

# THE HEART OF THINGS

## Bren'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

Text copyright 2018-2019 by Wanda R. Graham  
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

# I.6 Bren's audition (singing)

Wanda Graham

John Plant

**JUNIOR** ♩ = 120 **BREN**

sing me a song a-bout poop it's our birth-day It's a flaw o' hu-ma-ni-ty that what goes in

**BREN**

got-ta come out We got-ta breathe we got to eat and darn it all if we have-n't got to

**BREN**

poop This is my song a-bout na - no - tech-no - lo-gy how it put an end to poop

**BREN** *ff* laughs, facing the CCT cameras

*mf* c' - mon aint you wat-chin this

*Junior climbs out on the cross bar.* **BREN** **JUNIOR**

*(rapidly pulsing violin figurations)* I see what you're do - in clear as I see that gull Sing!

**BREN**

I hear you ev'-ry mor-ning I know your diff'-rent ways to poop from a sa - tis - fy - in' dum-pin

**BREN**

to push-in out the Ti - tan-ic to squi-shy oy-ster beads ploop ploop ploop you've had 'em ev'-ry

**BREN**

one This is my song a-bout na - no - tech-no - lo-gy and how your poo-pin' days r' done

*Junior shoves his pipes under his arm, swings down and slips the noose around his neck.*

## I.6 Bren's audition

♩ = 63  
BREN

Nine months we grew to-ge-ther in a sac of clou-dy wa-ter y come out ten mi-utes a-head o' me

Piano (w. string tremolo)

4 BREN

y' go so-lo back say-in t' me 'car-ry on.' I hope yer wat-chin from a big ole crow's nest in the sky

Bass pizz.

8 BREN

see t' way Dad-dy's knees buck-led just now not be-cause he knows the se-cret

11 BREN

Y' swal-lowed the key to his pre-cious safe He don't know I ne-ver told him I kin-da like the my-st'ry of it them

14 BREN

fin-din it at the au-top-sy but there's no au-top-sy there's no bo-dy I tole ya check the rope!

*f* *mp*

17 **BREN**

17 may-be fish got you al-rea-dy some-day some fel-la like me is gon-na catch the shark that ate the

20 **BREN**

♩ = 52

20 fish that ate the bel-ly out-a my big bro-ther can you tell me where you're head-ed give me a

25 **BREN**

25 sign so as I can be the one to find you give us a mo-ment's peace