



IANS | Edinburgh

This August, as India marked its 70 years as a free nation, the **Edinburgh Fringe** Festival, a statement of rebellion in art, music and theatre, also marked its 70 years of "being here" in the Scottish capital, which becomes home to nearly two million visitors for three weeks of the UK summer.

Over the years, more and more groups joined the movement and in 2016, there were 50,266 performances of 3,269 shows at 294 venues, making it the largest arts festival in the world.

**Tim O'Shea**, **Chairman** of the Edinburgh Festival Fringe Society that was created in 1958, said: "After seven decades, the Fringe remains as relevant, vibrant, rebellious and exciting as ever." He attributed the festival's success to "being a completely open access festival", which means anyone can take part.

There are more than a thousand street artistes performing on the Royal Mile that stretches from Edinburgh Castle and venues around it, mostly free. However, all hall shows of the Fringe are ticketed performances, with **Fringe Society CEO Shona McCarthy** emphasising at the AGM last week: "We will make sure access is our first priority."

The festival got five stars in terms of access among 200 similar events across the world, she added. In 2016, she said, 2.5 million tickets were sold for the shows, and by the third week of August 2017, reports said ticket sales had neared the *three million mark*.

A staggering 62 countries now participate in the Fringe and this year, as part of the **UK-India Year of Culture 2017**, India's Ministry of Culture, the Indian Council for Cultural Relations, the Indian High Commission and festival producer **Teamwork Arts** (of JLF and Meta Theatre fame) brought a selection of Indian theatre, dance and music to the event.

The **Indian Navy Band** performed last week as part of **The Royal Edinburgh Military Tattoo**, a series of military tattoos performed by British Armed Forces, Commonwealth and international military bands and musical teams on the esplanade of the Edinburgh Castle. **Prince Charles** and **Prince William** heard the band, which teamed up with a troupe of dancers portraying the festivals of India's western seaboard. The Band comprised 65 musician-sailors who performed under the baton of *Commander Vijay Charles D'Cruz*, Director of Music (Navy).

Among 26 Indian origin performances was "*Blind Spots*", a devised production staged by the students of **Delhi University** in collaboration with the **Edinburgh University**. It depicted the life of a people structured around campus life where everybody is trying to tell a story, a tale that deals with personal aspirations, social mobility and integration. The show depicted young India's voices and spaces from personal, literary and historical sources.

"The collaboration underlines the University of Edinburgh's commitment to develop **partnerships** with Indian institutions and deepen and extend Edinburgh's relationship with India," said Professor **James Smith**, Vice Principal (International) of Edinburgh University.

*Teamwork Arts* was founded by DU alumnus and 1980s DUMADS- activist **Sanjoy K Roy**, while the DU multidiscipline Culture Troupe was lead by Dy Dean (Culture) Professor **Shalini Baxi**, a *Kayem* contemporary of filmstar **Sushant Singh Rajput** and an accomplished artiste in her own right.