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the play about the

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## FROM THE PRODUCER

**ATC and Volvo welcome you to the third production of our 10th Anniversary Season, Edward Albee's *The Play About the Baby*.**

The 1962 premiere of *Who's Afraid of Virginia Woolf* catapulted its young author to the forefront of American theatre. Forty years on, Albee's legendary status rivals that of Arthur Miller and Tennessee Williams. Like them, his subject has been the deconstruction of the American Dream, his characters the human wreckage left when its myth and truth collide. Unique is his wordplay, a lethal fusion of absurdist wit and subversive intelligence, unleashed upon the monoliths of assumption, complacency and convention like some form of linguistic terrorism. Complexity and chaos, hallmarks of his writing, are merely synonyms for human existence as far as he is concerned. The enemy is certainty, a dangerous and life-denying construct found nowhere in nature save in the hearts of men with evil on their minds and blood on their hands. *The Play about the Baby* is Edward Albee's delightfully disturbing rumination on this theme: a parable of perception: a fable of foibles: a cosmic vaudeville



of language, logic, and theatrical smoke and mirrors where nothing is quite as it appears. It has been a privilege to work on this play alongside four wonderful actors. I share the seminal experiences of *Death of a Salesman* and *A Streetcar Named Desire* with Jonathan and Elizabeth. Jenny and Michael bring memories of *Hair* and *Twelve Angry Men*. I am proud of this *Baby*, product of our collected histories. It has been a pleasure to welcome to the ATC team Set and Costume Designer Lizz Santos, Lighting Designer Steve Marshall and Director-in-Training Colin Moy. I must also acknowledge the good company of Stage Manager TJ Haunui .

Go well.

Simon Prast  
PRODUCER

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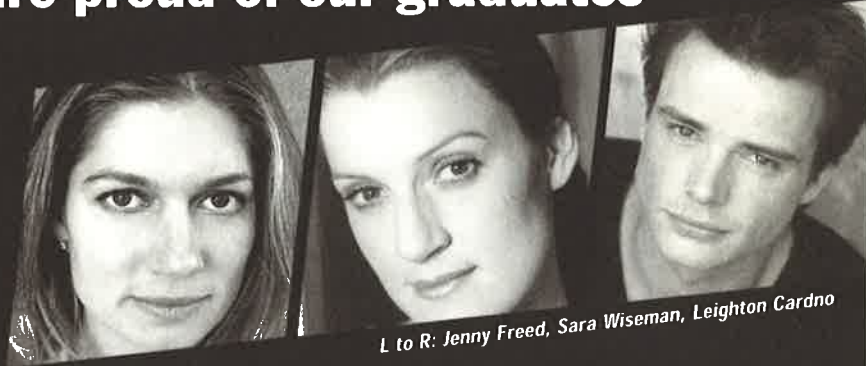
Welcome to the third production in the 2002 Auckland Theatre Company Programme, *The Play About the Baby* by Edward Albee, author of *Who's Afraid of Virginia Woolf*. Edward Albee is one of the legends of American Theatre, and Volvo is delighted to play a role in its New Zealand premiere.

With a remarkable cast and creative team, the latest installment in Auckland Theatre Company's **Decadence** Season promises to be a night of exceptional theatre.

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L to R: Jenny Freed, Sara Wiseman, Leighton Cardno

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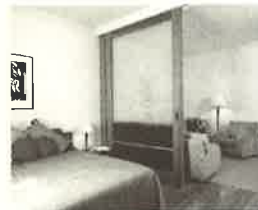
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## EDWARD ALBEE

Edward Albee was born in Washington, D.C. on March 12, 1928. Two weeks later, he was adopted by Reed and Frances Albee and taken to live in the family home in Westchester, New York.

Albee's adoptive father owned a nationwide chain of vaudeville theatres, which meant that young Albee got much early exposure to theatre personalities.

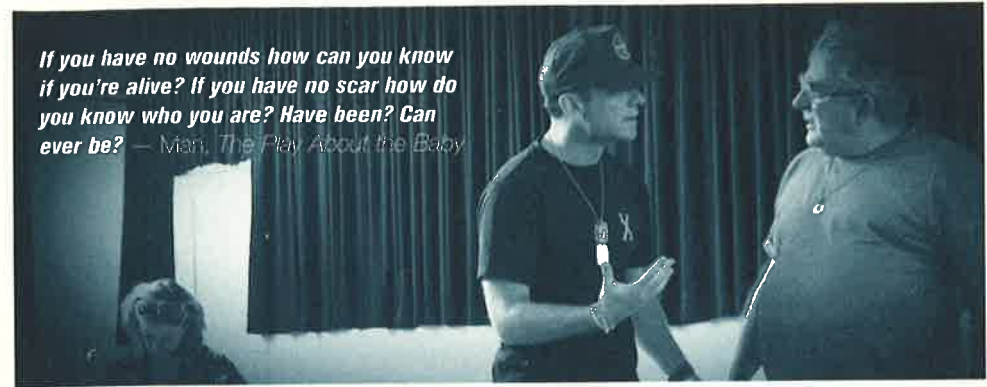
Albee's childhood, to say the least, was extremely comfortable. A magazine reports that this was a time of "servants, tutors, riding lessons; winters in Miami, summers sailing on the Sound; there was a Rolls to bring him, smuggled in lap robes, to matinees in the city; an inexhaustible wardrobe housed in a closet big room..." (Who Isn't Afraid of Edward Albee? Show, February 1963, p.83). Albee has never made any explicit comments about the happiness of his childhood. His father was believed, however, to be dominated by his wife, who was considerably younger than her husband and an avid athlete.

Albee's short play, *The Sandbox*, was dedicated to his maternal grandmother, to whom he was apparently very close.

Albee attended the Choate school from 1944 to 1946, when he enrolled at Trinity College, a small liberal arts institution in Hartford, Connecticut. His stay there was brief, but he gained some dramatic experience playing various roles in plays.

Albee's first job was writing continuity dialogue for radio station WNYC. After leaving his parents' home to settle in Greenwich Village he spent years holding a variety of jobs — including three years as a Western Union messenger. They supplemented his trust and were chosen because they were dead ends and would not interfere with his primary vocation: writing.

His artistic endeavours were filled with frustration. He lived for nearly half a year in Italy where he wrote a novel which has never been published. W. H. Auden, whom he met in New York, read some of his poetry and suggested that he write pornographic verse as an exercise to improve his style. In New Hampshire he met Thornton Wilder who advised him to turn his efforts toward drama upon which Albee steeped himself in everything even mildly important.



*If you have no wounds how can you know if you're alive? If you have no scar how do you know who you are? Have been? Can ever be?* — Man, *The Play About the Baby*

On his thirtieth birthday in 1958, he quit his job with Western Union and wrote *The Zoo Story* in three weeks. After being rejected by several New York producers, the play had its première at the Schiller Theatre Werkstatt in Berlin on September 28, 1959. Four months later it was paired with Samuel Beckett's *Krapp's Last Tape* at the Provincetown Playhouse in Greenwich Village. Its reception was favorable and won Albee the recognition as a formidable talent. In 1960 it won the Vernon Rice Memorial Award in 1960.

Albee's first and major "hit" was *Who's Afraid of Virginia Woolf?* which opened at Broadway's Billy Rose Theatre on October 3, 1963, starring Uta Hagen and Arthur Hill as the battling George and Martha. It ran for 664 performances and was made into a popular film starring Elizabeth Taylor and Richard Burton. Like Eugene O'Neill Albee nabbed three Pulitzers, for *A Delicate Balance* in 1966, *Seascape* in 1975 and *Three Tall Women* in 1991. This last seemed to restore his popularity with New York critics and audiences who had been treating him like the unwelcome guests in plays like *A Delicate Balance*.

Albee can be classified with theatrical experimenters whose work jumped the boundaries of American drama. His style embraces existentialism, absurdism as well as the metaphysical. His plays tend to puzzle. While not easy "night out" fare they are also full of satirically witty and sharp dialogue. The Albee audience consists of those who value being challenged and appreciate theatre that, if it existed, would fit into the School of Anti-Complacency. His failures at the box office are as well known as his critical successes. As described by the playwright himself his plays are "an examination of the American Scene, an attack on the substitution of artificial for real values in our society, a condemnation of complacency, cruelty, and emasculation and vacuity, a stand against the fiction that everything in this slipping land of ours is peachy-keen."

***A playwright is  
someone who lets his  
guts hang out on the  
stage. . .***

— Edward Albee

**Edward Albee's Plays**

*The Zoo Story* (1958)  
*The Death of Bessie Smith* (1959)  
*The Sandbox* (1959)  
*Fam and Yam* (1959)  
*The American Dream* (1960)  
*Who's Afraid of Virginia Woolf?* (1961-62,  
 Tony Award)  
*Tiny Alice* (1964)  
*A Delicate Balance* (1966, Pulitzer Prize)  
*Box and Quotations From Chairman Mao Tse-  
 Tung* (1968)  
*All Over* (1971)  
*Seascape* (1974, Pulitzer Prize)  
*Listening* (1975)  
*Counting the Ways* (1976)  
*The Lady From Dubuque* (1977-78)  
*Another Part of the Zoo* (1981)  
*The Man Who Had Three Arms* (1981-82)  
*Finding the Sun* (1982-83)  
*Marriage Play* (1987)  
*Three Tall Women* (1991, Pulitzer Prize)  
*Fragments* (1993)  
*The Lorca Plays* (1995)  
*The Play About the Baby* (2001)

***The only time I'll get good reviews is  
if I kill myself.***

— Edward Albee

***I have been both overpraised and  
underpraised. I assume by the time I  
finish writing - and I plan to go on  
writing until I'm ninety or gaga - it  
will all equal itself out... You can't  
involve yourself with the vicissitudes  
of fashion or critical response.***

— Edward Albee

***Who's Afraid of Virginia Woolf. . .***

— George

***I . . . am . . . George . . . I am*** — Martha

***Who's Afraid of Virginia Woolf  
You gotta have a swine to show you  
where the truffles are*** — I bid

***Oh what a wangled teb we weave.  
Wounds, children, wounds. Learn  
from it. Without wounds, what are  
you?*** — Man, *The Play About the Baby*

***We manufacture such a portion of our  
own despair. . .***

— Agnes, Act 3 *A Delicate Balance*

**ATC PRESENTS**

**the play about the**



**Man** Jonathan Hardy  
**Woman** Elizabeth Hawthorne  
**Boy** Michael Hallows  
**Girl** Jennifer Freed

**Director** Simon Prast  
**Designer** Lizz Santos  
**Lighting Designer** Steve Marshall  
**Stage Manager** TJ Haunui  
**Assistant Director** Colin Moy  
**Technical Manager** T.O. Robertson  
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This is the third production of the Volvo 10th Anniversary Season Decadence Auckland Theatre Company 2002. *The Play About The Baby* opened on Thursday 14 March, 2002.

*The Play About the Baby* lasts approximately 1hr 45mins with an interval of 20 minutes.

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Jonathan Hardy has a wealth of theatre credits stretching over four years. This is his fifth ATC production having directed *The Beauty Queen of Leenane* and performed in *The Cripple of Inishmaan*, *Twelve Angry Men* and *Death of a Salesman*.

NZ Born, he has played leads in many noted British companies and all Australia's leading companies. Most recently he performed John Gielgud's Shakespearean anthology *The Ages of Man*. He headed the voice tuition at James Cook University and contributed the Moon to Baz Luhrmann's *Moulin Rouge*. He is Dominar Rygel the 16th in the hit sci-fi programme *Farscape* now in its fourth series. This year he performs for the Melbourne and Sydney Theatre Companies.

He has multiple awards including an Oscar nomination and an ATC best actor plus best actor for Alan Erson's short film *Camping with Camus*. He has a large international fan club and is in much demand as a coach.

Jonathan is devoted to animals, particularly dingos and has a star named after him in the Aquila galaxy.

I love the play because it afford me the opportunity to work with ATC, Simon Prast and fellow NZ actors in delivering this delightfully disturbing play to a New Zealand audience. The play reminds me of Mapples speech in *Moby Dick*. It reminds me that I must battle within myself and within society against the cruel who pose as moral, worthy or principled. The lazy educators, greedy tenured academics, religious bigots posing as bio-ethicists and those who are bought by the Japanese and the Norwegians to back the killing of whales and wolves for the pseudo science that brought fame to Mengele. All of us who live in pompous constructs, who worship form rather than content. Those who make money instructing young artists in the hollow bitterness of the academe rather than practice, those who know the truth but find it politically inconvenient, who wear ludicrous confections to state occasions and decry the practical and sensible, who mistake severity for seriousness, "whose good name is more to them that goodness". Bankers called usurers, cruel native hunting titles, political correctness at the expense of honesty and those that murdered Galileo, Reich, Lorca Christ and every child that suicides. The politicians who allow the atmosphere to go rather than strain the budget and feed their armament peddlars, waging war on poverty by throwing bombs at beggars.



We are delighted to see the return of Elizabeth Hawthorne, one of New Zealand's most talented actresses. Elizabeth most recently appeared as Blanche in Auckland Theatre Company's *A Streetcar Named Desire*, directed by Simon Prast.

During her career spanning over twenty-eight years, Elizabeth has worked with Theatre Corporate, the Mercury Theatre and Auckland Theatre Company. She won Best Supporting Actress for *Savage Honeymoon* at the Nokia Film Awards in 2000, was named Theatre Actress of the Year for Rosalind in *As You Like It*. She was the recipient of ONZM in the Queen's Birthday Honours, 2001 for services to theatre.

Her extensive film credits also include *Jubilee*, *The Frighteners*, *Savage Honeymoon*, *The Last Tattoo* and *Alex*.

Among her theatre highlights Elizabeth names her appearance as Rosalind in *As You Like It*; Masha in *Three Sisters*; Blanche in *A Streetcar Named Desire* and Maria Callas in *Masterclass*.

**What are your thoughts and feelings on *The Play About the Baby*?**

A parable of our times. Impossible brilliance of concept and construct.

Albee: a searing seer.



Michael is no stranger to Auckland Theatre Company. He has appeared in ATC's productions of *Hair*, *Death of a Salesman*, *Cabaret*, *The Wind in the Willows*, *Julius Caesar* and *12 Angry Men*. His television credits include roles on *Jack of All Trades*, *Hercules*, *Xena* and *Plainclothes*. Other theatrical credits include *Kiss of the Spider Woman*, *The Winter's Tale*, *The Dresser* and *Midsummer Night's Dream*.

**What are your thoughts and feelings on *The Play About the Baby*?**

To work on *The Play About the Baby* has been an incredibly challenging experience for me, both as an actor and personally. Albee's style is so precise and clean (no trappings), that you have to be very exacting with your work, you must be so very specific. I have greatly enjoyed sharing the process with Simon, Jonathan, Elizabeth and Jenny. Their 'pearls of wisdom' and generosity have, I think, furthered my understanding and knowledge of our craft. Thank you.



Jennifer Freed has previously appeared in three Auckland Theatre Company productions – *Hair*, *The Judas Kiss* and *Into the Woods*. She has also performed in the Wellington Fringe Festival and productions such as *The Lower Depths* and *The House of Bernada Alba*. Freed's television credits include *Hercules* and being a nun selling NZ natural mineral water. She has trained extensively both in New Zealand and in Europe including the Odin Theatre in Denmark, Greenland Theatre in Norway and Teatteri Pesa in Finland.

**What are your thoughts and feelings on *The Play About the Baby*?**

No room whatsoever here for self-judgement or second guessing and so there's little more a girl can do other than "surrender" – oh, that the doing were as easy as the saying! Get out of the way Jen, GO!



**SIMON PRAST** FROM THE DIRECTOR

The lovely Jenny Freed brought this quotation along to rehearsal one day:

*'Edward Albee describes his work as: "an examination of the American scene, an attack on the substitution of artificial for real values in our society, a condemnation of complacency, cruelty, emasculation and vacuity, a stand against the fiction that everything in this slipping land of ours is peachy keen."*

It spoke to me. I had seen this play in New York in February of 2001 and was aware that it had not completely revealed its meaning to me. After September 11, a lot fell in to place. In a way, Albee's play was a premonition of an awakening of some sort. It seemed that everyone on the planet except the Americans could answer why someone would want to do this terrible thing to them. They couldn't see it. Just too close to the self image, I guess. Land of the Free. Home of the Brave. This horror does not compute. If Man and Woman have a mission, it is to bring Boy and Girl into life [indeed the play's final movement begins with a second birth]. They excavate the youngsters in search of their buried assumptions. They challenge their certainty borne of ignorance.

They dismantle self-deceptions encouraged by the cinematic delusions and a 'Hallmark' morality. We spoke lots throughout the rehearsal process on topics ranging from Noam Chomsky's *Manufacturing Consent* to Keanu Reeves black leather pants in *The Matrix* [that was Michael!!!]. We felt that the play ended on a hopeful note, the crying they hear a sign of a new unsanitised, unromanticised life. Brought to the abyss in order to see the glory. It was extraordinary to be working on this particular play at the time of Kevin Smith's death. All the questions about fairness, good things happening to good people... So much to ponder. I was grateful for Albee's unflinching compassion and profound understanding of grief as joy's necessary reflection.

## LIZZ SANTOS

### DESIGNER

Since graduating from the UK with an Honors Degree in Theatre Design, Lizz has worked extensively Internationally in Theatre, Film and Television. She has designed over 120 productions in the areas of Drama, Opera, Dance, Touring Theatre, Ballet and Musicals in 8 countries including England, Finland, Sweden, Poland, Spain and New Zealand. Since arriving in NZ two and half years ago, Lizz has designed set and costumes for Downstage Theatre, Circa Theatre, New Zealand Actors Company, UNITEC and Bats Theatre. She was nominated for "Best Set Design" at the 2000 Chapman Tripp Awards for her first NZ work on *Flipside* at Circa Theatre in Wellington. She also designed the set for Roger Hall's *A Way of Life* with the New Zealand Actors Company, *The Government Inspector* at UNITEC and Jo Randerson's *Unforgiven Harvest* at Downstage last year. She has taught Design and lectured at various Universities and Colleges in Europe including Oxford University, Helsinki University of Design and Cardiff University. She teaches regularly at Toi Whakaari; New Zealand Drama School, UNITEC and New Zealand School of Dance. She is designing for Canterbury Opera, the Royal New Zealand Ballet and The Galileo Project later in the year. Her TV and Film work includes Anikka Moea's *Youthful* music video, TV Ad's for National Bank, Telecom and Ronald McDonald House Charities. This is her first work with Auckland Theatre Company.



## STEVE MARSHALL

### LIGHTING DESIGNER

Steve Marshall is the head of the Performance Technology programme at UNITEC's School of Performing and Screen Arts. He is a Lighting Designer and Production Manager, and was instrumental in the redevelopment of Auckland's Maidment Theatre from 1991 to 1998 and Wellington's BATS Theatre from 1989 to 1991. During 2002, Steve is excited to be designing *The Play About the Baby*, his first for Auckland Theatre Company as well as a production of a new Opera, *Galileo* at the Maidment Theatre in April.

*The Play About the Baby* is an exceptional play, rich in thought and idea, which has provoked a response that will stay with me for years. Not only is this my first design for ATC but it also marks my first time working professionally with some of my graduate students, one which I am greatly looking forward to.



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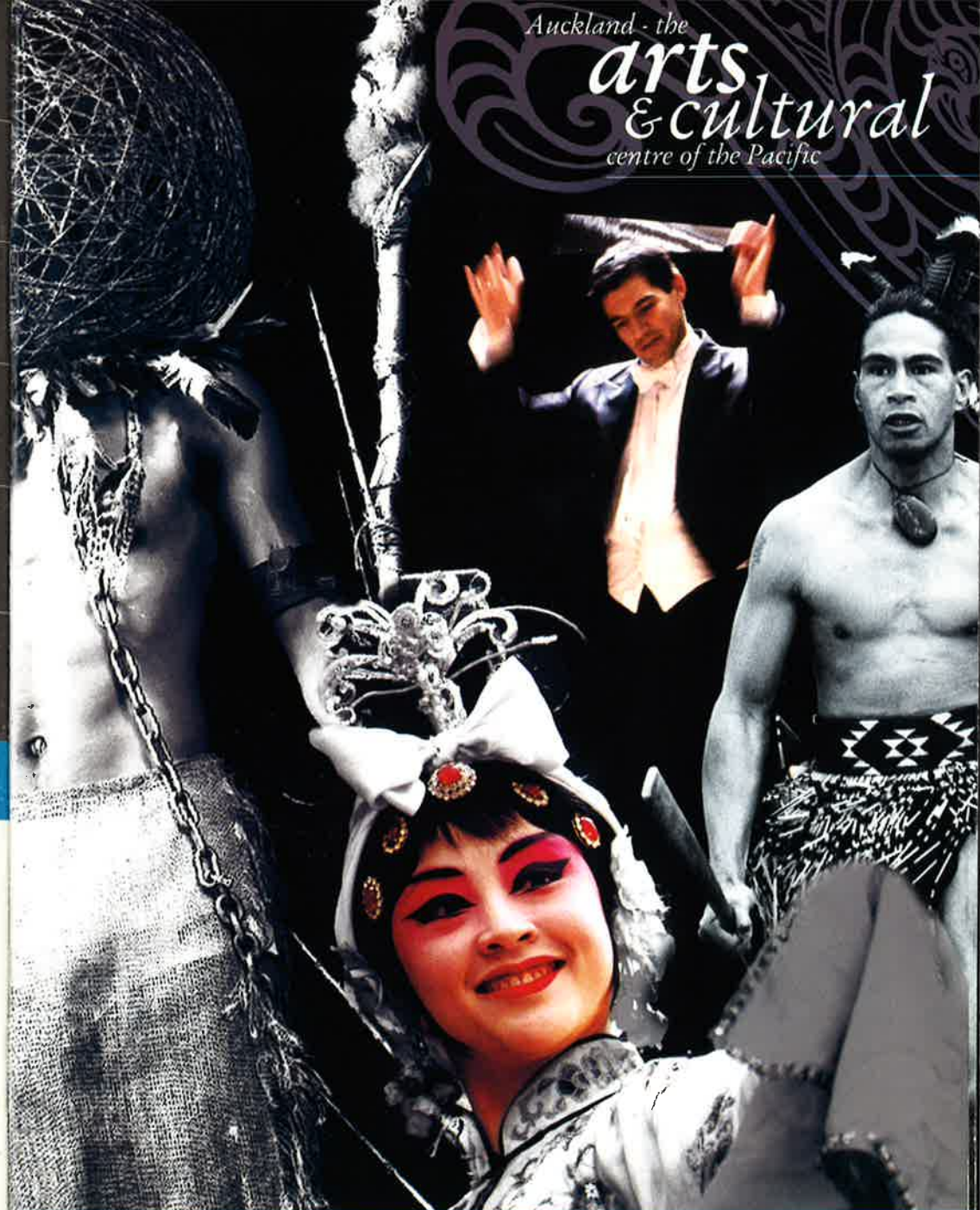
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