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Welcome to *Noises Off*, the fifth play in Auckland Theatre Company's 2002 Decadence season.

Noises Off is a comic masterpiece, one of the funniest plays ever written about theatre. It continues Auckland Theatre Company's unrivalled brilliance in bringing the finest in New Zealand and World theatre to our city.

Laughter is one of the greatest pleasures in life; one that should be enjoyed as often as possible. The fact that since its debut 20 years ago *Noises Off* has had theatre goers around the world rolling in the aisles shows laughter is truly the universal language and therefore should be enthusiastically encouraged.

Volvo is proud to support Auckland Theatre Company in bringing you another exceptional production. And rest assured that unlike the plot of *Noises Off*, where anything that can go wrong will, at Volvo we are dedicated to ensuring everything will always go right.

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L to R: Stephen Brunton, Sara Wiseman, Leighton Cardno

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UNITEC



FROM THE PRODUCER

SIMON PRAST

ATC and Volvo welcome you to the fifth production of our 10th Anniversary Season *Noises Off*, brought to you in association with Newstalk ZB.

A comedy from the author of *Copenhagen* seems an unlikely proposition. But so too did a moral thriller on nuclear physics from the author of *Noises Off*. Michael Frayn is a theatrical master of the unlikely proposition, perhaps because he can discern patterns beneath chaos: a regular pulse barely audible above mayhem's seeming randomness. Timing is the secret of all comedy but most particularly farce. Here, its pulse beats with a quantum-mathematical precision set down by the playwright twenty years ago. As events on stage apparently spin ever-further out of control, Frayn's mirthful formula gets ever more specific, invisible amidst the desperation. We gave up at the readthrough when we got to Act Two. Until the actors follow his meticulous instructions as to when and where to move, enter or exit, it makes no sense. But when they do, we laugh. And laugh. And laugh. Getting the sardines on, getting the sardines off. That's farce. That's life. Not such an unlikely proposition after all.

We are privileged to welcome back the director of last year's sleeper hit *Copenhagen*, Elric Hooper. Frayn presents him here not with the finest minds of last century but rather, its biggest hams. In the theatre, the stakes are much higher than mere nuclear annihilation. Armageddon can wait. The show must go on. Well...hopefully, anyway. Ensuring that their bogus counterparts will joyfully fail to get it right on the night is the real thing: a first-class cast and crew whose sublime talents guarantee to get it all wrong, just as Michael Frayn would wish. *May you break someone's leg!*

What better way to celebrate ten years of theatre than with this twentieth anniversary celebration of one of theatre's greatest comedies.

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Simon Prast
Producer

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REPUBLIC 107



MICHAEL FRAYN

PLAYWRIGHT

Michael Frayn was born in 1933, in the suburbs of London. He began his career as a reporter on *The Guardian*, then became a columnist on that paper from 1959 to 1962, and for *The Observer* from 1962 to 1968.

He has published nine novels - *The Tin Men*, *The Russian Interpreter*, *Towards the End of Morning*, *A Very Private Life*, *Sweet Dreams*, *The Trick of It*, *A Landing on the Sun*, *Now You Know* and *Headlong* (nominated for the 1999 Booker Prize), together with a volume of philosophy, *Constructions*.

He has written a number of plays for television, and for the stage his work includes *The Two of Us*, *Alphabetical Order*, *Donkeys' Years*, *Clouds*, *Balmoral* (Liberty Hall), *Make and Break*, *Noises Off*, *Benefactors*, *Look Look* and *Here*. *Alphabetical Order*, *Make and Break* and *Noises Off* all received *Best Comedy of the Year* awards, whilst *Benefactors* was named *Best Play of the Year*.

He has translated four of Chekhov's full-length plays - *The Cherry Orchard*, *Three Sisters*, *The Seagull* and *Uncle Vanya* and adapted Chekhov's first, untitled play as *Wild Honey*. He has also translated four of his one-act plays -

The Evils of Tobacco, *Swan Song*, *The Bear* and *The Proposal* and adapted five short stories *Drama*, *The Alien Corn*, *The Sneeze*, *The Inspector General*, *Swan Song* and *Plots* for the stage. These, with the exception of *Plots*, were staged collectively as *The Sneeze*. He has translated Tolstoy's *Fruits of Enlightenment*, Yuri Trifonov's *Exchange* and Anouilh's *Number One*.

For some years after leaving *The Observer*, he continued to contribute features to the paper on foreign countries, among them Cuba, Israel, Japan and Sweden and has written columns for *The Guardian*. He has written and presented a series of personal films for BBC Television on Berlin, Vienna, Australia, Jerusalem, Prague, Budapest and the London suburbs in which he grew up.

Clockwise, his first film, was released in 1986 starring John Cleese. His second film, *First and Last*, won an International Emmy Award in 1990. The film of his play, *Noises Off* was produced by Disney. *Alphabetical Order*, *Donkeys' Years*, *Make and Break* and *Benefactors* have all been filmed for U.K. television and *A Landing on the Sun* was filmed and transmitted (BBC) in 1994.



Michael adapted his latest novel, *Now You Know*, for the stage which opened at the Hampstead Theatre in 1995 and toured the UK in the spring of 1996.

A collection of articles written for *The Guardian* were published in November 1995 by Methuen, under the title *Speak After the Beep.....*

His latest screenplay, entitled *Remember Me?*, starring Robert Lindsay, Rik Mayall and Imelda Staunton was released in 1997.

He has written two news plays - *Alarms & Excursions* toured the UK transferred to the West End in September 1998 and closed on 6th March 1999. *Copenhagen* opened at the National Theatre in May 1998 and won the Evening Standard and Critics' Circle *Best Play Awards* 1998, the French production at the Theatre Montparnasse won two Moliere Awards for Best Production and Best Translation and it was also nominated for the Olivier Award for Best Play. *Copenhagen* recently finished a two year run at the Duchess Theatre in the West End and opened on Broadway in April 2000 where it ran for one

year. The Broadway production won the Outer Critics' Circle Award for Outstanding Broadway Play. *Copenhagen* also won the Tony Award for Best Play and the Tony Award for Best Direction of a Play went to Michael Blakemore for *Copenhagen*.

A new production of *Noises Off* opened to rave reviews at the Royal National Theatre in October 2000 and played in their repertory prior to a UK spring '01 tour. It opened at the Piccadilly Theatre in May 2001 and transferred to the Comedy Theatre in March 2002.

Noises Off opened at the Brooks Atkinson Theatre on Broadway in November 2001.

His latest novel *Spies* has just been published by Faber & Faber (2002).



FARCE: A light dramatic work in which highly improbable plot situations, exaggerated characters, and often slapstick elements are used for humorous effect.

The American Heritage® Dictionary of the English Language, Fourth Edition Copyright © 2000 by Houghton Mifflin Company.

Early examples of farce can be found in the comedies of Aristophanes, Plautus, and Terence. During the Middle Ages the term farce designated interpolations made in the church litany by the clergy. Later it came to mean comic scenes inserted into church plays. The farce emerged as a separate genre in 15th-century France with such plays as the anonymous *La farce de Maître Pierre Pathelin* (c.1470). In England two of the earliest and best-known farces are *Ralph Roister Doister* (1566) and Shakespeare's *Comedy of Errors* (c.1593). Instances of farcical elements, such as broad, ribald humour, physical buffoonery, and absurd situations can be found in many plays that are not termed farces, such as the comedies of Molière. In the 19th and early 20th century plays called "bedroom farces", best exemplified in the works of Feydeau, were popular. Usually French or modeled on the French, they had suggestive dialogue, and they usually concerned erring husbands and wives, silly servants, and mistaken identity. In the 20th century, farce found new expression in the films of Charlie Chaplin, the Keystone Kops, and the Marx Brothers.

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NOISES OFF

See your local
Newstalk ZB

by MICHAEL FRAYN

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Frederick Fellowes
Selsdon Mowbray
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This is the fifth production of the Volvo 10th Anniversary Season of *Decadance*. *Noises Off* opened on Thursday 16 May 2002.

Act One - 53 minutes
Interval - 20 minutes
Act Two - 33 minutes
Interval - 5 minutes
Act Three - 23 minutes

Noises Off lasts approximately approximately 2 hours and 15 minutes, including intervals.

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

Auckland Theatre Company

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ILONA RODGERS

DOTTY OTLEY



PETER ELLIOTT

LLOYD DALLAS

Award-winning actress, in both New Zealand and Australia, teacher and director, Ilona Rodgers trained at Bristol Old Vic Theatre School and has worked extensively in theatre, film and television in the UK, Australia and New Zealand. Having completed the television directing course at South Pacific Pictures Ilona directed *Sweet Revenge* and *Homegrown* for The Performing and Screen Arts School and worked as an assistant director to Simon Prast in *Art*. She will direct another play for the Performing Arts School this year and also run a twelve week drama course for Auckland Theatre Company.

Last year, Ilona made her directorial debut for Auckland Theatre Company with *Secret Bridesmaids' Business*.

Ilona's television credits include the *Dr Who*, *The Avengers*, and *The Saint Beverly Hillbillies*. In Australia she was a lead character in *The Sullivans*, *Prisoner*, and *Sons and Daughters* and in New Zealand the lead in *Gloss* and *Marlin Bay*. Her acting credits for Auckland Theatre Company are *By Degrees*, *Three Tall Women*, *All My Sons*, *Amy's View*, *Wit* and last year *Copenhagen*.

Ilona's thoughts on *Noises Off*

Comedy is serious business and if the work is done well a theatre full of laughing people is the reward.



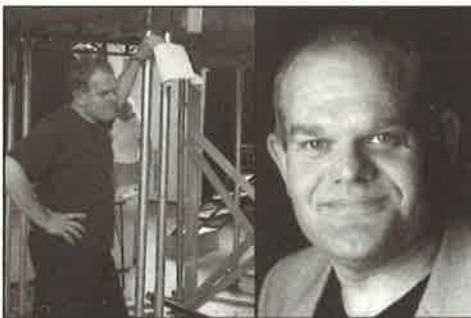


GERALDINE BROPHY

BELINDA BLAIR

Geraldine's thoughts on *Noises Off*

It is always a pleasure to work for ATC; that now increasingly rare of species, a professional theatre company in Auckland. *Noises Off* marks a reunion of sorts for me. Elric Hooper has influenced my career more than anyone else, and after seven years, it has been a pleasure to work with him again on a play that is such a glorious example of theatrical precision and joyful entertainment.



MARK HADLOW

FREDERICK FELLOWES

One of New Zealand's most renowned and respected actors, Geraldine Brophy's most recently appeared as *Leah* in the New Zealand Actors Company's adaptation of *King Lear* for the NZ Festival of the Arts. Her recent work for Auckland Theatre Company includes *Rosencrantz and Guildenstern Are Dead*, *Arcadia*, and *Molly Sweeney*. In 1998 she received the Chapman Tripp Award for Best Actress in a Supporting Role for *Tzigane* (Downstage). She has worked for most NZ theatres and companies, most notably as a Court Theatre member for 10 years.

She first appeared on television in the telefeature *Home Movie* for which she was named Best Actress at the NZ Film & Television Awards in 1998. She became a core cast member of *Shortland Street* as receptionist Moira Crombie and was a finalist as Best Actress for the role at the TV Guide NZ Television Awards in 2000.

Mark has just completed filming of a second series of *Willy Nilly* for TVNZ, and comes into *Noises Off*, his 103rd stage production, rearing to go. A jack of all trades, in television, film, radio, theatre, Mark squeezes in all sorts of corporate engagements as well. Trying to keep up with the schedule, all over New Zealand, makes the working week a long one. *Noises Off* with ATC, under the direction of Elric Hooper, has put him among a bunch of his cronies from the halcyon days of the Court Theatre in Christchurch, and fun, as well as very serious farce, is the order of the day!



PAUL BARRETT

SELSDON MOWBRAY

Having worked in theatre for over 20 years, Paul has many stage credits to his name. His most recent theatre role was *Oswald* in *Leah* for the New Zealand Actors Company at the Wellington Festival. Previous appearances for Auckland Theatre Company include *Art*, *Foreskin's Lament* and *Masterclass*.

As a musical director, Paul has recently worked as an associate director for a tour of *Chicago*. His past work in musical directing includes *Sweeney Todd*, *She Loves Me*, *Gypsy*, *The Boys From Syracuse*, *Big River*, and *Little Shop of Horrors*.

His film and television work includes the acclaimed short feature *Signing Off*, *A Crack in Time* (Cloud 9) and two series of McPhail and Gadsby (TVNZ). His most recent television work was in Series 2 of *Being Eve* for South Pacific Pictures.

Paul has taught musical theatre and voice at a number of performing institutions and has recorded over 400 voice-overs for television commercials, corporate work and documentaries.

Paul's thoughts on *Noises Off*

I was in London in 1982 when *Noises Off* premiered; as it happens, touring Britain in a farce similar to the one the actors in *Noises Off* are doing. I had never laughed so much in my life and have wanted to be in it ever since. It's especially nice to be working again with several actors with whom I've performed many times throughout my career.



PATRICK GRIFFITHS

GARY LEJEUNE



Patrick has worked with the Auckland Theatre Company in *Lovelock's Dream Run* and *Into The Woods*. He appeared in some 30 productions at Mercury Theatre, including *Amadeus*, *Don Giovanni*, *Slice Of Saturday Night*, and *Ladies Night*. At the Court Theatre he has played roles in *Closer*, *Look Back In Anger*, *Hamlet*, and *Arcadia* and has directed *Jerry's Girls* (Court II).

For Unitec he has directed *What The Butler Saw* and *The Real Inspector Hound*. He has recently appeared in an episode of *Spin Doctors*.

Patrick's thoughts on *Noises Off*

I feel so "totally and absolutely...I don't know... I mean...I'm just trying to...you know...I'm just saying...words, doors, bags, boxes, sardines, us, OK? I've made my point?"



SARAH SOMMERVILLE

POPPY NORTON -TAYLOR

Sarah has recently appeared in *The Facemaker* for Circa in Wellington and *On The Razzle* at Downstage. She has appeared in many productions including *Wit*, *Kiss me Kate*, *Way of the World*, *Beauty and the Beast*, *Kiwifruits II*, *Diary of Anne Frank*, *Hayfever*, *The Little Mermaid*, *Three Sisters*, *Bad Jelly the Witch* and *Cabaret* at Court Theatre, *Little Shop of Horrors* at Skycity, and *Rush* at Regent Theatre, *Shakers*, *Dirty Weekends*, *Charley's Aunt*, *Masterclass*, *Revenger's Tragedy*, *Blue Sky Boy's*, *Flowers at Breakfast* at Fortune Theatre, and *The Winter's Tale*, *Three Sisters*, *House of Bernard Alba*, *Othello*, *The Plain Dealer*, and *Fenn* at Mountview (London).

Sarah has also done work for television and has been involved in choreography and directing.

Sarah's thoughts on *Noises Off*

I now realise how lovely it is to be an actor with all the applause and none of the responsibility of the unsung heroes of stage management.



ANNA HEWLETT

BROOKE ASHTON

Having graduated from Toi Whakaari – New Zealand Drama School in 1999, Anna Hewlett has an extensive list of acting credits to her name. Her recent stage appearances include *The Crucible*, *Three Sisters*, *Much Ado About Nothing*, *Kiwifruits*, *Macbeth*, *Ada*, and Auckland Theatre Company's recent theatre production *Hair*. In addition, she has appeared in *Lord Of The Rings*, *Dark Knight* and *Shortland Street*.



STEPHEN BRUNTON

TIM ALLGOOD

Stephen graduated from the Unitec School of Screen and Performing Arts in 1999. He most recently appeared in *On the Razzle* in Wellington, which won the Chappman Tripp Award for best production. He has also appeared in Noel Coward's *Hay Fever* at the Court Theatre, and at Unitec his highlights include *Summer Folk*, *Hamlet*, *Oedipus the King* and *Antigone*.

Last year Stephen was also involved in two short films. The first, *Filmworthy*, won the TVNZ Young Directors Award. The other film, *Button*, required him to undergo 16 weeks of intense martial arts training for the role.



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15



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Final Draft is 2econd Unit's annual showcase of new New Zealand plays. Each year you will get the opportunity to preview the latest work of our playwrights before production by theatre companies throughout this country and maybe even in Ireland.

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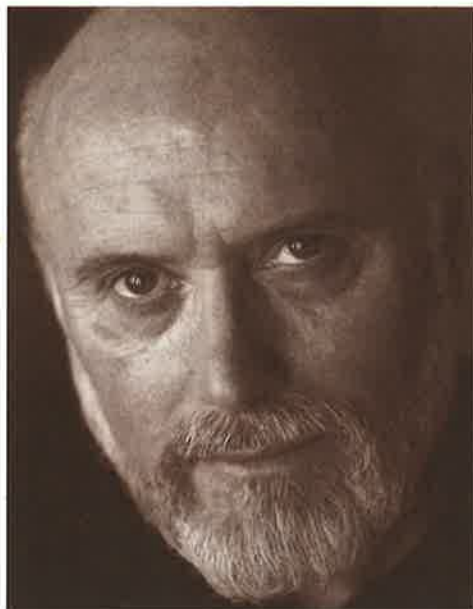
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ELRIC HOOPER M.B.E.

DIRECTOR



Elric Hooper is an acclaimed actor and director with an international career which includes the *Old Vic* and the *Berlin Ensemble*. Until recently, Elric Hooper was the Artistic Director at the Court Theatre in Christchurch, a position he had held since 1979. During his time at the Court, Hooper commissioned many New Zealand plays including *Blood Of The Lamb* and *Footrot Flats* and, more recently, *Daughters Of Heaven*, *Larnach* and *This Other Eden*. His choice of programme often involved the staging of New Zealand premieres of overseas plays and he has directed a myriad of productions from operas to Shakespeare and from classics to modern American and British theatre. In the 1990 Queens Birthday Honours, Hooper was awarded the MBE and in the same year he received the 1990 Commonwealth Medal in recognition of his contribution to New Zealand Theatre. Hooper has recently been made a Doctor of Literature by the University of Canterbury.

DIRECTOR'S NOTE

Perhaps the two finest farces of the second half of the twentieth century, *Noises Off* by Michael Frayn and *On The Razzle* by Tom Stoppard appeared within a year of each other. Both obey and defy the classical rules of the form.

Despite its immense popularity and its demonstration of supreme theatrical skill, farce has always been looked at askance by academia and the literary establishment.

The reasons for this are many but the two chief ones are the low priority it puts on words and ideas and its association with sexual immorality.

Farce is, on the whole, physical and not verbal. Therefore the texts do not have the literary quality that makes them easy subjects for teaching. With the notable exceptions of *The Importance Of Being Earnest* and *On The Razzle*, farces are not noted for great verbal skill or sophistication. *Charley's Aunt*, for example, provides catch phrases about nuts from Brazil and not epigrams. Indeed, elaborate verbiage slows down and entangles the flying feet of the farce performer. Because of its speed, there is little time to develop profound character exploration. Farce depends very much on the skill and personalities of its performers for its human content.

Throughout its history, farce, particularly that of the French model, has been associated with sexual licence. Until our own times, this has put it beyond the pale of respectability.

Yet farce is the sister of tragedy. Both are extremely artificial forms operating on rules that give us profound pleasure.

Farce is the tragedy of everyday life and good farces, as opposed to burlesques, begin with normal circumstances in which the things we most dread happening, arrive at the most inconvenient moment. The vain attempts to circumvent these mishaps lead to greater and greater chaos. Farce feels no obligation to resolve anything but simply stops when the mayhem is at its height.

One of the things that everyone recognises in this genre and one of the reasons for its popularity, is what the French call "the malevolence of things" – the rake we tread on, the manhole left open, the clothes iron we thought was cold.

Michael Frayn, in *Noises Off*, has not only written a brilliant farce within a farce, obeying all the classical rules, but has managed to create a satire on the wonderful and futile nature of theatrical performance itself.



JOHN PARKER

DESIGNER

John gained an M A degree in Ceramics from the Royal College of Art in London in 1975, was Head of Design Theatre Corporate from 1983-86 and was Resident Designer Mercury Theatre from 1986-89.

A freelancer since 1989, John's theatre work includes: *The Holy Sinner*, *The Threepenny Opera*, *Chess*, *Pack Of Girls*, *Lovelock's Dream Run*, *Romeo And Juliet*, *The Contest*, *Titus Andronicus*, *Good Works*, *Chess* (For The Australian Tour 1997), *Twelfth Night*, *F.I.L.T.H*, *Assassins*, *Eugenia*, *Tusitala*, *Waiora*, *Amy's View*, *Cavaleria Rusticana / I Pagliacci*, *The Book Club*, *Cabaret*, *Art*, *Cat On A Hot Tin Roof*, *Serial Killers*, *Into The Woods*, *Decadence*, *On the Razzle* and *Chicago*. Currently working on *The Marriage of Figaro* for Opera NZ.

John has also designed for The Louis Vuitton Ball and The America's Cup Ball.

He was also Installation Designer for Bendon's *Next To Nothing*, *Bellsouth Pharaohs* and *Precious Legacy* for the Auckland Museum.

John was awarded a Waitakere City Millennium Medal for services to the Community.

John's thoughts on Noises Off:

For someone who always thinks and works minimally, it was fascinating to be working with super realism and then to deconstruct the illusion. This is the most demanding play technically of a set I have ever worked on.

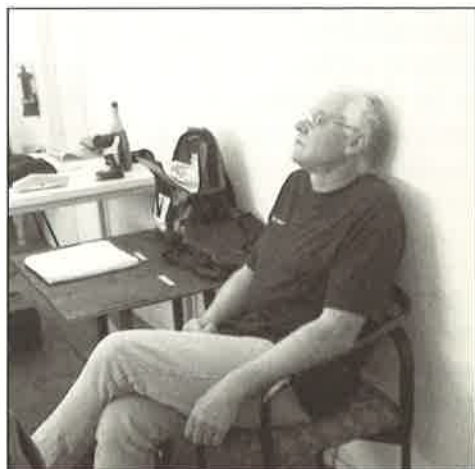
SARA KILONBACK

LIGHTING DESIGNER

Sara has worked in the theatre industry for eleven years, working predominantly as a freelance theatre technician.

Brief interludes of lighting design include work for Black Grace Dance Company, Shona McCullagh and The Human Garden and Touch Compass Dance Company. Her most recent design was for The University of Auckland's *Malaga* at The Aotea Centre.

This is the first time Sara has designed for Auckland Theatre Company and she is looking forward to working with all involved.



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playreadings

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Past reading have included **The Bellbird** by Stephen Sinclair and **The Daylight Atheist** by Tom Scott.

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Tom Stoppard UK / 1975

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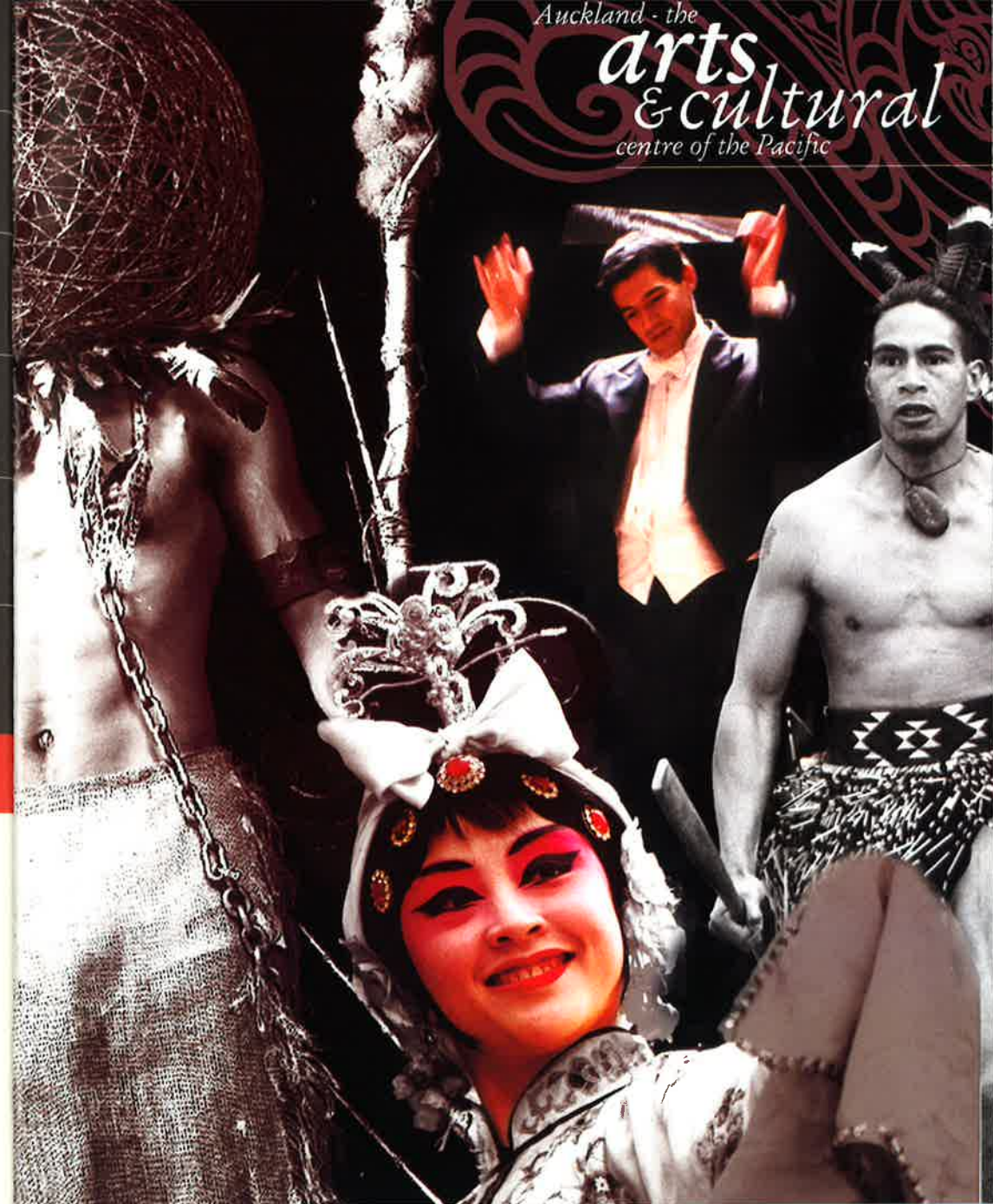
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