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Vanya

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**AUCKLAND
 THEATRE
 COMPANY**

Welcome to *UNCLE VANYA*, the fourth and final production of the 1996 International Season.

It seems fitting to conclude a memorable year for ATC with this masterpiece by a playwright many consider to be the father of modern drama. Chekhov's classic remains as vibrant as the day it premiered a century ago. Subtitled "Scenes from Country Life in Four Acts", the play's magnificent cast of characters struggle with themselves and each other to make sense of "what our real business in life is". It is an age-old quest, (noble in its futility), realised with Chekhov's masterly eye for the way we reveal (or conceal) our true natures.

ATC has assembled a cast of favourites and new faces under the direction of Colin McColl (*DAUGHTERS OF HEAVEN*, *THE SEAGULL*). Escaping the public service, Stuart Devenie (*Vanya*) and Ian Watkin (*Professor Serebryakov*) take on the new rigours of country life. Joining them are two of Auckland's tallest women, Theresa Healey (*Yelena*) and Lee Grant (*Marya*). ATC is privileged to welcome four new names to our playbill. George Henare (*Astrov*) needs no introduction to an Auckland audience. He has recently completed international tours of *THE SECRET GARDEN* and Ken Hill's *PHANTOM OF THE OPERA*. Listener's to National Radio can catch George's recording of Witi Ihimaera's *BULIBASHA*. Elizabeth McRae (*Marina*) won many new fans as Marge, New Zealand's favourite busybody on *SHORTLAND STREET*. Her recent stage credits include *RICORDI*, based on the life of Katherine Mansfield (also directed by Colin) and the middle role in Court Theatre's production of *THREE TALL WOMEN*. Brian Sergent (*Telegin* or *Waffles* to his friends) is one of Wellington's most accomplished actors, currently appearing on *SKITZ*. His many theatre credits include award-winning turns in *I HATE HAMLET*, *THE HOMECOMING* and the Wellington season of *MARKET FORCES*. Finally, we welcome Hera Dunleavy (*Sonya*), whose credits include *BEAUTIFUL THING*, *NGA TANGATA TOA* and *THE MASTER BUILDER*. Hera won Most Promising Newcomer at Wellington's 1994 Chapman Tripp Theatre Awards. Set designer John Harding (*THREE TALL WOMEN*), lighting designer Bryan Caldwell and Wardrobe Mistress Elizabeth Whiting complete a first-class creative team.

ATC thanks the ASB Bank for its generous support as production sponsor for *UNCLE VANYA* and gratefully acknowledges the continuing support of Creative New Zealand. We are further indebted to the sponsor's listed on the back of this programme, especially TVNZ, Air New Zealand, Auckland City's Arts Alive, NZI, Albany Toyota, and NewstalkZB. Their support has been integral to the success we have enjoyed in 1996.

We celebrate our 5th Birthday in 1997, expanding our programme to six productions: *ARCADIA*, *MOLLY SWEENEY*, *ALL MY SONS*, *SKYLIGHT*, *MASTER CLASS* and *SOCIAL CLIMBERS*. We hope you can join us for another year of the best new works from New Zealand and around the world.

From all of us at ATC, very best wishes for the holiday season.



Simon Prast
 PRODUCER

AUCKLAND THEATRE COMPANY

THE LIFE OF ANTON CHEKHOV

Anton Chekhov was born on January 17, 1860 in Taganrog, a Russian port 600 miles south of Moscow.

His father, Paul, was a grocer, an ardent church-goer and a strict disciplinarian, beating his children on a daily basis. At sixteen Chekhov found himself alone in Taganrog after his bankrupt father fled to Moscow, soon followed by the rest of the family. Chekhov had to stay to finish his education. He spent the next three years impoverished but free of his father's influence, later rejoining his family in Moscow where he was to study medicine. To contribute to the family's income, Chekhov started to write comic sketches for journals. Soon he had a cult following and was promoted in 1882 to Oskolki ("Fragments"), a prominent comic magazine, and later to a daily newspaper, The St Petersburg Gazette.

In 1894 he graduated as a doctor and was to practise erratically until 1899. The turning point in his career came when he started to write short stories for Novoye Vremya ("New Time"), St Petersburg's largest daily newspaper, and owned by millionaire publisher Alexis Suvorin, a vital advocate of Chekhov's work. He now became a national literary figure.

IVANOV (1887) was his first play to be produced but had mixed reception. Subsequently, **THE WOOD DEMON** (1889) from the

embers of which emerged **UNCLE VANYA** and **THE SEAGULL** (1895) were produced with the same indifferent response from the press and public. It was not until the Moscow Art Theatre in 1898 began producing his work with a revival of **THE SEAGULL** that Chekhov felt that his plays were at least being approached from the right direction. **UNCLE VANYA** (1896), **THE THREE SISTERS** (1900) and **THE CHERRY ORCHARD** (1903) were all premiered by the Moscow Art Theatre.

Throughout his life, Chekhov was plagued by ill



Above Chekhov in 1883

Left and below: Uncle Vanya 1899



COLIN MCCOLL- DIRECTOR



One of NZ's leading theatre directors, Colin was Artistic Director of Downstage Theatre in Wellington 1984-1992.

His innovative productions there such as **ROMEO & JULIET** and **THE THREEPENNY OPERA** spurred an invitation to tour Ibsen's **HEDDA GABLER** to the Edinburgh Festival, the Ibsen Festival in Oslo, the Covent Garden Festival and the Festival of Sydney.

Colin was also acclaimed for his production of Michael James **MANAIA**, **VERBATIM** and **SNAG**, all of which toured NZ and Australia and the Edinburgh Festival. He directed Ibsen's **THE VIKINGS** for the National Theatre of Norway, **MRS WARREN'S PROFESSION** and **THE MASTER BUILDER** for the Dutch National Theatre and earlier this year, Sondheim's **SWEENEY TODD** for the Queensland Theatre Company.

Colin directed **DAUGHTERS OF HEAVEN** (1993) and **THE SEAGULL** (1994) for Auckland Theatre Company.

Colin's production of **RICORDI** opened this year's International Festival of the Arts. After directing the Australian production of Tony Award-Winning **MASTER CLASS** at Circa for Christmas, 1996. Then Colin will return to Australia to direct a

new production of **CHESS** opening at Melbourne's Princess Theatre mid February.

JOHN HARDING-DESIGNER


John's set designs include **MACBETH**, **HAMLET**, **VIA SATELLITE** (Mercury), **CABARET** (Watershed), **WEED** (Mercury), **THE CRUCIBLE** (Mercury), **THE MERCHANT OF VENICE** (Mercury), **OLEANNA** (ATC), **BRAINDEAD - THE MUSICAL**, **OTHELLO** and our own **THREE TALL WOMEN**. As well as stage productions, John designs for television and teaches stage design and prop construction.

BRYAN CALDWELL



Bryan is a Theatre and Event Lighting Designer who has worked with most of Auckland's leading theatre companies, principally in collaboration with his partner, Set and Costume Designer Tracey Collins. His recent theatre designs include **INTO THE WOODS**, **ASSASSINS**, **THE CHANGELING**, and **ALADDIN** for the Watershed Theatre, **PINOCCHIO** at the Aotea Centre, **GISELLE** for Auckland Ballet Company at Bruce Mason Theatre, and **STILL SPEEDING** for Maidment Youth Theatre, as well as designing lighting for Axis Advertising Awards, (Auckland & Wellington), and the DB Warriors opening match in 1995. His recent installation with Tracey at Artspace **OUR NAME IS OBJECT** was voted Best in 1995 in both Art and Theatre end of year reviews. With support from a Creative NZ travel grant, Bryan has recently returned from London where he participated in an international forum for

Lighting, examining development of lighting as a design medium in world theatre.



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STUART DEVENIE



Stuart has worked in theatre, television, film and radio in New Zealand for the past 23 years. He has been an Associate Artistic Director for Centrepont Theatre (Palmerston North); and was a founding councillor for Circa Theatre (Wellington). Last year he toured as 'Frank 'N' Furter' in **THE NEW ROCKY HORROR SHOW**. His most recent stage work in Auckland was as 'Byck' in **ASSASSINS** at The Watershed and directing **RAW** at The Basement Theatre.

Following the huge success of Roger Hall's **MARKET FORCES**, this is Stuart's second engagement with ATC.

HERA DUNLEAVY



Hera graduated from Toi Whakaari, NZ Drama School in 1993. Her role in **BEAUTIFUL THING** at Circa won her Best Newcomer at the Chapman Tripp Theatre Awards in 1994. She has performed in three seasons of New Zealand premiere productions at Wellington's Taki Rua Theatre, one of which, **NGA TANGATA TOA**, toured to Auckland's Watershed Theatre. Hera played Hilde Wangle in the Circa production of Ibsen's **THE MASTER BUILDER**. Her Film and TV credits include **TRUE LIFE STORIES**, **PLAINCLOTHES**, **PERMANENT WAVE** and **O TAMAITI**. ATC welcomes Hera in her debut performance with the Company.

LEE GRANT



Lee, now based in Perth, W. Australia, remains one of New Zealand's foremost actresses. In 1991 she was recognised with an MBE for her contribution to the arts. Since the closure of the Mercury, Lee has been involved in a variety of television productions including **KURT VONNEGUT THEATRE** and **THE RAY BRADBURY THEATRE**. In 1992 Lee performed in the successful Aotea Centre production of **MY FAIR LADY**. In 1993 Lee played the character Bridget O'Malley (the housekeeper) in the critically acclaimed ATC production of Michelanne Forster's **DAUGHTERS OF HEAVEN**. Also in 1993 Lee had a core-cast role in the American television production **WHITE FANG**, filmed in Queenstown. In 1993 Lee performed in the ATC production of **ANGELS IN AMERICA** and earlier in 1996 played to packed houses and much critical acclaim in Edward Albee's **THREE TALL WOMEN** with

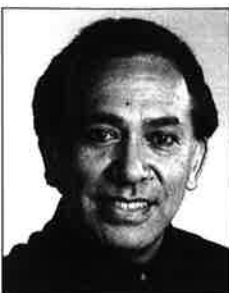
Theresa Healey and Ilona Rodgers. We welcome her back.

THERESA HEALEY



Theresa graduated from New Zealand Drama School in 1986 and has since worked at the Fortune Theatre (Dunedin), Court Theatre (Christchurch), Circa, Bats and Depot Theatre (Wellington), and the Mercury Theatre in Auckland. Favourite roles include Katherine in **THE SECRET RAPTURE** (Circa), Aunt Rose in **BABY DOLL** (Circa) and Sybill in **PRIVATE LIVES** (Mercury). Her film credits include **BREAD AND ROSES** and **THE KITCHEN SINK**. Theresa is well known to television viewers as Carmen Roberts on **SHORTLAND STREET**, ending her starring role in February 1996. Theresa was nominated for Best Actress in the 1995 New Zealand Film & Television Awards. Theresa performed in **THREE TALL WOMEN** for ATC (Herald Theatre), in early 1996, followed by several months travelling through Europe. Welcome back Theresa!

GEORGE HENARE



George brings vast experience in theatre, film and television. His career began in 1965 with the NZ Opera Company's production of **PORGY & BESS**. George remained with this company for six years graduating from the chorus to character principal roles such as Goro in **MADAME BUTTERFLY** and Koko in **THE MIKADO**. George has worked with both Downstage in Wellington and Mercury Theatre in Auckland in many outstanding productions. More recently George has toured NZ in a lead role in **CHESS**, NZ & Australian tours of **JESUS CHRIST SUPERSTAR** in 1994, the Australian and Asian tour of Ken Hill's **PHANTOM OF THE OPERA**, and the NZ tour of **THE SECRET GARDEN**.

In 1994 George won the Best Theatrical Performance for his role in **JESUS CHRIST SUPERSTAR** (Entertainer of the Year Awards).

ELIZABETH MCRAE



Elizabeth trained as an actress in Wellington with Maria Dronke. Her first professional theatre engagement was in 1968 at the opening of the Mercury Theatre. She also acted with Theatre Corporate. Among many other roles she played Winnie in **HAPPY DAYS** and the Mouth in **NOT I**, by Samuel Beckett. She was a founding member of the Tantrum Theatre Company.

Elizabeth has taught voice and speech in many New Zealand theatre schools. She has been a member of the New Zealand Film Commission. Last year she appeared in **THREE TALL WOMEN** at the Court Theatre in Christchurch. Earlier this year she played the Grandmother in **RICORDI** for the NZ International Festival of the Arts. You may recognise her as an original cast member of **SHORTLAND STREET**.

BRIAN SERGENT



Brian has been writing and performing his own comedy work since 1979. Brian has been a core cast member and creative contributor to the successful TV3 comedy series, **SKITZ** in all three series from 1994 to 1996. His other television credits include **COVERSTORY**, **RAY BRADBURY THEATRE** and the popular standup comedy show **PULP COMEDY**.

His film credits include **BRAINDEAD**, **MEET THE FEEBLES** both films directed by Peter Jackson, **FOOTROT FLATS** (Spit Murphy voice), **CHICKEN** directed by Grant La Hood and **ABSENT WITHOUT LEAVE** directed by John Laing. Brian's was recently in the Circa Production of Roger Hall's **MARKET FORCES** during the Wellington Festival of the Arts. His many theatre credits include **I HATE HAMLET** and **MOONLIGHTING**, for Circa Theatre.

IAN WATKIN



Ian has performed extensively in theatre throughout New Zealand since 1970, with the latest plays including Berkoff's **EAST** and **KVETCH**, directed by Roger Morton, and even more recently the sell-out New Zealand premiere season of Graham Greene's **TRAVELS WITH MY AUNT** (ATC). Ian was in the original cast of the Wellington Circa production of **MARKET FORCES** and the recent highly successful ATC production.

Ian has appeared in many outstanding films including **SLEEPING DOGS**, **UTU**, **GOODBYE PORK PIE**, **JUST ME AND MARIO**, and **BRAINDEAD**. He has appeared in many television productions, including **CLOSE TO HOME**, **MARLIN BAY**, **COUNTRY GP**, **WHITE FANG**, **ENID BLYTON SERIES**, **HERCULES** and **SHORTLAND STREET**.

Ian Watkin is also a writer of comedy and drama.

AUCKLAND THEATRE COMPANY

PRESENTS

Uncle Vanya

Scenes from Country Life
by
Anton Chekhov

AUCKLAND THEATRE COMPANY PRODUCTION
Thursday October 10, 1996
Herald Theatre, Aotea Centre

CAST
(In order of Appearance)

Marina Astrov, Uncle Vanya, manager of the estate	Elizabeth McRae
Serebryakov, retired Professor	George Henare
Telegin, impoverished landowner	Stuart Devenie
Sonya, daughter of Serebryakov	Ian Watkin
Yelena, second wife of Serebryakov	Brian Sargent
Maman, mother of Vanya	Hera Dunleavy
	Theresa Healey
	Lee Grant

The Performance will last for approximately 2 hours 15 minutes
including 15 minutes interval

DIRECTOR	COLIN MCCOLL
SET DESIGNER	JOHN HARDING
LIGHTING DESIGNER	BRYAN CALDWELL
PRODUCER	SIMON PRAST
PRODUCTION MANAGER	TERESA SOKOLICH
WARDROBE	ELIZABETH WHITING
STAGE MANAGER	FRITHA WALKER
DIRECTOR'S ASSISTANT	GREG SMALE
SET BUILDERS	THIRD STAGE
PROPERTIES	ARTS BANDITS
MARKETING & PUBLICITY	DIANA GOULDING PROMOTIONS

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Christina Frankham
Celia Galbraith
M Gardiner & A Mummery
Lucia Gerke
C Goff
Winifred Gowan
Maggie Gresson

Carol Gribble
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Pamela Kean
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Errol Kelly
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