



## **Mermaids @ The Fringe Wellbeing Guide**

### **Cast and Crew Document**

As a cast or crew member of a Fringe show this summer, you have some incredibly exciting weeks ahead of you! You will experience and become part of the unique buzz that is the vast global arts industry congregating in one Scottish city for a month, and will make memories and friends for life - both on and off stage - with your team and other artists you meet during the festival.

However, amongst all these positives it is also important to remember that the pace and buzz of the Fringe can get overwhelming at times, and that it is okay and is something experienced by everyone (genuinely everyone) at various times throughout the festival. Therefore, taking care of yourself and being mindful of your own needs and the needs of those around you is the key to mitigating stresses and challenges in the long-run - and to enjoy to the fullest the intense but fantastic month you have ahead of you as a team!

Below is an outline of some important differences between doing a show in St Andrews and at the Fringe to keep in mind, alongside recommendations for how to accommodate for these differences from a wellbeing perspective. There is also a section covering some security advice for the Fringe. At the end of this document is a list of contact details for the wellbeing support and emergency assistance available to you as part of Mermaids at the Fringe.

Please do take your time to read through this document carefully - it is lengthy for a good reason. Familiarising yourself with its content can help mitigate serious challenges and will set you up for a successful and enjoyable Fringe. Please also remember that your Mermaids Fringe Representative is always there to support you in any questions you may have about this document, or in any wellbeing matters that would arise during rehearsals in St Andrews or at the Fringe. It is their job to help or signpost you in any matter great or small, so never hesitate to get in touch!

Wishing you the most amazing experience at the Fringe!

*Mermaids Performing Arts Fund*

# 1. IMPORTANT DIFFERENCES TO REMEMBER

*Between putting on a show in St Andrews and at the Fringe*

## **Time Commitment:**

The time commitment for both production team and actors to a Fringe show is vastly different from any show you will have done in St Andrews. Unlike St Andrews shows, which are ultimately side projects running alongside degrees and other commitments that balance out your university life, Fringe shows are a full-time commitment for a month. From the start of rehearsals to the end of your final performance, you will practically live the show as you spend the majority of your time working on the production and will likely live with and enjoy your free time with your fellow cast and crew members too.

Whilst this is ultimately a wonderful opportunity to make memories for life and bond with so many new people, it is important to be aware of how the increased time commitment from a St Andrews show to a Fringe show makes it even more important to give yourself and your team breaks from the production - both during working hours and in your free time. You will all enjoy the experience more if you are able to leave the production bubble to rest up for a few hours here and there!

## **Support Network:**

Another big difference between doing a show during term time in St Andrews and in the summer at the Fringe is that your normal group of friends who usually are there to support you through a production might not be present. This is not to say that you won't have supportive friends around you - most shows create a fantastically supportive environment within the teams - but just to remind you that not having your normal support network can sometimes be difficult during the Fringe when the production process gets more intense.

However, just remember that everyone is in the same boat - so help each other out! Also, make sure prior to rehearsals starting that you have a friend or relative that is not at the Fringe that you can call during the month if you want to vent to someone who has no stakes in the production!

## **New City:**

Similar to you being out of your comfort zone in terms of support network, the city of Edinburgh is a new, bigger, and busier place than St Andrews - especially during the Fringe. It can sometimes feel overwhelmingly busy, and so it is important to know your way around and where to escape for a breather if you need to. Therefore, make sure to familiarise yourself with the city - knowing the nearest supermarkets and coffee shops to your venue, a nice pub to hang out with friends, and the quickest and safest route home from the start will definitely help make your month at the Fringe more stress free. Read more below about some good quiet spaces in Edinburgh too, that can be helpful to utilise during the Fringe.

## **2. HOW TO ENSURE WELLBEING IN A FRINGE SHOW**

### **2.1 Pre-rehearsals**

#### **Script:**

*Production team:* Make sure to finish the script as early on as possible - the end of June at the absolute latest - so that it can be sent out to the cast well in advance of rehearsals. This will give the cast members a chance to get comfortable with the script and to flag any potential concerns with the script when there is still enough time to rework the script into something everyone is happy with.

*Cast:* When the script has been made available to you, start learning lines as soon as possible. The rehearsal period for a fringe show is short and intense, so the more you know going into it, the less stressed you will be about lines and the more time you can spend getting comfortable with the blocking and the rest of the cast. This is vital to make Fringe shows more relaxed and enjoyable, and to give time to spot and mitigate any potential wellbeing concerns in the script and staging. If you have any concerns with the script, raise it to the production team as soon as you can to give them time to work it through together with you. If you feel uncomfortable talking to the production team about the script, don't hesitate to reach out to the Fringe representative.

#### **Wellbeing plans**

*Production team:* Make sure to finalise your show's wellbeing plan in close collaboration with the Fringe Representative as early on in the summer as possible. Please send your wellbeing plan out to the entire cast and crew and emphasise that they should familiarise themselves with it and refer back to it if needed during the Fringe, as it will contain all your show-specific wellbeing advice and support. It is crucial that your entire team has access to your wellbeing plan during the whole month, and it is your responsibility to ensure that is the case.

*Cast:* In addition to reading this wellbeing plan, it is most important that you familiarise yourself with your show's wellbeing plan. That wellbeing plan is the only one that contains all your show-specific wellbeing advice and support with regards to your production's unique content and trigger warnings. Please make sure that this show-specific wellbeing plan is sent to you by your production team prior to rehearsals; if it isn't, remind your producer or speak to the Fringe Representative.

#### **Socials**

A great way to start mitigating wellbeing issues early on is to create a welcoming and relaxed atmosphere within your production. This ultimately comes from everyone getting to know each other and feeling comfortable around each other, so invest some time at the end of the semester or during the summer to have in person and/or online socials, and create a cast & crew group

chat where everyone can get to know each other before starting rehearsals together. This will also improve the quality of your show if everyone is happy to work together from day one.

## **2.2 Rehearsals in St Andrews**

### **Breaks**

For cast and crew alike, frequent breaks will be vital as you enter the rehearsal period. You will have 6 full working days a week booked for you to rehearse, so it will be pretty full on! If there is any time you as a team feel you are in a good enough place - give yourself a day or an afternoon off - you need it! Ironically, sometimes spending less time rehearsing is more productive! Equally, if you need a break from a rehearsal, either as a cast and crew member, don't be afraid to ask for it. Your team should respect that we all need to step aside at various times, so just ask - you will not be the only one needing it during these weeks. Additionally, make sure to have pre-scheduled breaks every day that your entire team is aware of.

### **Socials**

To balance out the hard work of rehearsals and to continue getting to know each other as a team, make sure to schedule in some socials during the rehearsal weeks. This can be a pub trip, a day at the beach, a picnic dinner etc. Anything to spend some down time together so that your company does not only become associated with work for the month. This will help with cast and crew bonding to create a more enjoyable and productive team atmosphere. However, similar to the aforementioned necessity of breaks, it is also important to remember that sometimes some might want to spend their down time on their own - even if you are close friends - as rehearsals and the Fringe have so much social interaction. It is important to keep this in mind and respect the decisions of your fellow cast and crew.

### **Contact the Fringe Representative**

The Fringe Rep will attend your first rehearsal to introduce themselves, and will be in town and available for your entire rehearsal period. The Fringe Rep is there for you to contact at any time, with any queries or concerns. They can assist with wellbeing concerns and answer any logistical questions you may have. They also keep information you share with them confidential, so don't hesitate to raise any concerns you might have already or during the rehearsal stage - the earlier you raise it the quicker the Fringe rep can help you mitigate the issue before it develops into something bigger. If for any reason you do not feel comfortable talking to the Fringe Rep, you can always contact the Mermaids President or the Union Sabbatical officers - more about important contact information below.

## 2.3 Performing at the Edinburgh Fringe

### Separate Show from 'Home'

It is common for a cast and crew to live together for the duration of your run at the Fringe. Whilst this is often a really fun time and will create some of the most memorable moments of the Fringe, it is important to remember that 'home' needs to be a place as separate from the production as possible. It is a place that everyone should feel they can return to for a break from the buzz and hard work of the festival. Therefore, avoid running lines, making set and props at scale, or practising show related things at home in your 'show flat'. Make your accommodation a safe space to just relax and hang out, and not a place to continue working on the show!

### Take a Break from the Fringe

It cannot be stated enough: it is crucial that you allow yourself breaks to put the festival on standby from time to time, to recharge and take care of yourself mentally. The buzz of the festival will entice you to work more, do more, and see more, but that isn't always healthy. As fun as it is to go and see shows in your freetime, sometimes you also need to just stay at home and watch TV or go reading in a park - the festival and all the shows will still be there later on!

If you need a quieter place to relax for a break during the day that isn't 'home,' here is a list of some good places to go to near our venue at Greenside @ Riddle's Court:

- Parks
  - **The West Port (Geddes Garden)**, 2-3 West Port, Edinburgh
  - **The Meadows**, 43 Argyle Place, City Of Edinburgh EH9 1LB
  - **St Andrews Square**, Edinburgh EH2 2AD
  - **Gardner's Crescent Garden**, Edinburgh EH3 8DA
  - **Princes Street Gardens**, Princes St, Edinburgh EH2 2HG
  - **London Road Gardens**, London Rd, Edinburgh EH7 5DX
- Cafés/quieter work places
  - **Fringe Central**, Grassmarket Centre, 86 Candlemaker Row Edinburgh
  - **Black Medicine Coffee Co.**, 2 Nicolson Street, Edinburgh EH8 9DH
  - **Waterstones Café**, 128 Princes Street, Edinburgh EH2 4AD
  - **Festival Theatre**, 13 / 29 Nicolson Street, Edinburgh EH8 9FT
  - **Caffè Nero**, 53-63 South Bridge, Gorgie EH1 1YS

### Finances

Living in Edinburgh during the Fringe can easily get expensive, which could add some extra stress down the line of your production. However, with your crew lanyard and pass - both of which you will receive upon arrival at Greenside - you are automatically eligible for many discounts at various food vendors, pubs, and establishments across town - just show your pass

and ask! Even better, your Greenside crew pass gives you free standby access to all Greenside shows during the entire month!

### **Manage Your Expectations**

One of the most important keys to avoiding stress and burnout as a student production at the Edinburgh Fringe is to manage your expectations of the festival and set realistic goals for your production. Success can mean many things at the Fringe. Most importantly, **success is not defined by ticket sales**. Remember that you are competing with over 3000 shows, of which many have bigger teams and larger budgets. Therefore, instead of measuring the success of your show by the amount of sold out performances, or pressuring yourself to put on the perfect show to create a ‘breakthrough opportunity’, set realistic goals that prioritise a good *experience* of putting on the show. Ticket sales are not a testament of the quality of your production at a large-scale festival like the Edinburgh Fringe.

A show that everyone enjoyed being part of and where cast and crew alike looked forward to every performance and was proud of the work they had done as they left the venue - that is a far more successful show than a production that sold out every night but where cast and crew did not enjoy their time in Edinburgh. As student productions at the Fringe, you are there to explore and have fun and that should be your main goal: to put on a production you enjoy and that YOU (not reviewers or industry professionals, you) are proud of. Let Mermaids worry about the finances of ticket sales, we’ve got that covered - you should just focus on having fun and appreciating how making it through the 7 month process that is putting on a show at the Fringe is a massive achievement in itself! You have already done an amazing job to get where you are.

### **Care for your Physical and Mental Health**

In the fast paced environments of the Fringe, often with late nights and early mornings, it is easy to forget the simple things we can do to take care of our bodies and mind. Whilst seeing shows and going to the pub in the evenings can be a great part of the Fringe atmosphere, remember to get good sleep too! That will help you perform better and give you more energy to face the ups and downs of the Fringe. Equally important is to eat something healthy every now and again. Don’t sacrifice meals for shows, and get some fruit from your nearest supermarket - sounds simple, I know, but trust me - remembering to care for your sleep and food really does make a difference to your energy levels and wellbeing during the month.

### **Communicate with the Fringe Representative**

Just like during the rehearsal period, the Mermaids Fringe Representative is there to help you with any questions or concerns you might have during your time in Edinburgh. Their job is to support you, so please don’t hesitate to reach out to them. Even if they don’t have the answer, they know where to signpost to someone who can, so it really is worth reaching out if you want any help. If you don’t feel comfortable reaching out to the Fringe Rep, see below for more details about

further contact details to wellbeing support in both Edinburgh and St Andrews. You should never feel pressured to rehearse or perform in conditions that make you uncomfortable, so don't hesitate to reach out if you need to!

### **3. SECURITY AT THE EDINBURGH FRINGE**

The Fringe is generally quite a safe and welcoming environment, but nonetheless there are a few security aspects to keep in mind:

- **Share Contact Details:** Wifi/data connection is often really weak at the Fringe because of the amount of people using it at the same time. Therefore, make sure that everyone in your team has each other's phone numbers so that you can call if you need to, just as you should all make sure to have the phone number of the Fringe Representative for the same reason.
- **Accommodation Information:** For safety purposes, make sure to inform the Fringe Rep (and ideally someone not at the Fringe too) of the address you will be staying at in Edinburgh. If you are staying at different places as a team, make sure that everyone in the cast and crew (and the Fringe Rep) have been told the different addresses that your team is staying at in case of an emergency.
- **Travel:** Try to always travel/walk in pairs or a group if possible, especially if late at night. This goes for travels within Edinburgh, as well as to and from the festival. If you are need to take a day trip from Edinburgh during your time at the Fringe, please make sure someone in your team knows about this. If you need to leave for a longer time, you must let the Fringe Representative know.
- **Flyering:** Similar to travels, make sure to flyer in pairs for a safer and more enjoyable flyering experience.
- **Emergency contacts:** See a full list of contact details below. In case of an emergency, call 999, in case of a non-emergency, call the police on 101.

## 4. IMPORTANT CONTACT DETAILS

Below is a list of important and helpful contact details to familiarise yourself with ahead of rehearsals and the Fringe. Whatever is going on, you are never alone and there is always someone to talk to. The people who are here to help you in any and all situations include the Fringe Representative, union sabbatical officers and staff, St Andrews student services, as well as non-St Andrews support contacts. **In case of an emergency, always call 999.**

### 4.1 Rehearsals in St Andrews

#### Emergencies

- Always Call 999 in any form of medical or mental health emergency.

#### Non-emergency Incident Support\*

- **St Andrews Security and Response** - Contact if you have any concerns or require to report a security incident or crime of any type, or if you wish to be connected to a member of Student Services outwith normal business hours.
  - Phone: +44 1334 468999
  - Email: [security@st-andrews.ac.uk](mailto:security@st-andrews.ac.uk)
- **111 Medical Helpline** - Call 111 in non-critical situations for health advice

*\*If any security or health and safety incident occurs at any time during rehearsals or at the Fringe, please always inform the Fringe representative of the situation after calling for support.*

#### Wellbeing Support

- **Fringe Representative** - Can support with any logistical or creative concerns, and is Mermaids' on-site wellbeing point of contact.
  - Phone:
  - Email: [mermaidsfringe@st-andrews.ac.uk](mailto:mermaidsfringe@st-andrews.ac.uk)
- **Student Services** - Can provide appointments to discuss and support you through any wellbeing concerns.
  - Phone: 01334 462020
  - Email: [theASC@st-andrews.ac.uk](mailto:theASC@st-andrews.ac.uk)
  - Worried about someone else? Fill out this anonymous form to flag a wellbeing concern for a peer you think may be in need of support: <https://forms.office.com/pages/responsepage.aspx?id=yyZW-KgN00mqWGTvZ47wGoC3285HueVGhIaCd2B3LXBUNzhORzRIO0xUVzkyVjgwRVVTNVc4MEhPOS4u>



- **Breathing Space Scotland** - Free non-judgemental external listening service open 6pm-2am Monday - Thursday, and 6pm-6am Friday-Monday
  - Phone: 0800 83 85 87
  - Webchat: <https://www.breathingspace.scot/how-we-can-help/need-to-talk/>
- **Samaritans** - Free non-judgemental external listening service, operating 24/7. You can call in to talk about anything, but Samaritans also a specialised suicide prevention listening service.
  - Phone: 116 123
  - Email: [jo@samaritans.org](mailto:jo@samaritans.org)
- **Director of Wellbeing and Equality (DoWell)** - Contact the Union's DoWell if you want to make the sabbatical team aware of any wellbeing concerns you are having with your experience during rehearsals or at the Fringe. The DoWell will also be able to help you with further signposting if needed.
  - Email: [DoWell@st-andrews.ac.uk](mailto:DoWell@st-andrews.ac.uk)

## 4.2 Performing at the Edinburgh Fringe

### Emergencies

- Always Call 999 in any form of medical or mental health emergency.

*\*If any security or health and safety incident occurs at any time during rehearsals or at the Fringe, please always inform the Fringe representative of the situation after calling for support.*

### Non-emergency Incident Support\*

- **111 Medical Helpline** - Call 111 in non-critical situations for health advice

### Feeling Unsafe?

- **Samaritans** - If you are walking home at night and are feeling unsafe, Samaritans are there to call and one of their volunteers will keep you company whilst walking home.\*
  - Phone: 116 123

*\*If possible, please avoid walking alone around Edinburgh at night. Always travel in pairs or in a group if you are out late. If you ever find yourself believing you are in danger, call 999 immediately.*

### Wellbeing Support

- **Fringe Representative** - Can support with any logistical or creative concerns, and is Mermaids' on-site wellbeing point of contact.
  - Phone:

- Email: [mermaidsfringe@st-andrews.ac.uk](mailto:mermaidsfringe@st-andrews.ac.uk)
- **Fringe Society Contact** - The Edinburgh Fringe Society is available for confidential support and guidance for all artists and crew throughout the festival.
  - Phone: +44 (0)131 226 0026 (option 4)
  - Email: [artists@edfringe.com](mailto:artists@edfringe.com)
  - Website: <https://www.edfringe.com/>
- **Fringe Central** - The Fringe Central, as the hub of the Edinburgh Fringe, partners with the mental health charity Health in Mind, to offer mental health and wellbeing support at the Fringe central. Their services include bookable, one-hour, person-centred support sessions which are tailored to your needs, providing an opportunity to explore any difficulties you might be having while performing at the Fringe.
  - Book a session or get in touch at: [fringe@health-in-mind.org.uk](mailto:fringe@health-in-mind.org.uk)
- **Theatre Helpline** - The Theatre Helpline is a free, independent and confidential phone and email service that provides support to people working in the theatre industry. Trained staff are available to offer support and signposting on any topic which affects your wellbeing in relation to your production.
  - Phone: 0800 915 4617
  - Email: [advice@theatrehelpline.org](mailto:advice@theatrehelpline.org)
- **Breathing Space Scotland** - Free non-judgemental external listening service open 6pm-2am Monday - Thursday, and 6pm-6am Friday-Monday
  - Phone: 0800 83 85 87
  - Webchat: <https://www.breathingspace.scot/how-we-can-help/need-to-talk/>
- **Samaritans** - Free non-judgemental external listening service, operating 24/7. You can call in to talk about anything, but Samaritans also a specialised suicide prevention listening service.
  - Phone: 116 123
  - Email: [jo@samaritans.org](mailto:jo@samaritans.org)

### Accessibility Support

- Accessibility for artists - if you have access requirements or concerns regarding accessibility, get in touch with accessibility support and they'll be happy to help.
  - Email: [artists@edfringe.com](mailto:artists@edfringe.com)