

Comic raises more than a few laughs to make charities £75,000 better off

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Danny Bhoy, real name Danni Chaudry, had a sell-out 12-day run
Jason Kempin/WireImage

A comedian who sold out a 12-day run in one of the biggest venues on the Edinburgh Fringe has given all his takings to local children's charities.

Danny Bhoy, real name Danni Chaudry, raised more than £75,000, filling the 700-seat Music Hall in the Assembly Rooms for a one-hour show produced on a shoestring.

The Edinburgh-based comedian, who has a worldwide following, spent £100 on posters, which he distributed himself, while he marketed his gigs through social media. Fees that he would normally have paid for management and PR went into the charity pot and have already been redistributed to good causes.

Bhoy's sister works for an Edinburgh charity and had asked him in January to perform a benefit gig during the Fringe.

"Over the course of the conversation I realised it wasn't just her charity, there were several in the city that were struggling because of various government cuts," he said. "They can't get the funding and

they are the kind of organisations that don't have the profile or the marketing machine behind them.

"My sister contacted them, told them what we could do and it snowballed from one benefit night. Other comedians have said to me, 'That's a good thing to do'. I say, 'You know what, it's not the first time I haven't made money in Edinburgh.' At least this time I know it's gone to a good cause."

Bhoy, born in Moffat, Dumfries and Galloway, was brought up in Edinburgh by his Scottish mother and Indian father and went to Merchiston Castle school. In 1999, aged 25, he tried his hand at stand-up and within months had won a national best newcomer award. Bhoy was soon selling out Fringe runs and appeared on the Royal Variety Show, before he broke through overseas, with acclaimed performances at festivals in Melbourne and Montreal. He briefly lived in the US, appearing on the Letterman show. He has such a huge following in Australia that his fans often assume that he lives there.

"I have a really good home crowd in Edinburgh," Bhoy said. "The posterage, the big billboards — it's all bullshit anyway, let's be honest — everybody does it because it's Edinburgh and you have to have a presence."

"I thought, 'I'll take a chance. I'll do it on Facebook and Twitter'. I kept back money in case I had to spend — you don't want to play to an empty room — but it sold very strongly early on, and then I got good feedback in the previews. I sold it out, and spent the £100 on 50 posters."

While his sister "did all the leg work", Bhoy developed his show. The first ten minutes eventually came to focus on the pleasures and pains of putting on a gig without a budget. He said that it made a pleasant change to walk around Edinburgh, and not see posters of himself with the word t*** daubed across his forehead.

Recently he visited the Citadel Youth Centre in Leith, one of the projects he had pledged to help. "I walked in with my sister. She said, 'Don't look to your left'. I did. There was a defaced poster of me. There are always people with pens."

Takings at the box office were augmented by bucket collections for each of the charities. Tommy Sheppard, the impresario behind the Assembly Rooms bill, agreed to settle immediately that Bhoy's run had ended.

"It's money people need," Bhoy said. "I just did what I always do. What am I going to do with that money? It felt like the right time to do this. Going round yesterday, visiting the charities, was the best part."

Other Fringe gigs — including an all-star benefit for Gaza — have failed to fill the cavernous Music Hall. To pull in 700 people a night

for the Teapot Trust, Home Link Family Support, Broomhouse Young Carers and the rest seems an improbable achievement. “Don’t sound surprised,” he said. “I’m Scotland’s Danny Bhoy.”