

## Morgan at StAnza

Back in 1998, planning the first StAnza Festival, we needed a headliner. We had already made our claim to be Scotland's own poetry festival but had, with equal insistence, positioned StAnza as international in content – so in looking for such a major figure amongst Scotland's poets there was really no choice. Who else but Edwin Morgan could possibly top the bill? Put simply, Eddie's work is characterised by the very diversity, individuality, playfulness and depth that we instinctively felt had to be the core of the festival we were founding. And, of course, added to that is what amounts almost to an alternative career – the internationalism embodied in his work as a translator from a mind-boggling range of languages.

Taking over as a director myself in 2001, with the Byre Theatre as our new and larger main stage, we couldn't wait to invite Eddie back once again to headline the already growing festival. In those days we featured music as a short introduction before each poet and I still recall, with something of a cringe, that I strode out onto the Byre stage, gave Eddie a big build up and launched into, "Ladies and gentlemen, please welcome Edwin Morgan!" only to be brought up short by a voice behind me saying plaintively, "But what about me?" In my eagerness to welcome Eddie back to StAnza, I had completely forgotten about the musician who was to precede him! The power of Morgan had me in its spell – but nothing daunted, I hastily backtracked and we enjoyed some excellent lute tunes which Eddie followed by one of the most engaging and inspiring readings we have ever had at the festival.

Over the 12 years of StAnza, we have been privileged to feature Edwin Morgan both as a live reader and as a presence in exhibitions, films and other events. Almost a poetry festival in its own right, Eddie's work seems to embody the spirit of celebration which we feel is central to StAnza. For me, this is best captured in the wonderful cartoon by Gerald Mangan featured in exhibition at StAnza 2001. Still to be seen on the About page of our website, this shows Eddie, resplendent in tails, with a thistle in his buttonhole, juggling above his head words and letters from the languages of the world. Nothing less than the Edwin Morgan we all know and love.

Brian Johnstone  
StAnza: Scotland's International Poetry Festival  
Festival Director 2001-2010  
Co-Founder 1998

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