

# THE HEART OF THINGS

## Ariel's audition

spoken word opera  
for actors and soundtrack  
text by Wanda R. Graham  
music by John Plant

Time: Present, early spring / fall, two years later

### Characters

LES SR, Daddy, Big Daddy  
43, owner/captain of boat/enterprise The Heart of Things

ARIEL  
42, Les Sr.'s brother, was a fisher

JUNIOR, LES JR,  
23-4, son of Les Sr, fisher

BREN  
23-4, Les Jr's twin, fisher

PEARL  
63, Les Sr's Mother, widow

CASEY DELUCCA  
22, student, fish packer

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Music copyright 2020 by John Plant

## Note from the composer

Wanda Graham's play deals with the struggle for gender equality, sexual identity, suicide, sexual abuse, generational tensions, the intricate web of family relationships, all within the context of the ecological and economic realities of the fisher's life. It manages to do this without preaching, by creating indelible, moving characters and thrusting us into their very particular world. My intention is to shape this world, by creating a medium in which the often subconscious drives behind their actions can be revealed.

The actors speak to a pre-recorded soundtrack, which sustains their rhythmically notated speech.

**Les Sr., 40** is the patriarch of his fishing enterprise. He devotes considerable energy to his business, but he is contemptuous of Fisheries regulations and frequently finds himself in trouble as a result. In his spare time he is an artist, creating strange and magical objects and covering them with sparkles, and seeking solace in his guitar. He has two children, twins, Les Junior and Bren, abandoned by their mother when they were three.

When a boy, **Junior (22-23)** was raped repeatedly by his uncle Ariel, but he has never told anyone. His father's consistent disregard for Fisheries regulations torments Junior, both because of the environmental damage it causes, and because it threatens the future of the enterprise. He turns his anger and frustration inwards, against himself.

**Bren (22-23)**, non-binary, aspires to be accepted as a fisher in this male-dominated culture. They are empathically sensitive to Junior, hopelessly in love with Casey, continually riffing on nanotechnology, while keeping things straight in their potato patch.

**Ariel, 38**, married but unable to have children of his own, has been disabled by a shark attack. Except for his mother Pearl, he is distrusted and disliked by the family, and he responds to their hostility by destroying what he can't have.

**Nan (Pearl, 60)**, Poppie's widow and the mother of Les and Ariel, tries to maintain a fragile peace in this tumultuous household. Her initial girlish spirits are worn down by the tragedies which befall her family.

**Casey, 21**, fish packer, is a young, intelligent, beautiful woman who will not let herself be the prisoner of a romantic relationship if it prevents her from realizing her dreams. She is loved by three members of the family: Junior, Les Sr, and Bren, and she ricochets indecisively among them.

\_John Plant

# The Heart of Things, Ariel's audition

## Excerpt I.

Wanda Graham

John Plant

ARIEL

4/4

Flute

go-in out ev'-ry day ex-pec-tin a mi-ra-cle, that what's broke's gon-na

Timp.

Bass Drum

steady pulsation Timp./Bass drum

4

LES SR.

fix it - self just be-cause you wish it Lie de-tec-tin glasses

Timp.

ominous brass chords

Bassoons

7

ARIEL

Two wives y' had that died A - del-la got the job a' of-fi-cer o-ver t' Fish'-ries thought y'd tell her a thing or two

Bass Drum

Harp

Harp

Harp

10

'bout fish-in so y'in-vite her to y' bed she run out on y' week be-fore the wed-din'

(Timp echoes so y'invite her to y'bed)

Harp

13

I been mar-ried eigh - teen years that's my some-thin' to your nu - thin times three

Harp

## Excerpt II

16  $\text{♩} = 60$  LES SR. ARIEL

You did-dle my son don't lie what I done I took ad - van-tage of your boy I s'-pose

Vibr./Harp alternating

Timp.

21

but not with-out ap-pre-ci-a-tin He was sleep-in in-no-cence ly-in there

25

When have I e-ver seen a-ny-thin so per-fect mouth eye-lash-es on his cheek

30

that what pos-sessed me to pull back the sheets and have a look at your son

Harp

Fl.

34 LES SR.

in his jammies no won-der I seen a lie in youreyes ev-'ry day we was to-gether

39

## ARIEL

we don't have chil-dren of our own Con-stance is right I shoot blanks 'n I

Vibr/Harp alternating

Marimba (w.strings)

43

ne - ver seen a - ny-thing so sweet and pure some-times as that boy

Fl.

47

y' hear a - bout kids that look like an-gels but he real - ly did

Harp

51

ly - in there sometimes an an - gel fal - len t' pil - low

Timp.