

WRITER'S ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS | BAGRYANA POPOV

Work on ANNA began in 2013 in a workshop at the Workcenter of Jerzy Grotowski and Thomas Richards in Italy. In 2016 this project received development support from the La Trobe Disciplinary Research Program in English and Theatre.

Since 2016 I have collaborated on this work with director John Bolton. In 2017 we presented an earlier version in the La Mama Explorations season. I am very grateful to John for his commitment, rigour, generosity and artistic wisdom directing this work.

I am grateful to Lara Week and Bronwyn Pringle for their beautiful and imaginative designs, and stage manager Julian Adams for helping bring the work to performance.

My thanks also to Adrienne Chisholm who designed in the 2017 Explorations season. Thank you to Justyn Koh for production photography.

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And thank you to La Mama, as always, for their amazing support.



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La Mama Theatre is on traditional land of the Kulin Nation. We give our respect to the Elders of this country and to all Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people past, present and future. We acknowledge all events take place on stolen lands and that sovereignty was never ceded.

We are grateful to all our philanthropic partners and donors, advocates, volunteers, audiences, artists and our entire community as we work towards the La Mama rebuild. Thank you!

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ANNA

17 - 22 DEC 2019



Image by Tess Hutson

ANNA

Written and performed by **Bagryana Popov**

Directed by **John Bolton**

Set design by **Lara Week**

Lighting design by **Bronwyn Pringle**

Stage manager **Julian Adams**

Photography credit **Tess Hutson**

We meet on the land of the Kulin Nation

First Nations people have never ceded sovereignty, and their struggle for self-determination continues. We pay our respects to elders past, present and future.

WRITER'S NOTE | BAGRYANA POPOV

I am from Bulgaria, where this story takes place. I was born during the communist era. When I was small, I noticed a particular phenomenon: the sudden whisper. It could happen in any place, public or private. While talking, people would suddenly drop to a whisper. The whisper and a particular kind of sudden side-darting glance were symptoms of watching or being watched.

This performance is set in Bulgaria in the 1950s-1960s, when every 7th person was an informer, and the typewriters of the secret police recorded everything, working around the clock. In this absurd and sinister world, truth and fiction were interchangeable.

My doctoral thesis investigated the embodied experience and memory of the totalitarian regime in Bulgaria through performance. This work continues that exploration. I wanted to look into how political control affects a person's mind, and what inner spaces a person creates to maintain some sense of self.

This play is the result of years of research into documents, interviews and secret police dossiers, interwoven with the fantastical stories by Avekos, my favourite writer whose stories I read as a child.

DIRECTOR'S NOTE | JOHN BOLTON

My notebook tells me that Wednesday 13th July 2016 was the first day of work for Bagryana and I on ANNA. (She had previously done many years of research and active exploration.) Exact dates are an important element of this show; they are proof that the content actually happened. Along with the notes themselves, the reports, the testimony, they put a stamp of authority on what would otherwise be equivocal and scarcely believable.

Anna's story is thrilling and appalling and her struggle to live a creative life through work, art and humour is inspiring.

The story is also proof that the worst can happen, that any political regime can turn toxic, maddening and killing the people it should protect and encourage. Some years ago we might have looked at this show, at the Stalinist regime of Eastern Europe, with a sense of detached interest, but no longer. Now it's our turn to be vigilant and do what we can to discern truth among the lies, and preserve our very lives on earth.

BAGRYANA POPOV: WRITER / PERFORMER

is an award-winning theatre artist who works in an interdisciplinary way. She has collaborated with acclaimed professional artists, students and communities, working as director, actor, dramaturg and performance maker. She is interested in how artistic practice can speak about social and political reality. Much of her work has examined themes of displacement, refugee experience and war. Most recently she directed *THEM* by Samah Sabawi, at Carlton Courthouse in June 2019. Previous projects: *Subclass 26A*, *Cafe Scheherezade*, *Sarajevo Suite*, *Of Cows, Women and War*, *Studies in Being Human*. Internationally, Bagryana has directed for the National Theatre of Macedonia, Bitola, presented work in Finland and performed in Bulgaria and Hungary. As a director and researcher, Bagryana has a passion for the plays of Chekhov and the way that they speak about human relationship to the environment. Her site-specific, durational project *Uncle Vanya* transposed to the Australian landscape, co-produced with La Mama, was presented in Adelaide Festival 2019 at The Cedars, the estate of artist Hans Heysen. Dr Popov is a lecturer and researcher in theatre at La Trobe University, Melbourne.

JOHN BOLTON: DIRECTOR continues to teach at his own school and at the V.C.A. He directs shows and performs his solo story-telling show at his home and in others' homes.

LARA WEEK: SET DESIGNER is a designer for performance and creative producer. Her designs for set and costume include *Caliban* with Western Edge Youth Arts (dir. Tariro Mavondo and Dave Kelman, Malthouse Theatre), *Make Me A Hour* (dir. Stéphanie Ghajar, La Mama Courthouse), *3 Sisters* (dir. Greg Ulfan, Metanoia Theatre), *South Sudan Voice* with Free Theatre (dir. Pongjit Saphakhun), *Night Sings Its Songs* (dir. Rodrigo Calderón, La Mama Theatre), and two seasons of Samah Sabawi's award-winning play *Tales Of A City By The Sea* (dir. Lech Mackiewicz and Wahibe Moussa) which she co-produced in 2016 with Daniel Clark and toured to Adelaide, Sydney, and Kuala Lumpur. This year, she produced and designed the premiere season of Sabawi's play *THEM* at La Mama Courthouse, directed by Bagryana Popov. Since 2011 Lara has been associate producer for Tribal Soul Arts, working with Patrice Naiambana to produce decolonial arts programs and performances

in Zimbabwe, Mozambique, the Netherlands, UK, and Australia.

BRONWYN PRINGLE: LIGHTING DESIGNER

is a Melbourne-based Lighting Designer. She has worked around Australia with companies such as Pop up Playground, NICA, ArtPlay, MTC, Red Stitch Actors Theatre, Australian Theatre of the Deaf, Arts Projects Australia, Black Hole Theatre, Outback Theatre for Young People, Chambermade and more, working on projects ranging from large festivals to small developmental pieces in venues that include The Princess Theatre, a London West End Nightclub, a warehouse in Buenos Aires, the Federation Square air-conditioning ducts and a woolshed in Glencoe, plus many more conventional and non-conventional theatre spaces. Design highlights include *Serial Blogger* (X:Machine), *Spin* (Anna Seymour), *Yam* (La Mama), *Closed for Maintenance* (Making Space), *Beneath and Beyond* (Making Space) and *Songbirds and Angels* (La Mama). She has received Green Room Awards for *alias Grace* (Malthouse Theatre) and *Letters from Animals* (Here Theatre/SRWT) plus numerous nominations, and two Melbourne Fringe Festival Design Collaboration awards.

JULIAN ADAMS: STAGE MANAGER is an honours graduate of La Trobe University's Bachelor of Arts, having also completed a diploma of Live Theatre Services with Melbourne Polytechnic. A jack-of-all-trades and self-confessed theatre addict, Julian is always looking for a new opportunity to challenge his skills. His recent successes include stage management for *Tchekov at The House of Special Purpose* (La Mama 2019), *Monash in Love and War* (Chapel Off Chapel, 2018), Sound and Lighting Design for *Creatures Lost* (Fringe 2019) *Creatures of The Deep* (Fringe 2018, Sustainability Festival 2019), *Bipolar Bear* (Fringe, 2016), and acting as Medvedenko in *The Seagull* (2018, LTU), Samson 2 in *ManDogMan* (MonsterFest 2017) and Gloucester in *King Lear* (2017, LTU). He thanks you for your patronage and hopes you enjoy the show.