

A woman with blonde hair, wearing a white blouse and tan trousers, sits in a wooden armchair with a patterned seat. She is in a library, with bookshelves filled with books in the background. To her right is a small round table with a framed photograph of two people on it.

the year of
Magical Thinking
by Joan Didion

A TOP 100 BOOK OF THE 21ST CENTURY
– *The Guardian*

 PRAIRIE THEATRE
EXCHANGE

April 9–21 / 2024
PTE.mb.ca

WELCOME TO THE SHOW



Joan Didion's book is synonymous with healing. Countless people have shared their stories with us of how, after losing a loved one, they were gifted a copy of *The Year of Magical Thinking*. "This will help," they were told. And it did. Time and time again.

This beautiful, inspiring, and uncompromising exploration of the process of grieving is profound in its clarity. It is truly one of those examples of how a specific story can touch on the universal.

With a team of all-Manitoban artists, we engage and explore one of the most celebrated novels of the 21st Century.

These courageous artists are sharing this story with such heart, and such rigour, it is impossible not to be moved. By the sheer force of the story, and by the brilliant artistry that has brought it to life.

As we head toward spring and renewal, here is an offering to give us hope.

With love,

Thomas Morgan Jones

Artistic Director

Lisa Li

Managing Director

Each season, we prioritize making space for Indigenous stories. This is our answer to the calls of the Truth and Reconciliation Commission. To make space, to support, and to be led by Indigenous collaborators.

This is our way of honouring Treaty 1 Land, the traditional territory of the Anishinaabeg, Cree, Dakota and Red River Métis nations and the home of many other Indigenous nations and Peoples.

All of us at PTE are committed to reconciliation, and to moving forward, together, in a good way.

You are welcome here in this space on Treaty 1 Land. Thank you for supporting Indigenous voices, and for supporting the live performing arts in Winnipeg.

PRAIRIE THEATRE EXCHANGE IS PROUD TO PRESENT

the year of
Magical Thinking
by Joan Didion

Featuring:

MONIQUE MARCKER

RODRIGO BEILFUSS *Director*

DANA LEITOLD *Set Designer*

BRENDA MCLEAN *Costume Designer*

ADAM PARBOOSINGH* *Lighting Designer*

ASHLEY AU *Original Composition & Sound Designer*

KATIE HOPPA *Stage Manager*

EMMA WELHAM *Assistant Director*

RUNTIME: 90 MINUTES, NO INTERMISSION

AUDIENCE ADVISORY: This show contains meditations on grief, death & mortality, terminal illness and prolonged hospitalization.

* Indicated designers on this production are represented by the Associated Designers of Canada, IATSE Local ADC659.

“**The Year of Magical Thinking**” is presented by arrangement with Concord Theatricals on behalf of Samuel French, Inc. www.concordtheatricals.com

DIRECTOR'S MESSAGE

Joan Didion had a surgical ability to notice and to dissect cultural and political movements and ideas that was entirely her own. Known for her sense of clarity and precision of language, she composed some of the most memorable and incisive essays about American life in the late 20th century. And then she was faced with the unfathomable: death, and the profound loss that follows when loved ones leave this world. Where do they go? How do we carry on?

She did what she could: she wrote. It was an inevitability.

Widely regarded as the first great secular book about grief, “The Year of Magical Thinking” became a global phenomenon; it spurred a Netflix documentary (“The Centre Will Not Hold”), it inspired other artists, it gave us language to handle the complicated and often contradictory feelings we experience in such life-altering circumstances.

And then, of course, the book spun off into the play, premiering in 2007 on Broadway with Vanessa Redgrave as “Joan”, under the direction of Sir David Hare. And here you are, now, witnessing this extraordinary text in a new, all-Winnipeg production.

Actor Monique Marcker “embodies” Joan Didion - or rather, the essence of Didion. It is not meant to be an impersonation. The point is the words; the sonic experience of being inside a mind that is desperately trying to piece together the events that led to a cataclysmic moment.

Joan Didion led an adventurous and somewhat eccentric life, mingling with Hollywood types and the high society of New York intellectuals. She did not hide the fact that her life was a privileged one. In our current world of hyper connectivity, we are all too painfully aware of the injustices that unfold in places far from us. We are over-exposed, daily. It is overwhelming.

And so, it is easy for us today to dismiss much of Didion’s perspective as “out of touch”. What does a fancy, rich white lady from New York have to say about suffering, really?!

Well, as it turns out, quite a bit: 90 (very detailed) minutes of it - as you’ll see and hear in this play. I find it impossible not to be absorbed by the titanic size of her brain, and the expansive canvas of her soul. And, most importantly: her privilege did not prevent her from experiencing the profound pain that binds us all together.

No one is spared. That is what she is here to tell you.

The Year of Magical Thinking, the play, was Didion's bridge project between writing the book and what followed next: her final memoir, "Blue Nights", which centred around her daughter, Quintana. Though the play carries the same title as the book about her life with husband John Dunne, "The Year of Magical Thinking" onstage goes further than the book, as it begins to address events about Quintana that were then expanded into "Blue Nights" – do get both books after seeing this play and dive deeper into one of the great minds of our time.

I hope you leave the theatre feeling a bit more connected to this precarious and beautiful project we call Humanity.

Rodrigo, xo

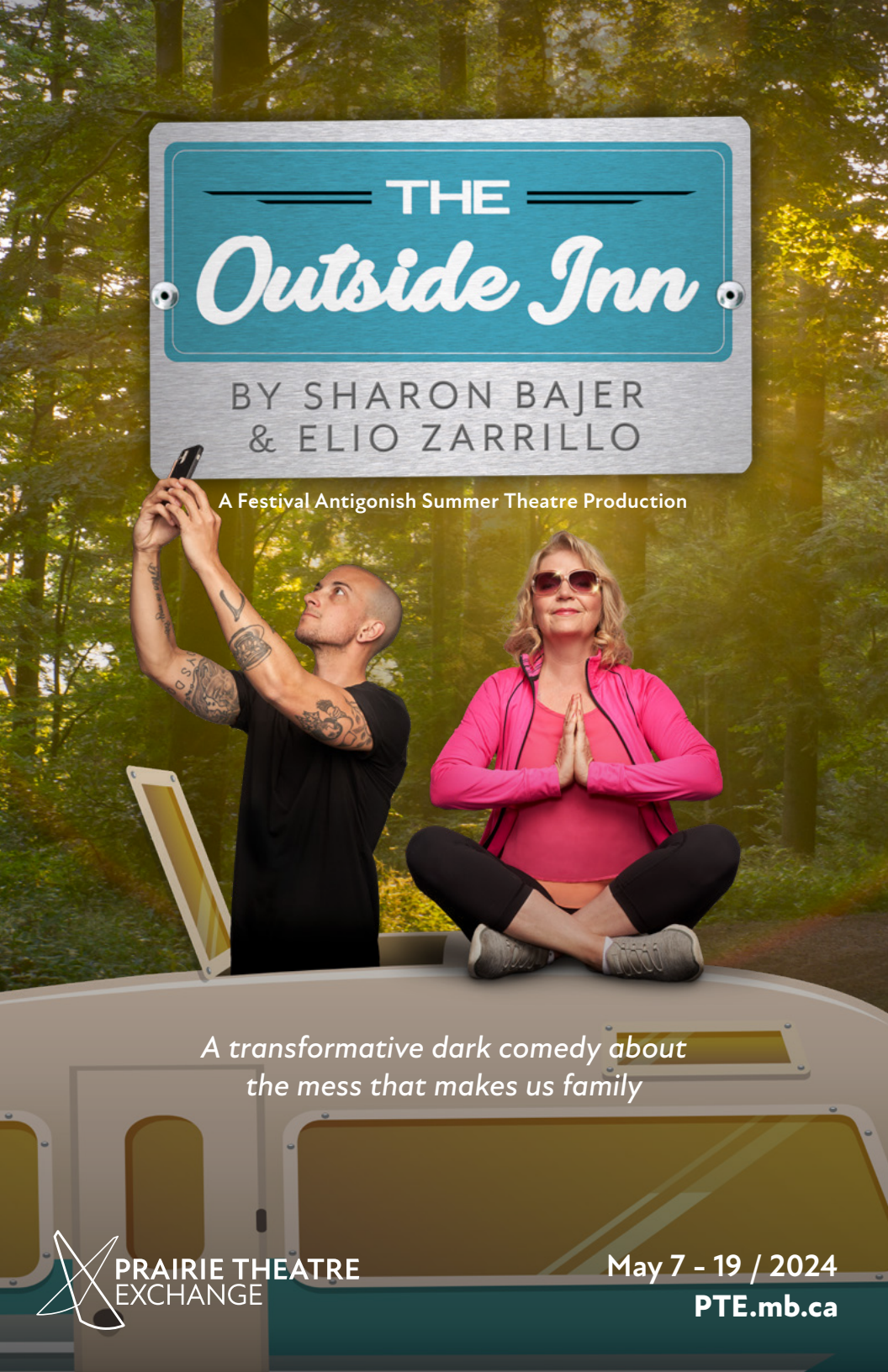
Recommended Reading
inspired by *The Year of Magical Thinking*

JOAN DIDION
THE YEAR OF
MAGICAL
THINKING

JOAN DIDION
BLUE
NIGHTS

Pick up a copy of *The Year of Magical Thinking* & *Blue Nights*

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A man with tattoos is taking a photo of a sign with a woman meditating in the background. The sign is blue and white with the text 'THE Outside Inn' and 'BY SHARON BAJER & ELIO ZARRILLO'. The background is a lush green forest.

THE *Outside Inn*

BY SHARON BAJER
& ELIO ZARRILLO

A Festival Antigonish Summer Theatre Production

*A transformative dark comedy about
the mess that makes us family*



PRAIRIE THEATRE
EXCHANGE

May 7 - 19 / 2024
PTE.mb.ca

MEET THE PLAYWRIGHT

Joan Didion

Joan Didion was born in Sacramento in 1934 and graduated from the University of California, Berkeley, in 1956. After graduation, Didion moved to New York and began working for *Vogue*, which led to her career as a journalist and writer. Didion published her first novel, *Run River*, in 1963. Didion's other novels include *Play It As It Lays* (1970), *A Book of Common Prayer* (1977), *Democracy* (1984), and *The Last Thing He Wanted* (1996).



Didion in the rehearsal studio where the play she adapted from her book 'The Year of Magical Thinking' was taking shape. (Photo by Fred R. Conrade/The New York Times, March 2007)

Didion's first volume of essays, *Slouching Towards Bethlehem*, was published in 1968, and her second, *The White Album*, was published in 1979. Her nonfiction works include *Salvador* (1983), *Miami* (1987), *After Henry* (1992), *Political Fictions* (2001), *Where I Was From* (2003), *We Tell Ourselves Stories in Order to Live* (2006), *Blue Nights* (2011), *South and West* (2017) and *Let Me Tell You What I Mean* (2021). Her memoir *The Year of Magical Thinking* won the National Book Award for Nonfiction in 2005.

In 2005, Didion was awarded the American Academy of Arts & Letters Gold Medal in Belles Lettres and Criticism. In 2007, she was awarded the National Book Foundation's Medal for Distinguished Contribution to American Letters. A portion of the National Book Foundation citation read: "An incisive observer of American politics and culture for more than forty-five years, Didion's distinctive blend of spare, elegant prose and fierce intelligence has earned her books a place in the canon of American literature as well as the admiration of generations of writers and journalists." In 2013, she was awarded a National Humanities Medal by President Barack Obama and the PEN Center USA's Lifetime Achievement Award.

Didion said of her writing: "I write entirely to find out what I'm thinking, what I'm looking at, what I see and what it means." She died in December 2021

MEET THE ARTISTS



Monique Marcker (she/her)

“Joan”

Monique is honored to be performing in Prairie Theatre Exchange’s production of *The Year of Magical Thinking* by Joan Didion, an intensely personal yet universal experience of bereavement. She is so grateful to be working with an amazing team at PTE to bring Didion’s words to life. Her most recent theatre credits include *None of This is Happening* (Theatre Projects of Manitoba), *Liams* (Manitoba Theatre for Young People); *All Fall Down* (Prairie

Theatre Exchange). Monique dedicates this performance to her incredible sister, Deb who navigating her own grief with surpassing honesty and strength, continues to inspire her.



Rodrigo Beilfuss (he/him)

Director

Rodrigo Beilfuss is a theatre director, an actor and an educator. He is currently the Artistic Director of Winnipeg’s Shakespeare in the Ruins (SIR). Rodrigo was a member of the Stratford Festival between 2015 and 2019, working as an actor and director. He trained at the University of Winnipeg (BA Honours) and at the Birmingham Conservatory for Classical Theatre in Stratford; and he also holds an MA in Classical Acting from the London Academy

of Music & Dramatic Art (LAMDA) in England. As a director, Rodrigo is a graduate of the Michael Langham Workshop for Classical Direction from Stratford. Born in Santa Maria, Brazil, Rodrigo left his tropical home in 2001 when he was 18 and relocated to Winnipeg (...from fire to ice). Since then, it’s all been one long and wonderful ride full of mistakes and pleasures, some wins, discoveries, and these days a lot of time spent with his little children, or buying books he’s never going to have time to read, or listening to podcasts while doing laundry late at night and wondering ‘how did I get here?!’



Dana Leitold (she/her)

Set Design

Favourite set design credits: *Mix Tapes From My Mom* (Royal Manitoba Theatre Centre); *Glad To Be Here* and *Edward II* (Theatre by the River); *The Dark Lady* (Shakespeare in the Ruins & Shakespeare on the Saskatchewan, SATAward Nomination for Production Excellence); *Hamlet* and *Timon of Athens* (Shakespeare in the Ruins); *Fame* (Winnipeg Studio Theatre); *Plé* (Manitoba Theatre for Young People); *Red Earth* (One Trunk Theatre &

Theatre Projects Manitoba, Evie Award for Outstanding Production Design); *The Cherry Orchard* (Theatre by the River & Echo Theatre). Coming this August to Whittier Park: *Shifting Gears - Bike and Circuses 2024* (Green Kids Inc.)

MEET THE ARTISTS



Brenda McLean (she/her)

Costume Design

Brenda is a theatre designer, creator, and director working on Treaty 1 Territory in Winnipeg, MB. Recent work has included: costume design on *Everything Has Disappeared* (Mammalian Diving Reflex, Unit Productions, Prairie Theatre Exchange); costume design on *Feast* (Prairie Theatre Exchange); set and costume design on *Phase 4.0* (Alexandra Elliott Dance); set and costume design on *Antigone* (Sick + Twisted Theatre & AA Battery Theatre); and co-creator/co-director/co-production designer on *Bike and Circuses* (GreenKids). This summer Brenda will be costume designing for *Shakespeare in the Ruins* and co-creating on *Shifting Gears - Bike and Circuses* with Green Kids Inc. Brenda has been Head of Wardrobe at Prairie Theatre Exchange for the last 13 seasons; she will miss this position.



Adam Parboosingh (he/him)

Lighting Design

Adam Parboosingh is thrilled to be designing the lighting for *The Year of Magical Thinking*. Adam is an associate professor in the Department of Theatre and Film at the University of Winnipeg where he teaches theatre design. Some of his more recent productions include designing the scenery for Theatre Projects Manitoba/RMTC's *Among Men*, Winnipeg Jewish Theatre's *Pals*, *Shakespeare in the Ruins' Twelfth Night*, *Dry Cold's The Prom* and *Yaga* at RMTC. He designed the lighting for WJT's *Narrow Bridge* and Sick + Twisted's *Antigone*. Other productions include designing scenery and lighting for UW's *Stupid Fucking Bird*, lighting for UW's *The Drowning Girls*.



Ashley Au (she/they)

Original Composition & Sound Design

Ashley Au is a bassist, composer, sound artist, arranger and queer creative. A multifaceted musician, Ashley performs, tours and records extensively. As a composer and sound artist, Ashley's work can be found on stages and galleries internationally. Projects include work with John K. Samson; multidisciplinary artist Christine Fellows; composer/trumpeter Chuck Copanace; and internationally acclaimed hip-hop outfit Super Duty Tough Work. Ashley is the Artistic Director of Cluster: New Music + Integrated Arts. Previous theatre productions include *The Lehman Trilogy*, *Among Men*, *Burning Mom*, *Sexual Misconduct of the Middle Classes*, *Trouble in Mind*, and *Orlando* at the Royal Manitoba Theatre Centre.

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MEET THE ARTISTS



Katie Hoppa (she/her)

Stage Manager

Raised and trained on Treaty 1 territory, Katie is a queer, neurodivergent stage manager based in Winnipeg. Recent credits include: *The Mountaintop* (RMTC), *The Waltz* (PTE), *Afterlight* (Rainbow Stage, Walk&Talk, The Keep); *The Little Mermaid*, *The Wizard of Oz* (Rainbow Stage); *Twelfth Night* (Shakespeare in the Ruins); *Summer of Semitism*, *Narrow Bridge* (Winnipeg Jewish Theatre); *A Charlie Brown Double Bill* (Manitoba Theatre for Young

People); *Bad Parent* (PTE, vAct, SoulPepper). Love to Kristjan, Rupert, and Juniper for all their support this season.



Emma Welham (she/her)

Assistant Director

Emma is delighted to be a part of bringing this beautiful play to Winnipeg audiences. She has previously worked for companies including The Arts Club, The Citadel Theatre, Vertigo Theatre, Royal MTC, Shakespeare in the Ruins, Shakespeare on the Saskatchewan, Theatre Projects Manitoba, Theatre by the River, Full of Days Collective, Dry Cold Productions, and Manitoba Theatre for Young People. Up next, she will be directing Jez Butterworth's

The River for the Winnipeg Fringe. "We tell ourselves stories in order to live" – Joan Didion.
emmawelham.com



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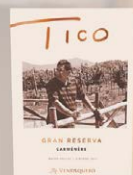
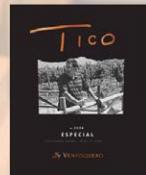
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Head of Lights & Sound

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Head Carpenter

Lovissa Wiens

Production Assistant

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Lighting Crew

Annika Binding *

Eric Bosse *

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Scenic Painter

Shauna Jones *

Scenic Carpenter

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Ms. Charmayne Rietze
Ms. Kelley Ritchie
Ms. Candace Rudy
Ms. Linda Shum

Mrs. Caitlin Spencer
Karen Stach
Mrs. Gina Sunderland
Colleen Sveinson Geary
Dr. James Tam
Mrs. Danielle Tetrault
Ms. Marjorie K. Turton
Carol & Hugo Unrah
Allan & Mavis Whicker
Trina White
Anonymous gifts (5)

Member Level – \$30-\$59

Karin Archibald & Marcel Carignan
Mr. Steve Ash-Hamon
Ms. Cindy Bass
Mr. Peter Baumstark
Mrs. Marilyn Adele Begg
Ms. Diane Bewell
Margaret Brook
Ms. Jane Burpee
L. K. Butler
Ms. Anita Cauldwell
Mr. Mike Chapin
Ms. Catherine Clement
David & Kathleen Connor
Ann Connors
Roger & Cathy Coss
Bob & Anna Coulter
Ms. Eveline Cruise
Ms. Jo-Ann Cumming
Alison Darling
Ms. Lynn K. Davidson-Young
Irene de Graaf
Milly & Dave Dyck
Thomas HJ Donnelly
Mrs. Lois Edwards
Ms. Carolyne Epp-Fransen
Ms. Naomi Gerrard
Ms. Bonnie Greschuk
Mrs. Elizabeth Higgins
Ann Hodges
Valerie Holden-Rushworth
Ms. Joan Hook
Ms. Katie Inverarity
Mr. Lars Jansson
Dolores Jardine
Paul & Joelle Johnson
Wayne & Donald Johnson

ONGOING SUPPORT

Ardith Johnston
Ms. Joanne Johnston
Pam & James Johnston
Ms. Doreen Kerr
Fred Kisil & Dixie Mitchell
Lindsey Koepke
Ms. Cathy A. Kozak
Ms. Holly Kraft
Ms. Anne M. La Tour
Ms. Michelle Lagassé
Marion Lewis
A. Paige Lewis
Kevin Longfield
Ms. Sharon R. Love
Allison MacHutchon
Ms. Florida Martel
Ms. Suzie Martin
Mrs. Margret Morrison
Carter Trim & Brenda Myall
Ms. Melissa Novecosky
Ms. Lorraine Elizabeth O'Leary
Andrea Paci
Ms. Claire Pankiw
Elizabeth Pate & Ross Kilfoyle
Denise F. Penley
Arlette Penner
Mrs. Debra Peppler
Mr. Allen Hart Pitch
M. Plett-Lyle
Roberta K. Rackel
Mrs. Catherine Robert
Mrs. Roslyn Roberts
Ms. Betty Rogers
Carol Runions
Mr. Robert Sales
Karn Sandy

Janet Scarth
Laurel Schellenberg
Walt Schoenhausen
Claudia Schmidt
Ms. Ruth Shead
Miss Nicole Shimonek
Terry & Sharon Silcox
Harry A. Skene
Ms. Inga Skundberg
Robert & Margaret Smith
Cathy Sokolowski
Wilma A. Sotas
Mr. Robert W. Stalker
Ms. Eleanor Steeg
Kevin & Gladys Stewart
Chris & Linda Sunde
Mrs. Sheila L. Tarte
Veronica Ternopolski
Grace Tokle
Donna & Wayne Tremblay
Mr. Chris Trimble
Mrs. Roberta Tuner
Amy Unger
Mrs. Yvonne A. Viklund
Gloria & Doug Waldron
Christa Walkden
Dr. Lori Wallace
Veralyn Warkentin
Ms. Alissa Watson
Ms. Emma Welham
Ms. Stephanie Wiens
Mrs. Antoinette Wildman
Ms. Susan P. Wiste
G. Wood
Ms. Kim Zeglinski
Anonymous gifts (8)

Donor Level – up to \$29

Ingrid Bolbecher
Ms. Briar Boyko
Peter Buehler
Canadian Play Supporter
Rod Chongva
Jan Currie
Robert & Gail Derby
Jo Dixon
Ron & Denise George
A.J. Gorospe
Sue A. Haralson
Ms. Sharon Harman
Mrs. Arlene Hintsa
Brett Howden
Sheila Jonasson
Alison Kennedy
Susan Knight
Mr. Siegfried Laser
Susan Loewen
Evan & Dustin Maydaniuk
Eleanore McMahan
Cairn A. Moore
Mr. Sean Richens
Dolores Rintoul
Ms. Heather Russell-Smith
Ms. Elspeth Sangster
Mr. Colin Simm
Louise Smith
Murray W. Vint
Ms. Leslie Watson
Janis Weirbicki
Ms. Susan Wellman
Joyce Zink
Anonymous gifts (7)

An artistic illustration featuring four hands in different colored sleeves (teal, yellow, pink, green) pouring wine from bottles into glasses. The bottles are orange, purple, and green. The wine is shown as flowing streams. The central text 'PTE PAIRINGS' is in a bold, yellow, sans-serif font, with a yellow fork icon hanging below it. The background is a light pink rectangle on a teal background.

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