality is very different. There are big differences in terms of scale, in terms of the venues you're playing in. It's a very, very competitive environment.

So we felt that this year, in advance of a call for submissions for funding that Culture Ireland is putting out for March 2nd, that we would have a very practical information session for people who may be interested in presenting work there this year, or indeed next year or subsequent years. We assembled a panel of people that I think are very strong, and have a range of experience. I would like if possible that this session isn't a formal lecture-type environment, but it is very much an opportunity to exchange information, to ask questions and to walk away from here maybe with a real picture of what's involved in presenting your work at the Edinburgh Festival Fringe.

I'd like to introduce the people who are here. We're going to conduct the session by topic, rather than each individual speaking about their own experience, so there'll be a lot of to-ing and fro-ing. The topics we're going to look at are: advance planning; choosing a venue, or how a venue chooses you; hidden costs and the reality of the financial challenges of presenting work in Edinburgh; publicity and promotion and how to generate an audience; getting reviewed; meeting presenters and having your work seen with a view to a further life; and how to access financial support.

I'll just introduce from the far left Jo Mangan, who is the Artistic Director of The Performance Corporation. Last year they presented *Dr. Ledbetter's Experiment* at the Edinburgh University Medical Faculty, which was a site-specific element of the Traverse curated programme. The Performance Corporation has a long and busy repertoire behind it in a very short period, and they have done a number of very interesting projects and a lot of them have been site-specific, so Jo has very particular experience of presenting work off-site as part of a curated programme.

Paul Fahy next to her is the Artistic Director of the Galway Arts Festival, so he is wearing two hats here, one as a producer having been part of the Galway Arts Festival team that presented *Trad* at the Assembly Rooms in 2005 and subsequently at the Adelaide Fringe, but also as a presenter who spends a lot of time in Edinburgh each year looking for work.

Next is Hartley Kemp who is the lighting designer on the Gate show that is opening tonight. Hartley manages Edinburgh's C Venues. Rachel West presented her show at C Venues last year. According to my notes on C Venues here there are 180 shows from 140 companies, which is a massive number of shows turning around in the time span at C Venues. Again, a range of questions can be asked of Hartley.

Next is Eileen O'Reilly who some of you might know. Eileen has been for a number of years now, the promoter liaison officer for the Edinburgh Festival Fringe and knows virtually every international presenter on first name terms at this stage. Eileen provides an extraordinary liaison service for people who are going to Edinburgh and are interested in trying to hook up with international presenters who are there and are trying to get their work seen. She also does a range of other things, Edinburgh being just one of them.

Her colleague here beside me is Leroy Harris, who is the Press and Marketing Officer for the Edinburgh Festival Fringe. Leroy has now done five Fringe festivals and so can provide excellent advice and pointers in terms of the reality of marketing and promoting your work against so many other shows. It's a very, very competitive environment.

We'll start of the advance planning end of things. I'll ask Jo about how *Dr. Ledbetter* was a part of the Traverse programme, and what was involved for you as a company who wouldn't have huge administrative resources, what's involved for a company of your scale taking on that.

Jo Mangan – I suppose the first thing was, because I had never been to Edinburgh before as a punter, the previous year I went over to do a recce essentially, with a view that it was a very good platform for presenting your work internationally and specifically with the idea of international presenters seeing it. We're a little island here so they tend not to make the journey too often, and if they do it may not be the time of the year when you've got your best show on. So that was a very tentative but very important step in thinking about going to Edinburgh, and what that allowed me to do was go and see what venues made an impact on me as a punter. To see where I ended up myself and what attracted me to go to a particular venue. What I did find was that once I found a particular venue I'd feel comfortable in it and would tend to stay for a day or two and see nearly everything in it before you'd see there was another one around the corner that was even more interesting.

I guess what stood out for me, and the quality of the work that stood out for me, seemed to be presented in the Assembly Rooms – that was the year that *Trad* was there – in the Traverse and in Aurora Nova in particular. That was just my bent. That was the style of work that I was particularly interested in. They were the places that I hung around and was interested in how they promoted the work that was there. The Traverse has a very strong tradition of new writing, and even though that's not necessarily at the core of what we as a company do, writing is an important element in all theatre and that was a potential home for us. Aurora Nova not so much because it is very much focused on physical theatre, and while we do delve into that occasionally it's not, again, necessarily our strong point. The Assembly Rooms, just because the piece we were thinking of bringing over was not a traditional theatre piece, it seemed the spaces there just weren't right for it.

So we were considering what piece to bring over then and we thought we'd go for something that did really well before, so we decided to bring a show called *Dr. Ledbetter's Experiment* which had done very well in Ireland the previous year in the Kilkenny Arts Festival. It had sold out and got a Best Production nomination in the Irish Times Theatre Awards. People were saying that'd be great, bring that. Any general chat we were having with people was very encouraging. Too much so in a way, because we opened ourselves up to that 'it'll be great'. It was interesting talking to Eileen earlier on about how everyone is coming with their great show from every country in the world. We're all bringing the best show that we have. Everyone's expectations are so heightened when you go over, no matter how hard you try not to let them be.

What we did was, I had met Mike Griffiths a couple of times through Theatre Shop, so very initial conversations went on and it was really down to the script at the end of the day. Despite what I say about us not focussing on writing, the script itself seemed to be very strong and interested them. I sent the DVD and they couldn't get it working, but they still said they were interested and wanted to see how it might proceed, and I hopped halfway through the sentence and said, we'll be over next week to see you. So we got the cheap Ryanair flight and went over and convinced them that it would be a great idea for us to come over and present our work there. They knew it was an off-site piece, and they had somewhere in mind, and interestingly a friend who had seen the piece in Kilkenny and lives in Edinburgh had that same place in mind. So all serendipity came together. We went to see the venue. It was under the University's umbrella and they were really accommodating. We were able to do a week long get-in before hand, which is really necessary for the kind of work that we do. We didn't have to share the venue with anyone, which was fantastic. That's not a common experience. That's kind of how it started off anyway.

Jane Daly – How far in advance did the conversation with Mike Griffiths in the Traverse take place?

Jo Mangan – The physical front-on conversation with him and the artistic director happened in January. We didn't know for sure until January, but we were confident enough I suppose, blindly confident a few months beforehand, to think that this might happen.

Jane Daly – Paul, moving on to you with *Trad*. Would it have been the same kind of process, because the Assembly Rooms has a different way of working?

Paul Fahy – Yes, we had originally produced *Trad* with the Galway Arts Festival in 2004 and it was, like Jo said, it was our perfect little show, and it was the best show we had to bring abroad. After we did it in Galway we transferred it to the Dublin Theatre Festival and that's where the Assembly Rooms had seen it. So we were approached by them as opposed to knocking on people's doors. We were lucky there was interest from an established venue. I'd been in Edinburgh prior to that with Rose Parkinson, my predecessor and the producer of *Trad*, just as a presenter to see work. I was drawn to that venue as well because during the first week of Edinburgh there's so much on and it's so hard to decide what you're going to go and see, and what's going to attract you, so I was originally venue-drawn. The venues that Jo just mentioned like the Assembly Rooms, the Traverse and Aurora Nova were the kind of venues that I was going to. It was great that a venue that we liked and that we would consider a good venue to kick off Edinburgh with had expressed an interest in the show. That was great.

The other consideration that came in to place was that there was another venue The Wildman Room in the Assembly Rooms where we presented *Trad*. When we did *Trad* in Galway and in Dublin it had a very specific set and there was a grass floor and grass walls, and all that stuff has to be thrown out the window when you're going into a venue that has a 20-minute turnaround. So you've got all those considerations about

redesigning a show or simplifying how the show is going to be presented but at the same time making it look as good as it had been when you did it originally. So that was something to take into consideration. Again, in terms of time, it was probably around January that we knew it was going to happen. We had the money secured a little later on in the year, but January was when the strong interest had been expressed.

Jane Daly – On that note, because the venue thing seems to be really important and they have so many different ways of working we'll move on to you Hartley. There's the companies seeking venues but the venues actually decide what they're going to programme. Could you talk to us about C Venues, and how it works for you?

Hartley Kemp – I guess it's a bit of a two-way process. Some venues are at one end of the Fringe scale like the Assembly Rooms and Traverse where they would see a lot of shows and quite often approach shows they've seen, then there are a lot of venues at the other end of the scale where anyone can phone up and send a deposit and they've go the venue. Then there are a large amount of venues in the middle where programmers will receive applications and will look at the applications and talk to companies and come and see work if work is available to be shown. We really fall into that bracket.

Our programming process tends to take place between January and April, the end of April being the Fringe programme deadline, so that's really the cut-off for anyone taking a show to Edinburgh. If you're not in the programme it's not really worth going. I guess most of the programming venues tend to take their decisions more towards the March-April end of that rather than the January-February end of that.

So quite often as a group you'll chose 2-5 venues that you think would suit your show and put an application in to those. Some of those venues may offer you some space straight away. Generally the less established venues will be quite quick to offer you something if they think your show is good, whereas some of the venues will sit on your application and look at it in conjunction with other proposals so it will take longer to make the decision. As a group you can be in the position of being offered two of your five choices and sometimes with a time limit saying you have to come back to us within a week, otherwise we'll take the offer away, but actually the space you want to go to is just saying they're interested or they'll come back to you later. It is quite a dilemma to be in because if you don't get the right performance space that can affect bringing a show to Edinburgh. It is something that every group goes through, unless you have an existing relationship with a venue, whereby you are able to say, come on, you know us, you know our show. In that situation you'd probably get offered something much earlier on. Already we've taken decisions on companies that we've known for some time about what shows they're bringing to Edinburgh, but certainly with the bulk of new applications we're still very much looking through proposals.

We will come and see work. We've got people all over the world who'll come and see work and scout for us and report back, so anyone who's got any work on show in Ireland between now and the end of the deadline we'd be happy to see it.

Jane Daly – Can you talk a little bit about the financial side? There are so many different financial arrangements that work, but in Edinburgh you don't get paid fees, you're working on box office. Can you talk about how you work in C Venues, because you have a number of venues, some on-site, some off-site? Typically what would it be like?

Hartley Kemp – Our on-site venues are standard theatre venues ranging from 40 seats to above 200. We also have off-site work in our programme, which is a slightly different arrangement. Generally, like most of the venues that programme in Edinburgh we are interested in a box-office split arrangement. We're not interested in a straight rental, which is only really the venues which will take any show that comes in that will do a

straight rental. Because we are not funded ourselves we do box office split with guarantee, which basically means we ask all our shows coming to pay us a guarantee which represents the contribution towards the costs of our kitting out the venues and making the whole thing happen. Then the hire fee is either the guarantee or a percentage of the box office. Normally it's a 60/40 split, so the hire fee would be the guarantee or 40%. Sometimes we have companies where we might do a 50/50 split. We might reduce the guarantee for a show that we know is something that we really want. We're always open to suggestion. But we are starting on the premise that we have to cover the bulk of our operating costs from the guarantee income.

Jane Daly – Typically would a show go in for the duration?

Hartley Kemp – We would advise that. About two thirds of our shows do the full run, and the other third do two weeks or single weeks. The problem is really that if you're only going to do a single week you're not going to make very much of an impression at Edinburgh. Whether you're coming to Edinburgh to get reviewed or whether you're coming to Edinburgh to be seen by international bookers, if you're only there for a week you can be missed. We'd always recommend the full run if that works in terms of budget. Generally the reviewers will tend to want to come and see Fringe shows at the beginning of the run, but once the International Festival starts, which is a week into the Fringe or a week and a half into most venues' runs, then it's much harder to get a reviewer to come along because they are interested in International Festival shows too. Also there can be a huge backlog in reviews coming out, so if you're there in the beginning you're much more likely to get your review printed before the end of the festival. The other thing is that you're audiences will tend to start very, very low and build, so if you do a longer run you've got a better chance of selling more tickets towards the end of the run based on your marketing work and your reviews. If you do a week it can be very hard to catch up.

Jane Daly – We'll get to talk more about the whole area of publicity and promotion and getting reviewed, which I think is a big, big challenge, when we come to Leroy in a moment. I think we might just stay on the cost factor just for a little bit more. I'm wondering about the hidden costs. If you're staying in Edinburgh for a full run of the Fringe, that's a significant investment. I'm just wondering can we talk a little bit about the sort of hidden costs, and the reality of it? Particularly in terms of submitting applications to potential funders. Things that you have to bear in mind.

Eileen O'Reilly – I'd quite like to talk about hidden costs because I think when companies are doing their budgets initially you're trying to make it as economically viable for yourselves to do things in the first place. You're often short-changing yourself, and deciding you're not going to take your lighting designer, and you're not going to take somebody because it's going to be a fee and transport and accommodation and things like that. I think that ultimately if you start to do that on paper before you even enter into negotiations with the venue, you're on a trip to nowhere. Ideally you're bringing your best work to Edinburgh and there might be compromises you have to make but I think it would be very foolhardy to compromise on the production values, even though it's going to be in a Fringe space. It's going to have to be compromised anyway because you're probably going to have to scrap your set, particularly if it's a piece you've done already and it's installed in Andrew's Lane and it's going to be there for six weeks. You don't have to dismantle it every day and put it into some temporary storage and then assemble it again the following day.

I think your production and technical support is worth looking at in a more favourable light when you think you can actually dispense with it, because while the venue as part of your contract will promise you technical support your technical person may well be a student or somebody who's working in Am Dram, and is an enthusiastic amateur. If

you feel as though you can take the risk on your show by going down that route, that's fine, but take it knowingly.

It's very important that you ask all the questions of your venue managers. Places like the Assembly Rooms and the Traverse do have a production team, but you have to understand that while the Traverse operates 52 weeks a year they do bring in additional crew to support additional companies. So you're not necessarily getting the best technical support because the Traverse shows are going to be getting that. Similarly in the Assembly Rooms, they produce some of the work that's in their programme, so the best techies will be working on their shows. You really have to remember that you're a client and you've got an expectation of some kind of proper return for your investment.

The contracts are quite difficult in Edinburgh. All the venues have a different one. There are things you think are negotiated and sorted and signed, and they're not. Some of the contracts really are designed with loopholes intentionally, and they're not generally in favour of the companies and the artists. I was saying earlier that we have a situation at the moment where we have a company who are still in dispute over guest tickets. At the beginning of the festival when you have no bums on seats you'll want to paper your house. Particularly if you know that there are critics coming, and it's really important that your critic is not sitting in an auditorium on his own. Although it does happen, and some of those shows do get five stars and do particularly well. But that's not always the case, so you'll want to get people in. Sometimes there are other performers and artists at the festival who'll swap tickets so you can go and see their work. But ultimately there comes a cut-off point despite what's agreed in the contract, which is generally maybe four to six tickets per performance, where the venue has allowed you to have the run of it just to get people in. But there's an invisible cut-off point where all of a sudden you're paying, and nobody's told you you're paying for those guest tickets, because there's no such thing as a free ticket. The other thing to remember about tickets is that while you might be pulling off guest tickets at no charge you're potentially paying for the printing of that ticket depending on the venue. So when it comes to hidden it really is hidden. You just don't think of it as a cost.

The other thing you have to remember too is that when you're coming to Edinburgh you really do need to try and bring every single thing with you. It is really a case of bringing the kitchen sink, because kitchen sinks are really expensive in Edinburgh. So are reels of thread, so are rolls of gaffer tape, so are light bulbs. Everything is extortionate.

In terms of planning it's not just planning when you're going, how you're going to get there. It's also where are you going to stay, who is staying with you. A lot of the time the problems that we have are not with productions, it's with the companies who all of a sudden after three and a half weeks hate each other. They're not going to share a room or a bathroom or a kitchen with that person again. There have been instances where we have had to find accommodation for artists so that the company will stay together until the end of the festival. It does happen. You laugh about it, but it is actually quite serious because you've invested so heavily in going to Edinburgh and everybody is up for it, and once they get there it's a different thing altogether. You really are away from home for a month. There are just some things that folk get lonesome for and do get emotional about that under normal circumstances wouldn't be a problem at all, and ultimately somebody has to pay either for a flight home for somebody, or to bring someone in to keep the artist happy. It is just that thing about travelling as part of a company.

I think the other thing is that if you're coming as a solo performer – I'd quite like to hear from Abie in a minute about how he felt about being a solo performer in Edinburgh. Sometimes you do get folk who will come on their own and they are the

writer, director, producer, administrator, and marketing person for absolutely everything to do with their show. At the end of three weeks, particularly if you're female and you haven't joined Scottish Slimmers, you've just saved yourself a fortune and dropped two stone in weight, because it really is bloody hard work.

I love that people come, and it's my job to encourage people to come, but the purpose for all of this is to open your eyes as to what the potential downfalls are, and if you think you can get over them, what the potential gain is. But you do have to be prepared to spend money. The fact that you've got a contingency of £500, for some companies you could add another zero. We can't tell you how expensive it is. The venues are expensive; you have to understand that they can't pick and choose who their clients are. I'd ask people to remember that you are actually the client. If you've not being serviced by your venue then you have to take it up with them. However you might be mentally and physically exhausted and you might feel it's not worth the fight.

What also happens in Edinburgh is that a lot of the venues offer in addition to the rental, the facility of the press and marketing office. Sometimes people really get exhausted at the festival and it's difficult for them to promote their show as well as perform their show. Last year we had 1,837 shows in the festival and we probably would have had about 70% of them at one stage through our office looking for assistance. Our office offers counselling and therapy, it offers press and marketing advice, it offers advice to performers. We arrange workshops and events to encourage people to come and network with other performers, so you're not exclusively stuck in your venue or even in your company. We make no charge for that. The cost is taken in with your fee when you register for the festival.

But the support of the venues that you're paying for, if you're not getting that, and you've maybe forgone the opportunity to take on a publicist because you think the marketing person at the venue is going to do that for you, you have to be very, very categorical when you're doing your contracts as to what you think you're getting and what you're actually going to get when you come to Edinburgh. If you don't do that beforehand it's too late when you get there because you'll be too busy trying to get the show up to get the press in. Ultimately you end up doing it yourself, and fighting about it afterwards. It's so much better if you have legal advice here before you go there to go through your contract. A couple of hundred euro investment to have a solicitor to look over your contract before you go to Edinburgh, it's going to save you ten times that.

Jane Daly – That's great. It's those kinds of tips about the dos and don'ts that are the difference in having a successful trip to Edinburgh and one that isn't quite so soul-destroying as I know it can be from time to time.

The publicity and marketing end of things. As Hartley said, if you're not in the Fringe brochure, don't go. Maybe Leroy would talk about this and the sort of strategies that companies and individuals should use. Also the support that the Edinburgh Festival Fringe itself offers.

Leroy Harris – The thing with the programme is that there are 1,837 shows in this one, which is last year's programme. If you're not listed in the programme and you've missed that April deadline then what you're missing out on pretty much is, from research we've done about 80% of the public use this as their primary means of figuring out what's on at the Fringe. They might book tickets at the venue or on the Fringe website or on the venue website or what have you, but actually knowing your show is on is the crucial thing of having you in this programme. The same goes in a way for the press because the press will, when the programme comes out, usually spend that first weekend leafing through and highlighting things that they want to come and see.

One of the main motivations of coming to Edinburgh is to get reviewed and to get column inches that you can take on to other projects and other places in the world where reviews from Edinburgh are worth their weight in gold to a lot of places. A lot of people come with that as their primary focus. Last year we logged just under 5,000 reviews that were published over the course of the festival. That includes The Guardian, The Scotsman, and The Telegraph, through to online publications, through to online outlets of The Guardian and those papers too. Nearly 5,000 reviews for nearly 2,000 shows means there's a fairly good chance that you can get reviewed if you do your planning and get that right. The main thing to know about the way the reviews work and the way journalists work is that the journalists will do their planning before the festival starts and quite often journalists will come to Edinburgh at the start of August and they know what they're seeing until the end of August and there's sometimes not much flexibility. Sometimes there is but for the most case there's not. What you want to be doing is to getting a press release and your show information out to them when the programme comes out, and that's the first week in June.

The main thing to say about press releases, and this is something you can go on and on about and you can get in touch with me if you need more advice about it, but the main thing is about giving people succinct and well-structured information. Remembering the important stuff like putting on it what venue you're on in and what time you're on at, because the number of people that forget is quite staggering. Remembering that journalists don't have a lot of time. They might be interested in your show, but if you send them four pages worth of information about your company history and things out of the blue that they're not expecting they're as quick to delete it as they are to even bother reading it.

The kind of things that people are looking for at the Fringe varies too. The Edinburgh Festival Fringe is quite well known for new work and presenting things that are quite cutting-edge and quite new ideas. That's something that a lot of publications will champion. That's quite nice to know because there are some festivals and some places that you go to where the tried and tested will do a lot better in the press than new work, but at Edinburgh new work will do very well. The Scotsman newspaper run the Fringe Firsts which some people might know about. The Fringe First is an award, and they'll give out maybe 4 or 5 Fringe Firsts every week of the festival. Winning a Fringe First is a real stamp of approval and will help boost your ticket sales.

The thing Hartley was saying about reviews getting published, hopefully if a journalist comes to see your first night, hopefully a review will appear the next day. Or the day after that; fingers crossed the day after that. It's been known that two weeks after that it still hasn't appeared. It's getting rarer now because publishing online is limitless. You can put as much quantity online as you like. Most publications will try and get all their reviews printed online. But there's still the slim chance that it can take a bit of time to feed through and appear in the paper.

The reviews can affect your ticket sales. Positive reviews are great and will affect your ticket sales, but they're not everything in Edinburgh. The other just as powerful thing can be word of mouth. If you're getting people in that are liking your show and they're leaving with that impression, that is what people are looking for. You can flip through this programme and it is literally hundreds and hundreds of shows. What everybody wants, public, press and promoters included is some sort of guidance. Actually wherever that guidance comes from it does have an effect on people. I'll do the same if I hear from someone else that a show is great and I should really go and see it even if it's had no reviews or it's had three one star reviews you'll still go and see it.

Another thing about reviews is that they are so varied. You can run the gamut from one to five stars and that happens so often you've no idea. There was a guy a couple

of years ago who came over from Australia having never performed to more than 100 people, played at The Gilded Balloon, went on to win the Perrier Award for Best Comedy Newcomer and got every rating from one to five stars. He's doing so well now, doing shows in London and he's been back to Edinburgh since then and he may well be coming back this year. That's kind of the flip side of it, that sometimes they don't matter that much because you can still do very well.

Jo Mangan – In terms of sales we still sold out every show. I think it was word of mouth that kept that going, and also the venue was important. But it's a bit of a body blow to get a one star.

Leroy Harris – It's that reality of there being near to 800 or 900 members of the press in Edinburgh and a good chunk of them are reviewing so the chances are that someone will come across you where what you're doing is just not their cup of tea. It's not necessarily a reflection on you at all; it's just a reflection on the variety of people that are in the city at the same time.

Jo Mangan – It's not until you're there and people are talking about stars that you realise that stars are really important. You feel like you're back in third class. We got five stars on one of the weekly things and we thought, oh no it's not The Scotsman, but actually all you have to do is blow up the stars and put them on your posters and suddenly you've got five stars on your poster. That's actually a serious currency.

Leroy Harris – Yes, being able to stick your star rating on your flyer with a little line is such a visual indicator to people in the street. Again it's a kind of word of mouth thing. Like you say blowing it up and stapling it to your flyer and having whoever's flyering give it out in the street and telling them this review came out today, it's great news, we're selling out. Whatever lie you want to tell to make sure they buy a ticket.

Jane Daly – You might want to talk about that because that's some of the work that people have to do to on the ground in Edinburgh to sell their shows. You're assaulted on every corner with people giving out flyers. I got caught between two people last year who were handing me flyers and they exchanged flyers themselves for each other's shows. It was like a little support group forming on the corner. I was just astounded by the amount of work you have to do. Paul, maybe from your point of view with *Trad* and your experience, what advice would you give to people about that? You might do your show and then have to go out and promote your show for the next day.

Paul Fahy – *Trad* arrived in Scotland having had huge success in Ireland and having great reviews and the end-of-year round ups in the Irish Times said it was one of *the* shows for 2004. We went off with gusto and thankfully had the support of Culture Ireland because it costs an absolute fortune to do something in Edinburgh. It really, really does. We were blessed to have it; we couldn't have done it without them. We were getting these daily sales sheets, how many tickets were gone per performance and you'd get to that morning and you'd see seven comps – that you're paying for as Eileen said – and one sale. That's during your first week, and it can be incredibly disheartening. You have to have a bit of steel in you to just shove your flyer in someone's face. We were lucky in that the Assembly press and marketing team were quite good, but they were quite good in that we managed them into being quite good to the point of bullying them in a way. We also had the Fringe Press Office who are also very good. Then in terms of marketing we had flyers and posters and we had employed the street teams from the Assembly Rooms to distribute that stuff. All that cost an absolute fortune, and it all depends on what time of day they go out at. There are different rates. It's so expensive.

Heading off you feel very assured that you'll have a great support mechanism around you but when you arrive it really is an onslaught. I have a background also in publicity.

I was the publicist for the Galway Arts Festival for many years so I was well used to trying to sell something. Thankfully I had that resource because I had to use it hugely to try and get people to come in. Especially critics in the first few days. Then literally we hounded and hounded the people we were paying to put up the posters and another crowd who distribute your fliers into all the little display units in cafes. Every single morning you're up and you do the rounds and note where the flyers aren't distributed, why aren't they there, you're back on to them and you go out again three hours later to see have they done what they've said they'd do. There's an awful lot of that kind of stuff. They're so time consuming and it is such hard work. It's great as well. We were very blessed in that we did get good reviews. Not that early on. I think we had to wait a week before the first one came out, but it was a five star. We were lucky that there was a good buzz around *Trad* after a week; ticket sales hugely improved and then all of a sudden there were people queuing for tickets. We were just very lucky. The show could still have been as great as it was but it mightn't have got the attention that it did get.

I was up at 8am every single morning having left the Assembly Rooms late at night and I was down on the Royal Mile thinking, I've come this far and I'm still putting up posters. Then by the time you come back up the hill your poster's covered up by somebody else. But the amount of resilience you have to have for that kind of stuff is huge because it can be disheartening. You put all that effort into it and you spend all that money and you come back and think, where are all the people? It is hard work.

To just touch on hidden costs. Things like accommodation in Edinburgh. We were a small company with three people in the cast, two musicians and myself and my colleague. We were a tight team. But accommodation in Edinburgh in August is outrageous. It's like buying a house. People leave and they charge five times what you'd expect to pay on a weekly rent. That kind of stuff costs an absolute fortune.

Also like what Eileen said about brining your own gaffer tape and everything else you need that's very true. In the venue we were in there were seven shows on per day, which I think is too many because what you end up with is very pared back productions. Maybe if the axed one or two of the shows and allowed you more time to get in and get out you'd have higher production values. But the amount of wear and tear that your set is going to take over a three-week period when you've got a twenty minute change over, and it's exactly twenty minutes that we had to get the show up, and then we had fifteen minutes to get out. That's a lot of wear and tear on physical objects, and they're being thrown into a container in the alleyway outside the Assembly Rooms. That's the kind of thing you're dealing with. That kind of maintenance stuff does cost money. So like Eileen was saying about scrimping and saving, saying I won't bring my lighting designer or I won't bring whoever is a bad idea because you're not serving your production to the best that it should be. A lot of this stuff might sound very obvious and apparent but you can't reiterate enough how well planned you have to be in every single area, especially your costings. You just would see things accelerating and running away from you, which can be very scary towards the end when even though you are selling out your show, it's costing you to be there. I can't reiterate how important it is to have covered everything before you go.

Eileen O'Reilly – Another thing about the cost and the time, when Paul is saying you've got twenty minutes to get in and fifteen minutes to get out, if you're not out in fifteen minutes you are financially penalised against your box office. There is a financial forfeit. It's not that you just say sorry to the next company coming in and maybe buy them a pint. There is a financial implication there and I don't think enough companies realise that, again until it comes to settlement, and then all of a sudden there's £50 gone and you think, what was that? On the 7th of August you took twenty-two minutes to get out and that's your penalty. When I say the venues are meticulous in that way for every single penny you owe them, they know exactly down to the roll of gaffer tape

that you got, or the bottle of water that the techie brought in for you, you will be charged. It's to really say to you that if you want to go shop at Lidl and support yourselves then you have to really do more of that for you. If it means bringing a body who is your gopher and maybe your flyer person, because you're going to pay for it somewhere else. If you're going to pay for it, pay for your own as opposed to a fifth of a body from Assembly Rooms to flyer on your part for two hours in the day. What you're paying for that would probably bring your wee brother or your wee sister over who are going to love the idea of being in the Assembly Rooms bar at night time and will probably do it for that and will sleep on the carpet. It's that kind of thing.

We all think that we are quite mature and sophisticated adults, but when it comes to Edinburgh you are back in Uni land. Your accommodation is probably university accommodation or places that you stayed in when you were in first year at university. I stayed in one of those places the year before last. I couldn't believe it. But it happens because that's all that was available and that's all you can afford.

In order for you to not feel that you've been cheated in Edinburgh you do have to budget properly. If it's going to cost €100,000 don't tell Culture Ireland it's going to cost €80,000. It's going to cost €100,000. Be upfront about it. If there are savings at the end that is a bonus. Don't short change yourself at the outset. If you're going to lose and you're prepared to lose big time that's fine, but don't go in to it ignorant. That's just the worst possible thing. We had a company from Australia a couple of years ago that were with Hartley down at C Venues. They were meticulous in their budgeting is as far as they had no flyering team but they had a schedule where all the performers were out on the High Street for so many hours every day. They had so many leaflets they had to distribute in that time. What was actually happening was that their potential audience on High Street were getting to meet the people in the show, have a wee bit of a chat, and it actually started to work for them. They got very well reviewed and actually made a wee bit of money. They really, really thought they'd lost everything but when it came to the final payout they'd actually made something like £460, which they were just totally delighted with. But they'd all contributed to it. They'd all worked really hard. If you've got your leading actor, he's still got to be up on High Street at 10am on a Monday morning giving out 500 flyers, the same as your extra. Please no extras in shows. No walk on parts. You just can't afford them. Unless they're going to be your flyer person and the lighting operator and they're going to take the tickets at the door or whatever. Folk have to multi-task.

It is a bit of a step back for performers when they've been performing in nice theatres here or they've been part of festivals. They kind of have to slum it. You are kind of doing that, but you just have to know that's what you have to do. Being on the High Street flyering is really important. People hate it but it is one of the best place to market shows.

Leroy Harris – Yes, it's important. Don't make the mistake of deciding not to. I think if you come and you spend half an hour in the High Street as a visitor you might come away thinking that was just a hassle and actually I'm not going to do that. Don't make that mistake. Remember it is around half the people in the street do actually read the flyers. If it is the cast or somebody involved in the show they know the show and can really engage with people. They can say I'm from Australia and they'll say their mum's cousin's from Australia, and you get that conversation going. Before you know it they've come down and they've brought eight people to come and see the show. So it is really important to do flyers. In fact, above posters and anything else, definitely, definitely do flyers. If you are coming we produce a press and marketing guide, which has suggested quantities of flyers and if you're going to do posters, suggested quantities of posters. Something to help you as a bit of guidance.

Hartley Kemp – We have regular companies who are very organised with flyering, and I'd say that after the programme, having your actor's flyering, preferably in costume or show t-shirts so they're identified with the show is a really important thing. I don't think it's worth paying a company to distribute for you unless there's some practical reason. You're much better off getting someone who can be part of your company and they can help out with everything else. The Fringe I think is really about finding ways where you can cut corners with costs and not spend money on things that you would normally spend money on, because you have to make it work on a budget that's less than a normal theatre budget. Things like getting extra people along to help your company is a much more effective way of cutting costs than cutting part of the production.

Also going back to the budgeting thing, I'd say show your budget to someone who's been to Edinburgh before. I'm sure the Fringe Office will advise on a budget. We'll certainly advise on a budget. Some of the venues may be out to rip people off with hidden costs, but I think a lot of the venue managers in Edinburgh are trying to be open about their costs. We certainly try to be open about our costs, but there are cases where charges have to be made because we have to have some kind of deterrent against companies overrunning, for example. What I would say is when you get your contract from your venue, have a read of it with somebody who understands contracts and have a discussion with the venue about how it works in reality. If possible, talk to performers who have been in that venue before as well. There will always be costs from all parts of the festival that you're not expecting but the more you can talk to people who have been through it before, you'll have a better idea of what they are.

Jane Daly – I want to throw this open to the audience soon because lots of people will have questions and there's a lot of people with first hand experience. Just before we do that I'd just like Eileen and Paul to talk about presenters. About the good things that can come out of Edinburgh. It's an extraordinary place, and that experience on High Street with the flyers is all part of the festival experience. The opportunity to have your work seen and to travel elsewhere with it, to have a further life for it I think is a very important part as well. There are hundreds of people that go through Edinburgh who essentially are on shopping trips.

Paul Fahy – In terms of looking for work for Galway. I would pick just one or two shows from Edinburgh because what I don't want Galway Arts Festival to be, and what Galway Arts Festival isn't, is a receiving festival that you can get anywhere else around the world. It has to be unique, and if it's not going to be that then it's just going to become average. I could go to Edinburgh and I could probably get half of the things I want but I'm not going to do that. I would maybe have a notion to get two things. Sometimes you don't get anything. The previous year wasn't a great year to be honest. This year I saw a lot better stuff. I probably will have two things I saw in Edinburgh in Galway this year. Again they're very specific things and they fit into the overall shape of my programme for this coming July. Having said that I do go to festivals around the world and you do meet some people who are, as you said Jane, on shopping trips. Jane and I were in New York recently at APAP and it was like the Ideal Homes Exhibition multiplied by 1000. You had a phenomenal amount of booths of people just selling, selling, selling. People were there and it was like having a shopping cart going round. I found it extraordinary because it's not the approach I'd take, but it works for some people.

Eileen O'Reilly – My job really is to do a bit of matchmaking in Edinburgh because I do know a lot of the international buyers who come to the Fringe Festival. I think we have to go back to come forward. I think if you're bringing work to Edinburgh you have to decide what you want for it before you leave home basically. If you want the column inches and to gain a reputation for your company at home that's fine. It's very applaudable to do be able that. The thing is, if you take your work to Edinburgh and an

international buyer decides they like it and would like it for their festival, you might have to wait 18 months for that invitation to come. 18 months is almost the minimum that you would have to wait for the invitation to go to a festival.

So then do you have the rights for the show, are the cast going to be available, have you discussed that with them, are they up for other opportunities with other companies, is there a film in the offing? Presenters, or promoters as we call them in Edinburgh, want the piece of work they saw in Edinburgh. They don't want it with a replacement in the lead role. They want the show that they saw. Most of them, to be honest, will wait for it. However if you don't have the rights for the show – we had a situation two or three years ago where we had a show that quite a famous UK author had penned this play and let a young theatre company bring it to Edinburgh where it did phenomenally well, but he had no intention of ever giving them the rights past Edinburgh. Basically he let them come up and try the show out and see if it actually had legs, it did have legs and a West End producer took it on board, and the company who brought the work to the public's attention and got it acclaimed had absolutely no right to it. You have to see what the longevity it before you bring the work. If there's no afterlife for it or the performers are not interested, either recast before you come to Edinburgh or convince them that next summer in Adelaide is what they really want to be doing.

In the event that you've got all that sorted before you leave home then yes you can start to look for international buyers to come and see your work. I keep saying to people being in Edinburgh is like having a party. If you don't invite people nobody will come. Nobody knows your work better than you do. You'll have an idea of the kind of venues it would play in Ireland. Maybe in the UK. Maybe in Australia, the US and Canada. But you have to have some kind of knowledge, either from somebody else's experiences of what tour route they took or what people were interested in that kind of work, or even just from reading international press like Backstage or Variety. All those kinds of papers that we always think are not about us, they're a bit luvvie. They actually let you know about where work is going and about where the audience might be for your work. My job is also to introduce people to companies who don't know each other at all, who've really got no track record, but they might be doing interesting work for a particular festival. There's a festival coming up in Birmingham later this year called Fierce, and they do take quite a lot of work from Edinburgh.

The other thing that I do is for the companies who are coming to Edinburgh who the likes of Paul might not be interested in taking post-Edinburgh because he wants all the new, dynamic work in his festival, I'd encourage them to contact Paul and to potentially play in Galway before they come to Edinburgh, and maybe get the track record there.

A lot of international companies, they're not necessarily coming in to Edinburgh for a Fringe First, they're just coming in for the experience and to be on an international platform. This year particularly we have the British Council showcase, which happens every alternate year, and from the 1,200 international buyers who come on an annual basis, we'll get another 200 this year. The good thing about that is that they're supported by the British Council to come and see British work, but like everybody who comes to Edinburgh they won't buy exclusively from the British menu because their festival will not be a festival of British theatre and they won't have an audience at their venue for totally British work for an entire season. So they do go outside and see work.

It's that thing of knowing who might be interested in your work. Even if you don't know, there are publications like International Performing Arts Yearbook and all these different directories that list international venues and the kind of product that they programme. If you think for a minute that these people might be in Edinburgh, drop them an email, tell them you're going to be there and offer them a ticket.

Which brings me round to tickets. Because you are paying for your tickets, but that £6 that it's costing might actually be the £6 that gets you a gig somewhere. I do feel that sometimes companies have to be a little more generous in how they're spending their money. It's not even so much the cost of the ticket that's the problem. It's the ease of accessing a ticket for the show that makes it easy for a promoter to go and see a show at a particular venue at a particular time. It is a problem for us with the venues because all these tickets are yours, they're not ours, and so we don't like to give them away. We would like to access them in order to pass them on to somebody who's going to use them and then give you the information about who got them, so you can network with them at a later date. It's a problem with the Fringe that we have to resolve with the venues. It's an ongoing thing. In the event that you have to opportunity to have a promoter come and see your work, take it. A promoter might not necessarily like the show themselves, but they sure as hell know somebody who will like it, who is in a venue that's doing this type of work. Or even better, particularly in the US, is on a campus and is looking for a company to do a residency there.

I was at APAP as well. I suppose the up and the down side of this last trip was that we were all staying in the same hotel but we never saw each other. I actually think it was a good thing because it does mean you're meeting the people you should be meeting in order to make the connections for the companies. When I left New York I was over in Vancouver. When I leave here at the end of the month I'm going to be in Tokyo, Adelaide and Sydney. It's all great, and it sounds all very glamorous and exciting but it is really about meeting people who are interested in coming to Edinburgh to buy work. It is a business. You do have a product, and you are bringing it to a market. I think you're ultimately bringing it to sell it to a promoter who's going to take it to another audience, which will increase your credibility at home. Maybe to get some kind of international notion of where you actually rank or rate. In Ireland you might be a big fish but in Edinburgh in August you're in a very, very big pond. I think if nothing else it's to take the work there, see how it measures up, meet other companies, and explore the possibility for collaborative work if things don't necessarily work out for the show that you've brought. It's what you can make of it.

We can help direct you. We set up promoters' breakfasts by invitation only. If you're invited it means a promoter is interested in your work. You get the chance to meet them, and you also get the chance to meet other promoters who maybe don't know you yet but through word of mouth might think this may be a company that we'd quite like to have on board. But the work only starts in Edinburgh. I can't emphasise it enough. But we're there to help. We've got a brilliant press and marketing team who pick up the shortfall when the venues maybe don't come up to scratch the way that people expect them to. We do have the opportunities there to meet people. Sometimes it's spontaneous, it's in the office. We had a company in two years ago from Australia – lots of Australian companies come. They come and they have a proper notion of what it takes to do the Fringe. They came and they wanted to meet a particular promoter who works on a international Comedy Festival who literally came in behind them when they were sitting at my desk.

You'll get all sorts of people at my desk. The first time Fringe virgin, but you also get really famous international actors, directors and producers. We coincide with the film and TV festival at the end of our festival so we get a lot of TV and film producers coming in, some of them quite famous. Film's not my bag so I really don't have a clue about them. I did have Harvey Goldstein at my desk a couple of years ago. Seemingly he is Mr. Miramax, but he was just somebody else looking for product. That's how it is. There's no harm dropping a curtsey to someone. It is that everybody is there to sell a product or buy a product and I think when you start looking at what it takes to do that then Edinburgh is certainly the biggest place. I think in some respects it is the best place in terms of the quality and quantity of the international buyers who come. The

next biggest market to us really is in Adelaide and it's quite small by comparison. So we want to stay literally streets ahead of them. Although you will come and you will get wet and you will get midge bitten and you will get all sorts of things that you won't get in Adelaide, but it's much more fun.

Jane Daly – Anybody want to make any questions or observations?

Audience 1 (Rachel West, RAW. *Under Ice*. C Venues, Edinburgh, 2006) – My approach to Edinburgh was – I probably did all the things that Eileen said not to do. In January when Jo was closing a deal, we were doing a tech run of the show we eventually brought. I applied very last minute to Culture Ireland and I got the money. Well, I made the application and through having met Siva Zagel from C Venues at Theatre Shop. I realised I was quite late. I only knew the Traverse and C Venues. To find out that you were too late in March, I think it was, that certainly the Traverse had sorted out their programme by then. We did have a new writing piece and I did think it probably would have done quite well in the Traverse. It was great to know Siva and to be able to have had that contact through Theatre Shop and it made a world of difference to picking up that phone and making that call. Talking to Hartley was great, it was very open.

Out of the ten people supported by Culture Ireland we were the only two that weren't really a company. I didn't have a producer, and that was probably a mistake. I didn't have a production manager; well I had one eventually, sort of part-time through the venue. I certainly didn't bring enough technical support of my own which was a big mistake. It just meant I spent a lot of my time running around. I did bring the family member who was sent out to Homebase. Sorting out technical things is not what I do, and I was sorting out gauzes and video and we had a lot of cues. Suddenly I had to retract on a deal that I'd done with C Venues and say I want the same techie every night. It's quite complicated and I can't retrain somebody. And they said that will cost more money.

I did the same with my budget more or less as I went along. I made a budget and as it came to the June deadline I realised that to do the producing, the PR, the directing and to be in rehearsal for something for the Galway Arts Festival as well, it was just too much. I couldn't keep up with the deadlines that were coming from the Fringe. Once you agree to go it's almost like a full time job. Well, you can get other work done, but it's difficult doing a show at the same time. It's probably difficult doing the show that you're bringing over because you just have to answer a lot of questions.

Good images are another thing. Our image got used quite a lot. That helped a lot, to have done that leg work here in Dublin and not be trying to look for photo shoots over there. At the last minute I did employ someone for PR, Sheridan Humphreys. I kept on getting more and more into debt by making these decisions. By realising I couldn't keep up with those decisions. The PR in a different country and a different festival is just something that only a PR person that's been there before can do in the way that it needs to be done.

While there is the help there, you also need to have the freedom to know how the whole festival works. You need to have the time to do that if you are also sorting out problems. I had good advice from lots of people, and one of the good things we did do was rent a flat. That made a really big difference. We were kind of happy campers. I made a big difference to me being the only girl with a load of lads, who also wanted to bring over a child. Those sorts of things were sorted before we went. Everybody is on very different levels. If you go over as a student group you can say everybody muck in together, but not if you've got professional actors going over on contract. We used a contract that was kind of based on that which Project operates on, so you have to offer a certain standard.

You're going into a venue, say C Venues, where there were I think twelve performances a day in the space I was in. We had a ten-minute turnaround. The cost is £10 per minute you go overtime. That is there. It's a real cost. I was flabbergasted in a way. You can't take any of those things personally, and I know Hartley won't. To have someone sitting there doing nothing to help this mad scurry but just marking things on a clipboard and marking the time. I'd like to have had my own clipboard because I know there were times that we went over for reasons not to do with us. That's the precision that you're talking about. I totally understand. If there are 250 shows going on in one venue they need that precision. There is a tally at the end, where that was dropped in our case. There's swings and roundabouts, and ways of dealing with it. The contract, basically, it's down to the details of the contract. Just to realise that those things are really happening.

The other thing was insurance. I think for Irish companies going to Edinburgh there's a package that all the insurance companies offer in Britain which is for Public Liability and Employer's Insurance. Public Liability is something like £212 for the month, for Edinburgh. That's fine, we can use the Public Liability, but you can't use the Employer's Insurance, you have to get your own insurance for that here because we're not British employers. That was a really big thing. I had a child in the play. If it's just you in the play and you can say to yourself, if I cause myself to trip over my own microphone maybe I'll do it on my dad's health insurance or whatever. If you've got to the point where you've moved out of that realm and you've done professional stuff – even if you're in a venue where the people before and after you are amateurs. You're dealing with their amateur get out and your trying to have a professional get in. Maybe you don't know what their insurance is. I really needed it, and that caused a problem. The insurance came through literally just the day before we left. That was only made possible through help from Project.

One other thing about press and marketing. I was delighted that I did employ these other people. You always feel you could have got more out of them. They made very targeted flyering, and I think that maybe with the show that we were doing that that worked better than sending the lads in suits down the Royal Mile. I personally felt I couldn't ask the actors on a full time basis to go flyering. We did go flyering and I know that direct contact makes a huge difference, and it's great to see people. I actually felt that the targeted flyering worked. That wasn't really something I'd thought of before I went there. This show is coming out of the Traverse, it's kind of like ours, and maybe we can target that audience rather than just hanging around on the Royal Mile.

Audience 2 – Is there any directory or website of the nature of different types of venues apart from theatres?

Eileen O'Reilly – Yes, when you register with the Fringe Festival, and you can do that online, we give you access to download information from our website or we can send you a hard copy depending on which is your preference. We can send you our Spaces Directory, which is just a new publication. It's really up to date in terms of novel spaces. Some of them are bars, a couple would be churches and almost into site-specific, but not specifically. What you'll see in the back of the programme there's a list of venues. That literally is every nook and cranny that is a venue. If you needed something quite unusual that wasn't there you could contact our office. We do work with some of our Edinburgh-based companies who do site specific work, so if you do need something that wasn't there, and wasn't in the Spaces Directory. The Spaces Directory is basically giving information about spaces that do have some kind of technical facility or support. When it comes to the smaller tiny spaces we wouldn't necessarily have them listed there. If there was something particular that you wanted, a type of venue – for example a couple of years ago one of the theatre companies

used Debenhams. Now Debenhams will not be in the Spaces Directory, but that's where they performed. One of the companies from here used public conveniences. They will not be in the Spaces Directory; however if you would like access to them we can make that available to you.

Audience 3 (Abie Philbin Bowman, *Jesus: The Guantanamo Years. Underbelly, Edinburgh, 2006*) – I'd just like to say as well that you should talk to someone who's been there because there are probably five or six venues that get a huge proportion of audience and media attention. I think the only way to really get Edinburgh is to go there as a punter for a week and see as many shows as you can. I did that in 2005 and I saw I think 30 shows in a week. Actually I had a press pass because I work for a magazine, which was kind of handy. I did review quite a few of them but not all. But honestly, if you do that and see five or six shows a day you'll realise what it's like to be a punter at Edinburgh and how incredibly overwhelming it is for everyone. Press and punters alike. You start to ask yourself why did that show work, why did that show not work? How come this show is ok and full and this show is brilliant and empty? Having done that I then designed a show pretty much for Edinburgh. I was just thinking all the time, will this work in Edinburgh?

One thing as well about accommodation. I think the Fringe website is brilliant for that. There's a page where you can advertise accommodation on, and get accommodation. Both years I went I got stuff from there. I had a tiny box room that was £400 for the month, and I was delighted.

I think just to say a few more things. Everything that's been said I totally agree with, just a few things haven't been mentioned. The press and the internet are basically sources of free advertising, and they are sources of free advertising that people actually look at. Things like myspace.com and bebo.com are ridiculously good ways to promote your show for free. You can put all your propaganda up there, you can put video clips, you can put photos, you can put whatever you want, and you can start networking. Search Edinburgh, search Comedians. There's a Myspace comedy network, there's probably Myspace theatre. You can find people on the network and they'll come along. People spend hours on Bebo. People who have clearly nothing better to do. Target them.

I remember when I arrived – I was playing Jesus, hence the hair. Never miss a chance for promotion, by the way. Well, I forgot my crown of thorns and I was thinking, of all the things to forget, the crown of thorns. But then I thought, no hang on a second. I was thinking wouldn't it be funny if Jesus had to phone home and say, Dad where is it? And Dad would say, you're room's a holy show. I can't find it. I actually wrote up a little piece and sent it to the Fringe website. That's still up there. For the entire month of August it would cost you a thousand or something quid to put up an ad on that site. I had a thing with my picture and a spiel about the show and I typed it in. It was up there for a month. I think the big key to getting media is actually writing like a journalist. Just read loads of arts features, because the way journalists write is the way it's going to be written, so if you write in that style, they just cut and paste. It saves them an hour. So they say yes, I'll take that one, and they put it in.

I think also something that has been mentioned is that the time of day is very important. The time that your show is on. Certainly if you're doing comedy. All the big names from comedy are on from about 8.30pm. Ed Byrne, Dara O'Brien, Reginald B. Hunter. Amazing, amazing comedians. They go on until about 10.30 and from about 11 you have all the things like Spank. Basically big showcase shows that's are about three hours long and you get a free beer. You see five or six top name comedians who've gone from their shows to do five or ten minutes at these places. I think that if you're going to go to Edinburgh you should make sure that you're on before 8pm because you just won't get the audience. Ed Byrne sold out some huge room with about 10,000

people in it. So you're competing with that in the evening time. I was on at 1pm and the most high profile thing I was competing with was *Lunch With the Hamiltons*.

Just a final thing to say is that by far the most important thing in Edinburgh is the 40 words in the Fringe programme. Everyone sees that. Just get that perfect. I think I redrafted mine about 200 times, and I wasn't making major changes, just commas and hyphens and spaces. Most people put their reviews in. If you go through that brochure I guarantee you will find 100 shows that say 'Brilliant! Fantastic! Unmissable! You must see this show!' That's why I say go as a punter because you'll realise how overwhelming that is. Literally you just don't know what to see. My thing was if I could make somebody laugh in those 40 words they would think I was funny and they might come and see my show. That was what I went with.

Maybe one final thing would be that novelty works. I put sudoku on my fliers and it's free. About three people did it last year. I'd say probably a hundred will do it this year. The Times loves sudoku so they ran a feature on sudoku and have my flyer on page 3 of The Times. The media is lazy. Stuff snowballs. If you get in to one paper it's easier to get into another one. It's probably much easier to get into the media here before you go, so if you want to put the show on here before you go and network and try and get on to Newstalk. If you've got media here they'll maybe say, oh they've got media in Ireland, they might be worth going after.

Eileen O'Reilly – The thing is though that Abie did have a really stunning image that was absolutely everywhere in Edinburgh. You just couldn't hide from it. You were on the front page of the List.

Audience 3 (Abie Philbin Bowman) – Do you know how I got the list? There was a thing about religion, and I was lucky that religion jumped as the theme last year because it totally played into what I was doing. What happened was that this guy emailed me with this list of questions. One of them was, in comedy nothing is sacred, but how does that work when the joke turns to religion? What I did in that situation is that I thought, well this is going to make really bad copy, so instead of answering the questions I sent the guy three paragraphs of sound bites. He ended up quoting pretty much all three paragraphs, whereas everybody else who got sent that questionnaire, from what I could read of it, had tried to answer the questions which were impossible to answer in an interesting way. As a result, because I was the main thing in that article, they then put me on the front cover of The List. They pay people to walk the streets with The List, and I was on the cover. That was about 15 hours of flyering I didn't have to do. That was unbelievably lucky.

The art of flyering and schmoozing I think Simon is the absolute expert on. Simon schmoozes like no one I've ever seen before. It's a five-minute process but it's a total art form. You have to see it in action. It's exhausting to keep that rate up.

Audience 4 (Simon Toal, Flipside & Spacecraft, *The Friends of Jack Kairo Underbelly*, Edinburgh 2006) – It was the most exhausting thing I've ever done in my life.

Audience 3 (Abide Philbin Bowman) – And it was a brilliant show. But because you couldn't sell it in ten seconds your audiences weren't great and it was a tragedy.

Audience 4 (Simon Toal) – I was the only one flyering my show and I was performing the show as well. My biggest thing was that I'd be up at 11am and I'd be outside the venue in costume, selling my show. Then I'd go and do the show at 4.30pm, lost five pounds in weight, then go sell the show again and do the whole thing again the following day. But I actually ended up with an article. Two people who saw me on the

street wrote an article and sent it to the Fringe website. Just two people talking about my schmoozing.

Audience 3 (Abie Philbin Bowman) – It stood out. You were in character, and I don't know how you kept it up because at that rate it was five minutes per person.

Audience 4 (Simon Toal) – I think I had a nervous breakdown in week two.

Jane Daly – That's one of the issues, when people are travelling without those kinds of resources. You're performing and you also have to sell your own work. That's one of the big challenges I suppose.

There's another question there?

Audience 5 (John Pickering) – It's not a question, more an observation. I go there to look for shows, as Eileen knows, and bring them back to Dublin to the Dublin Gay Theatre Festival. Which for those people who don't know is on from the 7th to the 22nd of May. It is amazing how many production companies will go there and will have press releases, publicity brochures and flyers, and they forget to put a contact name, they forget to put a contact number and they forget to put an address. It is almost impossible to get a postal address for any production company. They will invariably put a mobile number down, which nine times out of ten is a British mobile number that they've picked up because it's cheaper to use a British mobile. So all these international companies you just can't contact after about a month after the festival. In the last couple of weeks I've been chasing a particular company from America, and I've also been chasing one from London that Leroy helped me out with. Again it's very, very difficult because they will not put the correct contact details on press releases and flyers. They do websites, and the websites go out of action or disappear after about two or three months after the festival. You're talking about us giving them invitations to come to festivals. You say 18 months afterwards. I'm inviting them six months afterwards, and I still can't get the details. To me that's a most important factor.

Secondly, can I just say as an observation, of the twenty-odd productions that I have been brought into Ireland, virtually every one single one without exception has failed to make any money whatsoever in Edinburgh. It has cost them all a fortune. Invariably they all complain that contracts are reneged on. They complain that venues change room sizes, times; you name it, it's changed. They take an inordinate amount of time actually getting their money. I was with a company in London last weekend and they still have not got their money from Edinburgh from last year.

Eileen O'Reilly – What venue were they at?

Audience 5 (John Pickering) – I don't know.

Eileen O'Reilly – Because, to be perfectly honest, part of their contract with the venue is payout. By the end of September our office has paid out all money to all the venues. Generally what happens is, when you are opting in to a venue you're also opting in to receiving the payment of your box office that we sold on your part. When that happens we take 6% of what we sold on your part and we also take a credit card commission from that. The balance goes to your venue. It depends very much then what your contract is for payout with your venue. We're constantly listening to artists who have not yet been paid out, but whose venues were paid in September. I would advise those companies to take legal action, because the venues are behaving fraudulently. Nobody wants to resort to court but I think in some instances it's the only way to get paid out. Certainly this last year, all our payments were made by the end of September. Considering the size and scale of the festival, to pay out over 1,800 shows

I think is commendable to our sole performing accountant who makes all the reconciliations with the box office manager.

Audience 5 (John Pickering) – But why can't there be an ombudsman for the festival? You hear these complaints every year without exception about people getting ripped off.

Eileen O'Reilly – The thing is, what we're trying to do is act as a lobby for the performers with the venues, however our contracts are not with the venues. It's the companies that are contracting with the venues. But what seems to happen is that companies get a little scared about raising any kind of issue because they perhaps want to come back to Edinburgh and don't want to get a bad name. So there's a bit of a Catch 22 situation. You find that particularly with the bigger venues, people don't want to rock the boat in case they've got a really good show and they want to take it back to that venue that they were successful in before. They're in a Catch 22 because ultimately the venue won't take them back, so they have got something to lose. It is a difficult situation. It definitely is.

Audience 4 (Simon Toal) – I just wanted to say that in relation to the Fringe Office itself I found everything above board and absolutely professional in any dealings I had with them. Publicity and everything. On the other hand, I should have dealt with the Fringe Office more. We all have 20/20 vision in hindsight. I should have dealt with the Fringe Office more than I actually did with my venue. Little things and loopholes were consistently appearing in my contract. Times were changed. Various things kept happening. I was paying X amount of money for publicity, they you'd go into the publicity office and see them sitting on their arses doing nothing. When you asked them about it they'd say well, we're trying to sell ninety other shows. Then you say I don't care about the ninety other show, I care about my show because I paid you money to sell my show. Then various other things would happen as regards technical things, like the hiring of a technician. You're told one day that you have a technician. This is actually true: the day I went on, three minutes before I went on stage, a manager came up to me and said it was against the policy of this venue for you to be able to use one of our technicians without a formal contract or paying them. So I said to him, when I walked in the door yesterday I was told that this was my technician. He said it is against the policy of this company to allow you to use this technician. That's the bottom line. I said, you're telling me this three minutes before I go on stage? The bottom line is that person told me they're my technicians, and they'll stay that way and we'll talk about it after the show.

Eileen O'Reilly – You're the type of bloke who can say that. I wouldn't say no to you.

Audience 4 (Simon Toal) – Well, I was in costume and I did have a gun. It did help.

Eileen O'Reilly – This is what I'm trying to get over to people is that we're an umbrella organisation. We help you find your venue, we'll help fight your battles, but you are the client.

Audience 4 (Simon Toal) – That was exactly my point. I was told by Culture Ireland and by other people there to go to you. But I was so busy selling the show, I was so busy performing the show. I made the biggest mistake I'd ever made in my life which was I didn't take one day off. I did 25 performances straight through the Fringe Festival. I was exhausted. I was really tired, so I got to the point where I was fighting a battle with my venue.

Eileen O'Reilly – We're meeting with all the venues on the 24th of February in Edinburgh. It is just things like that that we are made aware of that we will address in that forum, which will be venue managers. Some of them will not want to hear what the

complaints are, but unless we address it at that forum then we have to go a wee bit more public on our website, and do the name and shame thing. Ultimately what will happen is that venue managers will be in a position where they adversely affect the Fringe Festival, and I will do whatever I can to prevent that.

I was saying to folk earlier, I was in a situation in Edinburgh in 2001 where I had been involved in 2000 with the Dublin Theatre Festival and a production of *Bedbound* that went to the Traverse Theatre. Now in the Traverse, in the Fringe programme, had put our entry in incorrectly. They had put us in for one week in the festival as opposed to three. It was an accident, nobody did it deliberately. However, after week one we'd won a Fringe First, Enda Walsh was the darling of the festival, and we'd sold out in week one. But week two and three we played to an average of eight people. I'm sitting as promoter liaison. My job is to match make shows. I have a conflict of interest. I cannot morally sell *Bedbound* above all the other shows. Effectively all the promoters I was meeting would maybe hear about it or read the review, but I couldn't be proactive because it was a conflict of interest. Yet the conflict of interest continues within the venues, Underbelly included, who act as producers of some of the work that's there. They are active in selling that work potentially over your work, and you're the client. So we are lobbying on companies' parts.

It's great the Hartley's here. Leroy and I do this kind of road show thing quite regularly, and it's great when there's somebody from the venues there and he can say, yes that guy did say that, and he does have a problem with you. Harley reconciled a situation in Edinburgh almost spontaneously because things didn't particularly work out well. That's his gift to do that. Obviously he can't do it with all the companies, and hopefully we'd never have to do it with all the companies anyway because they wouldn't all have a problem. Similarly, we can go back and say to Underbelly there's an outstanding issue in Ireland and what are you going to do about it? But unless we know we can't. We're good but we're not psychic.

I'm quite happy to take them to task because it's morally wrong to do that. The whole nature of the Fringe Festival as open access is endangered then because it becomes effectively a curated festival at venue level, which it is already in many respects. At the moment it does allow companies access to very good venues that generally speaking do have an audience for a particular kind of work in that venue. But you need the support that all the other companies are getting there, and that's where we come in, as a kind of safety net for that. Our venue and performer liaison is here to help, I'm here to help, and bottom line is we've got the Press Office, and the venues do not want an angry Press Office.

Audience 4 (Simon Toal) – That was exactly what I wanted to say to everybody. Always remember that the Fringe Office is there to help you with whatever you need. I should have taken it up, but I was just exhausted. I couldn't fight any more. The same thing, you get reviews, and in total I had five four-star reviews for the show and a write-up in The Guardian, and as you well know, I played to seven people a day in a 150-seater theatre. So you have to work with your venue as best as you can, but always remember that the office is there for you.

Audience 3 (Abie Philbin Bowman) – And don't be conservative about the size. I was in a 70-seater and I wanted to get a 55-seater. Go small, because if you can say that your show sold out in Edinburgh and it was ten people, no one's going to know that. Certainly if it's a 60/40 split, they assume you're going to sell 40% as the guarantee. So you're basically buying 16% of every single show you're going to do up front. You're paying a lot of money down. With my show I was incredibly lucky and sold out, and I still didn't make an awful lot of money at all. You go for credibility, you go for reputation, you go for what doors you might open. You don't go to make money, because you won't.

Audience 1 (Rachel West) – I think that was my biggest mistake, the box office prediction. I predicted for a month's run in Edinburgh way less than we had predicted for a ten-day run in Project. A ten-day run at – I can't remember what our percentage was, say 50%. I think we predicted 30% for Edinburgh and it was still off by about five grand.

Audience 3 (Abie Philbin Bowman) – The average audience is 3 people, isn't it?

Audience 6 (Karen Egan, *Absolute Cabaret. Assembly Rooms, Edinburgh, 2006*) – What happened to me was, I was in a very high profile venue, The Assembly Rooms, last year. Performing my own show but employing another seven people along with the show. It was a very expensive show to bring to Edinburgh. Certainly at the beginning was particularly expensive, and I tried to cut down on costs and everything. At times I completely sold out, so I had 150 people a night in a 150-seater venue. I lost €10,000 on my show and the Assembly Rooms said that I was one of the highest selling in that particular room. I was playing at the slightly off-peak time of 10.30 at night.

You just have to decide why you're going to Edinburgh. You have to decide why am I bringing this show. My show was considered to be hugely successful over there at the time. I couldn't get a review from any of the major broadsheets because they wouldn't come. I pleaded with the Assembly Room press office. They simply wouldn't come and review it. I don't know why. Just because there are 1,800 shows or something like that in the Fringe, and they don't want to see a cabaret show. Then they might review somebody peeing into a teapot at the back of a tree. It's more interesting. It makes more interesting copy. It might be an absolutely appalling show, but it could get a review from The Scotsman, and everyone is searching for the review from The Scotsman. They might just go, ah cabaret, I've seen it all before, and they don't come to see your show to see if there's anything different in it.

That's just to say that with the Assembly Rooms, if you're on a 60/40 split you can really guarantee that actually it's going to be more like 70/30 in favour of them when they do the reconciliation. You do not get anything free with the venue. The venue doesn't come with anything. I didn't get any publicity with the Assembly Rooms, no matter what they say, and they are one with the highest profile you can talk about.

I, in my opinion, wasted money on a publicity person over there. She didn't work out for me at all. That was a complete waste of €2,000. I'd rather have brought over my friend to do it, who knew nothing. Honest to god. If anyone in this room wants to email me after I can tell you all the things not to do. I was really, really conscious in my budgeting and I did everything I could to keep my costs down. Still, it's considered to be a very successful show, and that's what's laughable. The good thing is that I enjoyed it artistically and online I got reviews, and I can use them to quote. As Eileen was saying, you have to focus on the positive things about making contacts, and I made a lot of contacts. You have to say that Edinburgh was a very positive experience from that point of view. But to echo what Simon was saying, he had no days off, I had one and a half days off, but really there weren't days off because I was self-promoting. I'm still exhausted from Edinburgh. I really am. It's a really tiring experience doing it yourself. I'd say look at your budget and double it. I really would say it. Do not go over to Edinburgh without talking to any of us. Please do not do that to yourselves. It is a total waste of time.

Could I just ask – I'm so sorry I wasn't able to make the beginning of the meeting – but could I just ask Leroy something? I understand from an international perspective why Edinburgh wants to grow, but having been to Edinburgh in 1996 when it was a big festival even then, it was possible to make an impact in Edinburgh then. It's not really

possible to make an impact these days. I wonder about the value about having bigger and better. 1,800 shows vying for the same amount of press. Personally, even from a punter's view.

Leroy Harris – Absolutely. To be honest, in 1996, for example, there were still people writing then that the festival had become too big, and that in 1986 you could make a splash and you couldn't really now in 1996. I think the thing to remember about the Fringe is because of the way it's made up, and because it's made up of dozens and dozens of small businesses – C Venues is a business, Underbelly is a business, The Assembly Rooms is a business and they're all working together.

Audience 6 (Karen Egan) – Not for the artists.

Leroy Harris – No, I don't mean they're working together as in they're working with each other, I mean that they're all operating as businesses. You can't really be stagnant as a business. The Fringe has to grow in order to be a viable festival. Because the Fringe doesn't rely on any sort of public subsidy, because we don't really get any at all, that's again why it has to keep growing. That's the way to look at it really isn't growing, it's getting smaller.

Eileen O'Reilly – Also I think the thing is that in 1996 we would have had about 400 journalists come in. Basically as the festival has grown in scale in terms of the number of productions, similarly the number of critics and reviewers, the number of international buyers has grown. Maybe not necessarily at the same rate.

When I started in 2000 with the festival we effectively had no registered international buyers at all, because my job didn't exist. We knew people came to Edinburgh but they came and they went and we had no record of them being there other than the fact that maybe we know some show was appearing in the Sydney Festival or something was opening in New York or whatever. We'd only hear that back, but we had no means by which to monitor it. When I came on board in that very first year of 2000, just by putting it out on our website and also in some of the trade press we had over 400 buyers who were in town, just because they were there. We didn't actually actively go out and source them.

That's exactly what we're doing now. Obviously the bigger the festival is getting the more buyers we need, and that's why I go to these arts conferences and other people's trade shows in order to get people to come to Edinburgh to see the work. Similarly what's happening now is that, piggyback style, if we're getting 100 Italian buyers in, we're probably getting 20 journalists in. They're piggybacking what these promoters are going to see to get the preview press for work that might be going to a festival in Italy. It's that kind of thing.

So yes, it is increasing in terms of the number of productions. At the moment we've got 2,381 companies registered. They won't all necessarily all materialise this year in Edinburgh, but already, and we're nowhere near programme, the promoters are already coming back to make sure I know they're still interested in coming and we're already in a dialogue. It's almost servicing itself in terms of the numbers. The shows are going up but we are getting more buyers, we are getting more press. It just does mean that there's much more competition.

Your slot, I would have said, was not really the best slot in that venue and it's a problem with the Assembly Rooms. We had a situation there a couple of years ago where we had a show that was aptly named *The Suicide Site Guide to the Internet* and they were playing effectively to three people a night at a 11.30pm slot.

Audience 6 (Karen Egan) – I didn't really have a problem with the audiences.

Eileen O'Reilly – But you have to understand that at that time of night your journalist is in the bar. He's knocked off. It's difficult, but what really is difficult is, Simon ends up in a big venue and it sounds really great that he's in the big venue. He's encouraged to take that timeslot in that space. You're encouraged to take your timeslot. *Suicide Site Guide* was 11.30 at night. A theatre show that was really deep and emotional. The fact that it was on at 11.30pm meant I could go to it because I don't get to see that much work. I went three times, and the three times I went there was a small piece in the show that necessitated audience participation. In order to move the show on somebody from the audience had to go up. The three nights I went it had to be me. Nobody else went up. We could have been sitting there at four in the morning because the show wasn't going to go on. They would have really lots of excess time for get out.

It's that kind of thing that some people are flattered that they're in the venue and they've a good time slot. It's almost like getting all your stars aligned, that you're in the right place at the right time. Sometimes it might be better to be in the wrong place at the right time, and get people to come and see the show. To get reviewed late at night is exceptionally difficult. If you're not reviewed in week one when the journalists still have energy, you're not going to get reviewed for your kind of show at that time of night. Unless it's something that's happening at the Speigeltent, in which case they're plastered but they're having a good time and everything fabulous.

Audience 4 (Simon Toal) – That's exactly it Karen. Your show's brilliant. I've seen it and it's amazing. You got full audience and no reviews, and there's me with no audience and loads of reviews. You can just never tell how it's going to work out.

Eileen O'Reilly – This is it. Sometimes you think it's too good to be true. It is.

Jane Daly – We're fast running out of time, so we'll just take a few more quick questions.

Audience 7 – You were saying that since 2000 you've been able to quantify the buyers coming to Edinburgh. Has it been possible to quantify what they've bought?

Eileen O'Reilly – Not in the way that I would like it, because until this year – I've only been back at the festival on a contract basis, so I'm really only there during July and August. This year I came back after the Dublin Theatre Festival, and what we're trying to do is because there is so much work I'm trying to cherry pick about fifty shows to see where they're going, if they're going anywhere. What we do do is that when people register with us we ask for their programme from their venue or their festival and we're very thorough about going through from about going through them from year to year. If Joe Bloggs has been from the Lowry in Manchester, if he's been and he hasn't taken work, then I don't particularly want to register him as a promoter. I'm quite interested in seeing what shows have an after life, although saying that there were two shows in the Sydney Festival this year, and they were in the Fringe four years ago. So it's taken some time for some shows to come back round again.

Certainly in terms of generally monitoring who's buying what, we'll get that mostly from the programmes, and we get those from people who register. John (Pickering) is great because John does take a lot of work from the Fringe Festival. What's even better is that he actually sees a lot of work that he potentially doesn't take, but he's already building up relationships with companies. I think Jo (Mangan) found that too. Ok, people might not be able to take the work that you had in Edinburgh last year, however they've made a connection with the company and there's a potential for collaborative work later. It's not always immediate. For example the British Council who've only got thirty shows will monitor those shows for 18 months after this year's showcase to see how much financially it's generated for their investment.

Audience 5 (John Pickering) – Can I just add to that? And I give them a free theatre, and free accommodation, and everybody goes home with money in their pockets. Everybody.

Audience 8 – I have a question and a comment. My comment is in economic, financial terms. A point of diminishing returns. Sometime you get to this point where it's big enough and past that you start losing people. As you said, if she can't get someone to come at 10.30pm and there are only so many slots, how can they actually add more when already at 10.30pm you can't get anybody to go because they're burnt out, they're exhausted?

Eileen O'Reilly – That's just the journalists that are potentially not going. What happens is for example with newspapers like The Scotsman they'll bring on additional journalists. It's very much that thing of how they perceive your work, who they're going to send to review it. It's the relationships that start in June and July in terms of getting information to the press. The Press Office send out complete lists of journalists – certainly the Scottish and the National press – so that there are contacts there for the general reviewers who are going to do The Scotsman and The Guardian and The Herald. All the bigger, substantial papers. Those newspapers take on additional staff every year. It really is that case about getting to the arts editor to encourage them to take on that kind of work, or to even push for features. If you're not getting taken up in one area of the paper it's to still pursue the other opportunities in the paper to be seen.

Our audiences are going up. We're selling well in excess of a million tickets on an annual basis. The bigger it's getting, it's not that the numbers are falling off in terms of attendance.

Hartley Kemp – It would be interesting to look at dividing the average each year.

Leroy Harris – Yes you could. You could look at the audience average. I can give you an exact number on paper but it varies from probably about 45 to 65, but that's no means crept up or went down.

Hartley Kemp – But that 45 to 65 is swayed by the fact that there are some shows that sell an awful lot of tickets. Mostly comedy. So that's not really a good indicator for theatre.

Audience 1 (Rachel West) – Yes, you'd almost have to separate it into different strands.

Hartley Kemp – Also there's a big danger in going to a larger space and thinking you're going to get a percentage capacity house. It's much safer sometimes to think in terms of how many people are going to see my show. 25% of 200 seats or 25% of 50 seats is very different.

I think also it's very important to think quite hard about which section of the programme you're going to go in to if your show is borderline. If your show is borderline Theatre/Children's Shows, if your show is borderline Theatre/Cabaret, if your show is borderline Theatre/Physical Theatre you can find that going in to the wrong section means that certain reviewers won't consider you, and also certain members of the audience won't consider you. Also you're then opening yourself up to a certain section of ticket buyers who do look at that section coming to see your show. That can be a very hard one to call.

I'd also like to come back on the issues with venues, because obviously a lot of people here have had issues with venues. The thing to remember is that there are many, many different venues. They're all independent. There are maybe 200 venues on the Fringe, and I would think probably about 20 companies that run year-round running

venues in a professional or semi-professional manner. Plus a whole load of amateur venues at the other end of the scale. There are obvious advantages and you can make a case for going to a bigger venue that's very established, that's got a big presence, that has lots of press attending, that has a bar for press and performers. That kind of venue is going to be more expensive, and it is going to be run more like a slightly ruthless business because the people running that venue need to make sure that they can cover their costs and continue running from year to year. Or you can go to a smaller venue where you're likely to be one of a fewer number of shows, so you'll get more personal attention from the people running that venue, but you may well get, in theory, a less professional standard of service because maybe the staff at that venue are students or are semi-professional. And there are all sorts in the middle. I happen to think that C Venues sits kind of in the middle of that.

It makes a huge difference which venue you go to, and different managements have a different ethos, so if you're not happy with a venue you've been to then try another one. Don't go back to the same venue. If you're not happy, then talk to the venue. Tell them there's a problem during the festival. There are bound to be problems by the nature of the number of shows in each space and the number of people coming in and out. We have a few companies each year coming to us with problems during the festival. What we want to do when that happens is to try and sort them out, because there is no point in having unhappy companies or having people who aren't happy. We want our companies to come back and to recommend us to other people. We also have some companies who don't say anything during the festival and then write to us afterwards. We'd much rather hear it during the festival, but again, if people write to us afterwards we will try and put it right. I'd suggest that if you write to the venue or you talk to them and it's not working out, then copy the Fringe Office on all your conversation, so that the venue knows that you've done it, and the Fringe Office can also put some pressure on the venue. Ultimately, if you haven't got any money you should be taking legal advice, and you should probably be suing, because that's completely not acceptable.

Audience 1 (Rachel West) – C Venues paid up on time.

Jo Mangan – It's really hard to feel un-attacked in Edinburgh. It feels like everyone is out to get something from you. Whether it's the people from whom you are renting where you're staying, or the venue, or the publicity people, or the people who are selling the gaffer tape. It feels like everything is costing twice as much as it should do. So it's really hard not to feel under attack in some way. There are great things that aren't necessarily apparent immediately. I had to come home in the third week because I just couldn't hack it anymore. Just couldn't hack it. I went back for the final weekend, but got a cheap flight home for a few days and recharged. Kind of only now a year later I see the benefits of having gone, and for us it wasn't about that particular show. Only now I remember that we didn't go with that show thinking that show could go anywhere else because it was too big, too unwieldy and too expensive. Other good things are coming. *[addressing Abie Philbin Bowman]* I think you've got a great idea and attitude, and I think if I was to go back to Edinburgh I would make something specifically for it.

Audience 3 (Abie Philbin Bowman) – I think as well doing everything myself – managing, flyering, postering – so it does keep the costs down. I think there's nothing better than seeing it as a punter for a week, seeing how enormous it is, realising what you're getting yourself into, realising that 95% of shows probably lose money, and thinking, do I want this? If I'm going to do it, how does it work, who succeeds, who fails? Just trying to work it out and get your head around how to make it work. That was absolutely the only way my show was treated. Just knowing what it was really like.

Leroy Harris – Can I just give some dates? First thing to say is that if you are coming, definitely come and speak to the Fringe Office. Definitely do. If you're coming in August, come at the start of August and make sure you schedule some time to come and see us.

On the 24th of February in Edinburgh we're doing a similar session to this. After the session a lot of venue managers will be there, and they'll be on hand to go and show you the venues if you want to come and see them. If there are cheap flights on the 24th of February I would say hop over to Edinburgh. It's quite early. It's about 11 in the morning. All the details are on www.edfringe.com which is the Fringe website. On the 17th of March I'm doing a specific Press and Marketing session, like this but just on all your press and marketing issues. But I guess if there is a big interest here I can talk to you guys about maybe doing something here, if that's something you need to do. If not, it's on the 17th of March and it's in London.

Jane Daly – Leroy's right. I think there is a huge amount of good advice here. Jo who said she went as well in advance. I think that's really good advice. And what Karen is saying, actually to know why you're going there. What you want out of it. What your expectations are is really important as well.

Information that's come up here, you can contact Jen Coppinger or myself at the Irish Theatre Institute, and we'll act as a conduit for putting people in contact with each other. If there is a demand in terms of the number of companies going, we'll certainly look at you coming back to do another session on a smaller scale with companies that are actually going there.

We got some guidelines from Culture Ireland around the 2nd of March deadline for submission for applications for funding to go to Edinburgh. What they said to us is that in 2006 Culture Ireland gave a tenth of its overall budget to shows going to the Edinburgh Festival Fringe, which was €300,000. They're saying, however, that this doesn't guarantee that they will give the same level of funding from an increased budget for 2007. The deadline is Friday 2nd March for people interested in taking work there. On the basis of last year, and taking on board what people have been saying to them, they've emphasised the need to budget correctly and realistically, particularly in the area of PR and marketing, and transport. They've also said to us that if the show you wish to bring to Edinburgh hasn't already been performed in Ireland, and that the Board of Culture Ireland hasn't seen it, they'll base their funding decisions on the reputation of the company or the artist and the track record of previous work that you've done. In any case all applicants need to submit extra supporting information for work they're doing. Programmes, reviews, photographs etc. They've also said that the venues in Edinburgh in which you're proposing to present your work in will be of importance to them when they are assessing the work. It would suggest that the more established venues in Edinburgh will be the ones that they will possibly look more favourably on. They've been very up front about why that is: it's because the profile of Culture Ireland will actually be enhanced by association with the more established venues.

So, they're the dates to remember. If anyone needs further advice around that, or guidelines or guidance around submitting the application, you can contact us.

Is there one last burning question that anyone has?

Audience 9 – Can I ask one of the companies who have gone what has been the follow-on response, or has there been a follow-on response? Has there been an after-life to your shows because of Edinburgh?

Audience 4 (Simon Toal) – Yes, an invitation to the National Romanian Theatre Festival, performing for two nights there, and an invitation to the Prague Fringe. I'm still hopeful for something here, but the show has a life in other countries.

Audience 9 – But generally everyone has had something.

Paul Fahy – *Trad* went on to the Adelaide Festival and did very well there. Then we put it into the Bush Theatre in London for a month, and we are exploring an 8-week tour for Australia next year.

Jo Mangan – For us, remembering that that wasn't the objective. Coming back to what Karen was saying about why are you going. The objective was to get a bit of coverage for the company internationally so people knew who we are when we annoy them in the future. That has worked. The show we did last year called *Drive By* in Cork and Dublin is going to the Fierce Festival, subject to funding from Culture Ireland, hopefully in May. There's lots of interest in that particular show because it's a little bit less unwieldy, although still unwieldy.

Audience 3 (Abie Philbin Bowman) – It's mainly reputation that you get from it. I've had one or two offers from the continent but mainly it's me going out to people saying I did it in Edinburgh, had this review, and using that to open doors. To what extent it opens doors I don't know, but I think it probably does.

Jo Mangan – I'd just say, remember to follow up. If you can get a list from Eileen or your venue of who has been there, remember to follow it up, because sometimes life and other work gets in the way but it is important to re-contact those connections, even a year later.

Jane Daly – Thank you everybody for your time.