

# The Village and The Road

Tom Pow and The Galloway Agreement

PROGRAMME



Image credit – Kim Ayres

The Village and The Road is a show about rural depopulation. For the first time in human history more people live in cities than in the countryside.

*‘The response from our audiences has been quite overwhelming. The Village & The Road is something special...’* – Matthew Zajac

Selected for the **Made in Scotland 2022** Fringe Showcase, **The Village and The Road** combines the poetic vision of Tom Pow with the musical talents of **The Galloway Agreement** and the dramatic sensibility of **Matthew Zajac**.

## THE PRODUCTION

A personal and collective story about rural depopulation, told through storytelling, live music and theatre. Tom Pow draws on his travels for this emotive journey exploring the abandonment of the countryside, refugee crises and the ‘great thinning’ of the natural world, whilst The Galloway Agreement musicians draw on their wide experience of European musical traditions, enlarging the emotional landscape and driving the narrative.

*‘All human life is here, and if we cannot easily express what has been lost in the decline of rural places, we surely know it’s gone.’ – Patrick Laurie*



Tom Pow received a Creative Scotland Award to respond in poetry and prose to the phenomenon of dying villages in Europe.

Travels to Northern Spain, Central France, Southern Italy, Eastern Germany, Bulgaria, Western Poland and Russia and to Northern Scotland resulted in a rich archive of recordings, photographs and writings, including *In Another World – Among Europe’s Dying Villages* (Polygon, 2012).

Image credit – Sophie Kandarouff

## AUDIENCE RESPONSES

‘A wonderful representation of life’

‘Stunned admiration... wonderfully intense, moving and passionate’

‘My concentration span is usually limited, but tonight I was totally gripped throughout’

‘It could almost have been written in the last 24hrs’

## THE GALLOWAY AGREEMENT

The Galloway Agreement is a collaboration featuring four renowned traditional musicians; Wendy Stewart (harp, vocals), Ruth Morris (alto and tenor nyckelharpa), Gavin Marwick (fiddle), and Stuart Macpherson (double bass). These world class musicians are all based in Dumfries and Galloway. They originally came together as invited artists to record on Wendy’s album, ‘Folds in the Field’. They enjoyed playing together so much that they decided to form this quartet, with a quite different instrumental line-up and choice of material from a more usual string quartet!

Their repertoire is a mixture of original compositions and favourite tunes and songs from Scotland and other European traditions. The Galloway Agreement are well known for their sublime sound created by this lovely combination of instruments. They had tremendous fun composing the music for *The Village* and *The Road*.





Image credit – Andrew Wilson

## PROGRAMME NOTE

A common question we have been asked is, ‘How did *The Village and The Road* come about?’ The first part of the answer would have to be, ‘Not in a hurry!’ Back in 2007, I read that Europe was facing a fall in population, by 2050, equal to that of The Black Death; the effects of this were to be felt most acutely in rural areas. I was immediately gripped with a desire to visit villages already suffering from depopulation and to respond to the circumstances I found there. Of course it wasn’t only the falling birth-rate that affected villages. Also around 2007, for the first time in human history, more people were living in cities than in rural areas. Funding from a Creative Scotland Award allowed me to travel to dying villages throughout Europe, from Spain to Russia. There has been a range of outputs from these journeys, including the book, *In Another World – Among Europe’s Dying Villages*.

While I was following my own focused exploration, Wendy Stewart (harp), Ruth Morris (nyckelharpa), Gavin Marwick (fiddle) and Stuart Macpherson (double bass) – the musicians who became *The Galloway Agreement* – were travelling through Europe, playing, holding workshops and, as all musicians do, picking up traditional tunes, techniques and influences. As a result of both their and my trajectories, when we met over my text of *The Village and The Road*, there was immediate empathy and unity of purpose: we wanted to make of two elements a third. However, it took the experience and skill of the director, Matthew Zajac – and the sympathy he brought from his own concerns (seen most notably in *The Tailor of Inverness*) – to turn *The Village and The Road* into theatre.

It is Matthew who drew on the company’s memories and imaginations (and the expertise of lighting designer, Andrew Wilson), to turn *The Village and The Road* into a fluid theatrical experience, one in which the stories (in a variety of genres: personal narrative, poetry, flash fiction, proverb and song) are underscored and driven by the four musicians, who also act as a chorus; sometimes with warmth, at others with extreme threat. As much as the words, it is music and song that carry the narrative on a journey across geographical space and time and between cultures. At other times, added texture comes from site specific recordings of the human voice and of the natural world, for it too is facing its own ‘thinning’.

*The Village and The Road* is a personal and collective response to circumstances of memory, landscape and experience. There is lyricism here, but there is also the harshness of difficult decisions (to stay or to go, to the city or across the sea), that affect those who make them and those who are affected by them. The silences between scenes or the abruptness of their ending carries its own eloquence.

In short, *The Village and The Road* is a world in which you are invited to contemplate home and what it means to leave it: it is for anyone who has left home.

**Tom Pow**

## THE TRAILER

<https://vimeo.com/646366339>



made in  
  
**SCOTLAND**

### MADE IN SCOTLAND

Following the 2022 Made in Scotland Showcase funding and curation (Scottish Storytelling Centre, Edinburgh), we will be touring nationally and internationally through the Spring of 2023. Previous sold-out performances have informed future bookings in terms of the dramatic, multi-genre crossover appeal of the show, and we welcome any expressions of interest or booking queries.

Made in Scotland is a curated showcase of high-quality performance from Scotland at the world's biggest arts festival, made possible by support from the Scottish Government's Edinburgh Festivals Expo Fund.

It is a partnership between Edinburgh Festival Fringe Society, Federation of Scottish Theatre, Scottish Music Centre and Creative Scotland.





## POTENTIAL AUDIENCES AND ENGAGEMENT

WHO WILL THE SHOW APPEAL TO – Anyone who loves beautiful and powerful words and music. Anyone interested in one of the greatest demographic changes in our times. Anyone who has left home.



Image credit – Tom Pow



## CONTACT

thegallowwayagreement@gmail.com  
www.thegallowwayagreement.com

## LEAD PRODUCERS

Ruth Morris – +44 (0)7796 370 146  
Ed Littlewood – Ed Littlewood Productions – +44 (0)7956 255 186

## CREDITS

Original script by Tom Pow  
Original live score by The Galloway Agreement  
Direction by Matthew Zajac  
Lighting design/ photo credits Andrew Wilson  
Sound design by Stuart Macpherson  
Digital assets by Emma Dove  
Photo credit – Kim Ayres

The Village and The Road gratefully acknowledges the support of Creative Scotland, Scotbelge Charitable Trust, Dame Barbara Kelly, DG Arts Festival, DG Unlimited, Pete Renwick, and Theatre Royal Dumfries

### From Tom Pow:

‘The Village and The Road is a fluid theatrical experience; one in which the story (in a variety of genres: personal narrative, poetry, flash fiction, proverb and song) – told by a narrator/ commentator/participant, underscored and driven by the four musicians, who also act as a chorus. As much as the words, it is music and song that carry the narrative on a journey across geographical space and between cultures. At other times, added texture comes from site specific recordings of the natural world and of the human voice’.

### Ed Littlewood Productions

Ed Littlewood Productions Ltd delivers productions and events nationally and internationally. The company provides support and consultation for the performing arts industry – funding / fundraising, touring, education / learning and participation, production administration – working with a wide range of freelancers and associates across the UK. Offices are based in Edinburgh and Bristol.

