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A PLAY BY
Roger Hall

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FROM THE
producer



ATC and Volvo welcome you to the second production of our 10th Anniversary Season **Decadence**, Roger Hall's *Take A Chance On Me*.

Last year's world premiere was a sell-out success, the 'Full House' signs testament to Roger's enduring gift for comedy. After twenty-five years in the business, his eye and ear were never keener as he tuned in to the suburban noise of life after divorce. From unlikely ingredients, he once more created a recipe for success: take six broken hearts and pulverise into lonely pieces; drop in some fresh hell and a little crushed hope then drizzle with bottled anger,

Whip desperately until stiff with frustration then scorch in uncontrollable desires until well-frazzled. Sprinkle with random acts of humiliation before serving. Palatable pain; distress made delicious! If it still ended in tears it was because now we were crying with laughter. Roger Hall's alchemist talent is always appreciated. At a time when laughter has been in short supply, it's good to see him again.

So too is it a pleasure to welcome back members of the original cast and crew, joined for this return season by 'new bloods' Jodie Dorday, Darien Takle and Paula Keenan.

Simon Prast
Producer

VOLVO

for life

Welcome to another tremendous production by Auckland Theatre Company. I am sure that you will enjoy this frisky little number from Roger Hall *Take A Chance On Me*.

No doubt there are many who, upon hearing the title, think back to the song performed by a famous Swedish pop-group. Last year Volvo took great pleasure helping bring this production to an audience of over 12,000 people. We are delighted to once again be supporting a play that is fast becoming a New Zealand Classic. That said, our newest Classic the Volvo S60 AWD is more Viking than ABBA.


John G. Snaith
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programme

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decadence

THE VOLVO 10TH ANNIVERSARY SEASON
AUCKLAND THEATRE COMPANY 2002

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2002 the vagina monologues • take a chance on me • the play about the baby • the daylight atheist • noises off • the bellbird • travesties stoned in his pockets • waiting for godot • the rocky horror show



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Roger Hall

IT WAS TOM STOPPARD WHO SAID THAT HE WROTE ROSENCRANTZ AND GUILDENSTERN ARE DEAD BECAUSE HE WANTED TO WRITE A PLAY, BUT ONCE HE BECAME A PLAYWRIGHT, WRITING A PLAY WAS A VERY DIFFERENT THING.

I felt exactly the same before and after *Glide Time*. It's twenty five years since it opened and since then I have written for the stage twenty two plays, four pantomimes and the books for four musicals. In other words playwriting became a job.

It's often assumed that it is easier writing a play once you become experienced. Not so. No matter how many plays you have written, the task remains the same: to write something that will hold and entertain an audience for about two hours. This is, as always, a daunting task. But what helps is that it is useful to know that, despite almost inevitable bouts of despair wondering if you can solve all the problems and whether it will ever get finished, past experience tells you not to give up, that there is somehow always a solution. It's the difference between amateur and professional writers: the amateur gives up, the professional doesn't.



Often I'm told, "Of course theatres put on your plays because they're Roger Hall plays". Well yes and no. Yes, I am "marketable" but that remains true only if the play still works. Word-of-mouth remains the best advertisement as always and if people don't like the play no name on earth will help it. Which brings me to opening nights. Opening nights are still stressful. No matter how confident everyone may be during rehearsals, the play doesn't exist until it is performed in front of an audience. (I used to ask my students, "Who is the most important person in the theatre. The director? The writer? The actors?" None of the above - it's the audience.)

Recently we were in New York. I felt a real pang of sympathy for Antony McCarten and Stephen Sinclair when I saw that *The Full Monty* was running on Broadway. It should have been their show. *Ladies Night*, there and it might well had it not been for their London producer, who was willing to tour it but not to put it on in the West End. A West End production would have given it international street cred. But as well as everything else you need in theatre, you have to have the luck.

First you have to write the play. Then you have to have an agent, the agent has to find a producer who has to find the right director, who has to find the right actors and then they have to find the right theatre. On the whole, I've had the luck.

I wouldn't have changed the last twenty five years for anything.

POST SCRIPT: So here we are at The Bruce Mason after the amazing season at The Maidment last year. Deep down I thought it would work, but not take off in the way it did. Janice Finn and the wonderful cast just took the audience by the scruff of the neck and never let go until 90 minutes later (no interval). I've never seen audiences leave the place so happy. One woman took her 90 year old mother. She reported that, during the "naughty bits", her mother clutched her arm not so much in shock but to prevent herself falling off the seat laughing. So hang on, here we go again.



ABOUT THE *Author*

Roger Hall is New Zealand's most successful playwright. The extraordinary successes of plays such as *Glide Time*, *Middle Age Spread* and *Social Climbers*, and the television series *Gliding On* and *Market Forces* have made him a household name. His plays have broken many New Zealand Box Office records, and there is almost always at least one of Roger's plays in production somewhere in New Zealand or Australia. Internationally, Roger's work has been performed in eight countries, including Britain where *Middle Age Spread* played on London's West End for fifteen months, and was named West End Comedy of the Year.

Born in Woodford Wells, Essex, England, Roger Hall arrived in New Zealand on Good Friday 1958, after a six-week voyage on board the *Captain Cook*. As a Teachers' College student he wrote for, and later edited, the college magazine *Student Opinion* and became involved in the newly-formed Downstage, New Zealand's first local theatre. After Teachers' College, Roger spent time in the classroom, before leaving to work for School Publications as the editor of *Education*, the department's official magazine for teachers.

Although he had failed in an earlier attempt to convince Wellington's *Evening Post* to employ him as a film reviewer, Roger was writing. A contributing writer on the television series *Close to Home*, he was also working on his first play,

A Hard Day at the Office. The name didn't survive, but nearly twenty-five years ago, on August 11, 1976, Roger Hall's first play (now called *Glide Time*) opened at Wellington's Circa Theatre. Set in an unidentified government department, *Glide Time* created the joy of recognition among middle New Zealand that was to become the trademark of a Roger Hall play. The season sold out, and transferred to the 1200 seat Opera House where it packed out seven nights.

Glide Time became the television series *Glide On*. A classic of New Zealand television, *Glide On* ran for five years and made Roger Hall a household name. And that was just the beginning. *Glide Time* was followed by another landmark play, *Middle Age Spread*. Written partly in Janet Frame's old room at Otago University during Hall's time as the Roger Burns Fellow, it played on London's West End for over a year, and was subsequently made into a film.

In the last twenty-five years, Roger Hall has written and co-written well over 150 scripts. *Glide Time*, *Middle Age Spread*, *The Share Club*, *Social Climbers*, *Dirty Weekends*, and *The Book Club* all show Roger's acute understanding of middle New Zealanders' concerns and interests. He was one of the first New Zealanders to tell our stories on stage, and his work has paved the way for other New Zealand storytelling. He remains very involved in New Zealand theatre, where the generosity and support he shows to other performing arts practitioners, especially writers, is well known.

Auckland Theatre Company has produced four Roger Hall plays since it was formed in 1992. After its ATC World Premiere, *Take A Chance On Me* will be performed in Wellington and Christchurch, and later that year the New Zealand Actor's Company toured another Roger Hall play, the drama *A Way of Life* throughout the country.



Jennifer Ludlam

LIZ (NARRATOR)

Jennifer Ludlam has an outstanding list of credits to her name, having appeared in an array of local television and stage productions during the course of her career. Jennifer's theatre highlights include Winnie in Beckett's *Happy Days*, Vita in *Vita & Virginia*, for Circa Theatre, and recently Martha in *Who's Afraid of Virginia Woolf?* at the Court Theatre. Jennifer's television roles include Cheryl in *Gloss*, Prisoner, and Liz in *Cover Story*. She also presented *Playschool* for ABC, Australia. Jennifer won the Outstanding Performance accolade for *Vita & Virginia* as well as Best Actress for *Lysistrata* at the Chapman Tripp Theatre Awards. She received the New Zealand Film and Television Awards' Best Actress Award for *Under Cover* (1993) and for *Cover Story* (1996).





Stuart Devenie

ERIC (NARRATOR)

Stuart Devenie is one of New Zealand's most accomplished actors with a career spanning nearly three decades. In addition to his role in *The Atrocity*, Devenie's other Auckland Theatre Company credits include *The God Boy*, as Director, *Copenhagen*, *Serial Killers*, *The Cripple of Inishmann*, *Twelve Angry Men*, *Uncle Vanya* and *Molly Sweeney*. Other credits include *The New Rocky Horror Picture Show*. He's appeared in numerous television shows including *Jack of all Trades*, *Hercules*, *Market Forces*, TV One's comedy series *Willy Nilly* and TV2's *Shortland Street*.



Peter Elliott

TIM

Peter has appeared in more than 50 theatre productions in a career spanning twenty years, including numerous productions at Court Theatre, Downstage, Fortune, Melbourne Theatre Company, Mercury and the Auckland Theatre Company.

Peter has also appeared in more than 30 television shows including long stints on *Gloss* and *Shortland Street*. Recent projects included the documentary series *Captain's Log* for TV1 and the forthcoming, *Secret New Zealand*. He is a father of three, sings with the *John Does* and is preparing to direct *Song of the Nightingale* for United.





Jodie Dorday
ELEANOR

Jodie Dorday has appeared in a variety of stage productions throughout New Zealand including *Dancing at Lughnasa* and *All My Sons* both for Auckland Theatre Company, *A Midsummer Night's Dream* (Centrepiece) and as the lead in *Sylvia* (Downstage). Her most recent stage performance was as Goneril in the Sydney Theatre Company dramatisation of *King Lear*. Jodie's roles on television include appearances in *Shortland Street*, *Jack of All Trades* and *Xena*. Her first feature film role as "Lynn" in 1999's *Via Satellite* earned Jodie the NZ Film Award for Best Supporting Actress.



Auckland Theatre Company presents



By
Roger Hall

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- Lighting Designer
- Stage Manager
- Assistant Stage Manager
- Technical Manager
- Properties
- Operator
- Wardrobe for Elizabeth Whiting
- Dresser
- Set Construction
- Publicist

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- Tracy Grant
- T.G. Robertson
- Teresa Sokolich
- Mirinda Penny
- T.O. Robertson
- Suzanne Grajkowski
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- Tim
- Liz (Narrator)
- Eleanor
- Lorraine
- Brian
- Dan
- Fleur

- Stuart Devenie
- Peter Elliott
- Jennifer Ludlam
- Jody Dorday
- Darien Takie
- Greg Johnson
- Bruce Phillips
- Paula Keenan

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- Oliver Driver
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- Danielle Butler
- Helen Bartie
- Shelley Gearty
- Leal Butler
- Frith Walker
- T.O. Robertson
- Alison Reid
- Alex Gorichinski
- Sarah Peters
- Andi Revoley

This is the second production of the Volvo 10th Anniversary Season *Decadence* Auckland Theatre Company 2002. *Take A Chance On Me* opened on Thursday 7 March, 2002.

Take A Chance On Me lasts approximately 1 hour and 50 minutes with no interval.

PLEASE REMEMBER TO SWITCH OFF ALL CELLPHONES, PAGERS & WATCH ALARMS

AUCKLAND THEATRE COMPANY

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Darien Takle
LORRAINE

Darien last appeared with Auckland Theatre Company in *The God Boy* as Flo Sullivan, with her son Frank playing the title role. Her theatre, television and film credits include *Plaf* (Edith Piaf), *Evita* (Evita), *Les Misérables* (Fantine), *Into the Woods* (The Witch), *Possession* (Grundys Australia), *Marlin Bay*, *Typhons People*, *The Lost Tribe*, *Heavenly Creatures*, *The Ugly*, and six years as Cyrene, Xena's Mother. Darien's solo shows include *Darien Takle Sings Brecht*, *Wings Over Water*, and *Songs for Lotte*. She is a member of the Hens Teeth Womens Comedy Group.

Last year Darien appeared in *Mercy Peak* and *The Wedding Party*, *It's My Party and I'll Die if I Want To*, and *On The Razzle*. She sang Piaf songs with the Philharmonic Orchestra and spent five days performing at a Xena Convention in Los Angeles. This is the first time Darien has worked with Jennifer Ludlam since they attended drama school together 31 years ago.



Paula Keenan
FLEUR

Paula Keenan has worked professionally for the past 30 years, in musical theatre, cabaret, film, television and radio.

She has worked with Downstage Theatre and Circa Theatre in Wellington, the Mercury Theatre in Auckland and with the Auckland Theatresports Company, performing improvisational comedy for corporate events.

Paula spent two years on Shortland Street as the devious con-artist Adelaide Pratt, and recently, featured roles in two international movies, *Eye of the Storm*, filmed in Rarotonga, and *Her Majesty*, which will be released later this year.



In April 2001, Paula appeared in the musical *Les Misérables*, at the Bruce Mason Centre, as the black-hearted, greedy, rotten-to-the-core Madame Thénardier.

Paula is also the voice of "Poppy", (a six year old huna bug) in the children's animated TV series *Buzz & Poppy*, which screens weekly on TV2.

Naked and unadorned, she has been making quite a splash as the "lady in the shower" in the AVM television commercial, in which she has a revealing experience with a randy son-in-law and a bit of a juggle with a slippery bar of soap. This commercial has now screened world-wide on *Commercial Breakdown* and *The Ruby Wax Show* in the United States.

In October this year Paula, will present *An Evening with Queen Victoria - a Portrait in Her Own Words* at the Auckland City Art Gallery during the run of a major Art Exhibition, *The Lives and Loves of Victorian England*, supported by musical director Carl Doy and tenor Paul Chappoy.

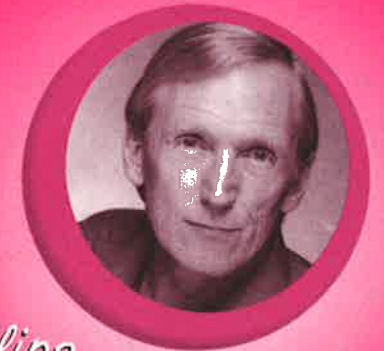
Take A Chance On Me is Paula's first appearance for Auckland Theatre Company.



Greg Johnson

BRIAN

Greg Johnson won 1998 New Zealand Film and Television Award for Best Supporting Actor in *Citylife* and was nominated for Best Supporting Actor for *Marlin Bay II*. A well-known face to local television viewers having played the character of Dean Crombie in *Shortland Street*, Greg has also performed in numerous other television series and telemovies including *Hercules*, *The Chosen*, *Citylife*, *Coverstory*, *Pleindroes* and *Letter to Blanche*. His feature film credits include *Broken English*, *The Whole of the Moon*, *End of the Golden Weather* and *The Piano*. Greg has obtained his pilot's license since appearing in last years *Take a Chance On Me*.



Bruce Phillips

DAN

Bruce Phillips' contribution to the New Zealand film, theatre and television industry spans over twenty years, during which time he has notched up an impressive list of credits. He is one of the Artistic Directors of Wellington's Circa Theatre and has directed eight productions there. Most recently, Bruce has appeared in the stage productions of *Rutherford* and *Art* (Circa Theatre) as well as the 1999 production of *Julius Caesar* for which he won an accolade for Outstanding Actor. Recent theatre credits include *The Cripple of Inishmaan*, *The Herbal Bed*, *Lady Windermere's Fan*, *The Country Wife*, *Wit*, *The Seagull*, and *Armadillo*, all for Circa Theatre. Bruce's film roles include Alex, *The Sinking of the Rainbow Warrior* and *Starlight Hotel*. His recent television credits include *Dark Knight*, *Hercules*, *Twist in the Tale*, and *Blond Gerigo* for German Television. His last role for Auckland Theatre Company was as Col in *Dead Funny*. This is Bruce's sixth Roger Hall, including the TV Series *Neighbourhood Watch*. His last role was in *Noises Off* at Circa Theatre.





DIRECTOR

Janice Finn

Janice Finn has spent her working life in either television or theatre. First as an actress, then as a television director, producer, and writer. She was an actress with Downstage Theatre in Wellington for four years in the early 70's before shifting to Australia where she worked as a company actor with the South Australian Theatre Company, the Melbourne Theatre Company, the Nimrod Theatre in Sydney, and finally the Sydney Theatre Company. Janice returned to New Zealand in the 80's to become a television director, but after a few years moved into television producing. Her first production was *Gloss* where she was responsible for casting Simon Prast in the role of Alistair Redfern. Recent television productions include *Marlin Bay*, *For the Love of Mike*, *The Possum Hunter*, *In the Deep End*, *Changing Rooms* and *The Big Art Trip*. Janice is currently appearing in the Strip on TV 3. *Take A Chance On Me* was her directorial debut for Auckland Theatre Company.

DIRECTOR'S

Note



To be invited to direct Roger Hall's play *Take A Chance On Me* came as the most wonderful surprise and to have such an experienced and talented cast is a gift. How lucky can you get?! Once again Roger Hall has tapped into a slice of life that will be familiar to many – divorce and sudden widowhood – and crafted it into an hilarious play about the middle aged looking for love. For the over 40's, breaking up is more than hard to do, so while Roger's play is a comedy, it is a comedy with bite. "Money and pain" ... one of the characters moans after her break up, and for those who have gone through a divorce, or been widowed, it pretty much sums it up. However, orchestrated by two narrators who also play 'the other partners', our six would-be lovers don't sit around moaning for long – they tentatively step into the world of arranged dinners, personal columns, dating agencies, and organised events – all in a quest to meet someone else. Their encounters with frequently very unsuitable people are written by Roger with his usual wry and funny skill, along with a pathos that occasionally catches you unawares. But if you bring any issues, you'll be using them to wipe away the tears of laughter, as our desperate but delightfully hopeful characters stumble through the meat market, in that eternal quest to meet the perfect partner. When I began producing for television, my first production was *Gloss* where I made what I think was the very perceptive decision to cast Simon Prast as the spoilt and amoral Alistair Redfern. It subsequently came as no surprise to me when he began Auckland Theatre Company after the Mercury's sad demise, as Simon was always a consummate professional, with a love and respect for his profession that transferred itself to those around him. I have loved the experience of being back in the warm environment of the theatre, and I don't remember when I laughed so much as I have done in rehearsals for this very funny play. Enjoy.

Janice Finn



DESIGNER
Tracy Grant



A leading stage designer in New Zealand, Tracy trained for her career in professional theatre in the early 1980s at the Mercury Theatre in Auckland. There, she had the unique opportunity of designing a wide variety of productions from studio work through to large-scale musical and opera productions. She has since become a successful freelance designer in New Zealand and Australia. Her work has been chosen to represent performance design in New Zealand at the Prague Quadrennial in the Czech Republic in 1991, 1995, and 1998. Tracy is a Winston Churchill Fellow (1987) and has a Bachelor of Spatial Design from Auckland University of Technology, Te Whare Takiura o Tamaki Makau Rau (1996). She was finalist in 'Best Craft in Short Film Drama' at the NZ Film and Television Awards (1997) and won Best Production Design at the St Kilda Film Festival (1999) for her work on *Possum*. Tracy's range of work remains extensive with an increasing involvement in the training of young professional performance designers in New Zealand. She is currently based in Auckland, working for major Australasian performance companies and teaching institutions. Highlights of Tracy's work in recent years includes the two spectacular outdoor opera productions at the North Harbour Stadium of *Carmen* and *La Traviata* and the acclaimed *Ihi FRENZY* for the Royal New Zealand Ballet featuring the work of Te Matarae I Orehu and Split Enz. Her work with Auckland Theatre Company includes the set and costume designs for *Dancing at Lughnasa*, *Arcadia*, *Masterclass*, *Wind in the Willows*, *Wit*, *The Judas Kiss* and *A Streetcar Named Desire*.



T.O. Robertson

LIGHTING DESIGNER

T.O. ROBERTSON HAS BEEN TECHNICAL MANAGER FOR ALL OF AUCKLAND THEATRE COMPANY'S PRODUCTIONS SINCE COMING ON BOARD IN 1997.

The extensive list includes *Twelve Angry Men*, *Master Class*, *Closer*, *Cabaret*, *Art*, *Copenhagen*, *Haruru Mai*, *Rosencrantz & Guildenstern Are Dead*, *Death Of A Salesman*, *The God Boy*, *Collective Stories*, *The Beauty Queen Of Leenane* and *The Blue Room*.

He has also been Lighting Designer for *Vagina Monologues*, *Four Cities* and last years *Take a Chance On Me* (Auckland Theatre Company). Before joining Auckland Theatre Company he was Lighting Designer for *Dawn Raids* (New Pacific Underground), *Within a Magic Prison* (Angel Theatre Company), *Shadows and Light* (Christian Penny / John Bolton), *In Moving Memory* (Black Grace Dance Company) and *Pandora's Box* (Art Education). He was once also the Tour and Production Manager for the now legendary New Zealand band, *Supergroove*.

His latest venture includes being co-producer of ATC's 2second Unit alongside Frith Walker and Oliver Driver. He also continues working for Black Grace Dance Company as much as his Auckland Theatre Company commitments allow.

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WRITTEN BY EVE ENSLER

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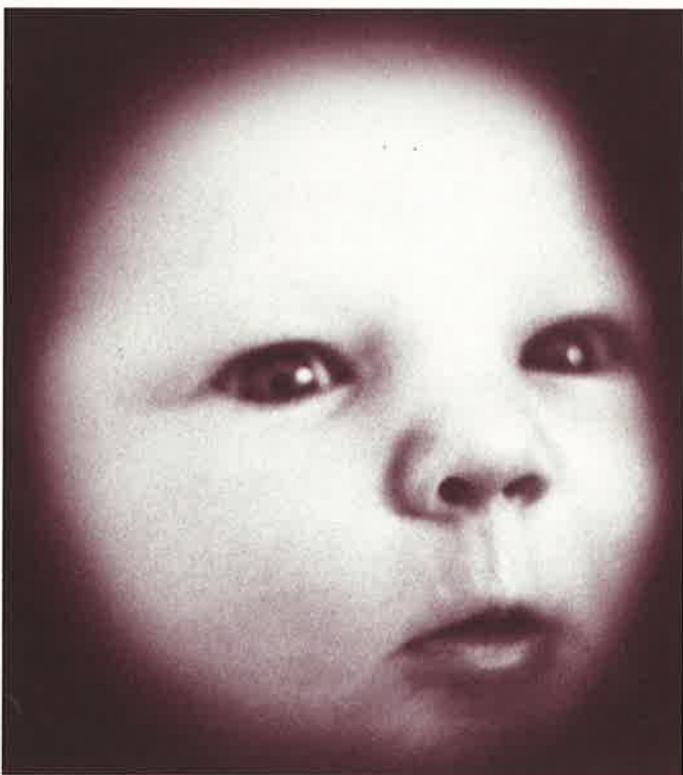
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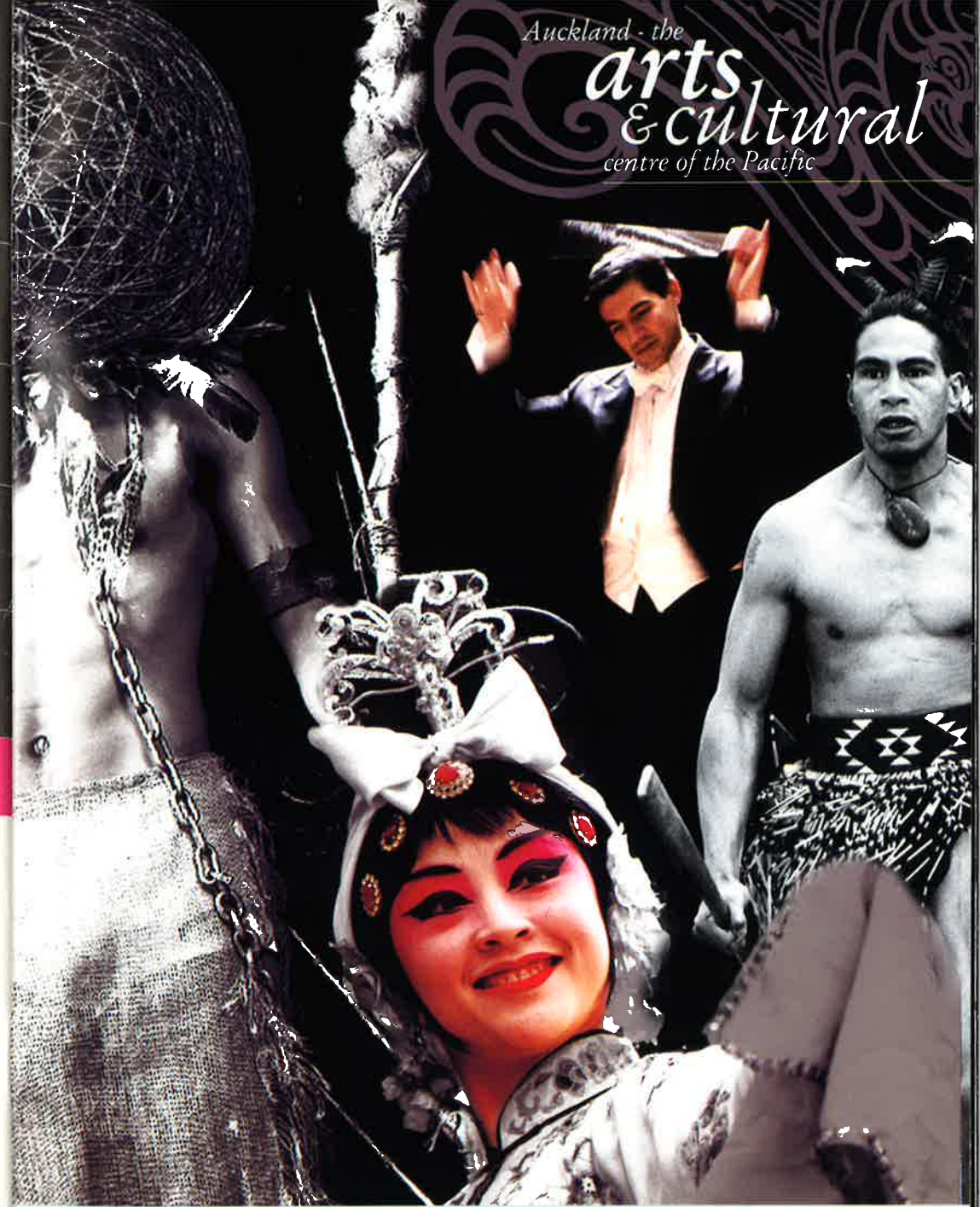
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