

# THE HEART OF THINGS

I

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, I.5. Les

♩ = 66 JUNIOR

♩ = 72 LES SR.

They'll get back to me with an answer soon you been say-in for years that crap

Winds Piano/harp Timp.

8 LES SR

a-bout sig-ni-fi-cant fish and sus-tain-a-bi-li-ty no no not what I meant pro-per li-cen-sing 'n

Vc & Cb pizz./timp.

14 LES SR

'at build this up the way you think it should be hold your head up high you want mo-dern thingslike

Clarinet Alto flute

21 LES SR

young peo-ple o-ver town how 'bout we get it to be the real-ly great thing it can be you be proud o Big Dad-dy

rit.

27  $\text{♩} = 52$  JUNIOR LES SR.  $\text{♩} = 63$  JUNIOR LES SR.

the debt we car-ry ev'-ry day Don't bear talkin about Fish'-ries got to lis-ten No com-pro-mi-sin

27 Winds Strings Timp.

33 LES SR. JUNIOR LES SR.

you come on down I ex-ist on-ly on this boat I give her to you son you cap-tain make her the

33 Timp. Bass pizz.

39 LES SR. LES SR.

boat to beat thewhole en-ter-prise one day too I be a - long to youknow cut bait

39

## 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....'

5  $\text{♩} = 63$

13  $\text{♩} = 90$  LES SR. (singing)

The o - cean she take you she take you bit by bit one way or a no - ther how -

20 LES SR.

e - ver long it takes Heart and soul flesh and bone take ev' - ry

*pp*

26 LES SR. LES SR.

scrap of you she will

CONSTANCE'S VOICE (on CB) Must be thirty vessels in the sea lanes.  
CONSTANCE'S VOICE (CB) ...waiting for Heart of Things, big Daddy

Don't talk a - bout her

*mp*

33 LES SR

beau - ty talk a - bout her ap - pe - tite in - stead.

CONSTANCE'S VOICE (on CB)  
If you're not coming, can you say?  
Adella won't hold sea lanes closed much longer.