



Try, Try, Try

by Neil Tòmas Smith

Eszter Marsalko (director and script dramaturg:)

Darren Gallacher, Joe White and Gloria Yehilevsky (percussion)

Lighting Design: Calum Dunbar

Thursday 22nd October 2026, 6pm

The Lemon Tree

*Try Try Try was co-commissioned by **sound** and the project was funded by Creative Scotland, the Hope Scott Trust, and the PRS Foundation.*

Programme notes

Try Try Try is a percussion theatre piece about effort in a hostile world. Through various challenges of performance a very human struggle is brought into sharper focus on the stage, sometimes through rather inhumane means.

Taking inspiration from the late theatre of Samuel Beckett ('Fail again. Fail better.'), the precise location and boundaries of this drama are unclear: is this a performance that takes place in a real space or only in the mind? Are these three separate figures or aspects of a single consciousness?

While these questions persist, the piece is grounded in the limits and potential of the human body, here explored through percussion performance and technique. This requires a certain kind of virtuosity in performance, made all the more visible by the challenges laid in its path, while the physical elements also introduce more than a hint of humour.

The composer would like to thank the performers and director for their collaborative input during rehearsal period and the staff at sound for their support.

Biographies

Neil Tòmas Smith is a composer of chamber, orchestral and choral works. In 2025 his *Hidden Polyphony* was premiered by the combined forces of the RSNO, Dunedin Consort and Anna Dennis to widespread acclaim, while his debut portrait disc, *Stop Motion Music*, was described by Ken Walton in the *Scotsman* as ‘powerful and moving’ (5*). He is currently working on a new album to be released on Delphian. Neil teaches at the University of Edinburgh, the Open College of the Arts and St Mary’s Music School.

Eszter Marsalko is an artist working in live performance, film and video. She primarily directs, writes, choreographs and works as a dramaturg. She is interested in collaborative, multi-disciplinary ways of working and experimenting with form. She often makes things that take on a form of their own – they’re not really like anything else. Eszter lives in Scotland and works internationally. She has worked with a range of artists and companies including Royal Lyceum, Scottish Opera, Curious Seed, Grid Iron Theatre Company, Volksbühne (Berlin), Hungarian State Opera, Weimar National Theatre and Nordland Visual Theatre (Norway). Eszter is co-artistic director of Snap-Elastic, a multi-year funded company in Scotland, and experimental company ghostbag.

Darren Gallacher is a percussionist and multi-discipline performer. He studied at Edinburgh Napier University and the Royal Northern College of Music, where he was the 2019 winner of the RNCM Gold Medal Competition. As a performer he enjoys a varied career working as a percussionist in many settings including Orchestral (Scottish Opera, BBCSSO, Sinfonia Cymru), chamber (IPSA Collective, The Hebrides Ensemble) and as a soloist. Darren’s main interests lie in experimental and contemporary music, and he enjoys championing new music with recent collaborations including Pierluigi Billone, Oscar Escudero and Belenish Moreno-Gil, Dave Maric, Fergus Hall, Meg Curlew, Olly Hawker, Adrianna Kubica-Cypek, Alistair MacDonald, and Neil Tomas Smith. He is also interested in dramaturgy in contemporary music performance and is currently in the final stages of a PhD on the subject at the University of Glasgow.

Dr Joe White is a theatre-maker, musician and facilitator with a PhD in Theatre Studies from Glasgow University. He currently performs in the UK and internationally with Olivier award winning percussion group STOMP and works as

a freelance actor / musician / teacher on numerous professional projects. He has worked as a visiting lecturer at universities across the UK and as a facilitator for the National Youth Theatre of Great Britain, amongst others.

More info at: www.clearlyjoewhite.com www.instagram.com/clearlyjoewhite

Gloria Yehilevsky is a vibraphone player, improviser, and composer based in London. She integrates percussion performance with ongoing multimodal enquiry, resulting in a fluid cluster of activity. Situated in the UK and international jazz, experimental, and contemporary classical scenes, recent and upcoming appearances include the Vortex, Ronnie Scott's, Hungry Brain (Chicago), Sō Laboratories (NY), **soundfestival** (Aberdeen), Huddersfield Contemporary Music Festival and the Southbank Centre in Serious' EFG London Jazz Festival. Steve Reich described her as 'an extremely impressive percussionist... with an amazing combination of technical mastery and riveting energy.'

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