

ESD
ELIOT SMITH DANCE

SUMMER '25

HUMAN | CANDLELIGHT





WELCOME



© Photographer Steve Brock

Welcome to Eliot Smith Dance (ESD)'s Summer 2025 Season.

We are delighted to welcome you to the return of HUMAN, a powerful solo work originally choreographed in 2023. For the first time, ESD presents this piece in an intimate candlelight setting, bringing a new depth and atmosphere to the performance, HUMAN | CANDLELIGHT.

Revisiting HUMAN marks a significant moment of reflection and renewal for both ESD's artistic vision and organisational growth. It is always a privilege to work closely with Yamit Salazar in the studio. As our longest-serving dancer, his passion and artistry continue to inspire—and I have no doubt that his performance tonight will be both moving and unforgettable.

We extend our heartfelt thanks to the Friends of ESD for their continued support, as well as to Alnwick Playhouse, Alphabetti Theatre, Tony Loughlin, and our generous donors.

To learn more about how you can support the future of this unique company, please visit:
www.eliotsmithdance.com/support

Thank you for being with us and I hope you enjoy the performance.

With very best wishes,
Eliot Smith, Creative Director



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CREATIVES AND CREDITS

Creative Director and Choreographer

ELIOT SMITH

Dancer

YAMIT SALAZAR

Composer and Pianist

ADAM JOHNSON

Horn

DAVID TOLLINGTON

Vocalist

RAYAN ALI

Voiceover

Pupils at **ST MARK'S RC PRIMARY SCHOOL**, Newcastle upon Tyne

Mastering

JOHN MARTINDALE

Property and Lighting Designer, Costume

ELIOT SMITH

Lighting Re-Creation

NICK TYLER and **HANNAH RICHARDSON**

HUMAN



© Photographer Darren Irwin

What does it mean to be human? It's a simple question, just a few short words, but it unwraps the bundle of complexity, contradictions, and mystery that is a human life.

Why do we behave the way we do? How do we live better? How did we get to now? What is now? What is our future? What is our purpose? What is our story?

Ultimately, this work presents various human emotions and the 'discrete emotion theory' has been central to this exploration of anything human.

- Reflection from Eliot Smith, Choreographer

When hearing the word “human”, and what it meant to me, it was quite challenging to find a straight answer, as it is a word that can be seen as limitless and personal to us all.

I wanted to find common ground where I could resonate with the audience and to show them in some ways that we are equal.

We breathe, we eat, we feel, we have a heart, and one of the natural instincts of humankind is trying to survive in this fast moving world that we live in.

HUMAN

As a dancer I see this work “Human” as chapters of life. An exploration, a journey that makes us feel alive, revealing our authenticity, the emotion and the obstacles that we face in life. The hurt, pain, rejection, happiness, love, loss, and sadness.

The repetitiveness of everyday living that we set ourselves to be able to survive and the rise and fall of our paths.

Experiences that can teach us who we are as people and who we want to be, that allow us to learn from our mistakes and become more knowledgeable about cultures and identities.

The music composed by Adam Johnson has sounds that have a sense of evolution from wildlife, out of space and AI, which compliments and rounds up my own interpretation of what “Human” is, allowing me to have a deeper connection and bringing a different dimension to the work.

- Reflection from Yamit Salazar, The Dancer

Before I wrote anything of the score for “Human”, I had to consider the universal elements which describe the word “Human” and its link to artforms. These included subjects like cell-development, rhythm-looping, phenomenology, and also the bigger questions of “where have we come from?” and “where are we going?”.

Delving deeper into more unusual depictions of “Human” took me to the American artist Bruce Nauman. His works Clown Torture (1987) and Good Boy, Bad Boy (1985) were hugely inspiring to me. They included the looping of material and also the shift from what is expected to the turn of the “question” itself.

Looping in classical music is not uncommon. The French composer Olivier Messiaen was a master of this. He drew upon birdsong and his own synaesthesia which he wove into his compositions. Messiaen was also inspired by the stars and our reaction to them. His piece “Appel Interstellaire” is an extraordinary work for solo horn and requires great technical command for the extreme musical language and the effects he creates. This piece was so integral to my studies for “Human” we have included it within the score, and it begins Act 2.

The sense of stars, space and science was so important to include in the score that I have added certain effects at the beginning, middle and end of the piece. Other effects you will hear are birdsong, animal noises, heartbeats, and voices. As a whole, the score moves from basic “man-made” sounds (including a conch-call), through romantic music, and then finally electronic dance music.

With the ever-growing presence of AI in our world, I have placed AI voices at the very end of “Human” which, despite their apparent terms of existence, questions their place against us.

- Reflection from Adam Johnson, The Composer

CHOREOGRAPHER



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Eliot Smith (he/him) is a distinguished British dancer and choreographer, born in 1990 in Newcastle upon Tyne, and is known for his innovative contributions to contemporary dance predominantly in the North East of England. As the founder and creative director of Eliot Smith Dance (ESD), Smith has achieved significant acclaim for his work, which blends traditional techniques, particularly inspired by Martha Graham, with modern, dynamic elements. Smith's choreography often involves collaboration with award-winning composers, musicians, and designers, resulting in performances that are both diverse and relevant.

Throughout his career, Smith has received numerous accolades, including being shortlisted for One Dance UK's People's Choice Award in 2018 and winning The Green Dance Award in 2022 for ESD. His works have toured extensively across the UK and internationally. In addition to his creative endeavours, Smith has commissioned international choreographers to expand the perspectives presented by ESD, aiming to broaden audience experiences in contemporary dance.

Smith's dedication to making contemporary dance accessible to children, young people, and adults shines through his work with ESD's award-winning wellness dance workshops. By focusing on those with limited access to dance, he not only promotes physical and emotional well-being but also inspires a love for movement and creativity. Smith's approach not only educates but also uplifts, planting seeds of passion and confidence that may one day grow into careers in the arts.

Smith's deep connection to the legacy of Martha Graham is reflected in his studies at The Martha Graham School in New York and his project "Inviting Martha Graham back to the UK", which led to the creation of 'Graham in UK' in 2018. This platform promotes the life and work of Martha Graham in the UK and has cemented Smith's role as a key figure in continuing her legacy.

After retiring from performing in 2021, Smith has focused on choreographic leadership, continuing to shape ESD. His career also includes roles such as Associate Artist at Dance City (2017) and Artist in Residence at The Bowes Museum (2018), where he later joined the Bowes Board of Trustees in 2021. In recognition of his contributions to the performing arts, Smith became an Honorary Friend of the British Federation of Festivals in 2022. Most recently, in 2024/25, Smith completed the Create Growth Programme, led by Creative UK, furthering his commitment to fostering innovation and business in the arts.

DANCER



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Yamit Salazar (he/him) is a versatile and highly accomplished dancer, choreographer, and rehearsal director with a strong career rooted in both performance and creative direction. Born in Colombia and raised in Central London, Yamit's dance journey began at the BRIT School of Performing Arts, followed by formal training at Bird College of Dance. His exceptional talent and dedication to his craft led him to join Eliot Smith Dance (ESD) in 2013, where he quickly became a key figure within the company. Over the years, he has performed lead roles in a wide range of works choreographed by prominent names such as Eliot Smith, Mark Baldwin, Maurice Causey, and others.

In 2017, Yamit transitioned from being a full-time company dancer to a freelance Rehearsal Director and Guest Dancer at ESD, allowing him to further hone his skills in choreography and creative leadership. His first major choreographic work for ESD, titled Bloom, was commissioned in 2021, marking an exciting milestone in his career as a creator.

Alongside his work with ESD, Yamit has demonstrated his versatility as a performer in diverse settings. He has danced on Celebrity X Cruises, and has been involved in pantomimes at various theatres, including The Capitol Theatre in Horsham and Trinity Theatre in Tunbridge Wells, where he performed as a dancer, dance captain, and choreographer. His impressive credits also include performing in Madonna's iconic Vogue at the London Palladium and dancing in La Forza del Destino at the Royal Opera House.

COMPOSER



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Adam Johnson (he/him) is an internationally acclaimed pianist renowned for his remarkable technical skill and diverse repertoire. His performances, celebrated for their emotional depth and virtuosity, consistently draw sold-out crowds in major venues across London and Europe. Known for his ability to seamlessly blend crossover classics with beloved modern instrumental pieces, Johnson has captivated audiences and critics alike, with The Telegraph calling him “A Revelation.”

Beyond his achievements as a soloist, Johnson is a prominent figure in the orchestral world. He is the Founder, Artistic Director, and Principal Conductor of The Northern Lights Symphony Orchestra. His contributions to music have been recognised with several honours, including his election as a Freeman of the Worshipful Company of Musicians in 2011 and his membership in the Royal Society of Musicians. In 2019, Johnson was also awarded the Freedom of the City of London.

As a composer, Johnson has produced highly acclaimed recordings. His album *Savage Piano*, recorded at the iconic Abbey Road Studios, was praised by BBC Radio as “Cinematic and Emotional.” In 2020, he released an EP, *Keys to the Garden*, and his single “Frith (After Janáček)” under Collaborative Records.

In collaboration with ESD, Johnson has composed for productions like *Seacole + Nightingale* (2020), *TroY* (2020), *Homecoming* (2021), *LIFE* (2021), *HUMAN* (2023), *The Three Jolly Ghosts of Christmas* (2023) *PITMAN* (2024) and has contributed to ESD’s educational outreach programs, enhancing access to music through his creative works.

THE COMPANY

Eliot Smith Dance (ESD) is a prominent contemporary dance company based in North East England, recognised for its inclusive approach and high quality performances, particularly in underserved areas. Led by founder and creative director Eliot Smith, the company operates out of Newcastle's Dance City and has achieved acclaim for its innovative works, including performances in New York, Rome, and Paris.

ESD has a strong commitment to making contemporary dance accessible to diverse audiences, especially those with limited access to the arts. The company's mission extends beyond performances to include award winning wellness dance workshops for children, young people, and adults.

ESD's dancers come from around the world, and the company has embraced digital formats for its works, particularly during the COVID-19 pandemic. One notable piece, *Seacole + Nightingale*, received praise for its timely exploration of Mary Seacole's legacy during the Black Lives Matter movement and in the context of the pandemic's impact on ethnically minoritised NHS workers.

In recent years, ESD has turned its focus to raising awareness about climate change, with outreach programs in schools and communities. This shift led to the company's receipt of the inaugural "Green Dance Award" at the One Dance UK Awards in 2022. Additionally, ESD produces *ESD Presents*, a biennial event celebrating influential dance makers.

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ESD acknowledges the generous support for HUMAN | CANDLELIGHT in summer 2025 from the **Friends of ESD** for their continued support, as well as to **Alnwick Playhouse**, **Alphabetti Theatre**, **Tony Loughlin**, and our generous **donors**.



SUPPORT US

Our audiences, friends, partners, and donors are at the heart of everything we do. Your support allows us to celebrate the rich artistry of Eliot Smith Dance (ESD), nurture emerging choreographers, and deliver impactful outreach programmes that transform lives through dance.

Whether you choose to give £1, £100, £1,000 or more—either as a one-off donation or an annual gift—every contribution makes a difference and is deeply appreciated.

Ways to Donate

Online: www.eliotsmithdance.com/support

In person: Donation box at the venue

By cheque: Payable to Eliot Smith Dance

Join the Friends of ESD

Become part of our growing community: www.eliotsmithdance.com/jointhefriends

Would you like to explore membership or other ways to support the Company?

Please contact June Svenson at 0191 269 5579 or jsvenson@eliotsmithdance.com — we'd love to hear from you!



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Eliot Smith Dance (ESD) is committed to exploring ways to reduce the impact of its activities on the environment through its environmental policy. Whilst acknowledging that touring creates an unavoidable carbon footprint, we are actively seeking ways to improve and mitigate against this. We endeavour to promote best practice across our creative team and to raise awareness of the effects of climate change amongst our collaborators, partners, suppliers, friends, audience members, and the young people engaging in performances, events and our Education and Beyond programme.

To find out more, please visit: www.eliotsmithdance.com/commitments

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