

# Cascando

## by Samuel Beckett,

### presented by Pan Pan Theatre

#### Key information

**Duration:** 45 mins (includes an introductory talk and 30-minute walk)

**Age guidance:** 14+

The route of this show will be accessible for wheelchair users.

Welcome to the Barbican and this immersive experience by Pan Pan from Ireland. Both our organisations have strong links to Samuel Beckett, and as ever we extend our thanks to the Beckett Estate. We still have vivid memories of Pan Pan's stunning production of *All That Fall*, presented here in 2015. This is a special moment for us all, as *Cascando* is the second of our promenade events since we locked down in March 2020. As theatres around the country adjust to a changed reality, this absorbing outdoor audio performance, unfolding along the Highwalks, fits perfectly with our new circumstances.

**Toni Racklin, Head of Theatre and Dance, Barbican**

First broadcast in English in 1964, *Cascando* begins with the character Opener setting the scene: 'the month of May', 'you know, the reawakening'. Whilst the month of May is past, this presentation of *Cascando* here at The Barbican can certainly be thought of as a reawakening. For us as a company it marks our first live presentation of work in close to a year. Like the majority of our colleagues around the world we have been confined to our home offices and our interactions with audiences mediated through screens. We're delighted to be here in London, reawakening our relationship with the Barbican, where we were last in 2015 with the production *All That Fall*, and to be not only performing for, but with our audience. We hope you enjoy your time with us and the journey that Beckett's text and our reading of it will lead you on.

**Gavin Quinn, Co-Artistic Director, Pan Pan Theatre**

#### Cast

Voice **Andrew Bennett**

Opener **Daniel Reardon**

Performer **Roly Botha**

Performer **Bob Karper**

#### Creative team

Director **Gavin Quinn**

Designer **Aedín Cosgrove**

Sound designer and music **Jimmy Eadie**

Sound engineer **Rachel Conlon**

Stage and production manager **Tríona Humphries**

Dramaturg **Nicholas Johnson**

Producer **Gwen Van Spÿk**

barbican

## An image, like any other

by Nicholas Johnson

The current century is the first time in human history that the streets of the world's cities are full of people wearing headphones, immersed in private auditory worlds that others cannot hear. The late twentieth century saw this revolution dawn with Sony's iconic Walkman (1979) and Discman (1984), both of which were limited by how many cassettes or compact discs one could easily carry. Today's smartphones can now fit tens of thousands of compressed audio files without increasing their weight. With an internet connection on the same device, each headphone-wearer can access audio-streaming libraries so vast that they could play continuously for hundreds of years without repeating. From one angle, this is the golden age of audio, the apotheosis of radio. From another, the situation has left listeners overwhelmed with choice, sifting the infinite catalogue like a librarian of Babel, too awash in information to properly *attend*.

Assuming that the reader of this note is a ticket-holder accessing this information on an internet-connected device, it may seem churlish to point out that Pan Pan's 'promenade' experience of Samuel Beckett's radio play *Cascando* is thus not the only game in town. Anyone can explore the Barbican's byzantine Brutalism while immersed in a private sonic landscape, and anyone can watch others doing the same. Everyone can freely choose their preferred 'Voice' or 'Music' and, like the 'Opener' in this play, turn on the taps, modulate volume, and mix them at will. In this sense, all walking-listeners are performing one of the ideas behind *Cascando* every day. But Pan Pan's project invites audiences to participate in a journey that is at once more specific and more strange than what is generally available.

When Beckett's *Cascando* was first broadcast by the BBC on 6 October 1964, the options for audiences were considerably fewer, and the sense of occasion around a broadcast event was greater as a result. Competition for the listeners' attention was restricted to other programmes and stations within regional boundaries, on a far more limited temporal scale. In the present era where audio is now ubiquitous and effectively infinite, Pan Pan's ongoing exploration of Beckett's works for radio (*All That Fall*, premiered in 2011, and *Embers*, premiered in 2013) offers to return audiences to a focused mode of unusually mindful attention: a more defined manner of listening and a more distinctive relationship to space. *All That Fall*, the first work in this series (which came to the Barbican in 2015), achieves this by placing audiences in a listening chamber with rocking chairs under changing lighting states, while Jimmy Eadie's sumptuous new recording of the play envelops them. *Embers* places the audience back in traditional seating and explores live, rather than recorded, performance, with actors concealed inside a giant sculpture of a skull, as lighting undulates: it feels as though one is listening to the play underwater, distorting space and stretching time.

In the manner of a continuing experiment, the proto-immersivity of *Embers* suggested the shift in agency implied by *Cascando*, where the audience becomes a dynamic participant in the work, a kind of co-performer. For its premiere in 2016 at the Samuel Beckett Theatre in Dublin, designer Aedin Cosgrove and director Gavin Quinn constructed a reflective labyrinth, and a barefoot, berobed audience was brought into the dark space to listen on headphones together as they walked, a curious blend of solitude and togetherness. With only hints of light to guide the ensemble through the installation, the experience was profoundly disorienting, even for those familiar with the theatre. As the idea progressed, however, the company noticed that one of the most interesting viewpoints on the piece was looking down from the overhead gantries, exposing the ritual and collective character of an audience engaging with Beckett on headphones. The beauty of strangers gathering to experience something together has only sharpened in the time since then, after the pandemic has helped us to look differently at empty streets and to consider new ways to fill them.

The concept for an outdoor version of *Cascando* emerged from this insight, first playing in the fields and forests of Enniskillen in 2019, starting from Portora Royal School, Beckett's alma mater, then in the more urban settings of Galway and Düsseldorf in 2020. Rather than inviting anyone to download and experience the journey on their own, Pan Pan's *Cascando* gathers audiences at a specific time and place, invites them to wear identical cloaks with hoods (a djellaba sourced from Morocco, in a hat-tip to the Auditor in *Not I*), and sets them loose in a form of collective choreography, a 'social sculpture' that intervenes in public space. It reveals the power of Beckett's text that no matter where one listens in this ritual manner, it transforms the terrain, inviting a different way of looking at the environment. Those who go through the experience report noticing images from the text in strangers' windows as they pass, while those who stand outside experience a shift in their thinking as well: is this a monastic cult, some kind of protest, or merely art?

Those already on friendly terms with Beckett's prose or plays will find much in *Cascando* that is familiar: an Opener who seems obscurely obliged to compel the speech/sound of others, an urgent Voice that is divided between a 'story' and a 'self,' and a fascination with the power of Music as a character in this drama. As is usual with Beckett, hearing the *sound* of the language is key to the experience, rather than seeking narrative clarity; the drama is contained in the Opener's quest for an elusive sonic unity, in the Voice's quest to 'finish' an unfinishable tale, and in the emotive power of Music itself. The formula for *Cascando* is as algorithmically simple and compelling as Beckett's Play, from the same era and clearly influenced by this work, yet the ideas that result from enacting a journey while listening are surprisingly complex. As Ruby Cohn wrote of *Cascando* in A Beckett Canon, 'With scarcely an unusual phrase, Beckett has created an unusual text-music tandem that can be viewed as a play-making process, a sifting through conscious and unconscious creativity, and a movement through externals toward being.'

*Nicholas Johnson serves as Dramaturg on this production.*

## Biographies

### Andrew Bennett

#### Voice

Andrew Bennett's previous productions with Pan Pan include: *ELIZA's Adventures in the Uncanny Valley*, *The Importance of Nothing*, *The Seagull and Other Birds*, *Embers*, *Everyone is King Lear in His Own Home*, *All That Fall*, *The Rehearsal*, *Playing the Dane*, *Oedipus Loves You*, and *Mac-Beth 7*. Other theatre includes: *A Midsummer Night's Dream*, *The Passing*, *Fool for Love* (*Irish Times* nomination for Best Supporting Actor), *A Month in the Country*, *Homeland*, *The Importance of Being Earnest*, *The Playboy of the Western World*, *Lolita*, *Translations*, *The House*, *Good Evening Mr Collins*, *Sour Grapes*, *The Electrocutation of Children*, *The Marriage of Figaro*, *Tarry Flynn*, *Saint Joan*, *The Rival*, *The Map Maker's Sorrow*, *Tartuffe*, *Sons and Daughters* and *The Wolf in the Winter*, all for The Abbey Theatre and The Peacock; *Happy Days*, *Freefall*, *Cat on a Hot Tin Roof*, *Everyday*, *Tenth Birthday*, *Streetcar*, *Big Bad Wolf*, *Car Show*, *The Seagull* and *Foley* for The Corn Exchange; *Brave New World* for Theater Bonn; *King Lear* for Théâtre National Populaire; *Philadelphia*, *Here I Come!* for the Gaiety Theatre; *The Playboy of the Western World* for Druid Theatre on UK tour; *Conversations on a Homecoming* and *Tinker's Curse* for Livin' Dred; *Roberto Zucco* for Bedrock at Project Arts Centre; *God's Grace* for Semper Fi; *Beckett's Ghosts* at Project Arts Centre; *Family Stories* for B\*spoke; *What Where*, *Medea Material* and *Early Morning* for Bedrock; *Landscape with Argonauts*, *The Spanish Tragedy* and *The White Devil* for Loose Canon; *We Ourselves* for Passion Machine; and *Words of Advice for Young People* and *Alone it Stands* for Rough Magic.

### Roly Botha

#### Performer

Roly Botha is an actor, composer and sound designer based in London. A member of the National Youth Theatre of Great Britain, selected acting credits include *Ghost Stories* at Lyric Hammersmith, *EastEnders*, and *Strangers In Between* at the King's Head and Trafalgar Studios. As a composer and sound designer, Roly Botha has worked at venues including the Battersea Arts Centre, Southwark Playhouse and Southbank Centre, previously scoring and sound designing the Olivier Award-nominated *Warheads* at the Park Theatre, along with three Vault Festival Award-winning pieces for The Pappyshow – *BOYS*, *GIRLS*, and *CARE*.

[www.rolybotha.co.uk](http://www.rolybotha.co.uk)

### Bob Karper

#### Performer

Bob Karper is an interdisciplinary artist with a broad portfolio of projects: award-winning solo performances, original song series for choirs, bespoke site-specific shows for children, transforming dementia care homes into creative community hubs, documentary films for dancers, participatory art projects in primary schools and more. American-born, Bob Karper is based in London, and balances his own solo projects with work alongside a variety of collaborators and companies including Lone Twin, Frank Wurzinger and Ladder to the Moon, and he is Associate Artist with Moving Memory Dance Theatre and People United.

[www.bobkarper.com](http://www.bobkarper.com)

### Daniel Reardon

#### Opener

Daniel Reardon has worked in Irish theatre, film, TV and radio as an actor, playwright, producer and director for nearly 50 years. He tours nationally and internationally with the award-winning theatre companies, Pan Pan (including *The Rehearsal*, *Playing the Dane* and *The Seagull and Other Birds*), Dead Centre (*Lippy*), and Brokentalkers (*This Beach*, for which he was nominated Best Supporting Actor at the *Irish Times* Irish Theatre Awards). Film and TV include *My Left Foot*, *Night Train*, *Love Eternal*, *The Silver Tassie*, *The Man Within*, *Fallout*, *The Clinic*, *Fair City*, and *The Tudors*. As a playwright his stage plays include *Spenser's Laye* in Dublin, Cork and Edinburgh; *The O.K. Thing To Do* at the Abbey/Peacock; *Fun With Bamboo* (Bewley's Café Theatre Award), and *Bleeding Poets* (nominated for Best New Play at the *Irish Times* Irish Theatre Awards). He has written many plays for radio, including the daily serial *Riverrun*. His poetry appears regularly in magazines and journals in Ireland, the UK, America and Australia. His book of poems, *In the Lion House*, was published by Gallery Press. A second volume of poems, *Fond Pageant*, was published recently by Somerville Press.

### Gavin Quinn

#### Director

Gavin Quinn is, with Aedín Cosgrove, co-founder and joint artistic director of Pan Pan. Selected credits and awards include: *Endgame* by Samuel Beckett at Project Arts Centre, Dublin; *The Sleepwalkers*, A

Pan Pan and Dublin Youth Theatre production; *The Temple* at the Malthouse in Melbourne; *ELIZA'S Adventures in the Uncanny Valley*, nominated for two *Irish Times* Irish Theatre Awards; *NŌ NŌ NŌ*, *The Tempest*, *Brave New World* for Theater Bonn; *The Importance of Nothing*, *The Seagull and Other Birds* at NCAP in Beijing and Dublin; *Embers* by Samuel Beckett which won the Herald Angel Award at the Edinburgh International Festival 2013; *All That Fall* by Samuel Beckett at George Town Festival Penang, also winning Best Sound Design and Best Lighting Design at the *Irish Times* Irish Theatre Awards 2011, and Herald Angel Award at the Edinburgh International Festival 2013; *The Rehearsal*, *Playing the Dane*, which won Best Production and Best Set Design at the *Irish Times* Irish Theatre Awards 2010; *Mac-Beth 7*, which was nominated for an *Irish Times* Irish Theatre Award for Best Production 2004; *Quad* by Samuel Beckett at Edinburgh International Festival; *Crumb Trail* at FFT Dusseldorf; *Oedipus Loves You* at the Smock Alley Theatre, Dublin, Ps122 New York and Sydney Festival; *The Playboy of the Western World* in Beijing and Dublin, performed in Mandarin and with a Chinese cast; winner of the *Irish Times* Special Jury Award 2006; *One – Healing with Theatre* at Digital Hub, Dublin; *A Midsummer Night's Dream* at The Abbey Theatre, Dublin; *Standoffish*, which won the Adelaide *Advertiser* Best Production in Adelaide; and *Newcastlewest* at Dublin Theatre Festival.

Outside of his work with Pan Pan, Gavin Quinn's opera directing includes productions of *Don Giovanni* for the Opera Theatre Company/Dublin Theatre Festival; *The Four-Note Opera*, *Carmen*, *Hamelin* and *The (Little) Magic Flute* for the Opera Theatre Company; *Così Fan Tutte* for Opera Ireland; and *The Abduction from the Seraglio* at Hackney Empire.

### **Aedín Cosgrove** **Designer**

Aedín Cosgrove is joint artistic director of Pan Pan Theatre Company and, as a set and lighting designer, has worked extensively in Ireland and internationally. Recent work includes *The Temple* at Melbourne's Malthouse Theatre; *ELIZA'S Adventures in the Uncanny Valley*, *The Good House of Happiness*, *A Doll House*, *Do Di Zhu (Fight the Landlord)* and *Playing the Dane* for Pan Pan Theatre; *Sacrifice at Easter*, *The Numbered* and *Faraway on Spike Island* for Corcadorca; *Schöne Neue Welt*, *Der Sturm (The Tempest)* and *NŌ NŌ NŌ*, in a co-production between Pan Pan Theatre and Theater Bonn; and *A Midsummer Night's Dream* at the Abbey Theatre, Dublin. Aedín Cosgrove's most recent designs are *TimeTimeTime* by Jennifer Walshe for the Borealis Festival Norway 2019; *Endgame* by Samuel Beckett and Pasolini's *Salò Redubbed*, a Dylan Tighe and Abbey Theatre co-production for Dublin Theatre Festival 2019.

### **Jimmy Eadie** **Sound Design and Music**

Jimmy Eadie is an audio engineer, producer and artist whose award-winning work covers recording, sound design and installation. He uses a variety of sculptural and time-based media which are often presented through hybrid forms of installation and performance. His work has been presented throughout Ireland and internationally. He is a founding member of the Crash Ensemble (IRE) and is currently a creative partner. He has been nominated (in 2013) and won the *Irish Times* Irish Theatre Award for best sound in 2011 and 2015. Jimmy Eadie has collaborated with artists, composers and performers from varied backgrounds and has toured internationally both as sound designer, audio engineer and producer. As a professional musician, he has released music on Chrysalis, Ensign and Setanta, as well as many independent Irish labels. He currently lectures at the School of Engineering at Trinity College Dublin.

### **Nicholas Johnson** **Dramaturg**

Nicholas Johnson is Associate Professor of Drama at Trinity College Dublin. Dramaturgy credits include *D-Project* for OT Platform; *Beckett's Room* for Dead Centre/Gate Theatre; and four other Pan Pan productions: *WHAT IS THE WORD*, *Endgame*, *The Sleepwalkers* and *ELIZA'S Adventures in the Uncanny Valley*. As a director, work includes *Virtual Play* after Samuel Beckett (1st prize, New European Media awards, 2017). His 2020 publications include the books *Experimental Beckett* (Cambridge University Press), *Bertolt Brecht's David Fragments (1919–1921): An Interdisciplinary Study* (Bloomsbury), and *Influencing Beckett / Beckett Influencing* (L'Harmattan), as well as the special issue of the *Journal of Beckett Studies* on Beckett and pedagogy (29.1). He co-founded the Trinity Centre for Beckett Studies, the Samuel Beckett Laboratory, and the Beckett Summer School, and he convenes the Creative Arts Practice research theme at TCD. He has held visiting research positions at Freie Universität Berlin and Yale University.

### **Pan Pan Theatre**

Pan Pan Theatre was founded in 1993 by co-artistic directors Aedín Cosgrove and Gavin Quinn. The company has created over thirty theatre and performance pieces, touring its work to the most prestigious festivals and venues worldwide, including BAM, the Lincoln Center, The Kennedy Center, The Barbican, Hau Berlin, NCPA Beijing, and Sydney and Melbourne Festivals, with the support of Culture Ireland. The company has received multiple national and international awards, including the Herald Angel Award at the Edinburgh International Festival 2013.

Pan Pan aims to create original performances that are accessible and engaging for diverse audiences. Using various artistic disciplines in unique combinations, the company hopes to challenge the conventions of theatre. From initial concept to full production, Pan Pan encourages collaboration, experimentation and originality in creative artists by providing the tools and opportunities to realise their artistic goals.

Since its inception, Pan Pan has constantly examined and challenged the nature of its work and has resisted settling into well-trying formulas. Developing new performance ideas is at the centre of the company's mission. Pan Pan tries to approach theatre as an open form of expression and has developed an individual aesthetic that has grown from making performances in a host of different situations and conditions.

**[www.panpantheatre.com](http://www.panpantheatre.com)**

Presented by the Barbican.

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