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 Directed by Lee Lewis

DUEENSLAND THEATRE

Queensland Theatre acknowledges the Jagera and Turrbal people who are the Traditional Custodians of the land on which we work, and their unique relationship with the lands, seas and waterways. We pay our respects to their Elders both past and present, and to all Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples.



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Elizabeth Jameson Chair

The wellspring of *Tiny Beautiful Things*, the author Cheryl Strayed, is truly one of a kind. You may know of her through her debut novel *Torch*, or her fearless memoir *Wild: From Lost to Found on the Pacific Crest Trail*, which was propelled to fame by Oprah Winfrey's book club and later adapted into a film starring Reese Witherspoon. Or you may know her from the inspiration for this very project, the now-legendary advice column Dear Sugar, which she wrote anonymously on the website *The Rumpus* for two years before 'coming out' as Strayed.

Her agony aunt column started "on a lark", as she calls it, but it won multitudes of fans and followers for its intimate, frank advice, intelligently drawing deeply from her own personal life experience to craft something truly captivating and healing.

Now, through the process of stage alchemy, this extraordinary play distils Sugar's impactful, empathic essays from that advice column down into an hour-and-some-change of some of the most heartfelt, warm and inspirational theatre you'll ever see. As Sugar, Mandy McElhinney leads an incredible cast of artists who play a roster of ...some of the most heartfelt, warm and inspirational theatre you'll ever see.

lost soul letter writers, weighed down with secrets, regrets, doubts and grief that they feel they cannot share with anyone other than a faceless confessor behind a keyboard.

The correspondents' cathartic words leap off the page and onto the stage in a timely reminder that our shared humanity binds us together, despite our differences and circumstances, and that beauty can be found even in our darkest moments.

Cheryl-as-Sugar's columns have certainly captured the attention of the entertainment world. Adapted for the stage by Academy Award nominee Nia Vardalos, *Tiny Beautiful Things* was an off-Broadway smash hit when it debuted in 2016, it has recently been adapted into a streaming television show starring Kathryn Hahn, and now our own Lee Lewis is bringing it to life on the Brisbane stage.

All that remains is for you to sit back, open your hearts, and enjoy this tender hug of a play as it reminds you to find joy in the smallest and most seemingly insignificant of things.

Thank you for coming,

— Elizabeth

17 JUN — 8 JUL BILLE BROWN THEATRE

TINY BEAUTIFUL THNGS

BASED ON THE BOOK BY CHERYL STRAYED

ADAPTED FOR THE STAGE BY NIA VARDALOS Co-conceived by Marshall Heyman, Thomas Kail, and Nia Vardalos Directed by Lee Lewis

PRESENTED IN ASSOCIATION WITH TRISH WADLEY PRODUCTIONS

Cheryl Strayed is many things; a wife, a mother, a daughter, a writer, an ex-heroin user and now, an unpaid, online anonymous advice columnist called Sugar.

Amidst the clutter of family life, she receives emails from strangers urgently needing help navigating the contradictions and complexities of life. Sugar replies with candour, offering her own tough, sweet brand of unadulterated advice designed to offer a path of healing and catharsis. What would you tell someone who is unsure about role-playing as a sexy Santa or the father who feels as dead as his lost son?

Academy Award nominee (*My Big Fat Greek Wedding*), Nia Vardalos adapts this New York Times bestselling book into a stage work that is as authentic and human as the real stories it contains. Dare to reach out and embrace this exquisitely vulnerable play and the questions it poses. The advice you receive may surprise you.

The best advice can come from an unlikely source.

CREATIVES

Author Cheryl Strayed Writer Nia Vardalos Director Lee Lewis Set & Costume Designer Simone Romaniuk Lighting Designer Bernie Tan-Hayes Sound Designer/Composer Brady Watkins

Stage Manager Maddison Penglis Assistant Stage Manager Tia-Hanee Cleary

CAST

Letter Writer #2 Sepi Burgiani Letter Writer #1 Stephen Geronimos Sugar Mandy McElhinney Letter Writer #3 Nic Prior

LOCATION

Bille Brown Theatre Queensland Theatre 78 Montague Road South Brisbane

DURATION

95 minutes, with no interval.

WARNINGS

This production contains coarse language, dead black outs, and letters sent by real people seeking advice on all matters of life including complex conversations around life, death, and love. If you have any concerns about the content of the play, please reach out to our Box Office for further information.

The use of photographic or recording equipment is not permitted inside the theatre. The videotaping or making of electronic or other audio and/or visual recordings of this production and distributing recordings or streams in any medium, including the internet, is strictly prohibited, a violation of the author(s)'s rights and actionable under United States copyright law.

If you or someone you know needs information or support, these organisations are there to help:

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PRODUCTION PARTNER



Original New York Production by The Public Theatre. Oskar Eustis, Artistic Director. Patrick Willingham, Executive Director.

Tiny Beautiful Things is presented by arrangement with Concord Theatricals on behalf of Samuel French, Inc. www.concordtheatricals.com.



Nia Vardalos Writer 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.

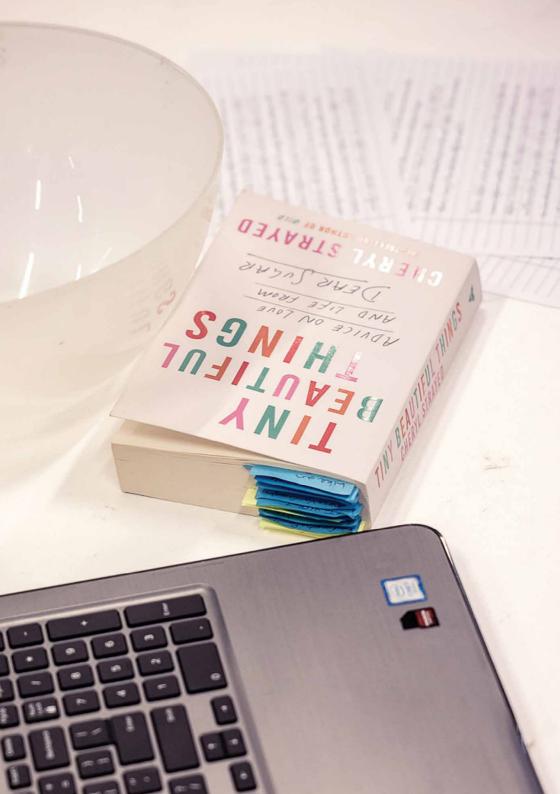
Sugar and the writers of the letters reveal themselves and we find

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





Lee Lewis Director

I have never read another play like *Tiny Beautiful Things*. It is, I think, part of a new wave of writing that is diving deep into emotion. Emotions that are deeply familiar or strangely disorienting. There is no right way to make or receive plays like this, there is no theatrical guidebook for artists or audience. This is not in the tradition of 'the well-made play'. The story, if there is one for you, rises up through an accumulation of moments... much like life. This is, if you like, a new way of trying to create a portrait of life.

In this play I found an extraordinary tribute to the tradition of 'kitchen table wisdom'... a willingness to offer up your experiences, as painful as they are, in the hope that the tiny bits of knowledge hived inside will help a friend survive, will help them through the various awfulness and confusions of life. It is a humane repudiation of the idea that there is ever a 'silver bullet' to solve the mystery of personal pain. It is a timely reminder that compassion, radical sincerity, brutal self-honesty and love are our best tools for building connection and community... that we can and must help each other.

I think every person will find something of themselves inside this play. It can be hard to listen to. It was definitely I think every person will find something of themselves inside this play.

hard to make. I found huge chunks of myself strangely comforted by Sugar's words. And so, no matter how great the cost I knew I had to try and share this experience with you. For all the darkness of the world it allows in, this play is ultimately hopeful. It believes it is possible to help, it believes in love, it believes in courage, it believes in the power of the right words at the right time, it also believes in our ability to survive the absence of the right words... sometimes the right silence is enough.

There was a kitchen table thirteen years ago where a good friend sat with me and helped me to survive the death of my daughter by offering her own experience of loss. This play is a celebration of that kind of generosity. I'd love to dedicate it to Selena, and to everyone who has ever managed to be a Selena (or Sugar, if you like) for someone in their lives.

Thank you for the leap of theatrical faith that this strange but beautifully recognisable play asks of all of us. And thank you to Philip Bacon Galleries who always support our beautiful things, both tiny and big!

— Lee

Lee Lewis, Stephen Geronimos

aure



Creatives

Nia Vardalos Writer



Nia Vardalos is an Academy Award® nominated screenwriter and actor, New York Times bestselling author and a Critic's Pick playwright who recently made her directorial debut with her screenplay, *My Big Fat Greek Wedding 3*. The first

instalment of the franchise earned Vardalos Academy Award and WGA nominations for Original Screenplay as well as Golden Globe and SAG acting nominations. She won Independent Spirit and People's Choice awards for her performance. In its sequels, Vardalos continues to serve as the screenwriter, producer, and star.

Trained in Shakespeare and musical theatre, Vardalos performed in *Twelfth Night* and musicals such as *The Music Man* and *Company*, (winning the Broadway Award.) Vardalos went on to adapt and star in New York Times Critic's Pick *Tiny Beautiful Things*, published by Samuel French (Concord Theatricals). She also became a New York Times Bestselling author with her memoir *Instant Mom* with all proceeds going to adoption charities.



Lee Lewis Director



Queensland Theatre: Family Values, First Casualty, Bernhardt/Hamlet, Return to the Dirt, Prima Facie, Our Town, Mouthpiece, Rice. Other Credits: Griffin Theatre Company: Prima Facie, Family Values, First Love is the

Revolution, Is There Something Wrong With That Lady?, The Almighty Sometimes, Kill Climate Deniers, Eight Gigabytes of Hardcore Pornography, The Homosexuals or 'Faggots', Rice, Masquerade, Gloria, The Bleeding Tree, Emerald City, A Rabbit for Kim Jong-il, The Serpent's Table, Replay, Silent Disco, Smurf In Wanderland, The Bull, The Moon and the Coronet of Stars, The Call, A Hoax, The Nightwatchman, The Literati, The Misanthrope (with Bell Shakespeare); Sydney Theatre Company: Mary Stuart, Honour, Love-Lies-Bleeding, ZEBRA!; Melbourne Theatre Company: Gloria, Hayfever, Rupert; Belvoir: That Face, This Heaven, Half and Half, A Number, 7 Blowjobs, Ladybird; Bell Shakespeare: The School for Wives, Twelfth Night; Australian Theatre for Young People: Battlegrounds, Citizenship; Darwin Festival: Highway of Lost Hearts; WAAPA: As You Like It; NIDA: After Dinner, Big Love, The Winter's Tale; The Hayes Theatre Company: Darlinghurst Nights. Positions: Artistic Director, Queensland Theatre; Artistic Director and CEO, Griffin Theatre Company; Richard Wherrett Fellow, Sydney Theatre Company. Awards: Helpmann Award - Best Play, Best Director The Bleeding Tree; Green Room Award - Best Ensemble, Best Production, Best Director The Bleeding Tree.

Simone Romaniuk Set and Costume Designer



Queensland Theatre: The Almighty Sometimes, Bernhardt/Hamlet, Macbeth, Elizabeth: Almost by Chance a Woman, Venus in Fur, Kelly, Bombshells, Head Full of Love, Fractions, The Little Dog Laughed, Macbeth (with

Brisbane Festival), Australia Day, The Pitch, The China Incident, An Oak Tree, The Removalists, Man Equals Man, Waiting for Godot, Eating Ice Cream With Your Eyes Closed, Beckett x 3, Ruby Moon. Other Credits: Highlights include: State Opera South Australia: La Bohème, Summer of the Seventeenth Doll, Love Burns, Boojum!; State Opera SA/Opera Queensland/NZ Opera: The Mikado; Opera Queensland: The Magic Flute, The Merry Widow, Space Encounters; Royal Northern College of Music, Manchester: La Vie Parisienne; Unicorn Theatre, London: The Hunting Lodge; Greenwich Theatre, London: Three Generations of Women; Ensemble Theatre: Suddenly Last Summer, Clyde's, Honour, Kenny, The Last Wife, Luna Gale, Shirley Valentine, Frankenstein, Casanova; Brisbane Festival/The Danger Ensemble/La Boite: The Wizard of Oz; Sydney Theatre Company: The Crucible, Seneca's Thyestes. Training: Bachelor of Dramatic Art (Design), National Institute of Dramatic Art; Bachelor of Design Studies (Three Dimensional Design), Queensland College of Art. Positions: Creative Director (2015 - 2019), OzAsia Festival, Adelaide Festival Centre: Creative Director/ Designer (2015 - 2019), Moon Lantern Parade, Adelaide Festival Centre; Resident Designer (2012), Queensland Theatre; Festival Designer (2012), Brisbane Festival; Affiliate Artist (2011), Queensland Theatre, Awards: Matilda Award -Best Design Macbeth, Best Design Kelly; Gold Matilda Award - Body of Work 2014, Body of Work 2012; South Australian Tourism Awards 2019 - Best Major Festivals and Events OzAsia Festival.

Bernie Tan-Hayes Lighting Designer



Queensland Theatre: God of Carnage. Other Credits: Opera Queensland: The Marriage of Figaro, The Human Voice, The Call, Festival of Outback Opera; Griffin Theatre Company: Quack, Strange Attractor, Modern International Dead,

Tiger Country, October, King Tide; Sydney Theatre Company: Travesties, Macbeth; Ensemble Theatre Company: The Little Dog Laughed, Ninety, Brooklyn Boy, Are You There, Derrida in Love, The Busy World is Hushed; La Boite Theatre Company: Amigos; NORPA: Mr BBQ, The Flood; Queensland Music Festival: Bob Cats Dancing, Charters Towers the Musical; Erth Visual and Physical; Gondwana, Nargen and the Stars; New Zealand Opera: La Boheme and Eugene Onegin; Pinch Gut Opera: Semele, The Fairy Queen, Orfeo, Dardenus, Idomeneo, Juditha Triumphans, David and Jonathan, Lormindo, Orpheus + Eurydice; Brisbane Festival: Miracle in Brisbane; Sydney Conservatorium of Music: Die Fledermaus, Dialogue of The Carmelites, Pirates of Penzance; Opera Australia: Opera In the Bowl, Meet in Beijing Festival, Yarrabah Community Opera. Positions: Technology and Content Principal, FPOV; Touring Technical Manager/Lighting Designer: Sydney Theatre Company, Melbourne Theatre Company, Belvoir St Theatre; Associate Lighting Designer, Nick Schlieper.

Brady Watkins Sound Designer/Composer



Queensland Theatre: First Casualty, A Dream Play, Othello, Bernhardt/ Hamlet, Metamorphoses, Moth, Wisdom, The Trial. Other Credits: Offside Theatre Company: Sexual Misconduct of the Middle Classes; La

Boite: The Last Five Years, Away, Bigger and Blacker, The Neighbourhood: Dead Puppet Society: SWARM. The Wider Earth (2022 National Tour): THAT Production Company: Sea Wall: Refraction Theatre: The Revisionist: Rocket Boy Ensemble: Reagan Kelly. As Sound Operator: Queensland Theatre: Who's Afraid of Virginia Woolf (with STCSA), Triple X, Our Town, Antigone; Woodward Productions: Sweet Charity, Edges: A Song Cycle; Underground Broadway: Spring Awakening, Don't Call Me Ishmael; La Boite: Neon Tiger. As Sound Consultant: Queensland Theatre: As You Like It. Drizzle Boy, Family Values, The Almighty Sometimes, Robyn Archer: An Australian Songbook, White Pearl, Taming of The Shrew. Training: Bachelor of Music Technology. Queensland Conservatorium of Music. Positions: Composer/Sound Designer, Artist Company, La Boite (2021-22). Awards: Matilda Award Nomination - Best Sound Design Sea Wall. Queensland Reconciliation Award - Partnerships Othello.

Maddison Penglis Stage Manager



Queensland Theatre: Debut. Other Credits: As Stage Manager: Woodward Productions: The Mystery of the Valkyrie; shake & stir theatre co: Animal Farm (2021 National Tour), QLD Youth Shakespeare Festival (2020); The Naughty

Corner Collective: *Maze*; Brisbane Powerhouse; QPAC. As Assistant Stage Manager: shake & stir theatre co: *Fantastic Mr Fox* (2019-2023),



A Christmas Carol (2018-2022), The Twits, Jane Eyre (2019, 2022 national tour), Revolting Rhymes & Dirty Beasts (2019 national tour), George's Marvellous Medicine (2018 national tour), QLD Youth Shakespeare Festival (2018); Bleach Festival: Chez Nous on Chevron; Sydney Festival 2019 (Carriageworks); Sydney Festival 2018 (Sydney Opera House). Positions: Event Coordinator, Sydney Festival 2022-23 (Sydney Opera House); Assistant Event Coordinator, Sydney Festival 2021 (Town Hall). Training: Bachelor of Fine Arts (Technical Production), QUT.

Tia-Hanee Cleary Assistant Stage Manager



Queensland Theatre: As You Like It, The Almighty Sometimes. Other Credits: As Lighting Operator: Brisbane Powerhouse: A Girl's Guide to World War, All Fired Up, Diary of a Madman, Speed: The Movie The Play, Diehard: The

Movie The Play, Titanic: The Movie The Play; Room to Play: The Eisteddfod. As Deputy Head of Props: Opera Australia: The Phantom of the Opera (2022/2023). As Props Assistant: GWB Entertainment: An American in Paris (Brisbane). As Assistant Stage Manager: Opera Queensland: Songs of Love and War, The Marriage of Figaro, Opera Under the Stars, Don Giovanni, A Flowering Tree, Peter Grimes; Troop Production: The Lonesome West. As Venue Technician: Brisbane Festival: Cassie Workman: Giantess, Orpheus, Eurydice. As Visual Graphic and Presentation Designer: Matilda Awards (2018 & 2019). Training: Bachelor of Fine Arts (Technical Production), QUT.

Trish Wadley Productions Co-Producer

Queensland Theatre: Debut, Other Credits: As Producer, Trish Wadley Productions: Spring Restaurant, Somerset House: Fresh Lines; Park Theatre, London: The Shape of Things, Clybourne Park; Lyric Theatre, London: Get Up Stand Up! The Bob Marley Musical; Dead Puppets Society: The Wider Earth (Natural History Museum, London and Australian Tour); Trafalgar Studios: The Red Lion; Theatre 503: Burning Bridges: Apollo Theatre, London: My Night With Reg. As Executive Producer, Defibrillator Theatre: Southwark Playhouse: A Lie of the Mind; Trafalgar Studios: Speech & Debate; Grange Hotel and Langham, London: The Tennessee Williams Hotel Plays; Finborough: Hard Feelings and The One Day of the Year; Langham, London: The Armour; Langham Place, New York: Insignificance. Positions: Member, Society of London Theatres (SOLT); Member, UK Theatre; Recipient, Stage One Bursary; Director, The Uncertainty Principle; Trustee, The British Australia Society. Awards: Olivier Award - Best Original Score or Orchestration Get Up Stand Up!; Olivier Award Nomination - Best Entertainment and Family The Wider Earth, Outstanding Achievement in Affiliate Theatre The Red Lion, Best Revival My Night With Reg.

Mandy McElhinney

Cast

Sepi Burgiani Letter Writer #2



Queensland Theatre: Family Values. Other Credits: Noosa Arts Theatre: Money and Friends, Three Wives and a Funeral; Blue Room Theatre: The Secretaries; Chico State Theatre: Arabian Nights, Revengers Tragedy, A Doll's

House, Chamber Music, Anonymous. Writing: Chico State Theatre: *Phase Forward*. Training: Bachelor of Arts in Theatre, Chico State University.

Stephen Geronimos Letter Writer #1



Queensland Theatre: Diving for Pearls (with Playclub). Other Credits: Belloo Creative: Boy, Lost; PIP Theatre: The Boys; Metro Arts: Anatomy of a Suicide; La Boite: Angel Gear; QUT: The Last Days of Judas Iscariot, Three Sisters, The

Crucible, As You Like It, What It Feels Like, Edward II; Ausdance: Qinkan; Kooemba Jdarra: The Mack. Film: The Beehive, The Queen & I, Scrub. Training: Bachelor of Fine Arts (Acting), QUT. Positions: Acting Facilitator (2023), Voices of The Valley Film Festival. Awards: Matilda Award — Lord Mayor's Award for Best New Australian Work Boy, Lost (Playwright, Katherine Lyall-Watson).

Mandy McElhinney Sugar



Queensland Theatre: Debut. Other Credits: Sydney Theatre Company: The Tempest, Appropriate, Mosquitos, In The Next Room (Or The Vibrator Play), The Beauty Of Queen Lenane, The Metamorphosis, A Streetcar Named Desire,

The Great, Don's Party, Rough Draft #6; Belvoir Theatre: Cinderella, Forget Me Not, B Street — Ep 3; Griffin Theatre Company: Dreams In White; Brink: When The Rain Stops Falling; Melbourne Theatre Company: Di Viv And Rose, The Hypocrite, Life After George, Pride and Prejudice, Twelfth Night, Three Sisters, The Balcony; Playbox: This Way Up, Holy Day, Twilight Series, Inside 2000; Black Swan: The Glass Menagerie. Film: The Bank. Television: The Exhibitionists, Love Child, Bad Mothers, Squinters, House of Hancock, Hyde & Seek, Paper Giants, Comedy Inc, Bed Of Roses, MDA, Wakefield, True Story with Hamish and Andy (Season 2), The Legend of Gavin Tanner, Howzat! Kerry Packer's War, Moody Christmas, At Home with Julie, Bed of Roses, The Alice, Welcher and Welcher, Stingers, Kath & Kim, Water Rats, Naked: Stories of Men. Awards: AACTA Award — Best Guest or Supporting Actress in a Television Drama Howzat! Kerry Packer's War, Logie Award Nomination — Most Outstanding Actress in a Series Paper Giants: Magazine Wars.

Nic Prior Letter Writer #3



Queensland Theatre: Debut. Other credits: Dead Puppet Society: Holding Achilles; Gob Squad: Creation (Pictures for Dorian); CalArts: Oedipus, Antigone, Hamlet, Our Iliad, And Tell Sad Stories of the Death of Queens: Eleshmarket

Co: *Well That's Oz, You Are Frogs*. **Television**: *In Our Blood*. **Training:** Bachelor of Fine Arts (Acting), California Institute of the Arts.



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Philip Bacon Galleries is delighted to be sponsoring Queensland Theatre's *Tiny Beautiful Things*.

My gallery has an interesting exhibition calendar for the second half of 2023 planned, with exhibitions by Margaret Olley, John Honeywill, William Robinson, and Rick Amor amongst others to come.

I am delighted to be associated with Queensland Theatre and I hope that like it, Philip Bacon Galleries will continue to bring stimulating and challenging art to all Queenslanders.

I wish you a great night at the theatre.

Philip Bacon June 2023

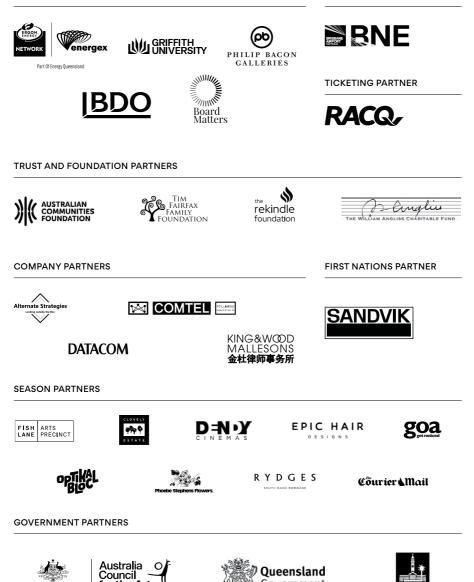




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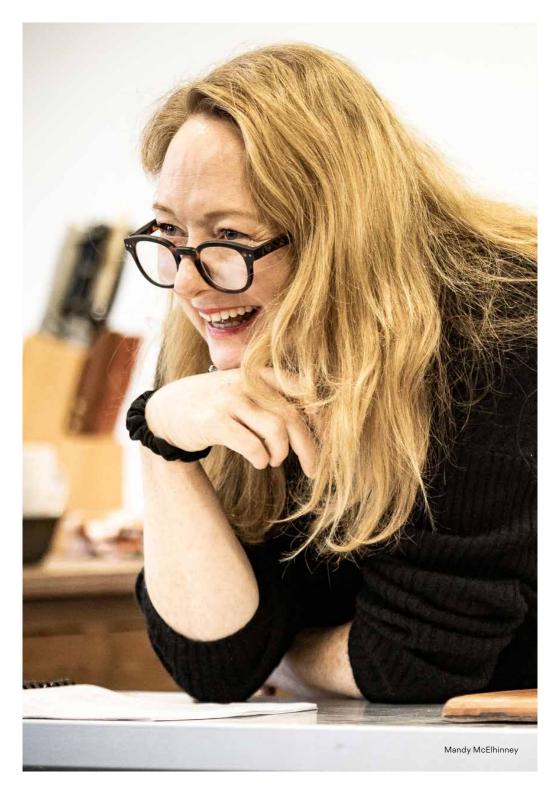
SCENIC ARTIST Leo Herreygers

ASSISTANT SCENIC ARTIST Jo Herreygers COSTUME MAINTENANCE

Tracey Leino
PRODUCTION ELECTRICIAN
Lauren Sallaway

LIGHTING PROGRAMMER/OPERATOR Claire Browning LIGHTING OPERATOR Brandon Duncan SOUND TECHNICIAN Nickolas Forrester

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS PHOTOGRAPHY Brett Boardman









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