

THE HEART OF THINGS

Junior'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

I.5, Junior's audition

Wanda Graham

John Plant

Lento $\text{♩} = 42$

JUNIOR

Measures 1-6 of the musical score. The vocal line begins with a whole rest, followed by the lyrics: "You been here seen ev'-ry-thing our mo-ther who run a-way". The piano accompaniment features a Bass Clarinet part with a *p* dynamic and a Timp/Piano part. The time signature changes from 2/4 to 3/4 and back to 2/4. A triplet of eighth notes is marked with a '3' above it.

7 JUNIOR

Measures 7-11 of the musical score. The vocal line continues with the lyrics: "Ca-sey the old man you seen all what I done with my life". The piano accompaniment continues with the Bass Clarinet and Timp/Piano parts. The time signature changes from 2/4 to 3/4. A sextuplet of eighth notes is marked with a '6' above it.

12 JUNIOR (continuing steady timp. beat)

Measures 12-13 of the musical score. The vocal line continues with the lyrics: "Should it end here don't want no ser-vice in church don't ring no". The piano accompaniment continues with the Bass Clarinet and Timp/Piano parts. The time signature changes from 3/4 to 2/4 and back to 3/4. A triplet of eighth notes is marked with a '3' above it.

14

Measures 14-15 of the musical score. The vocal line continues with the lyrics: "bells for me in the house of 'the fish - ers of men'". The piano accompaniment continues with the Bass Clarinet and Timp/Piano parts. The time signature changes from 3/4 to 2/4 and back to 3/4. A triplet of eighth notes is marked with a '3' above it, and a sextuplet of eighth notes is marked with a '6' above it. A Bass Drum part is introduced, labeled "Bass Drum (echoing Junior)", with accents (>) over the notes.

16 JUNIOR

Measures 16-17 of the musical score. The vocal line continues with the lyrics: "no >prea - cher cal - lin the ga-ther-ers of fish to 'ce - le - brate the life of'". The piano accompaniment continues with the Bass Clarinet and Timp/Piano parts. The time signature changes from 3/4 to 2/4 and back to 3/4. Accents (>) are placed over the notes in the vocal line.

4

18

JUNIOR

in "sor-row for the death of.." pro-mise no fish in the sea no bums in the pews

♩ = 60

JUNIOR

III.1 Junior's audition

An - ces-tors dance in my head mo-no-liths in an-cient stone claim my mind as their

Marimba (continuing 16th-note movement)

Cello

6

own lash-less eyes bal-ding heads ghosts they shuf - fle be - fore me in the

10

same track I have no choice but fol-low they are my voice soun-ding through me and a - cross me I am a

15

drum-skin Piano/horn I sound my fam'-ly's song

f Cello

Cello, bass tremolo

25

eyes sewn shut in grief that can - not grieve they paint me with rhy - thm and

29

co - lour their re - gret for the old land the old ways

$\text{♩} = 72$

29 Cello

Vla, Vc trem.

Marimba

35

down through lay - ers of skulls dus - ty and stained un - til my bones lit - ter the bo - tom of

35

Contrabassoon

41

time suck - ing in and out with the tide for - e - ver

41

Marimba

 $\text{♩} = 60$

45

ghost crabs fid - dler crabs wave an arm in gree - ting

45

Engl. horn

Marimba/Pno.

Cello

49

they sense me mo - ving in their u - ni - verse now an im - pres - sion a gra - vi - ty hol - ding my

Bells (oct. higher)

53

dust to a crack in a cra - ter one cell pro - clams to in - fi - ni - ty the

57

mys - te - ry of who I was now I am one of the dead

Piano

Contrabassoon