# THE HEART OF THINGS

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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## **COMPOSER'S NOTE**

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.

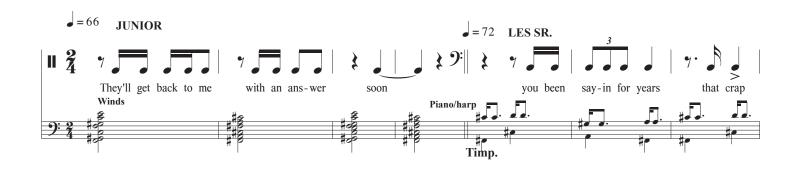
**Bren (22-23),** non-binary, aspires to be accepted as a fisher in this male-dominated culture. They are empathically sensitive to Junior, hopelessly in love with Casey, continually riffing on nanotechnology, while keeping things straight in their potato patch.

**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.

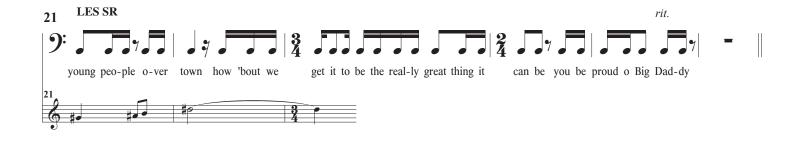
**Casey, 21,** fish packer, is a young, intelligent, beautiful woman who will not let herself be the prisoner of a romantic relationship if it prevents her from realizing her dreams. She is loved by three members of the family: Junior, Les Sr, and Bren, and she ricochets indecisively among them.

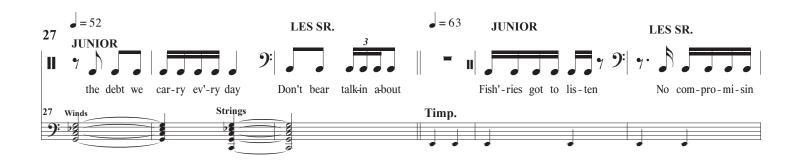
-John Plant

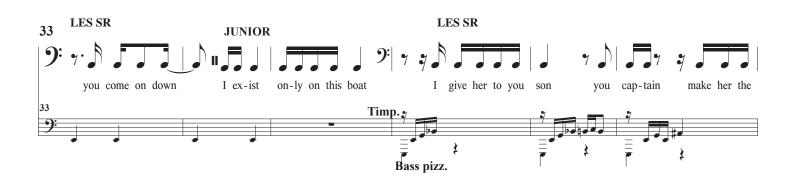


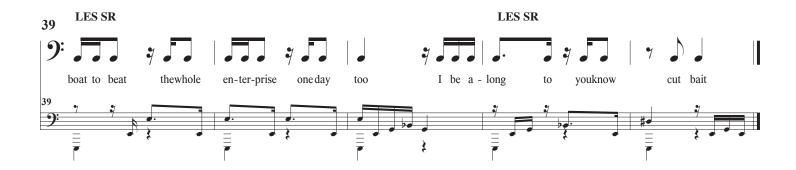












# The Heart of Things, II.1. Les

### COMPUTERIZED VOICES OVER STATIC:

'....wind gusts to 70Ks.... A man and a woman were swept to sea at Spinney's Cove....'





