

ARTS & CULTURE

Attendees at Haringey Fringe Credit: Stephen Furner



Fringe benefits

The fringe theatre festival showcasing what Haringey has to offer

By Benjamin Froehlich, *managing director, Newsroom Theatre Company*

What do people outside Tottenham or Haringey as a whole associate with our borough? Many things, but not its rich and powerful performing arts scene.

There are so many players in the arts who are challenging limiting realities within our communities, and it is time that an annual event celebrates this on a large scale, in a way that our borough deserves.

Theatre – or performing arts in general – is such a powerful tool to tell stories. Dance, music, pictures manage to reach hearts and minds in different ways when powerful words take the shape of a play, a poem, a song or a comedy set. Professional performers can guide us to unimaginable places and make us feel emotions that we may never have felt before.

Theatre is the living proof that diversity makes us stronger. The arts make us human, and they help us claim spaces, making voices heard.

Having moved to Seven Sisters nine years ago from Switzerland because of my passion for musical theatre, I grew to love our challenging

and colourful borough. I am a trained actor, singer and choir conductor – a theatre maker, trying to support other theatre makers in their journey to bring their ideas to their audiences.

When I first came across the Shell Theatre on my runs in Lordship Rec, I started to envisage a festival taking shape in this wonderful park, one that would bring local professionals, community groups, and theatre makers together to create opportunities to perform, find audiences, showcase new work, and celebrate theatre.

The outbreak of Covid-19 made it hard to plan ahead, so I decided to give it a go on a small scale, financing it myself, and calling it the 2021 trial.

In partnership with the Friends of Lordship Rec, the Lordship Hub Co-operative, many active players in my theatre network, Newsroom Theatre Company, as well as many others, we launched *Haringey Fringe – Theatre Festival* at the end of July.

More than 25 acts joined the festival to perform their work or run workshops for free between 2–10pm. Although the start of the day was rather wet, from the afternoon we ran all acts on our outdoor stage built behind the Lordship Hub, in the Shell Theatre, and other locations in the park.

The important connections created on the day will remain in place throughout the year, as we exchange resources and explore opportunities. Together with the Shell Performing Arts Collective and hopefully with support from Haringey Council and other bodies, we aim to be back next summer with a Haringey Fringe in Tottenham, as well as some satellite events in parks and venues across the borough.

We've only just begun to scratch the surface of what Tottenham and Haringey has in store in the performing arts.

To get in touch with thoughts and questions and to get involved, head to:

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Credit: Stephen Furner