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As the sponsor of *The Daylight Atheist* in partnership with the Auckland Theatre Company, UnitedNetworks is delighted to support Tom Scott as he adds playwright to his recognised credentials as a political writer, satirist and cartoonist.

We understand the challenges and synergies of building on established talents, having recently added broadband fibre optics to our gas and electricity distribution networks.

We are confident that Tom Scott will be an outstanding addition to the artists we are proud to have been associated with under our programme of community sponsorships.

Dan Warnock

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Welcome to the World Premiere of Tom Scott's first play, *The Daylight Atheist*. This work has been nurtured and developed, through Auckland Theatre Company and their ATC 2second Unit, to become the funny, fierce and profoundly moving one-man play that you will see tonight.

Volvo is proud to play a role in this support and development of New Zealand plays and playwrights and like Auckland Theatre Company we share the pioneering spirit of world premieres of the finest quality.

After all, it's good to be leading the way. Enjoy the journey with us.

John-G Snaith

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**AUCKLAND
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from the producer



ATC and Volvo welcome you to the world premiere of Tom Scott's *The Daylight Atheist*, brought to you in association with UnitedNetworks.

For over two decades, Tom Scott has chronicled New Zealand's coming-of-age in cartoons and political columns. For his debut as playwright, it is his own coming-of-age that he has chosen as subject matter. Inspired by memories of a childhood dominated by his father's moods and demons, he has distilled the old man's life into theatrical form and shaped his idiosyncrasies into a dramatic character. The result is a terrific yarn and an uncompromising portrait of human frailty: compelling and complex, at once, epic and intimate. It is a paradox of art that in the specific one finds the universal. Here, one childhood becomes every childhood. Even in this most personal history, Tom has once more recorded something of and about us all.

The Daylight Atheist is the first of two new New Zealand works to make their world premiere this season. Last year, this play and Stephen Sinclair's *The Bellbird* were workshopped under the auspices ATC's 2second Unit Literary Programme. We are delighted that the Programme should yield such successful results so swiftly and look forward to strengthening and expanding our commitment to New Zealand writing in the years to come.

We hope that you are enjoying the sights and sounds of our 10th Anniversary Season and look forward to seeing you at *Noises Off*, which opens at the Bruce Mason Centre next month.

Go well,

Simon Prast
Producer

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atheist
lives.



Why did I write the play now?

In 1999, I was one of the speakers at a function at Government House, in Wellington. Endeavouring to make the point that growing up in rural New Zealand in the 1950's and early 1960's was stupifyingly dull, I told the gathering that Feilding was a town where you could fire a cannon down the main street at rush hour – and if you hit anyone you'd be doing them a favour. Life in the rural backwater didn't just pass you by, it crossed to the other side of the street when it saw you coming. Roger Hall came rushing up to me afterwards and said, "If you don't write a play about your childhood, I will!"

Then I saw Greg McGee's play *This Train I'm On* and heard disturbing echoes of my own childhood, that I felt I should give voice to. I was half right. It was in fact Danny Moffat's view of the cosmos begging to be told. When asked how much of it is biographical, I borrow a line from an impressionist painter who said none of his paintings were real but all of them were true.

Some of it actually happened, and it should be noted that the passage of time has not dulled my powers of recall. These particular events are described exactly as I have always remembered them. Any artistic licence lies not in the fevered imagination of my adulthood, but in the fevered imagination of my youth. I re-wrote history while it was still fresh and could be improved.

As for the bulk of the play, some of it could have happened and the rest is all lies, blasphemy, libel and innuendo... As a result Danny Moffat is someone who resembles many fathers, including my own.

As far as I know, my father coined this expression. Over the years I have asked many people if they have ever heard it before and no one has. I would like it to be his. I first heard it when he was patient at Wellington Hospital. I brought my friend, A. K. Grant, the Listener columnist and script writer for McPhail and Gadsby in to see him. "Your stuff is okay," he opined gruffly from his sick bed while machines beeped and various tubes pulsed. "It's funny your stuff, but your two mates are crap!" Alan immediately started defending them stoutly, which my father wasn't the least bit interested in hearing, so to change the subject he announced that he's just had a visit from the hospital Chaplain. "I told him I was a daylight atheist. During the day I don't believe in God. God can get stuffed as far as I am concerned. Then, when shadows lengthen, the sun goes down, darkness fall, the building starts to creak, and you can hear the nurses' plimsoles squeaking on the linoleum – I start believing in God like you wouldn't believe. Forgive me God! I said a few rash things this afternoon when I was running a temperature! I didn't mean it!"

Alan was so impressed with this he completely abandoned his defense of McPhail and Gadsby.

by TOM SCOTT

Glimpses of Ireland

The train was nearly full. I stared out at the rolling, largely empty, untidy countryside. The land of my mother and father so many years ago. I studied the bleak but not unbeautiful landscape and tried to measure what my parents had left behind.

It seemed criminal that I hadn't come in '75 when I visited London briefly. I can't understand my reluctance now. We were brought up on tales of Ireland. Mum taught us to love and respect the place. 'Remember,' she told us often, 'the Irish had a language, and were writing books while de English were painting demselves with purple dye and running around eating udder.'

She talked often of Fermoy and of Daly's store, where she stayed when she went to high school. It was grand then. One of the finest stores on the High Street. Today, surrounded by supermarkets, musty and dark, in what my father calls the great Irish stale-bacon and kerosene tradition, it serves mainly as a parcel depot for the local bus company, a source of cheap lollies for children, and a drop-in centre for old women in brown

coats and shawls who announce in advance, 'Mary Daly, get away from the till, I've not come to buy anything – just to natter'.

As I was the guest of honour Auntie Chris and Mary Daly gave me the master bedroom on the first floor. The mattress was thin and hard and a thousand small pictures of Jesus and his mum stared at me from all the walls. Fortunately I was forced to drink Guinness every night of my stay until after two in the morning and lying down was momentarily uncomfortable, but usually mere seconds later I pitched forward into a black and soothing abyss. Guinness does that to you. It's a glorious drink, especially draught, that

should not be confused with the sour, sooty rubbish that passes for stout here. Poured properly it takes about five minutes. My cousin Richard couldn't bear to think of a world without properly poured Guinness. One afternoon, in the pub next to his mum's shop he commiserated with me. 'I once had Guinness abroad and it tasted something wicked.' His handsome face came close to tears.



'Guinness doesn't travel.'

'I'd say dat, I'd say dat,' confirmed a number of men at the bar.

The Irish I met were very fond of discussing death. Death and wills. It seemed that someone somewhere was always being swindled by a dead relative. 'Did you know that old man O'Connell died and left not a penny to his stepsister who nursed him all these long years, and him a millionaire and all?' 'A millionaire was he, Christ I never knew dat.' 'Ah sure he was. You saw how he lived in feeth didn't he? A man doesn't live in squalor like dat without salting away a few bob. And not brass, farthing to his sister. 'Tis a wicked shame.'

Having abandoned the idea of returning home herself, at least until the children were safely through school, Mum transferred her hunger to us. Given even the remotest chance we had to go there. When I returned she gave me a debriefing of the sort normally reserved for the KGB agents defecting to the West. 'Do they remember me? Did they make a fuss of you? Do they still have the bottle-green couch in the living room? Have they sold the old piano? Did you count the steps up to the school? Did Paddy take the poaching...?'

Yes, they remembered her.

'Joan was a glamorous girl, exclaimed my cousin Anne, a beautiful woman in her early forties. 'She was our favourite aunt. We always ran to meet her off the train and she always had presents for us.'

Yes, they made a fuss of me. Richard picked me up from Cork and delivered me to Fermoy in his battered VW. I was rushed through the Daly shop to the small lounge at the back and thrown into a sea of relatives. There I was hugged and squeezed by assorted aunts and cousins until Chris took me by the hand. 'So you're Joan's boy.' She turned to the others. 'Isn't he gorgeous, girls? Couldn't you just eat him?' I haven't been called a boy in years. I knew then I was going to enjoy Ireland.

About an hour later when the questions began to slow, Chris, who did the cooking while Mary ran the shop, shooed everyone away and put a huge meal on the table in front of me. Meat, gravy, vegetables with a huge bowl of steaming potatoes in the middle much like we would serve a salad. 'Work away boy, you must be starved. Work away.' She was a big woman, with a large, pink, almost perfectly round face, and she worked away herself with





great vigour. 'I've got to watch what I eat,' she grinned. 'That's why we always eat with the light on,' said Mary who was tall and thin. 'No matter,' said Chris 'I'll have half de trifle I was tinkin' of havin'.'

Mum had warned me to say nothing about religion, and under no circumstances was I to admit that a certain capping magazine I once edited had nearly provoked a charge of blasphemous libel. When the subject came up I nervously confessed to being agnostic. Chris and Mary merely nodded sadly. Two days later I came down to breakfast to read that the Pope had died. Hell, I thought, this will be the real test. Curtains drawn. No more trips to the pub. Nothing but official mourning to look forward to. Chris came out from the kitchen with a plate of buttered toast. 'The Holy Father has gone, Tom.' She added almost without pause, 'Work away boy, I've got more coming.' It was virtually all I heard about the Pope's death.

They wouldn't let me buy a drink or lift a teatowel. 'For God's sake boy, didn't you come all this distance to see us? Away with you.' And I was shooed out of the house and advised to visit my Uncle Tom and Auntie Pat who ran a second-hand furniture store down the street. 'They've no children Tom, and must leave their

millions to someone. Go and see them. You've as much right to it as any around here.'

Fermoy is bisected by the river Blackwater, sometimes called the Irish Rhine because of the number of English castles on its banks. Just above the bridge in Fermoy there is a series of rapids and a weir. It was here that my grandmother's first husband came drunk one evening in a dray to water the horses. They were all washed away and drowned. My grandmother married again and moved about thirty miles downstream to the tiny village of Aglish and a thatched cottage at the river's edge. There, four more children-Paddy, Bonnie, Betty and my mother-were born. My mother was the only one to move away.

Uncle Paddy, the poacher, still lives in the cottage. Puffing from the long climb down from the road Auntie Chris grabbed my elbow and told me how beautiful it had all been when her mother was alive. 'Paddy is wicked mean,' she whispered. 'They say he has all his money buried in tins in the garden. He has no wife or family Tom. You've as much right to his money as any.'

She needn't have whispered-Paddy was fast asleep in the tousled and grimy bed. The same bed in which he'd been born. Chris



eventually roused him and he climbed fully dressed. He confided he hadn't been feeling well. Although he hadn't touched a drop in months, he took me drinking that night. I don't know if he really was mean, but certainly he was the only Irishman I was able to buy a drink without starting a fight. We went into Aglish itself, a hamlet of about twenty houses and three pubs.

We called in on Uncle Bonnie. He was watching television standing up. There were no chairs in the lounge. 'Get Joan's boy a chair Queenie,' said Bonnie, a little embarrassed. Paddy said we couldn't stop and invited them to join us across the road in a pub.

Bonnie and Paddy went poaching later that night. I declined their invitation. Poaching is a serious offence and Paddy fully approved of the stiffer penalties. 'Look at the size of dat,' he demanded the next morning, opening the boot of his Mini. 'Time was when I got salmon twice that size. People are fishing them out and a man can hardly make a livin' like.' We then drove the back roads to a poultry factory. Around the back the fish were swiftly weighed and Paddy was handed his two pounds a pound.

There was something of a feud between him and my Auntie Betty so he never came in when he dropped me off. Betty reminded me of my mum. Always apologising. She apologised for the broken armchair, the lack of beer, the black and white telly. She insisted I have bacon and eggs for breakfast and it wasn't until I'd started that I realised she and her daughter were having toast only. They weren't always poor. They used to own land and beautiful Cooneen cottage down at the water's edge, but now it was the studio of an old Englishman, Charles Grey, busy preparing the history of the Grey family. I went down to see the old phoney, and in between assuring me that the Czar of Russia was a hell of a nice chap, that Queen Alexandra used to wave him outside Harrods, and that he was a close personal friend of the late Lady Edwina Mountbatten, he complained that he had great difficulty getting people to read his manuscript. I volunteered to do so, and he staggered to his feet, the blood draining from his face. 'Splendid,' he spluttered, 'but...I'm afraid you can't...not yet because...because...Ah yes, its locked away, that's right.'

Betty cried when the time came for me to leave. 'I remember you boarded that ship with your mother and twin sister. You were both so



small. I howled and howled and a policeman lifted me up and let me cross the barrier. Joan and I sobbed together right until the siren went and I had to leave the ship. New Zealand is a wicked long way away.'

In Fermoy Uncle Tom gave me fifty pounds and Auntie Chris another five. They lined up outside the store to wave me off. My flying visit was nearly over. It was a long trip back to London. We were warned on the ferry to watch out for unattended luggage. I smiled to myself. In Ireland they don't tell Irish jokes, they tell Kerry jokes. 'Did you hear about the man from

Kerry?' Richard asked me one night. 'He was so scared of being blown up on a plane he always took a bomb with him as he thought the chances of there being two bombs on the same plane were a million to one.'

I couldn't sleep on the train and nor could the huge Irishman opposite me. 'Want to talk?' he asked. I nodded. He leant forward all excited. 'My family are about to make legal history. My brother was fealthy rich but he didn't leave his money to us and we thought, hell, we've got as much right to them millions as anyone else, so...'

TOM SCOTT

biographical notes



photo: Jane Ussher

Tom Scott, after being conceived on the banks of the Blackwater River in Ireland, was in due course born in London, a fact he does not want widely disseminated. In 1949, along with his mother and twin sister he was transported aboard the *Tamoroa* to New Zealand aged 18 months. He remembers little of the voyage apart from the mutiny and a loud bump when crossing the International Dateline.

He was educated at Feilding High School and Massey University where, much to his relief, he was expelled from Vet School. Because his mother was Catholic he wasn't allowed to wear rubber gloves when performing rectal examinations on cattle.

In 1972 he gave up lecturing in anatomy and physiology at the Central Institute of Technology when a pretty student asked him innocently, "Please Sir, what's an orgasm?" In his confusion and embarrassment he asked her to stay behind after the lecture.

While taking care of his infant son and drawing the occasional cartoon he got summonsed to the Listener editor's office and offered the job of Parliamentary Columnist. Unable to type and a complete stranger to technology such as the tape-recorder he found himself treading the corridors of Power not having the faintest idea of what could be written about and what was traditionally out of bounds. In his flared jeans,

platform shoes, shoulder length hair, flaming red beard, and lopsided horn-rim spectacles he gave politicians and colleagues palpitations. Prompting from one Prime Minister emboldened some of the latter to try and have him booted out of the Press Gallery.

At various times he managed to offend Prime Ministers of all persuasions. Bill Rowling tore strips off him in private a number of times. David Lange told the *Auckland Star* on the eve of the 1983 Labour Party Conference that he was the journalist he most despised. Most famously, in 1980, Rob Muldoon attempted in vain to have him banned from a Commonwealth Heads of Government meeting in India, successfully had him banned from a Prime Ministerial trip to China, and on primetime television had him escorted from one of his press conferences.

He has been political columnist of the year twice and in 1996 won the Qantas award for Columnist of the Year. Four collections of his satirical writings and five collections of his cartoons have been published. He has written a play and a television sit-com about his Press Gallery experiences. *Fallout*, a drama about the 4th Labour Government's battle with the United States over nuclear weapons, won him a shared scriptwriting award even as politicians threatened to sue for libel. A former US Ambassador to New Zealand Paul Cleveland, who regarded him with deep suspicion during his tenure, insisted on taking him to lunch because he thought it was wonderful.

He won a co-scriptwriting award for the animated feature film *Footrot Flats*. His documentary on Sir Edmund Hillary, *View From The Top*, won numerous awards. He has been cartoonist of the year five times. When Jim Bolger was Prime Minister, his chief Press Officer Richard Griffin dreaded late afternoon phone calls from his boss angrily demanding that something be done about the Evening Post cartoons. New Zealand is a small country. He and Trevor Grice were delighted when Bolger launched their book *The Great Brain Robbery* warning of the dangers of adolescent drug use. The book formed the basis of an educational CD ROM which won a prize for digital communication at the 'BEST' design awards.

He is the only New Zealander to have won awards for excellence in political journalism, cartooning, documentary film-making, television script writing, and feature film screenplay writing. His work has taken him to the United Kingdom, Yugoslavia, Australia, India, the United States, and the South Pole. He can recount tales of being on the road with various politicians, pitching screenplays in Hollywood, and sitting around blazing fires at the base of the Everest massif.

He is an entertaining speaker. Reviewing the recent AK Grant Speech Competition in the Otago Daily Times, described Scott as the highlight and easily the well deserving winner. He is a master of comedy.



photo: Jane Ussher

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This is the fourth production of the Volvo 10th Anniversary Season of Decadence.

The Daylight Atheist opened on Thursday 18 April, 2002.

The Daylight Atheist lasts approximately 1hr 50mins including an interval of 20 minutes.

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stuart devenie

DANNY MOFFAT

Stuart Devenie is one of New Zealand's most accomplished actors with a career spanning nearly three decades. In addition to his role in ATC 2econd Unit *The Atrocity*, Devenie's other Auckland Theatre Company credits include *The God Boy*, as Director, *Take a Chance on Me*, *Copenhagen*, *Serial Killers*, *The Cripple of Inishmaan*, *Twelve Angry Men*, *Uncle Vanya* and *Molly Sweeny*. 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*. Stuart's most recent appearance was in the return season of *Take a Chance on Me* by Roger Hall.



Simon and I joined Tom's journey up this mountain about 18 months ago with the initial workshop. We refined, distilled, chucked things out, put them back, chucked them out again and then listened to what the first audience had to say. The most encouraging thing was "yes-go on with it".

After five days of rehearsal part of the makeshift temporary set disintegrated under me and I fell heavily to the floor and lay there breathing deeply for some time- reminding myself not to get too confident.

It's a scary prospect being alone on stage with Dan-you never quite know what he's going to do next. The first rule of mountain climbing-never look down.

Producer for ATC 54 productions

Director *The Play About the Baby*, *Hair*, *A Streetcar Named Desire*, *Haruru Mai*, *The Judas Kiss*, *Wit*, *Art*, *12 Angry Men*, *Closer*, *The Cripple of Inishmaan*, *Death of a Salesman*.

Actor TV *Gloss*, *Shortland Street*, *Hercules*, *Xena*, *Erebus*, *The Aftermath*, *The Sinking of the Rainbow Warrior*. **Film** *When Love Comes*, *Theatre: Cat on a Hot Tin Roof*, *Torch Song Trilogy*, *Amadeus*, *The Crucible*, *Hamlet*, *M.Butterfly*, *The Homecoming*, *The Seagull*.



from the director

SIMON
PRAST

This play brings with it two firsts for me: a world premiere and a cast of one. When Tom brought me the script of his debut work for the stage, I was enormously flattered and very moved that he should entrust me with its personal and precious contents. I was relieved that the text was neither mawkish eulogy nor posthumous hatchet job. Captured by its story and beguiled by its troubled hero, I felt he had written something very special. Although obviously and significantly drawn from one man's life, it mysteriously amounted to more than the sum of his experience and thereby gained some universal significance. It spoke of New Zealand: its promise and its prisons. It spoke of childhood's simple pleasures and of the enervating responsibility of adulthood. It spoke of the richness of male love and the poverty of its expression, the suffocating burden of masculinity. It spoke of the complexities of marriage and of addiction's destructive potency. The play's astounding achievement was that it did all of this and more with just one character and in just one room. It also did it with an audacious and irreverent humour that somehow made the tragedy all the more poignant. The process of bringing a play to life for the first time

is exciting, and a little scary. No famous movie or legendary production to compete with or compare. All scope, no constraint; all possibility, no precedent. For me, these are uncharted waters. I am therefore grateful for the guidance and indebted to the talent of my colleagues, particularly Stuart Devenie and John Verryt. Stuart is one of this country's most gifted actors. At the conclusion of last year's two-day workshop, he stood before an audience of hundred and delivered a performance of astonishing depth and detail. He sharpened the humour with wickedness and endowed the wickedness with humour, filling the character with life and the play with soul. As ever, John makes my job so easy. In time and place, his set is an inspired solution to the challenge of presenting one man in one room with theatrical viability. It is an Everest of suppressed emotion made manifest: a rebel's fortress, a child's playground and an old man's tomb. Thank you, thank you, gentlemen both. And thank you, Tom Scott. It has been a privilege to work on your magnificent first play and I hope we have done your art and your heart justice with this world premiere production.

The Daylight Atheist is a great play to design. There is only one actor who stays onstage throughout which means that accommodating entrances and exits no longer applies. I was interested in the idea of Dan's room being a barricade against the world and his emotions and having him climb over and inside the structure to tell his story. Having the set revolve represents Dan coming to the same dilemmas, telling his stories and denying his needs. Every day, month, year - maybe one day he'll stop the cycle.

The movement will be very slow and unnoticed. I've worked out we need to move about 1200mm at the circumference for every 4 pages of script which is 3.6mm per second.



john verryt DESIGNER



Career Highlights

Auckland Theatre Company: *Hair*, *Haruru Mai*, *The Beauty Queen of Leenane*, *The Cripple of Innishmaan*, *12 Angry Men* and *Death of a Salesman*.

NBR New Zealand Opera: *Falstaff*, *Aida* and *Lucia Di Lammermoor*.

Douglas Wright Dance Company: *Inland*, *Forbidden Memories*.


Theatre at Large: *Cyrano de Bergerac* and *King Lear*.

Indian Ink Company: *Krishnan's Dairy* and *The Candlestick Maker*.

Black Grace Dance Company: *New Religion*, *Fiaola* and *Urban Youth Movement*.



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The ATC 2econd Unit literary department has been established to discover and develop New Zealand playwrights and their work.

In 2001, we held ten two day play reading workshops and four eight day development workshops to enable us to begin this process. We were all astounded when Tom Scott submitted his script, a gripping solo show on the life of his Father. Teaming him up with Stuart Devenie and Simon Prast, we locked them in a room for two days to see if what was printed on the page would work on the stage.

At the play reading that Tuesday night we were packed to capacity, people were literally crammed in. Our regulars were there, those that love to see the plays in their earliest state, but on this occasion they had been joined by a host of Tom's friends and colleagues. The pressure seemed immense, (the opening night

will be nothing compared to the atmosphere in that room). As Stuart launched into what seemed to be a fully rehearsed performance, silence fell on all who were there, we were captivated, and best of all we were captivated by a NEW ZEALAND play.

Since then Tom has re-written, workshoped with us again, and re-written again. No doubt as you read this he is re-writing yet again, ready for the Wellington season.

As for ATC 2econd Unit, we are very proud that *The Daylight Atheist* and Tom Scott could be the first of what will be a very, very, very, long list of new New Zealand plays developed by our Literary Department.

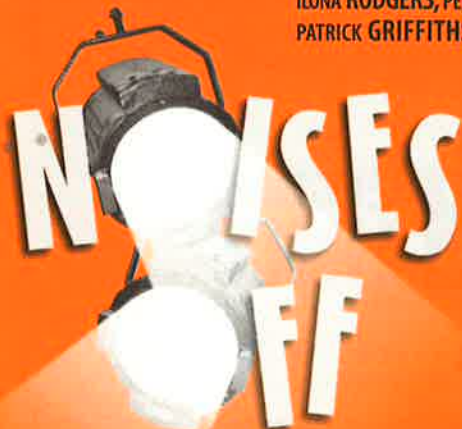
In fact we look forward to seeing you at the next one: *The Bellbird* by Stephen Sinclair.

Love from

Oliver Driver, Frith Walker, T.O. Robertson and Sarah Peters

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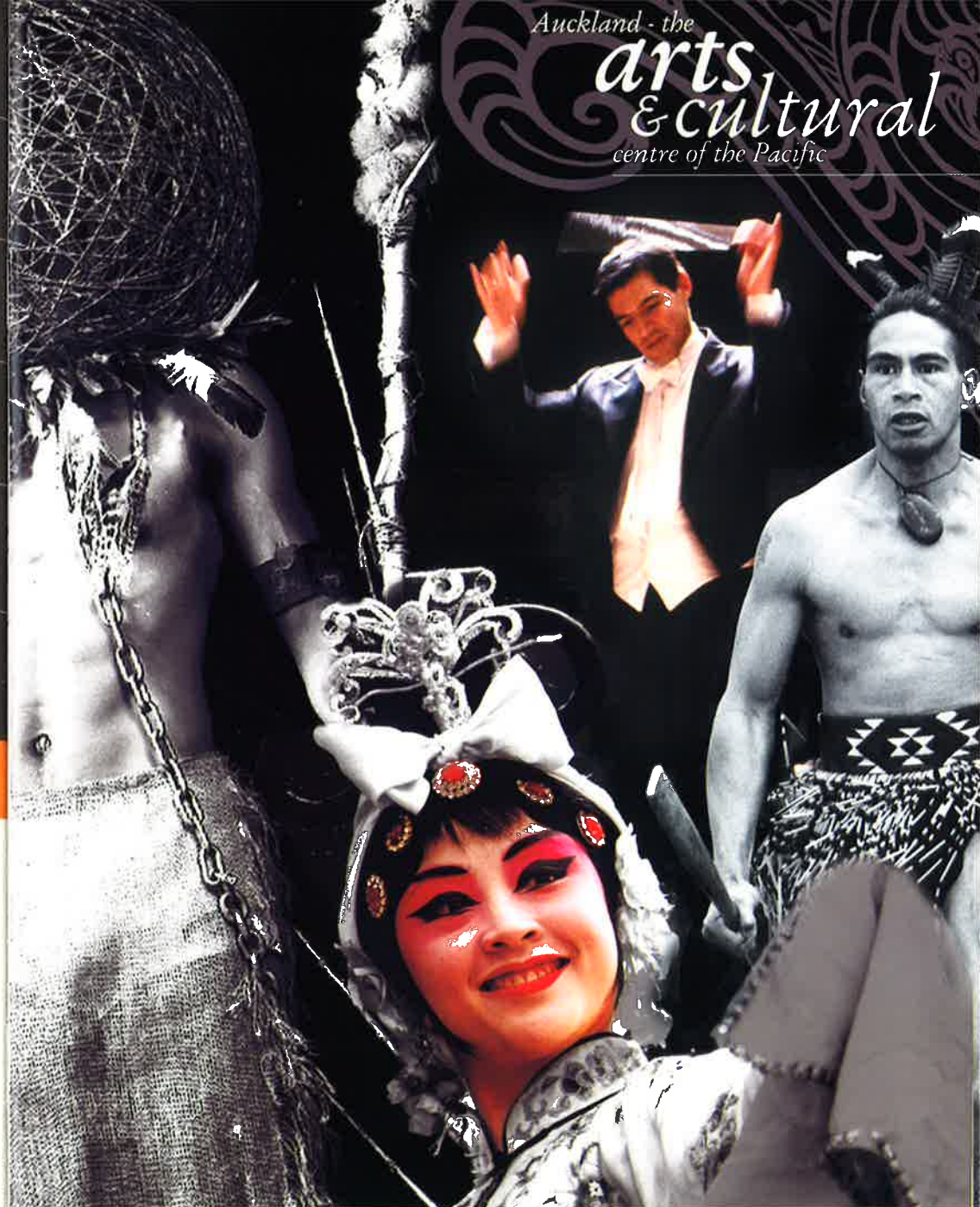
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