EDINBURGH FESTIVALS 2023

Edinburgh is the world’s leading festival city and the month of August sees an explosion of arts events across the city. Within the thousands of performances, you’ll find a wide choice of creative ageing events and productions.

This list highlights the shows and events that we have identified which are presented by older artists or have themes connected to ageing, but it is not intended to be a list of recommendations.

Enjoy the festivals!

EDINBURGH INTERNATIONAL FESTIVAL

*Bluebeard’s Castle*
In this radical retelling of one of opera’s great masterpieces, husband and wife face the reality of living with dementia while celebrating their long love and shared memories.
[Bluebeard's Castle | Edinburgh International Festival (eif.co.uk)]

EDINBURGH FRINGE FESTIVAL

*Comedy*

50 – End of the Road?
Steve Jackson explores the growing pains of middle-age life, with more than a smattering of 80s/90s nostalgic references.
[50 – End of the Road? | Comedy | Edinburgh Festival Fringe (edfringe.com)]
50 Midlife Crises to Try Before You Die
Buy that Meno-Porsche, bungee-jump with your second family, or dare to try Marmite again! Whatever your age, it’s a great time for a midlife crisis!
50 Midlife Crises to Try Before You Die | Comedy | Edinburgh Festival Fringe (edfringe.com)

Adam Green and the Diet of Destiny
In this anticipated follow-up to last year’s sell-out show, Adam Green addresses ageing, self-care and love.
Adam Greene and the Diet of Destiny | Comedy | Edinburgh Festival Fringe (edfringe.com)

Ageing Folks Telling Jokes
After a sell-out run in 2022, your favourite comedians over 40 return, older but triumphant.
Ageing Folks Telling Jokes | Comedy | Edinburgh Festival Fringe (edfringe.com)

Alex Leam: Now 40!
How does a former DJ turned stand-up comedian cope with a landmark birthday? Well... music! A stand-up show about hitting the big four-oh, from a man who isn't feeling his age.
Alex Leam: Now 40! | Comedy | Edinburgh Festival Fringe (edfringe.com)

David Baddiel – My Family: Not the Sitcom (WIP)
A massively disrespectful celebration of the lives of David Baddiel’s late mother, Sarah and his father, Colin, who has dementia
David Baddiel – My Family: Not the Sitcom (WIP) | Comedy | Edinburgh Festival Fringe (edfringe.com)

Gerry Carroll – Young
'Charmingly defiant' (Chortle.co.uk) Gerry Carroll has 70 years of experience to play with. He mashes up clown, stand-up and office work in a unique show.
Gerry Carroll – Young | Comedy | Edinburgh Festival Fringe (edfringe.com)

Liz Guterbock: Geriatric Millennial
In her debut show, California native Liz Guterbock explores belonging and whether it's possible to stay in love with life as we grow old(er).
Liz Guterbock: Geriatric Millennial | Comedy | Edinburgh Festival Fringe (edfringe.com)

Mike Birbiglia: The Old Man & The Pool
'Broadway's greatest comic storyteller' (Deadline.com). Chronicling his coming-of-middle-age story Mike asks the big questions: Why are we here? What's next?
Mike Birbiglia: The Old Man & The Pool | Comedy | Edinburgh Festival Fringe (edfringe.com)
Old Dog, New Tricks
50 years on the planet. 25 years on the circuit. 7 years on the biscuits. Come see me do jokes you’ve never heard before and jokes I’ve never said before.
Old Dog, New Tricks | Comedy | Edinburgh Festival Fringe (edfringe.com)

Pam Ford: Don’t You Dare! (Put Me in a Care Home)
Pam Ford has worked in a care home and has met many amazing "oldies" with amazing life stories to tell. Heartwarming and hilarious true life stories first hand.
Pam Ford Don’t You Dare! (Put Me in a Care Home) | Comedy | Edinburgh Festival Fringe (edfringe.com)

Priya Hall: Grandmother’s Daughter
Priya Hall is obsessed with her nan to an unhealthy degree. Her debut show is a joyful tribute to one old Welsh lady and the impossible standards Priya has to live up to.
Priya Hall: Grandmother’s Daughter | Comedy | Edinburgh Festival Fringe (edfringe.com)

Sex and Drugs and Getting Old
Edinburgh solo debut from London’s favourite 75-year-old stand-up comic. An afternoon show packed with jokes, music and laughter.
Sex and Drugs and Getting Old | Comedy | Edinburgh Festival Fringe (edfringe.com)

Steve N Allen: Alzheimer’s? I Can’t Even Remember How to Spell It
Dementia isn’t a laughing matter, but neither is the loss of both your parents and the tricky birth of your first child. Yet, somehow, that’s what Steve N Allen has to play with.
Steve N Allen: Alzheimer's? I Can't Even Remember How to Spell It | Comedy | Edinburgh Festival Fringe (edfringe.com)

The Fannies One Night Stand!
Jojo Sutherland and Susan Morrison are at the top of their games. They’ve been around several blocks and while the bodywork might fail the MOT, but funny gear works.
The Fannies One Night Stand! | Comedy | Edinburgh Festival Fringe (edfringe.com)

Dance, Physical Theatre and Circus

Ageless
Challenging stereotypes and championing creativity, PRIME, Scotland's leading dance company for those aged over 60, returns to the Fringe with two dazzling new works exploring life and loss.
Ageless | Dance, Physical Theatre and Circus | Edinburgh Festival Fringe (edfringe.com)
An Act of Seven Ages
Klouns Theatre Company presents an intimate clowning escapade in one act, inspired by the seven ages from Shakespeare’s As You Like It.

An Act of Seven Ages | Dance, Physical Theatre and Circus | Edinburgh Festival Fringe (edfringe.com)

Dances Like a Bomb
Celebrating the strength of mature bodies and challenging the cult of youth, the show is a reclaiming of the ageing body created by dance-theatre innovators Junk Ensemble.

Dances Like a Bomb | Dance, Physical Theatre and Circus | Edinburgh Festival Fringe (edfringe.com)

The Messenger
This beautiful play depicts the break-up of an old couple in a humorous, poetic and touching way.

The Messenger | Dance, Physical Theatre and Circus | Edinburgh Festival Fringe (edfringe.com)

Spoken Word

Kaye Adams: How to be 60 Live!
There isn't much that scares Kaye Adams. Hitting 60 though... that's terrifying! Helped by some well-known guests and importantly, you, she might just learn.... how to be 60.

Kaye Adams: How to be 60 Live! | Spoken Word | Edinburgh Festival Fringe (edfringe.com)

Theatre

33 to 04
A young doctor rushes an older woman onto a lift, taking her to surgery many floors below, but the lift breaks down and they're stranded for 40 minutes. A snappy, but at times contemplative comedy about ageing, death and Double Deckers.

33 to 04 | Theatre | Edinburgh Festival Fringe (edfringe.com)

A Trilogy: bag—
Refusing to join the Old-White-Guys Club, master storyteller Dennis Elkins travels through India searching for a divine life-affirming epiphany.

A Trilogy: bag-- | Theatre | Edinburgh Festival Fringe (edfringe.com)

Dorian
A striking and stylised imagining of Oscar Wilde’s gothic masterpiece: The Picture of Dorian Gray transforms into malevolent horror as its inspiration remains untouched and beautiful.

Dorian | Theatre | Edinburgh Festival Fringe (edfringe.com)
Enquiry Concerning Hereafter
David Hume and Adam Smith were giants of The Enlightenment of the 18th century and the dearest of friends. This is the story of their final days. They grieve because old age and disease are separating them, perhaps for eternity.
Enquiry Concerning Hereafter | Theatre | Edinburgh Festival Fringe (edfringe.com)

For Better, For Worse
Small town Scotland, September 2014. It is Diane’s first birthday since the death of her husband and the Independence Referendum is days away. Tempers flare when her adult son and daughter clash over politics.
For Better, For Worse | Theatre | Edinburgh Festival Fringe (edfringe.com)

Lear Alone
Lear Alone uses just King Lear’s lines from Shakespeare’s tragedy to explore themes of loneliness, ageing and homelessness: a study of one man's vulnerability in a digital world.
Lear Alone | Theatre | Edinburgh Festival Fringe (edfringe.com)

Man Shed
How does a man find his purpose when he grows older and all the major life events come thick and fast? Inspired by the work of the Scottish Men's Sheds Association, Man Shed explores the joy of sheds, the pain of loss and the comfort of friendship.
Man Shed | Theatre | Edinburgh Festival Fringe (edfringe.com)

Memories of the Early 1950s
Christine Hayward will take audiences on a nostalgic journey, sharing stories and encouraging audience participation with shared memories and sing-alongs.
Memories of the Early 1950s | Theatre | Edinburgh Festival Fringe (edfringe.com)

Nearly Lear
What if the great and tragic story of King Lear were to be told through the eyes of his closest companion? In this one-woman tour-de-force, Susanna Hamnett tells a very personal story that is poignant, mischievous, tragic, and hilarious.
Nearly Lear | Theatre | Edinburgh Festival Fringe (edfringe.com)

Thank You for the Music
A one-woman show that takes you on a comic and quizzical journey through tough times. It is a dialogue with dementia that reflects on personal experience.
Thank You for the Music | Theatre | Edinburgh Festival Fringe (edfringe.com)

The Chairs Revisited
The veterans are back with a perfect lockdown party - an ancient couple, marooned in an isolated spot, inviting imaginary guests. Life can be more absurd than fiction.
The Chairs Revisited | Theatre | Edinburgh Festival Fringe (edfringe.com)
The Collie’s Shed
Based in a Men’s Shed in East Lothian, follow 4 retired miners as a review of policing of the ‘80s miners’ strikes affects them all.
[The Collie’s Shed | Theatre | Edinburgh Festival Fringe (edfringe.com)]

The Father
A critically acclaimed play that delves into the subject of dementia through the perspective of an older man named Andre.
[The Father | Theatre | Edinburgh Festival Fringe (edfringe.com)]

The Fish Bowl
This award-winning experimental theatre piece explores communication, ageing, and identity through the real-life stories of people living with dementia.
[The Fish Bowl | Theatre | Edinburgh Festival Fringe (edfringe.com)]

The Mrs Dewinters
On the eve of the funeral of her last remaining friend, 95-year-old Helen enters the mid-century world of Daphne DuMaurier’s, Rebecca. A play about the triumph of imagination over dementia, anxiety and mortality.
[The Mrs Dewinters | Theatre | Edinburgh Festival Fringe (edfringe.com)]

Tickbox 2
A semi-autobiographical story of a Pakistani family arriving in Glasgow. Written and performed by Lubna Kerr who has taken part in Luminate’s older artists’ programme.
[Tickbox 2 | Theatre | Edinburgh Festival Fringe (edfringe.com)]

EDINBURGH INTERNATIONAL BOOK FESTIVAL

Christie Watson: Wild At Heart
Are we finally getting better at talking about middle age? Christie Watson talks about the joys and agonies of our middle years.
[Christie Watson: Wild At Heart | What's On | Edinburgh International Book Festival (edbookfest.co.uk)]

Judy Murray: The Wild Card
Judy Murray retired from tennis coaching to fulfil her lifelong dream of becoming a writer. Today she talks about her debut novel.
[Judy Murray: The Wild Card | What's On | Edinburgh International Book Festival (edbookfest.co.uk)]
Octavia Bright: A Place of Care
Octavia Bright’s debut memoir intertwines the author’s recovery from alcohol addiction with her father’s descent into Alzheimer’s. This will be a wide-ranging discussion on art, family and loss.

Octavia Bright: A Place of Care | What's On | Edinburgh International Book Festival (edbookfest.co.uk)