

AF
ADELAIDE
FESTIVAL
1-17 MARCH 2019

THEATRE / AUSTRALIA

Uncle Vanya

Written by Anton Chekhov
Adapted & directed by Bagryana Popov
Produced by La Mama

Image: Magda Bizarro

1 – 6 Mar / The Cedars, Hahndorf

Playwright Anton Chekhov

Translated and adapted by
Bagryana Popov with the team

Produced by La Mama and
Bagryana Popov

Directed by Bagryana Popov

Performed by James Wardlaw,
Natascha Flowers, Todd MacDonald,
Liz Jones, Olena Fedorova, John Bolton,
Richard Bligh and Meredith Rogers

Dramaturgy by Maryanne Lynch

Sound Design by Elissa Goodrich

Stage Management by Hayley Fox

Documentation by Tess Hutson

Uncle Vanya is performed in four acts over two consecutive days.

Day 1 Act 1: 4pm (1hr 40mins);
Act 2: 9.15pm or 10.30pm (1hr 5mins).

Day 2 Act 3: 1.30pm or 2.45pm (45mins);
Act 4: 7pm (40mins).

Uncle Vanya has been generously supported by La Trobe University through its Disciplinary Research Program in English, Theatre and Drama and Research Focus Area Transforming Human Societies, Creative Victoria, Bundanon Trust, The Avoca Project and Lyndal Jones.

La Mama Theatre also acknowledges and thanks the people at Corinella House and Steiglitz for hosting previous seasons, and Majid Shokor and Vince Crowley for their artistic contribution.

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The
production
Uncle Vanya

“The project is an ongoing exploration of how performance and environment come into conversation. In each site the play comes to life in a new way. The place and the play affect and illuminate each other, and new meanings appear, surprising and moving.”

Bagryana Popov, Director

Uncle Vanya is an intimate, site-specific, new version of Chekhov's early environmentalist play, set in the Australian landscape. Written over 100 years ago, the play is every bit as relevant today, with its themes of deforestation, land degradation and questions about how we live our lives in relation to the land. In it the character Dr Astrov says: "Forests are disappearing, rivers are running dry... the climate is ruined..." - words which resonate with growing urgency today. The play, subtitled *Scenes from Country Life in Four Acts*, depicts the lives of its characters in the regions: the economic difficulty of living on the land, isolation, tensions around property and family inheritance, resilience, and deep family bonds. The play's themes resonate strongly with contemporary issues of people living in regional Australia.

Performed over two days, *Uncle Vanya* is an immersive experience that dissolves the division between performance and reality, between audience and performers, as they move through the rooms of the house and surrounding land. It is a funny, magical and profoundly moving experience, bringing the world of the play to life. Between the acts, audience members can speak to the characters as they go about their lives, and are invited to attend talks presented about the history of the house and surrounding environment. This is a layered, three-dimensional experience of the play within the beautiful setting of Hans Heysen's home, The Cedars.

Director's notes
Bagryana Popov

When I was a child we used to play in my father's village near the Danube. The games that we played spilled out into the streets, the surrounding countryside, all the way to the river, and there was no division between the delight (and seriousness) of the game and the landscape. We were swamped at once in the real world and in the world of play. It was joyous. Many years later, when I first read the play *Uncle Vanya*, images of the people in it, the house, the landscape, moments leapt to life in my mind. Time seemed to be almost visible, to pass viscerally in the play. Afternoon, night, noon, evening, the months, seasons and years passing. The play itself seemed to be speaking, moving, suggesting a three-dimensional, real place, with people going about their lives.

I wanted to step inside that house, to watch those people, be near them, to understand how they let time pass them by, without grabbing life by the tail. How they let the forests be chopped down, and only one person notices, until he too gets distracted...Chekhov wrote the play *Uncle Vanya* in 1896. He was writing from his own passion for trees and forests.. He already knew then that trees are essential, and that the earth and the climate are in danger. It is more than 120 years later...Where are we now?

With this team of artists, we have entered the play, asking: how can we be inside this play *now*? What does the play say to us about how we live in relation to the land? What does it say about the deteriorating environment, about time and about wasting time? What can we change? In *Uncle Vanya*, as in all Chekhov's plays, the place, the land, the weather, are there, part of the action, sensory, real. We have had the opportunity to bring the play to life in the Australian landscape in very special places so far: Avoca, Steiglitz, Eganstown (Victoria) and Bundanon (NSW). In each place the play and the place come into conversation in intangible and surprising ways. Each place allows the inner life of the play to emerge in a new way, refracted through its life and history.

We are incredibly fortunate and privileged to perform at The Cedars, a very special place, rich with layers of history, where Chekhov's play can enter into conversation with the work of another artist passionate about trees and aware of their importance – Hans Heysen. New resonances and meanings will emerge, and we enter with a feeling of gratitude and wonder. My sincere thanks to everyone who has been involved with this project and supported it from its very beginnings to now.

What a joy.

Bagryana Popov
Direction, Concept
and Adaptation

Bagryana Popov is an award-winning theatre director, actor and performance maker. She has collaborated with acclaimed artists and communities around Australia and in Europe. She is interested in how artistic practice can speak to social, political and environmental questions. Her site-specific, durational version of Chekhov's *Uncle Vanya*, produced with La Mama, was performed at The Avoca Project, Steiglitz, Eganstown in Victoria and Bundanon NSW. Bagryana has a deep and long-standing interest in the plays of Anton Chekhov. Her award-winning *Progress and Melancholy* was a physical theatre adaptation of *The Cherry Orchard*. She has directed *The Seagull* and *Three Sisters*. She has collaborated with dance artists and co-created and directed a number of physical theatre projects, including *He is not here* with Simon Ellis at Red House, Sofia and *Studies of Being Human*, Dancehouse and *The Button Event* with Todd MacDonald (QTC). Working with community, Bagryana was on the team that created four projects with the St Kilda Drop in Centre: *The Lower Depths*, *The Tempest*, *Our Chalk Circle* and *Dante's Workshop*, together with John Bolton, Brian Lipson and Joseph Sherman. She has directed many projects that tell stories of place, displacement and refugee experience, including *Cafe Scheherezade*, *Sarajevo Suite*, *Of Cows*, *Women and War* and *Subclass 26A*, as well as her forthcoming project, directing the premiere season of *THEM* by Samah Sabawi, La Mama 2019. Bagryana is a lecturer in theatre and researcher at La Trobe University, Melbourne

James Wardlaw
Uncle Vanya

James has previously appeared for La Mama in *The Fever* directed by Tom Healey and Daniel Schlusser's production of *The Visit*. Other theatre credits include *The Taming of the Shrew* (Adelaide Festival); *The Merry Wives of Windsor* (Nothing But Roaring); *Julius Caesar*, *The Tempest*, *Two Gentlemen of Verona*, *Much Ado About Nothing*, *Romeo and Juliet*, *Richard III*, *The Merchant of Venice* and *Hamlet* (Bell Shakespeare); *The Crucible*, *The Hypocrite*, *Three Sisters*, *The Balcony*, *Lady Windermere's Fan*, *Romeo and Juliet* and *The Grapes of Wrath* (M.T.C); *Black*, *Falling Petals*, *So Wet*, *Violet Inc.*, *Baby X*, *Crazy Brave* and *A Return To The Brink* (Malthouse/Playbox); *The Nest* (The Hayloft Project); *Dictionary of Imaginary Places* (MIAF); *Penelope*, *NSFW*, *Middletown* and *Colder* (Red Stitch); *The Barretts of Wimpole St* (QTC) and *The Normal Heart* (Theatreworks). Film and television credits include *Turkey Shoot*, *Redball*, *Dark Love Story*, *Inspector Gadget 2*, *Gallipoli*, *Blue Heelers*, *City Homicide*, *Stingers*, *Good Guys Bad Guys*, *MDA*, *Janus*, *Seachange*, *Backberner*, *The Hollow Men* and *Howard*, *The Mild Colonial Boy*. James is a NIDA graduate and a proud member of Actors Equity since 1988.

**Natascha
Flowers
Sonia**

Born to a Chinese-Australian father and German mother, Natascha Flowers is a graduate of the Victorian College of the Arts, with a Bachelor of Dramatic Art (2010). She also holds a Master of Social Work from Monash University (2015), and is a qualified yoga teacher. Natascha has featured in various short films and stage productions. A couple of her highlights include playing *Juliet* in Essential Theatre's production of *Romeo and Juliet* which toured around Australia, and playing *Ophelia* in *Anti-Hamlet* at Theatreworks, written and directed by Mark Wilson.

Natascha has also written scripts for screen and stage. Her award-winning short play *Some People Run*, performed at the Melbourne Fringe Festival in 2013, looked at refugee stories from her own family history in Germany from World War Two and the Cold War. Using her creative and social work background, Natascha facilitates a variety of workshops in both community and clinical settings, aiming to empower people using theatre, yoga and mindfulness.

**Todd
Macdonald
Dr Astrov**

Todd MacDonald is the current Artistic Director and CEO of La Boite Theatre Company, in Brisbane Australia. After completing acting training at NIDA in 1994 Todd has worked extensively across the theatre, film, television and voice over industries. In 1999 he co-founded the award winning venue and production company The Store Room Theatre in Melbourne Victoria and programmed, produced and was Artistic Director until its closure in 2010. The Store Room was a 60 seat venue that presented and produced work as a part of Melbourne FRINGE, Comedy and International Festivals as well as year round programming and development outcomes. Todd has worked as a theatre director, producer, programmer and actor and was the Artistic Associate at Queensland Theatre Company from 2011-2014 after which he took up the role of AD at La Boite. Todd has worked as associate producer and company member with David Pledgers' company NYID and has toured internationally. Todd's theatre making practice is extensive and eclectic ranging from independent theatre companies through to mainstage companies, physical theatre to durational performance.

Meredith Rogers Maman

Meredith Rogers makes, teaches and writes about Theatre and Performance. Highlights by the decades have included: playing Maria in this ensemble since 2014, performing and dramaturging for *This Is Grayson* with Gold Satino (various sites in Newport 2018), directing and designing Peta Tait and Matra Robertson's *Breath by Breath* about Chekhov, love, fear and refuge (Carlton Courthouse, 2003), acting in Sue Ingleton's *The Passion and Its Deep Connection with Lemon Delicious Pudding* (Malthouse Theatre, 1995), co-founding the feminist Home Cooking Theatre Co in the 1980s, producing, performing or directing in all their productions, including *Running Up A Dress*, which premiered at the first Melbourne International Arts Festival before touring extensively, playing Clytemnestra in James McCaughey's *Oresteia* translated by Rush Rhem (Pram Factory 1974), Simone in Peter Weis' *Marat/Sade* for Melbourne Youth Theatre (Alexander Theatre 1968).

She received the Ewa Czjawor award for a woman director in 2003, taught theatre and performance at La Trobe University for 23 years and wrote a book about the innovative Mill Theatre Company of which she was a member (*The Mill: Experiments in Theatre and Community* 2016).

Her current projects in development include: *When I Hold Her Arm* sixty year-old women think about ninety year-old women, devising and performing with Hester Joyce and Maude Davey, and *Seduction* – a performance about friendship, sex, bodies and parallel parking, devising and performing with Davina Wright for Gold Satino.

John Bolton The Professor

John Bolton trained at the Guildhall School of Music and Drama, London and Ecole Jacques Lecoq, Paris. He was Director of Theatre at the Theatre Workshop, Edinburgh and co-founded Artworks, a company specializing in large scale shows and celebrations in Britain and Europe. He was invited to join Welfare State International as a puppeteer, maker and actor for their *Tempest* as part of the Toronto International Festival and has toured his solo show *Jumping Mouse* throughout the USA, U.K. and Australasia, subsequently invited to the Dublin and New Zealand International Festivals.

His directing and co-creation credits include *Odyssey* with Andreas Litras, which was invited to festivals including Adelaide Festival and the Barbican International Theatre Event in London; and *I Don't Wanna Play House* with Tammy Anderson, for which she was twice nominated for Best Actress in the Green Room Awards and was invited to the Dublin and the Hong Kong Festivals. In 1991 John founded the John Bolton Theatre School and later became Head of Acting at the Victorian College of the Arts. John is a Fellow of the Australia Council, he was awarded the 2005 Victorian College of

the Arts Teaching Excellence Award, the 2002 Kenneth Myer Medallion for Outstanding Services to Theatre in Victoria and two Green Room Awards for best production and outstanding direction of *My Brother the Fish*.

He has directed plays at The Malthouse, Theatreworks, the Sydney Festival of Dreaming, The Melbourne, Adelaide and New Zealand International Festivals, Belvoir Street Theatre, and for some of Australasia's premier theatre companies, including Kage, and Taki Rua, The National Maori Theatre of New Zealand. He was director of movement for the M.T.C. on *The Thirty Nine Steps*, *The Gift* and movement director for the S.T.C. on *Long Day's Journey into Night*. He has run classes and workshops for companies including 11th Hour, Melbourne Workers Theatre, M.T.C. S.T.C. and Back To Back Theatre Company.

Liz Jones Nanny Marina

Liz Jones commenced working as both an artist and staff member at La Mama Theatre in 1973. At the end of 1976, she became Artistic Director/Administrator and has held this position ever since. Liz has performed at La Mama and other Melbourne venues consistently since 1973, with the *Lloyd Jones Ensemble*, and with *Aphids* under the direction of Margaret Cameron in *Care Instructions*, which had seasons at La Mama, the Malthouse, and in 2009, toured to Denmark. She has also had major roles in Ariette Taylor's productions of F.X. Kroetz' *Farmyard*, in Suzanne Chaundry's production of Tadeus Razowski's *Mariage Blanc*, in Humphrey Bower's production of Julie Goodall's *Texas, Queensland*, in Daniel R. Lillford's production of Jodi Gallagher's *Banshee*, Mammad Aidani's *She* (under the direction of Lynne Ellis), *Eavesdropping* as part of the Melbourne International Festival (under the direction of David Pledger).

She also worked with Emma Valente and The Rabble in *Special* over three years presenting at The Courthouse in 2011. From 2009 – 2016, Liz took part in the *Minutes of Evidence project* from the 1881 Coranderrk Inquiry, where she played the role of Anne Bon in the initial exploration of *Coranderrk: we will show the country*. Liz has been part of the Uncle Vanya ensemble since its inception in 2014. Liz was awarded the 1994 *Kenneth Myer Medallion* for the Performing Arts by the Victorian Arts Centre Trust. In 1996, she received a *Doctorate of Laws honoris causa* from the Australian National University, in 2000 she was awarded the *Sidney Myer "Facilitator's" Award*, in 2001 the *Green Room Lifetime Achievement Award*, and in 2002 her name was placed on the *Victorian Women's Honor Roll*. In 2012 she was made an *Officer of the Order of Australia* (AO), the citation specifically mentioning her work with playwrights and the indigenous theatre community. In 2018 she received the Australia Council award for her contribution to Theatre.

**Richard Bligh
Telegin (Waffles)**

Richard is a Melbourne actor and has worked mainly in theatre over the past 30 years. He's appeared many times at the MTC, La Mama and Eleventh Hour Theatre over the years. He was a founding member of the Old Van Theatre company and has appeared in most of their productions. Richard last performed in Adelaide at the 2010 Festival in Eleventh Hour's production of *King John*. Richard has done film and TV work. Most recently he played Mr Butler in *Miss Fishers' Murder Mysteries* at the ABC.

**Olena Federova
Yelena**

Olena was born in Ukraine. After graduation from music college (piano) she made a decision to become an actress and while studying at a theatrical university (1999-2003) took an active part in the production of classic and contemporary Ukrainian and Russian works on the university's stage. She worked as a TV news presenter and children's television presenter in 2001 and from 2002 worked in the independent theatre company Atelier 16 and Yang Theatre in Kiev. In Australia she appeared as an actress in following productions: *Sarajevo Suite* (2011), *Before You Fell Asleep* (2017), and *Uncle Vanya* (2019). She collaborated with director Jim Curlis to play a leading role Villain his short movie *The Stars Down to Earth* (2007). She also known for her roles in Goran Stolevski's movies as Olesya in *Everything We Wanted* (2017) and as Irina in *My Boy Oleg* which was a winner of Lexus Fellowship on Sydney Film Festival in 2018. As part of her PhD study, Olena directed *4383 days of Child* (2016), and *Kolobok* (2017) for Fringe Festival in Melbourne. In 2009 she graduated from VCA and Music The University of Melbourne the VCA with a Postgraduate Diploma in Performance Creation (Animateuring), and received Masters in Performance Creation (2011) and PhD in Performance Studies (2016). Olena was a recipient of the Australia Postgraduate Award.

Elissa Goodrich Sound Design

Musician, sound-artist and composer Elissa Goodrich's sound-art works play internationally in festivals and cultural institutions across Europe and Australasia. A 2 x nominee for Australian Jazz Work of the Year with colleague Clare Shannon, and leader, composer of world-jazz *States of Play*, Elissa also works in independent theatre including enjoying long held collaboration with Bagryana Popov spanning over 20 years. Elissa's *Forgotten Songs of Flight*, in duo with cellist Caerwen Martin performed at National Opera Center (New York) (2017), and she co-created *Fragments* with Susan Bamford Caleo (performer) and Margaret Mills (director), (La Mama Theatre) (2017). Elissa's soundart work *What the Rains Bring* was part of *International Sonorities Contemporary Music Festival* (Belfast) (2018). Alongside Elissa's soundart work for children, *Between Footsteps* at *Heide Museum of Modern Art*, Elissa's *One Data Day* with visual artist Gabby O'Connor is featured in MADATAC Festival (Madrid, 2019), and Elissa's *Gene Tree Project* (a large scale new music project drawing on climate change science) continues in partnership with Artistic Director, Co-CEO, Nadja Kostich and *St Martin's Youth Performing Arts Centre*. Elissa is a composer-recipient of the 2018 APRA AMCOS Art Music Fund for her *Gene Tree Project: Listen. Now. Again* (2018-2022).

Maryanne Lynch Dramaturgy

Maryanne Lynch works across art forms as a writer, director, producer and collaborator. Her work is characterised by an interest in formal and methodological experimentation and a passion for working with diverse communities. Maryanne has won several awards for her work including two AWGIEs and an SBS Eat Carpet Film Prize. Maryanne has worked with many companies including BalletLab, Backbone Youth Arts, Lucy Guerin Inc, Next Wave, Outer Urban Projects and Queensland Theatre Company. She has also worked with many other artists in a range of working models, these artists including Andree Greenwell, Christine Johnston, Hugo Race, John Rodgers, Irine Vela and Vanessa Tomlinson. Maryanne is a long-term collaborator of Bagryana Popov. Maryanne was Dramaturge in Residence at Malthouse Theatre across 2007-11 and Producer at Radio National 2011-14. Most recently, Maryanne was the leading artist on *City of Lost Souls* (Theatre Works, 2018), a live work about the ghosts of St Kilda and surrounds involving musicians, community choirs, projections and rooming-house residents. She ran this concurrently with the second funded year of a three-year project entitled *STREETSWEEP: FITZORY STREET* (with Richard Holt and the Heritage Centre of the City of Port Phillip), this stage involving a local primary school and local traders. Maryanne was on the board of Theatre Works from 2012-16.

Hayley Fox
Stage Manager

Back in 2012, Hayley completed a Diploma of Live Production and a Master of Arts. Since graduating, Hayley has stage and production managed throughout Melbourne and regional Victoria and interstate. Some of her stage management credits include CrossRoads (RL Productions), Tales of a City By The Sea (Samah Sabawi), Edmund – The Beginning (Arts House) and In Between 2 (Performance 4a). Hayley also works regularly as a lighting technician, operating shows such as Titanic, Spring Awakening and Bare (Stage Art) and Our Man in Havana, The Japanese Princess and Stella (Lyric Opera).

Hayley now spends her days as Venue Manager for La Mama theatre and moonlights as a technician at Chapel off Chapel, operating for shows such as Dolly Diamond's Blankety Blanks and Britney Spears the Cabaret. Hayley is thrilled to be stage managing Uncle Vanya again, and helping bring this exciting and immersive work to new audiences.

La Mama
Theatre
Producer

La Mama is a non-for-profit, independent theatre with a distinct artist focus. Treasured for its continued advocacy of those seeking to explore beyond the mainstream theatre, La Mama champions artistic freedom and individuality. Providing the integral foundational resources and support for new and experienced theatre makers, La Mama ensures artist remuneration, celebrates creative risk and pedestals the development of new vibrant work.

La Mama prioritises accessibility and celebrates its excitingly diverse community, warmly welcoming artists and audiences alike from a wide cross section of the community. With its rich history spanning over fifty years, La Mama stimulates work that is adventurous, vigorous, relevant and reflective of a vital range of needs and voices.

La Mama has operated out of our home at Faraday Street since 1967. In 1998 we took over management of the La Mama Courthouse in Drummond Street, which we gratefully rent through Working Heritage. Through a major fundraising effort in 2008, the La Mama community bought the Faraday Street site. Sadly, on May 19, 2018, just short of our 10th year anniversary, the building on Faraday Street burned down. Our intention is to restore our beloved La Mama to its humble, intimate self, honouring our rich past and preparing for our fruitful future. La Mama is home to many and open to all. We hope to see you there.