



BURNING MOM



MARCH 27—APRIL 20, 2025

Granville Island Stage



ARTSCLUB
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COMPANY

**ENDLESS
POSSIBILITIES**
on every
stage.

BURNING MOM

By Mieko Ouchi

Burning Mom is staged by arrangement with Ian Arnold, Catalyst TCM Inc, www.catalysttcm.com.

Burning Mom received its world premiere at the Royal Manitoba Theatre Centre, Winnipeg, MB, in April, 2023.

The Playwright acknowledges the generous support of Workshop West Playwrights' Theatre, fu-GEN Theatre Company, and the Royal Manitoba Theatre Centre in the development of this script.

MARCH 27—APRIL 20, 2025

Granville Island Stage

CAST

Susinn McFarlen Dorothy

CREATIVE

Mieko Ouchi Director

Patrick Rizzotti Set Designer

Kirsten McGhie Costume Designer

John Webber Lighting Designer

Kim Clegg Projection Designer

Ashley Au Sound Designer

Ana Camacho Assistant Set Designer

Rebecca Mulvihill Stage Manager

Harlow Nguyen Apprentice Stage Manager

LAND ACKNOWLEDGEMENT

The Arts Club Theatre Company acknowledges the traditional, ancestral, and unceded territories of the [x̣ṃəθḳ'əỵəm](#), [Skwxwú7mesh](#), and [səlilwətał Nations](#), the original stewards of this land on which we operate. We would like to ask those visiting or living here to share their thanks by supporting local Indigenous artists and communities. Acknowledging is always a start to supporting; as we step forward, we wish to be better partners, healers, and helpers to our Indigenous neighbours.

WELCOME

Welcome to the Arts Club at our Granville Island Stage for your performance of *Burning Mom*. We're so happy that you've joined us, and we hope this visit inspires you to come back to see live theatre at the Arts Club again.

Did you know our name, Arts Club Theatre Company, comes from our 1958 origins as a private club for visual artists, musicians, and actors? In 1964, a group of twenty or so local theatre-practitioners and theatre-lovers banded together to convert an attic above that pub into a small performance space—our original home at the Seymour Street Stage.

From our origins as a small, scrappy pub theatre to our current existence as one of Canada's largest theatrical institutions, we have spent 61 years fostering pathways and opportunities for artists and craftspeople, creating a framework for art to flourish in our city. Distinctively, the Arts Club was created by local artists for the local community: we are Canadian-made and Canadian-proud!

So, we invite you to take in our just-announced 2025–2026 season. Here, at our Granville Island Stage, four new productions will delight you, starting with the heartwarming *Louisa May Alcott's Little Women* for the holidays, followed by Mark Crawford's *The Golden Anniversaries*, the satiric comedy *Franklinland*, and the hilarious *The Play That Goes Wrong*.

At our Stanley Industrial Alliance Stage, our season ticket series includes the hit musicals *Disney's FROZEN* and *Come From Away*, the reinvention of the classic *A Doll's House*, the emotional journey of *Kimberly Akimbo*, and the intrigue of *Dial M for Murder*.

At our Newmont Stage at the BMO Theatre Centre, check out Savage Society's *You used to call me Marie...*, WONDERHEADS Theatre's *A WONDERHEADS Christmas Carol*, and Adrian Glynn McMorran's *You're Just a Place That I Know*. We're also bringing back the sweet tones of *The Gingerbread Men* for a week of holiday serenading.

Come join us next season for this exciting lineup of endless possibilities at the Arts Club. You can renew or purchase your season tickets package right now online at artsclub.com, or by calling our box office at 604.687.1644. And please consider adding a tax-deductible donation to support our not-for-profit charitable organization in the work we do on stage and in this community. Can't wait to see you there!

Ashlie Corcoran Artistic Director
Peter Cathie White Executive Director



MUSICAL THEATRE INTENSIVE

Applications are now open!



Aimed at young artists (ages 12–19) with a passion for singing, dancing, and acting, the Arts Club’s Musical Theatre Intensive (MTI) exposes students to the kind of rigorous training typically found only at the post-secondary level and begins their journey toward becoming a true “triple threat” (actor/singer/dancer).

Junior program dates: Jul 7–18, 2025

Senior program dates: Jul 2–Aug 8, 2025

Apply by Apr 27, 2025

For more information, check our website

<https://artsclub.com/education/musical-theatre-intensive#about>



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NOTES FROM THE PLAYWRIGHT & DIRECTOR

LIFE CHANGES IN THE INSTANT. THE ORDINARY INSTANT.

—Joan Didion, *The Year of Magical Thinking*

I never imagined I would lose my father the way that I did. I never conceived of the grief my mother would feel and the path she would set herself on to find her way back. I never imagined I would be so moved that I would be compelled to write this story down and try to share it with all of you.

And yet here I am. Here we are. Humans together in the theatre. In the fading shadow of a worldwide pandemic. All trying to find our own way back. Not to an old life we used to inhabit, but something new and unknown.

Because, as Joan Didion articulates so clearly and concisely, that's what life is. An experience that is both maddeningly ordinary and astonishingly surreal.

I hope that watching this play, that something rings true for you. That you take hope from it. That it opens a little crack somewhere in the back of your mind where an idea hides. To do something extraordinary and brave. And that you do it.

Huge love and thanks to Ashlie Corcoran and Peter Cathie White for believing in this story and trusting me to bring it to Arts Club audiences, in collaboration with this astonishing actor, Susinn, and this incredibly talented creative team. I am so grateful for all that each of you brought: your heart, your craft, your artistry, and your care.

Special thanks to Workshop West Playwrights' Theatre, fu-GEN Theatre Company, and the Royal Manitoba Theatre Centre in the development of this script. And to my agent Ian Arnold, who has shepherded the process so kindly.

Heartfelt thanks to all the artists who have performed or read the play, dramaturged, or directed readings throughout its development: Brenda Kamino, Diana Belshaw, Krista Jackson, Jennifer Villaverde, Valerie Planche, Maralyn Ryan, Vanessa Porteous, Susan Coyne, Jules Melvin, and most deeply Nicola Lipman, who was my partner for so many years, and Lisa Horner and Megan McArton, who breathed life into the premiere.

I would also like to acknowledge the love and support of my husband, Kim Clegg, who supported me so deeply through the tragic time of my dad's passing and all that came before and after. I love you and am lucky to have you as a partner in this grand adventure.

Finally, I would like to acknowledge the incredible generosity and trust of my mother, Dorothy Ouchi, and my brothers, Kevin and Jason Ouchi, for encouraging me to share our story and giving me the freedom to portray them in the play. You are brave and loving humans, and I am forever grateful to be your daughter and sister.

This is for my dad—Eugene.

Mieko Ouchi



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AN INTERVIEW WITH MIEKO OUCHI

Burning Mom is based on an extraordinary true story—and an extraordinarily personal one for playwright and director Mieko Ouchi. The Mom of the play’s title is based on her own mother, who indeed did make a cross-border “pilgrimage” (as Ouchi put it) in her RV to the countercultural Burning Man festival in Nevada. In anticipation of the Arts Club’s production of *Burning Mom*, which Ouchi is directing, she discussed the process of writing and developing this unique play, its real-life inspiration, and what she hopes others find in seeing it performed on stage.

Arts Club: Can you speak a bit about the origins of this play and what inspired you?

Mieko Ouchi: Well, this play really grew out of a tragedy in my family, which was the very sudden and unexpected passing of my father in 2010. He was diagnosed with pancreatic cancer. At Christmas time he wasn’t feeling well, and after a huge round of tests, we were told the shocking news that he had six months to live, which seemed unimaginable, and then he passed away about three weeks later. So, it was a devastating event in our family. Of course, we were all heartbroken, but none more so than my mother, who had married my dad when she was 19. She had spent her entire adult life with him, and she was just so lost. Me and my brothers spent the year following that helping her find her way back into just sort of being alone and dealing with so many things that my dad had always done, the many life-things that you do as a partner and you don’t think about until the person is gone.

We got through that really tough first year, and at the end of the year my mom called my brothers and me into the family room. She said, “Oh my goodness, we’ve had such a horrible year—I really think that we should go on a family trip together.” And in that moment, all I could think of was, like, some sort of an all-inclusive in Mexico where people would bring me drinks. Then my mother said, “I think we should go to Burning Man.” And we kind of sat there. All I can describe is a stunned silence. This was not something that you would expect from my mother. My mother was not the kind of person you would look at and say, “Oh, that’s a natural fit.” It was a shock.

The following weeks were a journey of discovery about what had inspired her to go. It turned out that it was this thing that she felt compelled to do because my dad had mentioned it once. After my brother had gone to Burning Man, he said one time, “We should go to Burning Man.” Somehow that stuck in my mother’s head, then came back to her all this time later in the midst of her grief. Then what happened was that she went—and I don’t think she even put it in these kind of terms—on a pilgrimage.

It was a life-changing experience, and the play and the story really grew out of me witnessing the change that it made in her and in all of us. It came out of her telling the story. She started telling the story at grief support groups that she was part of and to family and friends, and everybody was so moved by it. I’m even getting moved talking about it. It really inspired me to think, “Is there a wider audience that I can share this story with?” Because the story actually isn’t a story of grief—it’s actually a story of hope and finding your way back to the joy in your life. And whoa, can’t we all use a roadmap for that? We all have a use for that, right? Especially after COVID—I started writing this just before COVID hit—I thought even more about why a story like this might be needed. We were all kind of trying to find our way back to joy in life again, and also realizing that we couldn’t go back to life the way it used to be. It was going to be a new normal. And I think that’s actually what my mom was grappling with, in that decision to make this life-changing trip.

AC: Did you ever attend Burning Man as research, or as preparation for telling this story?

MO: I did a lot of research, but unfortunately I haven’t been able to go yet. But it is still my mother’s dream that we all go with her. Every year she wants to go—she’s 76 now, and she’s still scheming to find a way to go back!

AC: Does she still have the RV?

MO: We do still have the RV, although we’re probably going to sell it very soon, because it is so huge and dangerous to drive. That has not changed! But we almost went last year, the year of the big mud fest, and that would have been hilarious if that was the year that we had gone. That would have been another play! As a family, we’re trying to find a way to get there together.

AC: Did you know from the start that this would be a one-woman show in terms of the formal structure of the play? If so, why did you feel that was the form best suited to tell this story?

MO: That’s a great question. I think I originally envisioned the show as a one-person show because one of the initial images that stuck in my mind was the image of my mom as a single little tiny person in the middle of this vast empty desert. The desert provides the most beautiful images of Burning Man—the scale and the size of these minuscule humans in this really incredibly empty space. I think it’s a beautiful metaphor for that sense of loneliness and how solitary we are as humans in those moments of grief. As I started to write it, and I started to imagine these other characters, I thought maybe it’s more powerful if it’s performed through the eyes of this single person experiencing it.

AC: As an actor yourself, have you played the character of Dorothy in any production of the play, or if not, have you considered taking on that role?

MO: Ha! I'm still too young. I'm not 63 yet, so I've got a few more years to go. Honestly, it's been incredibly exciting to be the playwright and the director. I feel like in some ways my role with the story has been to be the caretaker of it, because I'm representing my family and all these people, and they're all real people. I feel that responsibility very heavily on my shoulders, to make sure that it is done in a respectful and truthful way. It has felt really great to kind of be in the driving seat, as playwright and director, and then to invite these incredible actors—like Susinn McFarlen, who is just an amazing performer—to collaborate with me on this. It's been so exciting to invite women actors who are at the height of their powers as performers to come and take on a massive role, a real tour-de-force part.

AC: Has your mother attended a performance of the show? If so, what did she make of it?

MO: Yes! She attended a reading on Zoom early on. It was cute because she was very nervous about attending, and so she said, "I don't want to attend on Zoom under my own name." So, we went through this elaborate process of using my husband's Zoom account so that she could sign in as somebody else. We made sure that her screen was off, and my brothers were sitting with her, and I said, "Okay, you're completely anonymous. No one knows you're here." She said, "What if I cry?" And I said, "It's okay. No one will see you and we'll have the microphone off. You can just listen." Then, at intermission they had the chat box open, and when folks started chatting, saying kind things like, "Oh, I'm really enjoying this." My mom got on there and started typing, like, "Hi, everybody! It's me, Dorothy. I'm the real Dorothy." She completely outed herself! In that moment, fear kind of left, and she was in.

In Winnipeg when we premiered the play at the Royal Manitoba Theatre Centre, again, she had that last-minute fear but wanted to come to a preview and said, "I don't want you to tell anybody that it's me." And I said, "Okay, that's going to be weird. They're going to be like, 'Who's that person sitting with Mieko who looks a lot like her?'" And she said, "Just tell them I'm your aunt." So, people came to us and asked, "Oh! Is this your mom?" and I'm like, "Nooooo, this is my... Aunt Helen." And they were like, "Okay... sure."

It's been really incredible to have so many people come and want to talk to the two of us, and especially to my mom, to just share their own stories of loss and the journeys that they had gone through. They had such a

sense of kinship with my mom, and it was just so beautiful to see them connecting.

AC: What are you most looking forward to in directing the Arts Club production of *Burning Mom*?

MO: I'm so thrilled to come out to Vancouver and to the Arts Club to build this new production with such a talented team. I've worked in film and TV out there. I've directed workshops, but I haven't directed a full production at a theatre in Vancouver yet. So, I'm really excited to come out as an artist to experience that. The Granville Island Stage is such a beautiful space. It's got such a long history. Ultimately, I'm just excited to meet Vancouverites, to have them encounter the play and my mom and hopefully have some great conversations.

AC: Finally, what do you hope Vancouver audiences will take away from the show?

MO: Well, I think even though the play came out of my dear father's passing, it's become a story about life, about finding that path back to life again. I hope people leave lighter, and with that sense of possibility that they could do something fantastical like what my mom did, because it *is* totally possible. Her journey inspires me every day, and I hope it inspires them to go and do something that they maybe previously thought was out of reach. I know they can do it.



SELF-PORTRAIT BY DOROTHY OUCHI WHILE AT BURNING MAN.

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THE COMPANY



Ashley Au Sound Designer

Arts Club Debut

Other Theatre at the Royal Manitoba Theatre Centre: *Casey and Diana* (Theatre Aquarius) *Little Women*, *The*

Lehman Trilogy, *among men* (TPM), *Burning Mom*, *Sexual Misconduct of the Middle Classes*, *Trouble in Mind* (Citadel), *Orlando*; 2022/23 National Mentorship Program; *The Year of Magical Thinking* (Prairie Theatre Exchange)

Other training: B.Mus (Jazz Performance) Brandon University, School of Music. Ashley Au (she/they) is a Winnipeg-based bassist, composer, sound artist, arranger, and queer creative. A multifaceted musician, Ashley specializes in the upright and electric basses—performing, touring, and recording extensively.



Ana Camacho

Assistant Set Designer

For the Arts Club *Ring of Fire*

Other Theatre Set Designer: *TomorrowLove* (Telus Studio Theatre, UBC); Set Designer:

Anatomía del Desastre (Concept Design)

Film & TV as Art Director: *El Encargo* (short film); as Production Designer: *Manos* (Concept Design)

Other Ana is a Colombian industrial designer who has explored multiple creative approaches across interdisciplinary fields which led her to connect her background with the performative arts. She has experience as an art director and set designer in theatre, film, and commercials. Currently, Ana is a MFA student specializing in Scenic Design at UBC.



Kim Clegg Projection Designer

Arts Club Debut

Other Theatre *Brimful of Asha* (Citadel Theatre); *Songs My Mother Never Sung Me*, *Paper*

Song (Concrete Theatre)

Film & TV *Anash and the Legacy of the Sun-Rock* (APTN); *Equus* (CBC, *The Nature of Things*)

Other Innovation in the Arts Award (Edmonton Mayor's Evening); Distinguished Alumni Award (MacEwan University); Best Animation award, AMPA. Founding Board Member of the Alberta Post Production Association.



Susinn McFarlen Dorothy

For the Arts Club *Mom's the Word*, *Mom's the Word 2: Unhinged*, *Henry and Alice: Into the Wild*, *Sexy Laundry*, *Under the Influence*, *August*

Osage County, *To Kill a Mockingbird*, *The Birds & the Bees*, *Vanya & Sonya & Masha & Spike*

Other Theatre Susinn has worked across the country in theatres including the Yukon Arts Centre, the Palace Grand in Dawson City, the Centaur, the Belfry, the Citadel, Western Canada Theatre, Alberta Theatre Projects, Prairie Theatre Exchange, Manitoba Theatre Centre, the Caravan Farm Theatre, Canadian Stage, Touchstone Theatre, the Richmond Gateway, the Playhouse, and, last but not least, our beloved Bard on the Beach.

Other Susinn has been nominated for seven Jessie Richardson Awards and has won two for her work in the leading roles of *Hello, Dolly!* at the Playhouse and *Menopositive: The Musical* at the Firehall. Susinn is a co-founder of WET INK COLLECTIVE, an organization whose mandate is to promote gender equity in film and on the stage by mentoring and supporting women writers. *When I heard back in May of 2021 that there was a play being developed called Burning Mom about an older woman who goes to Burning Man, I wanted to be in it even before I'd read it. Call it instinct, or intuition, but I thought this one was meant for me. I contacted Mieko, who I didn't know at the time, and asked her to send me a copy of the script, but alas, it was early days so she wasn't ready to send it out. But here we are, almost 4 years later, and in a few moments I will be standing on the stage in front of you, telling you Mieko's wonderful story. I have to thank my family, especially my best friend and ex, Kevin McNulty, with whom I share two amazing kids, Lucy and Dylan. God knows we tried to keep them from this business, but to no avail. Both of them, all of us now, are trying to make a living telling stories. What can I say—we are the lucky ones. Thanks for coming, and thanks again, Mieko. What a wonderful tribute to your mother you have written.*




the Lazy Gourmet

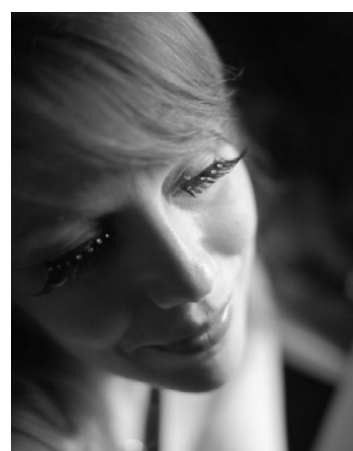
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Kirsten McGhie Costume Designer

For the Arts Club Kirsten started with the Arts Club in 2009, working in the props department. She accepted the position of Assistant Head of Wardrobe for the 2013–2014 season, and the following season she became the Head of Wardrobe. **Other** Kirsten has worked as a designer and builder with many companies, including Leaky Heaven Circus, New World Theatre, Mortal Coil, The Electric Company Theatre, UBC Theatre, Studio 58, and the Vancouver Opera. Kirsten has also worked to assist internationally renowned visual artists Geoffrey Farmer and Brian Jungen with the execution and installation of their works of art, and she is the resident Burner.



Rebecca Mulvihill Stage Manager

For the Arts Club *Dolly Parton's Smoky Mountain Christmas Carol, Beneath Springhill, The Cull, The Wedding Party, The Shoplifters, Topdog/Underdog, King Charles III, The (Post) Mistress, Good People, Educating Rita, Do You Want What I Have Got? A Craigslist Cantata*
Other Theatre Nine seasons with Bard on the Beach; *The Father, Bunny, Stupid F*cking Bird* (The Search Party); *Anywhere But Here* (Electric Company); *La Traviata* (Vancouver Opera) and many more in Vancouver, Victoria, Calgary, and beyond. **Other** Rebecca is a graduate of the University of Victoria.



Harlow Nguyen Apprentice Stage Manager

Arts Club Debut
Other Theatre recent credits: as Assistant Stage Manager: *A Sleigh Ride Christmas Carol* (Caravan Farm Theatre); as Stage Manager: *To Perfection* (Shameless Hussy Productions); as Apprentice Stage Manager: *Hamlet, Twelfth Night* (Bard on the Beach)
Other Harlow Nguyen is an emerging stage manager and theatre technician based on the unceded lands of the Musqueam, Squamish, Tseil-Waututh, and Kwikwetlem Nations. They are a graduate of the University of British Columbia's Theatre Design & Production programme. Harlow is thrilled to be a part of *Burning Mom*.



Mieko Ouchi Playwright & Director

Arts Club Debut
Other Theatre as Director: *Burning Mom* (RMTTC), *Pride and Prejudice, A Brimful of Asha* (Citadel); *Alberta Kitchen Party* (ATP); *Songs My Mother Never Sung Me* (Concrete); as Assistant Director: *Disney's Frozen* (Citadel); as Playwright: *The Silver Arrow, Nisei Blue, The Blue Light, The Red Priest*
Other Associate Artistic Director (Citadel); 2023 Lieutenant Governor of Alberta Distinguished Artist Award.



Patrick Rizzotti Set Designer

For the Arts Club *Million Dollar Quartet, Ring of Fire*
Other Theatre Design credits include world premieres and designs throughout the United States, Canada, and Europe for companies including Pittsburgh Opera, Vancouver Opera, Pi Theatre, Premiere Stages, Florida Rep, and numerous Off-Broadway productions in NYC.
Film & TV credits include Art Direction for *America's Got Talent, The Dr. Oz Show,* and *The Today Show*
Other Patrick has received the USITT Scenic Design Award, had his work presented as part of the OPERA America Director-Designer Showcase, and is a Lincoln Center Director's Lab Alumni. MFA: Carnegie Mellon School of Drama. Memberships: IATSE ADC 659 and USA 829. patrickrizzotti.com



John Webber Lighting Designer

For the Arts Club *Forgiveness, Kinky Boots, The Great Leap, The Matchmaker, Angels in America, Parts One and Two, Onegin, Do You Want What I Have Got? A Craigslist Cantata, Scar Tissue, Venus in Fur, Black Comedy, Saint Joan, Master Class, Philanderer, Becky's New Car, Age of Arousal*
Other Theatre selected credits: *The Wizard of Oz, Chelsea Hotel, The Sound of Music, No Exit* (Western Canada Theatre); *Rigoletto, The Marriage of Figaro* (Vancouver Opera)
Other John is honoured to be working with such a wonderful group of artists and also to be back with the Arts Club. A longtime designer of both sets and lighting, he has had the privilege of working with some of Canada's most talented and adventurous artists.

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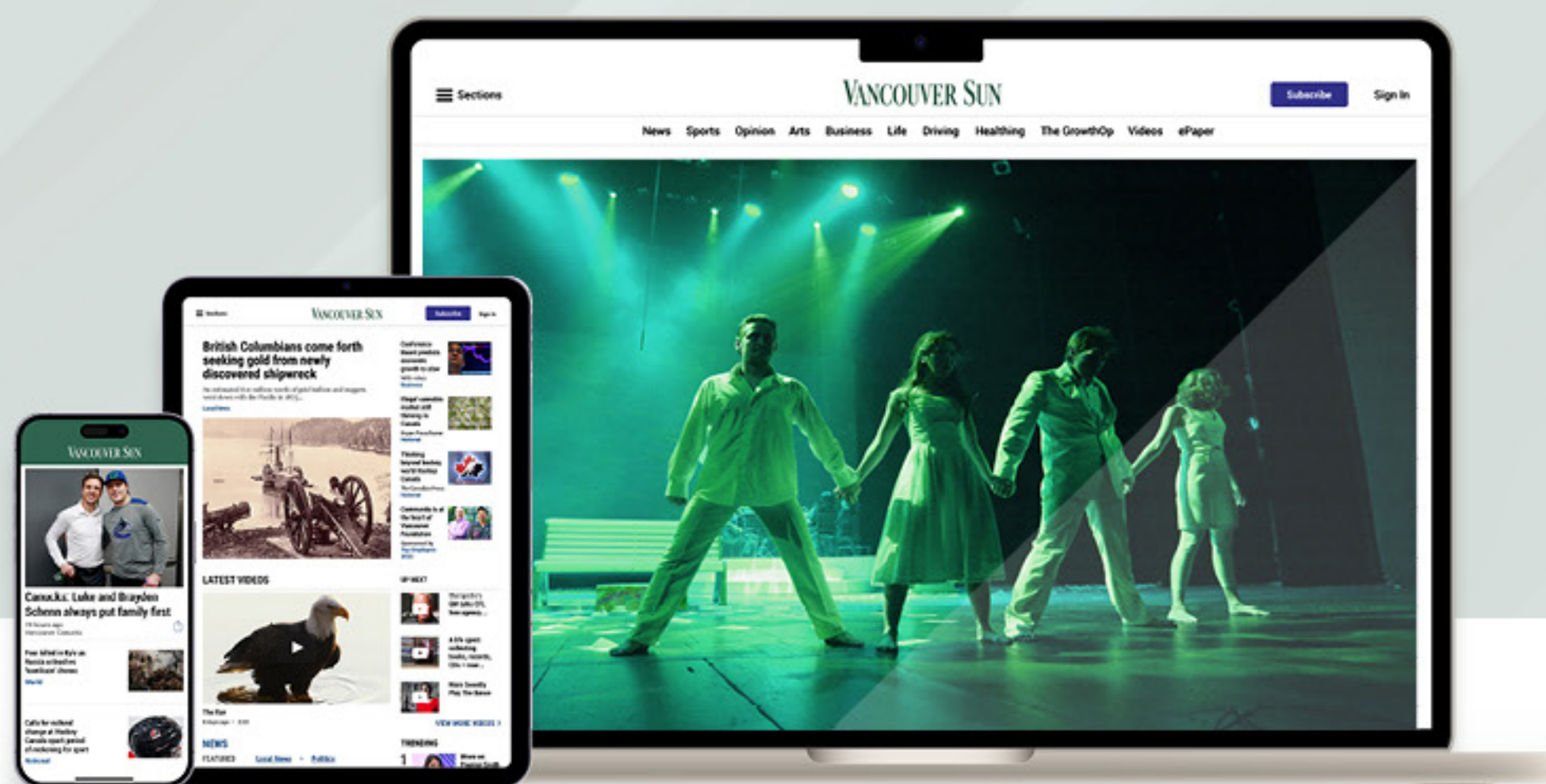
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