



# UNDERCOAT: A PARAFOXICAL TALE



**LA MAMA THEATRE  
DECEMBER 3, 4 & 5**

A supernatural tale of encounter with the Australian wilderness,  
in which the remnant wilderness 'answers back' as a  
provocative chorus of three red foxes.

*Or is it all a cover-up?*

***Undercoat*** celebrates the splendid versatility of the planet's  
most widespread wild carnivore, and the shape-shifting powers of  
language at large. Informed by the moral and mythological heritage of  
the red fox, and by the ecology of the species in Australia,  
***Undercoat*** is an omnivorous performance-in-the-making.



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Our sincerest thanks to the many volunteers who generously give their time in support of La Mama.

La Mama's Committee of Management, staff and its wider theatrical community acknowledge that our theatre is on traditional Wurundjeri land.

The La Mama community acknowledges the considerable support it has received in the past decade from Jeannie Pratt and The Pratt Foundation.

La Mama is financially assisted by the Australian Government through the Australia Council – its arts funding and advisory body, the Victorian Government through Arts Victoria - Department of Premier and Cabinet, and the City of Melbourne through the Arts and Culture triennial funding program.



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*Giraffes and tigers have splendid coats; we have splendid speech.*  
James Hillman, 'James Hillman on Animals'

## Background

*Undercoat* is inspired by Nikolai Gogol's story 'The Overcoat' (1842), which remains amongst the most elusive of literary creations. Another source for *Undercoat* is the short story 'The Red Fox Fur Coat', a vivid elaboration on aspects of Gogol's 'The Overcoat' by contemporary Portuguese writer Teolinda Gersão, first published in English in 2004. In Gersão's tale, a 'humble bank clerk' suddenly covets a magnificent fox fur coat seen in a shop window. As she pays for the coat in instalments, she finds herself gradually transforming; having acquired the coat, she drives away from the city, and makes her first leap as a wild animal 'into the depths of the forest'.

But what happens to this creature if her first, joyous leap is thwarted? *Undercoat* starts from this question—and transposes it to an Australian landscape, where the European red fox now inhabits all states and territories. Since its introduction to Victoria in the mid-nineteenth century, the red fox has helped to define the terms by which the Australian wilderness can (or cannot) exist. Flourishing these days in the urban fringe, the red fox in that environment has no predators; the main cause of death is collision with motor vehicles.

**Special thanks to** Bec Etchell for her generosity with Alice the two-door corolla.

### Thankyou also to

Clara Brack, Clare-Rose Trevelyan, David Young, Esther Justin, Everyone at La Mama, Gordon and Margaret Troup, Jethro Woodward, Peter Wiltshire, Rob Tremlett, Tim Stitz and everyone at Chamber Made Opera, Sudaya.

The script of *Undercoat* was made possible by a grant from the Australia Council literature board.



La Mama's **EXPLORATIONS** season has been supporting works in development since 1980.

Creative exploration is at the core of all works produced and presented at La Mama, however the Explorations' annual season of works in development is a special time of year where productions are given three nights in the space to explore their practice and develop their theatrical pursuits.

October, November and December at La Mama are filled with artists and audiences engaging in the process of development – of ideas, form, content, words, processes, whatever is useful to the particular production.

Check out the full program for 2015 here:

[www.lamama.com.au/2015-explorations](http://www.lamama.com.au/2015-explorations)

### Alice Darling: director

In 2013 Alice completed a Postgraduate Diploma in Directing at the VCA. Alice's directing credits include: *Tuesday* (VCA), *Like a Fishbone* (MKA), *You Took the Stars* (Fire Curtain Co.), *Killer Joe* (Blackwater Productions), *Kindness* (Theatre Works), *Tender Napalm* (TBC Theatre), and *Middletown* (Red Stitch).

### Caroline Lee: She

Caroline has been working professionally as a performer for over twenty years. Most recently she has appeared in *Jurassica* and *Wet House* at Red Stitch; *The Trouble with Harry*, directed by Alyson Campbell and written by Lachlan Philpott, for the Melbourne International Arts Festival; and *Waking Up Dead*, directed by Susie Dee and written by Trudy Hellier at fortyfivedownstairs. Caroline has won four Green Room awards and is also a well-known and awarded narrator of talking books.

### Cynthia Troup: writer

Cynthia's writing for performance is often concerned with the inherent musicality of language, and the allusive richness of fragments, magnification, repetition. This richness can quickly expose the fragility of conventional meanings, pointing past the words themselves. Previous projects first seen at La Mama include *A Quarrelling Pair: A Triptych of Small Puppet Plays*, and *Care Instructions*. [www.cynthiatroup.com](http://www.cynthiatroup.com).

### Emma Annand: Ruber tha ruder Chicken Fox

Emma graduated from VCA in 2014. In 2013, she completed a course of Film Performance at New York Film Academy (NY). Since graduating she has performed in theatre shows *I Still Call Australia Homo*, *Bock Kills Her Father*, *Reasons To Stay Inside*, in short films *Sweet Misery* and *Dream Fall*, various commercial work and has conducted theatre workshops at La Boite Theatre Company and Footscray Community Arts Centre.

### Georgia Rann: production/stage manager; lighting & sound

Following her diploma of theatre production in 2011, Georgia continues to explore and develop skills in the art of lighting design, production and public art. Her stage credits include: Fairly lucid Productions—*Raton Laveur*, *The Reckoning*. Travis Cotton's *Robots Vs. Art*; Chamber Made Opera: *The Minotaur Trilogy*, *Turbulence*, *Opera for a small mammal*, and also *Opera therapea*. This is Georgia's fifth work at La Mama theatre.

### Natasha Herbert: Fox Vobiscum

Natasha began the year at La Mama in Zoey Dawson's catastrophe *The Unspoken Word is 'Joe'* and ends up here again, being out-foxed by Cynthia Troup's sharp-witted parafoxical tale. Recently she played a famous celebrity in Emily Collyer's *Dream Home* and before that an alcoholic barmaid in Daniel Keen's *Dreamers*, she smashed it as an understudy in Clare Watson's *I Heart John McEnroe* winning a Green Room award which she reluctantly shared with the very sporty ensemble.

### Olivia Monticciolo: Ranger

Olivia is an actor/theatre maker who graduated from the VCA Bachelor of Dramatic Arts, Acting (2012). Her credits include *Dream Home* (2015), *Richard II* for Melbourne Fringe (2014), *Behind the Public Eye/ Tales of the Laneway* for the Melbourne 24 hour Experience, *The Good Girl* for Melbourne Fringe (2013), and *Phedre* with Bell Shakespeare (2013).

### Peter Humble: film

Peter is a cross-disciplinary artist and teacher who works across the fields of film, video, sound, and music. *Turbulence*—a digital artfilm that re-imagines the chamber opera of the same name created by Danish composer Juliana Hodkinson and librettist Cynthia Troup—was first screened in Australia at Melbourne's Federation Square in October 2015.