



OCT OREGON CONTEMPORARY THEATRE

TINY BEAUTIFUL THINGS

November 12 - November 28

Based on the book by Cheryl Strayed
Adapted for the stage by Nia Vardalos

Directed by Inga Wilson

Featuring *Eric Braman, Patrick Dizney,
Chelsey Megli & Tracy Nygard*

"Provocative, poignant and rich." —*NY Daily News*

Critic's Pick! "*Tiny Beautiful Things* is about the endangered art of listening to—and really hearing and responding to—other people... a sustained theatrical exercise in empathy!" —*NY Times*

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OREGON CONTEMPORARY THEATRE

Presents

Tiny Beautiful Things

Based on the Book by Cheryl Strayed

Adapted for the Stage by Nia Vardalos

Co-Conceived by Marshall Heyman,
Thomas Kail, and Nia Vardalos**Director**

Inga Wilson

Scenic Designer

Jeffrey Cook

Lighting Designer

Emily Bolivar

Costume Designer

DeMara Cabrera

Sound Designer

Taylor Freeman

Properties Designer

Zoë Pouliot

Stage Manager

Colleen Rooney

"Tiny Beautiful Things" is presented by arrangement with Concord Theatricals
on behalf of Samuel French, Inc.
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Original New York Production by The Public Theater
Oskar Eustis, Artistic Director Patrick Willingham, Executive Director

Oregon Contemporary Theatre acknowledges that we are on the traditional homeland of the Kalapuya people. We honor their descendants who are today members of the Confederated Tribes of the Grand Ronde Community of Oregon and the Confederated Tribes of Siletz Indians of Oregon, and we recognize their tremendous contributions to and continued stewardship of our region.

CAST (in order of appearance)

Sugar	Tracy Nygard
Letter Writer #1	Patrick Dizney
Letter Writer #2	Chelsey Megli
Letter Writer #3	Eric Braman

The performance lasts approximately 90 minutes with no intermission.

PRODUCTION TEAM

Director	Inga Wilson
Scenic Designer	Jeffrey Cook
Lighting Designer	Emily Bolivar
Sound Designer	Taylor Freeman
Costume Designer	DeMara Cabrera
Properties Designer	Zoë Pouliot
Production Electrician	Jessi Park
Stage Manager	Colleen Rooney

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Producing Artistic Director's Note

7

Welcome back to live theatre at Oregon Contemporary Theatre! Twenty months ago we finished our production of Jen Silverman's *The Roommate* just as Governor Brown's first shutdown took effect. We are delighted to be back, once again sharing outstanding professional theatre with you.

Many of you reached out to us with concern for our health and safety. Many also dug deep to offer support for OCT during our time of unprecedented need. Your encouragement and generosity were beacons of hope that helped guide us to this moment with a renewed sense of purpose and commitment to give back. We have a lot to be thankful for as we enter this season of gratitude and goodwill.

We took advantage of our long intermission by offering virtual classes, using Zoom to host new play development workshops featuring artists from all across the country, and dabbling with virtual programming. In addition, staff tackled overdue cleaning and maintenance projects all around our facility with the help of very dedicated volunteers. Thanks to a gift from the owners of the now defunct Bijou movie theatre, we were able to replace the oldest of our audience seats with "newer," more comfortable seats. These projects were possible because of the unexpected gift of time in the past year and a half.

Thank you for being here, for your support while we were apart, and for following our safety protocols so that we can better protect you, our staff, volunteers and artists. Please tell your friends about your enjoyment in returning to live performance at OCT. We have three more fun and provocative plays coming to you in this season. And we hope you and your friends will join us for all of them.

Also, as you leave this performance, consider grabbing an ornament from the Looking Glass giving tree in our lobby. Help us give back to our community by brightening this holiday season for deserving youth.

A handwritten signature in black ink, reading "Craig Willis". The signature is fluid and cursive, with the first name "Craig" written in a larger, more prominent script than the last name "Willis".

Craig Willis
Producing Artistic Director

Dear Audience,

I'm trying to decide what I should write to you - if I even need to write to you. An evening of theatre should stand on its own as a glorious, ephemeral night of performance without a director's description to prepare you. But here I am, writing anyway.

I missed the Dear Sugar column as it happened and came to *Tiny Beautiful Things* fresh on the heels of the most collectively raw months for humanity that I've experienced in my lifetime. And there's no doubt the letters portrayed in *Tiny Beautiful Things* capture pieces of raw humanity.

Others have described Sugar's responses as an experience of Radical Empathy. Would I give (or take) all of Sugar's advice? Who knows? I'm not their shoes. But that's the beauty of theatre. We all get to explore what it is to be in those shoes for an evening. Or perhaps remember the shoes we once wore on our own journey. It's why I believe theatre is the art of empathy in motion.

So I guess I don't have a question, so much as a wish: for this evening, enjoy the journey and celebrate with us this shared exploration in Radical Empathy. And whether it breaks your heart, makes it sing, or both—I hope you chat about it with your friends. Share their stories. Share your stories.

Thanks for being here tonight. We've missed you. I've missed you.

Yours,
Inga

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A Christmas Carol

Nov 19 - Dec 11
Adapted and Directed by John Schmor

Personal History

Jan 21 - Feb 5
By Dominic Taylor
Directed by Stanley Coleman

Once

Feb 25 - Mar 12
Book by Enda Walsh
Music & Lyrics by Glen Hansard & Markéta Irglová
Based on the Motion Picture Written and Directed by John Carney
Directed by John Schmor

God Said This

April 15 - 30
By Leah Nanako Winkler
Directed by Michael Malek Najjar

Hay Fever

May 20 - June 4
by Noël Coward
Directed by Tricia Rodley

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The letters are real... I thought, as I read Cheryl Strayed's incredibly moving book, *Tiny Beautiful Things*.

People wrote these letters.

A few years ago, author Cheryl Strayed gave advice as Sugar for the literary website The Rumpus, and later collected the letters into a book. Journalist Marshall Heyman gave his friend, director Thomas Kail, the book, and Tommy gave it to me suggesting it could become a play. As I read the letters exchanged, I wept, smiled, and was astonished by the raw and extraordinary candor. Sugar and the writers of the letters reveal themselves, and we find ourselves in their conundrums and sorrows, in their lives lived and roads traveled. I yearned to be as bold, audacious and willful. As I adapted the book into a play, I found the words so illuminating that I grieved and moved on from certain events of my own.

Still, if I had one letter to write, it would be:

Dear Sugar, I hope to be as brave as the writers of the letters and as open as Cheryl Strayed.

— Nia Vardalos



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CHERYL STRAYED (Author) is the author of the #1 New York Times bestselling memoir *Wild*, the New York Times bestsellers *Tiny Beautiful Things* and *Brave Enough*, and the novel *Torch*. Strayed's books have been translated into nearly forty languages around the world and have been adapted for both the screen and the stage. The Oscar-nominated movie adaptation of *Wild* stars Reese Witherspoon as Cheryl and Laura Dern as Cheryl's mother, Bobbi. *Tiny Beautiful Things* was adapted for the stage by Nia Vardalos and debuted at The Public Theater in New York City, directed by Thomas Kail and starring Vardalos. Strayed is the host of the hit podcasts *Sugar Calling* and *Dear Sugars*, which she co-hosted with Steve Almond. Her essays have been published in *The Best American Essays*, *New York Times*, *Washington Post Magazine*, *Vogue*, *Salon*, *The Sun*, *Tin House*, *New York Times Book Review* and elsewhere. Strayed holds an MFA in fiction writing from Syracuse University and a bachelor's degree from the University of Minnesota. She lives in Portland, Oregon.



NIA VARDALOS (Adapter) is an actress, director, producer and screenwriter. She is an accomplished alum of Chicago's Second City whose stage credits include Jennie in Theatre20's *Company*, directed by Gary Griffin, and writer and actor for twelve Second City revues (Jeff Award winner). Vardalos adapted and starred in the original production of *Tiny Beautiful Things* at The Public Theater in 2016, reprising the role at the Public in 2017 and again at the Pasadena Playhouse in California. She is best known for starring in and writing the romantic comedy film *My Big Fat Greek Wedding* (2002), which garnered her nominations for the Academy

Award for Best Original Screenplay and the Golden Globe Award for Best Actress in a Motion Picture Comedy or Musical. In addition to her screenplay credits—including co-writing 2011's *Larry Crowne* with Tom Hanks—Vardalos is the author of the *New York Times* bestseller *Instant Mom*.

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ERIC BRAMAN (Letter Writer #3) is excited to step into their first main season performance with Oregon Contemporary Theatre! Additional local performance credits include *Bunfight!* (OCT), *Ministers of Grace* and *Anne of the Thousand Days* (VLT). Directing credits include *The Essentials* (Lane Community College), *Rehearsals for Life* (University of Oregon) and *Dhebbba* (NW10). As a playwright, their works have been performed by Chicago's Ghostlight Theatre Ensemble, NW10, the UO, Operation Shadowbox and more. Eric has also performed as a poet across the West Coast, notably: Oregon Country Fair, Arts Alive! Corvallis, and Bigfoot Regional Poetry Slam. They are also a producer for the NW10 Festival and serve as the Program Director with Lane Arts Council. Special thank you to Kris (Du bist die besten meine Liebe!) and the big, beautiful, giving hearts of the cast and crew.
www.ericbraman.com



PATRICK DIZNEY (Letter Writer #1) is thrilled to be returning to live theatre with Oregon Contemporary Theatre, where he performed in *Becky's New Car* and *The Cake*. He is recently retired from teaching theatre at Western Washington University and, most recently, Central Washington University. Patrick has an MFA in Acting from University of Washington and has performed professionally in two national tours, numerous regional theatres, Off- and Off-Off Broadway productions, feature films and a few commercials. He is transitioning into his next life chapter as a freelance actor, director and full time nomad.



CHELSEY MEGLI (Letter Writer #2) is honored to be sharing space and telling stories onstage again. Highlights of her past performances include: *Melancholy Play* (#GoTeamAlmond), *Bunfight!* (Oregon Contemporary Theatre); *Treehouse*, *The Complete Works of William Shakespeare - Abridged* (Cottage Theatre); *The Children's Hour*, *Company* and *The Vertical Hour*. She has also enjoyed directing, including *Damascus* (West Coast Premiere, assistant director), *SideMan*, *For Whom the Southern Belle Tolls* and multiple NW10 titles. Chelsey is a founding member of Operation Shadowbox and co-host of What The Musical, a podcast for musical theatre nerds and newbies. whatthemusical.com



TRACY NYGARD (Sugar) is so excited to be back on a stage again, especially back at Oregon Contemporary Theatre where she was last seen as Helen in *Fun Home* and Joan in *Melancholy Play*. Tracy is also a regular at Cottage Theatre. Favorites at CT include: *Treehouse* (Susan), *Hamlet* (Gertrude), *Curtains* (Georgia), *Assassins* (Sara Jane Moore), *A Flea in Her Ear* (Raymonde), *Spamalot* (Lady of the Lake) and *Much Ado About Nothing* (Beatrice) among many others, including, hopefully, finally after a two-year pause, *Mamma Mia!* in Spring 2022. Tracy has a BFA in Musical Theater from The Boston Conservatory.

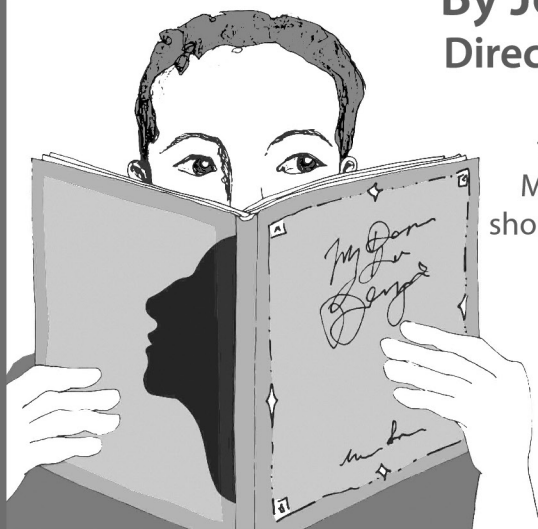


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BUYER & CELLAR

By Jonathan Tolins

Directed by Craig Willis



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EMILY BOLIVAR (*Lighting Designer*) is thrilled to be back at Oregon Contemporary Theatre! She is a University of Oregon alum with a BS in Theatre Arts and has been doing lighting design for seven years. Emily is the Assistant Technical Director at the Richard E. Wildish Community Theatre in Springfield, OR, and Production Manager of the new, local theatre company The Tall Tale Players. Her recent design credits include *A Midsummer Night's Dream* (Tall Tale Players), *Sons of the Prophet* (University of Oregon) and *Bunfight!* (OCT).

DEMARA CABRERA (*Costume Designer*) is thrilled to return to Oregon Contemporary Theatre, having previously designed costumes for *Bunfight!* and *The Cake*. DeMara is an instructor and costumer for the Theatre Arts Department at Oregon State University. She received her BA in Drama from Stanford University in 2004 and her MFA from Boston University in 2013. DeMara has worked as an assistant professor at Central Connecticut State University, an instructor, designer, and costume shop manager at Linfield College and a guest designer at Western Oregon University. Favorite credits include: *Shakespeare in Love* (OSU); *Comedy of Errors*, *Romeo and Juliet* (Bard in the Quad); *Women in Congress* (Linfield College, ACTF Meritorious Achievement in Design award); *The Dialogues of the Carmelites* (Huntington Theatre and Boston University Opera Institute); *Angels in America*, *Hair* (Playhouse on Park in West Hartford, CT); *A Servant of Two Masters* (Central Connecticut State University). She would like to thank her incredible husband, Shawn, for his love and support. demaratamsel.weebly.com, [facebook.com/demarasdesigns](https://www.facebook.com/demarasdesigns)

JEFFREY COOK (*Scenic Designer*) is a Washington native, living in Seattle and working throughout the Northwest since 1990. For Oregon Contemporary Theatre: *Marjorie Prime*, *The Last Five Years*, *Lucky Me*, *Clybourne Park*, *A Lie of the Mind*, *Next to Normal*, *Assassins*. Seattle design work includes: The Seattle Children's Theatre (*The Garden of Rikki Tikki Tavi*, *Elephant and Piggie*, *Naked Mole Rat Gets Dressed: The Rock Experience*), The 5th Avenue Theatre (*...Forum*, *Cinderella*), Village Theater (*The Gypsy King*), and designs for Harlequin Productions, Book-It, Tacoma Actors Guild and Profile Theatre in Portland (Pinter season). He has designed the official City of Seattle Winterfest experience at Seattle Center since 2008. National Work: three years at the Denver Center Theatre design and production shops, and *Thomas the Train: Live! on Stage*. BFA Washington State University 1991, MFA University of Oregon 1995. JeffreyDesigns.net

TAYLOR FREEMAN (*Sound Designer*) first worked for Oregon Contemporary Theatre straight out of high school, and he's excited to be working in the space once more. He is the former Production Manager for The Academy of Arts and Academics in Springfield and a former member of the Student Production Association at LCC. Previous work at OCT includes stage management for *Vanya and Sonia and Masha and Spike*, props design for *Successful Strategies*, and sound design for *Damascus* and *Good People*. He also enjoys piña colodas, though, as an avid cyclist, does not enjoy being caught in the rain.

JESSI PARK (*Production Electrician*) has been working with IASTE Local 675 since 2016. Before finding Local 675, Jessi worked with local bands like Candy Apple Bleu and has been stage managing for Red Raven Follies. Jessi's heart and soul are in the theatre and she couldn't imagine being anywhere else. She can be found working at the Hult Center, Cuthbert, McDonald Theatre, Autzen Stadium, Matthew Knight Arena and other local venues. This is her first show with Oregon Contemporary Theatre.

ZOË POULIOT (*Properties Designer*) is a freshman political science major at the University of Oregon. She has experience acting, directing and in many other areas of backstage work, culminating in over 65 productions in the United States. Some of her favorites include playing the Witch in Sondheim's *Into the Woods* and directing *Annie* (2021). She is grateful for the opportunity to have a work study position with Oregon Contemporary Theatre as a properties designer and stagehand!

INGA WILSON (*Director; Education Coordinator*) is delighted to be a part of welcoming audiences back to the theatre to enjoy tiny beautiful moments in *Tiny Beautiful Things*. Other recent projects at Oregon Contemporary Theatre include co-producing *NW10*, co-directing *Bunfight!* and playing Judy in *The Curious Incident of the Dog in the Night-Time*. Originally from Minnesota, she received a BFA in Theatre Performance from Drake University and went on to study at the O'Neill National Theater Institute and Chautauqua Theater Conservatory. Inga enjoys acting, directing, and teaching theatre for diverse audiences. Thank you for coming and supporting the arts!

COLLEEN ROONEY (*Production Stage Manager*) is a recent UO graduate with a BS in Theatre Arts and Anthropology, with focuses in stage management, lighting design and archaeology, respectively. Stage management credits include: *NW10: Into the Cybersphere*, *Thom Pain (based on nothing)*, *NW10: Oh, Boise!* (Oregon Contemporary Theatre); *Mother Courage and Her Children*, *Avenue Q*, *Tartuffe* and the spring 2020 digital project *Or Not To Be* (University Theatre). Outside of OCT, she can be found tending to the plants at Passionflower Design, collaborating with her peers on summer productions and exploring the beauty of Oregon.



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TYLER ANTHONY (Master Electrician) joined Oregon Contemporary Theatre in August 2019. He is a stage electrician, lighting designer, stagehand and director. In addition to his work with OCT, Tyler is the touring electrician for Right Angle Entertainment and the Eugene Ballet and an IATSE local 675 member. Design credits include *Peter and the Starcatcher*, *The Wolves*, *Boston Marriage*, *Treehouse* and *Winter Shorts*. Director credits include *Boston Marriage*, *Nightlight* and *Out of Joint*. He can be found working at OCT, The Hult Center, Matthew Knight Arena, Autzen Stadium, Hayward Field and Lane Community College.

AMY DUNN (Production Manager/Master Carpenter) graduated from the University of Oregon with a BA in Theatre Arts and joined the staff of Oregon Contemporary Theatre shortly thereafter in August 2007 as the Master Carpenter. In 2019, Amy took on the additional role of Production Manager. Select design credits include: *Stop Kiss*, *Mud* (University Theatre); *The Explorers Club* (VLT); *King Lear* (SPA); and *Hello, Dolly!* (Lane Summer Musical Theatre). Amy's OCT design favorites include: *Miss Bennet: Christmas at Pemberley*, *Buried Child*, *Venus in Fur*, *A Bright New Boise*, *I and You*, *August: Osage County*, *boom*, *The Pillowman*, *Shipwrecked!* and *The Clean House*. In her spare time, Amy can be found cross stitching, gaming, or gushing over her adorable cats, Oskar and Jill.

BENJAMIN SANDERS (Carpenter) is glad to part of the team at Oregon Contemporary Theatre! He grew up performing and building sets for shows at California's Palo Alto Children's Theatre and earned his BA in Theatre Arts with an emphasis in Design and Technology from SDSU. He returned to the S.F. Bay Area to work at the Children's Theatre and also teach theatre tech at Foothill Community College. He has appeared onstage locally in: *Rocky Horror Show* as Brad, *Jesus Christ Superstar* as Jesus (ACE); *Spamalot* as Lancelot/Tim the Enchanter (VLT); *Putting It Together* as Man#2 (NRRP); *Dirty Dishes* as Alex (NW10); and *Fun Home* as Roy/Pete/Mark/Bobby Jeremy (OCT). Ben is grateful for the love and support of his co-parent Melissa and their kids Raj and Kai. He is glad to be a part of a thriving theatre scene in the Eugene/Springfield area and here at OCT!

MARY WETHERBEE (Box Office Manager/Volunteer Coordinator) began her involvement with theatre in high school where she acted in several plays. She holds a BA from Penn State in Social Work. Mary's acting credits at Oregon Contemporary Theatre include *Life in the Theater* and the Northwest Ten plays *Paper is Dope* and *Savage & Strawberry*. She has also performed monologues with Actors Table and is active in the Eugene Shakespeare Club and Reader's Theater.

TARA WIBREW (Associate Producer) is a multi-hyphenate theatremaker who has worked with Oregon Contemporary Theatre since 2011. She has a Masters in Arts Management from the University of Oregon and trained at NYU's Tisch School of the Arts - Atlantic Acting School. Select OCT credits include: direction of *Thom Pain (based on nothing)*, *Damascus* (West Coast Premiere), *Middletown*, *Melancholy Play* (#GoTeamAlmond), *Vanya and Sonia and Masha and Spike*, *A Bright New Boise* and *August: Osage County*; and acting roles in *The Cake*, *The Flick*, *Shrimp & Gritts: She's Gone* and *boom*. Other select directing credits include *Treehouse* (world premiere), *Peter and the Starcatcher*, *The Pillowman* and *The Last Days of Judas Iscariot*. Tara is an adjunct professor of theatre arts at Lane Community College. She is also a founding member of Operation Shadowbox and producer/editor/co-host of What The Musical, a podcast for musical theatre nerds and newbies. In her spare time, Tara sings lead for Higher Love Band and spends time with her very good dog, Poppy. whatthemusical.com, higherloveband.com.

CRAIG WILLIS (Producing Artistic Director) has been at the helm of Oregon Contemporary Theatre since 2003. Craig has an MFA in Directing and a PhD in Dramatic Literature/Theory from the University of Oregon. In 2008, Craig received an Oregon Arts Commission fellowship to train with Anne Bogart and SITI Company. His directing credits include: Edward Albee's *At Home at the Zoo*, Lisa Kron and Jeanine Tesori's *Fun Home*, David Ives' *Venus in Fur*, Steve Yockey's *Blackberry Winter*, Jason Robert Brown's *The Last Five Years*, Aaron Posner's *Stupid Fucking Bird*, Nathan Alan Davis' *Dontrell*, *Who Kissed the Sea*, Edward Albee's *Who's Afraid of Virginia Woolf?*, Bruce Norris' *Clybourne Park*, Nina Raine's *Tribes*, Adam Gwon's *Ordinary Days*, Brian Yorkey and Tom Kitt's *Next To Normal*, Robert Lopez, Jeff Marx, and Jeff Whitty's *Avenue Q*, Geoffrey Nauffts' *Next Fall*, Itamar Moses' *The Four of Us*, Henrik Ibsen's *Hedda Gabler*, Joe Calarco's *Shakespeare's R & J*, Martin McDonagh's *The Pillowman*, Bertolt Brecht's *Mother Courage*, Anton Chekhov's *The Seagull*, Stephen Sondheim and John Weidman's *Assassins*, Edward Albee's *The Goat, or Who is Sylvia?*, David Auburn's *Proof* and Thornton Wilder's *The Skin of Our Teeth*. Craig's scenic designs for OCT include: *The Flick*, *Becky's New Car*, *The Seagull*, *Ordinary Days* and *I Am My Own Wife*.

DARA WILLMARTH (Carpenter) is a recent graduate from the University of Oregon, majoring in Theatre Arts and minoring in Digital Humanities, with a focus in stage management and production. After stage-handing for Oregon Contemporary Theatre across multiple seasons, Dara is excited to join the OCT staff. Stage management credits include *A Midsummer Night's Dream* (Tall Tale Players), *Personal Game* and *A Doll's House*, (University Theatre), as well as serving as Technical Director of the Pocket Playhouse for two years. When not in the theatre, Dara can be found fawning over her two cats, Spawn and Zelda, as well as working events at the McDonald Theatre. Dara is a founding member of The Tall Tale players and co-hosts the podcast Understudy-ied Theatre History with her partner, Colleen.



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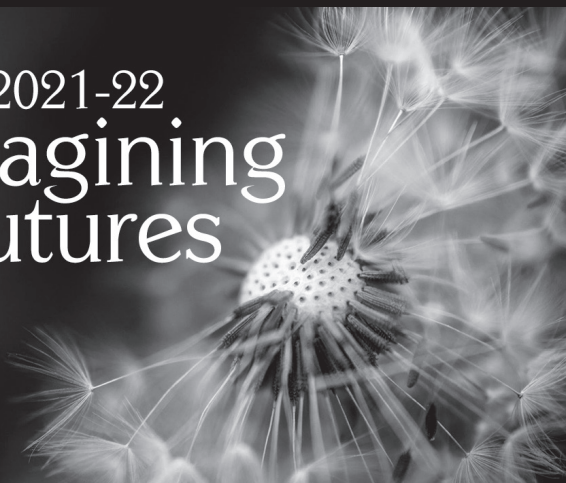
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