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Dramatic Publishing



Based on Lois Lowry's companion piece to
The Giver, *Gathering Blue* tells a suspenseful tale
of the power of creativity to fight brutality.

Gathering Blue

Adaptation by Eric Coble

Gathering Blue

“Thought-provoking.”

—Portlandfamily.com

“Vivid, earnest and engrossing.”

—The Oregonian

“An enchanting and empowering story that shows the power of art and the importance of thinking for yourself.”

—PDX Kids Calendar

“Deep and complex ... The world of the future is pictured as desolate and despairing, but in the children we see the light of brighter possibilities.”

—Dennis Sparks Reviews

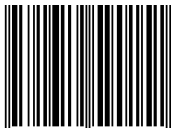
“It’s prickly ... peeking under the blanket of comfortability to stare at the fears and dangers underneath. The sharp whooshing sound of 250 or so middle-school kids inhaling in shock together can fill a theatre in a most exhilarating way.”

—Oregon Arts Watch

Drama. By Eric Coble. Adapted from the book by Lois Lowry. Cast: 4 to 15m., 4 to 15w., extras as desired. In an apocalyptic future where children are kept like animals and human life is cheap, young Kira learns the ugly truth about the powers controlling her world. A gifted weaver, her talent catches the attention of the Council of Guardians. Under their custody, Kira is made to mend and embellish the ceremonial Singer’s Robe—a garment that tells the history of the world. But the longer she works, the more she learns about the horrifying secrets that keep her community hostage. Can she use her knowledge and art to reshape the future? ***Area staging. Approximate running time: 65 minutes. Code: GD1.***

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Gathering Blue

A play by
ERIC COBLE

Based on the book by
LOIS LOWRY



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IMPORTANT BILLING AND CREDIT REQUIREMENTS

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In addition, all producers of the play must include the following acknowledgment on the title page of all programs distributed in connection with performances of the play and on all advertising and promotional materials:

“Originally commissioned by Oregon Children’s Theatre and First Stage
Children’s Theater in 2012.”

Gathering Blue premiered at Oregon Children’s Theatre in Portland, Ore., on April 27, 2013.

Director Stan Foote
Scenic Design.....Mark Haack
Lighting Design Nathaniel Bartos
Costume Design Sarah Gahagan
Sound Design and Compositions Cecil Averett
PropsDrew Dannhorn

The cast was as follows:

Jamison Andres Alcala
Vandara, Annabella & others Camille Cettina
Jo Steele Clevenger
Katrina & others..... Cassie Greer
Thomas & others..... Jeremy Howard
Singer, Christopher & others Dennis Kelly
Kira Stephanie Roessler
Matt.....Peyton Symes

Gathering Blue

CHARACTERS

KIRA: A teenaged girl finding her gift.

KATRINA: Kira's mother, newly taken.

CHRISTOPHER: Kira's father, taken long ago.

MATT: A young boy, hungry for the world.

VANDARA: A scarred woman of the village.

CHIEF GUARDIAN: The voice of order in the village.

JAMISON: A guardian of the village.

THOMAS: A teenaged boy who knows his gift.

ANNABELLA: An old woman who knows.

JO: A very young girl with a future.

THE SINGER: A man who remembers.

VARIOUS VILLAGERS, GUARDS, TENDERS

PLACE: In and around the village.

TIME: Soon.

PRODUCTION NOTES

The play can be performed by 7 to 20 actors. If casting for seven, all actors, except the one playing Kira, will play various characters. One woman plays Katrina and others; one woman plays Vandara, Annabella and others; one man plays Christopher, the Singer and others; one man plays Jamison and others. If casting for more than seven, other actors become other members of the community in crowd scenes. The set should be flexible for maximum speed. Though little should be graceful about it. Think *Mad Max* in a forest.

The Singer's Robe and Staff are available for rental from First Stage in Milwaukee, Wisc., should a producing theatre not wish to create their own. Contact: production@firststage.org for details.

Gathering Blue

(Darkness. Perhaps the sound of faint wind. Then soft footsteps moving through leaves, branches. Faster. Faster. Perhaps gasping breath—someone pursued—faster—

Lights slowly begin to come up. We see a seated figure on the ground.

Then a horrible animal snarl, not a creature we can name, fierce, brutal, deadly—

In the dim lights, we can now see KIRA, a young teen in a roughly woven shirt and pants, very plain, seemingly sitting asleep in the dirt beside what appears to be a body. The body is covered in a ragged long cloth, nothing ornate or graceful.

Another ROARRR—

And KIRA startles awake.

Silence.

She looks around. At the body.)

KIRA. ... Mother?

(Nothing. She looks very small and alone.)

KIRA *(cont'd)*. They're coming. I can feel it. Not just the beasts, but the others.

(Pause. She touches the body once more. She collects herself and pulls a walking stick to her. She stands unsteadily, one leg twisted inward.)

KIRA (*cont'd*). And there's no one between them and me.

(Lights come up around her. A green coarse world. Perhaps it is littered with debris from a distant pre-apocalyptic past: bits of plastic junk, chunks of pavement, etc.)

She limps away as a boy, MATT, about 10 years old, with even filthier clothes and face, races in with an armload of twigs. He stops and nods to her.)

MATT. So you be back from the Bone Field.

(She nods.)

MATT (*cont'd*). What's it like there? Scared, was you? Did creatures come in the night?

KIRA. I had a fire. It kept them away.

MATT. So Katrina be gone now from her body?

KIRA. I watched her spirit leave. It was like mist. It drifted away.

MATT. Your hut is horrid burnt.

KIRA. I saw the smoke. Did they burn everything? My threading frame?

MATT. I tried to save things, but it's mostly all burnt.

KIRA (*nods*). Then I have to start building again.

MATT. It's a long walk to the saplings. And digging in the river mud's no easy.

KIRA. Will you help me? (*He watches her.*) I can't pay you, but I'll tell you some stories.

MATT. I be whipped iffен I don't finish the fire twiggies. (*He starts out and turns back, hesitates.*) I heard them talking. They don't want you should stay, Kira. They be planning to turn you out, now your ma be dead. They be set on putting you in the Field for the beasts.

KIRA (*covering her fear*). Who's "they," Matt?

MATT. Them women. I heared them talking at the well. They want your space where your hut was. They aim to build a pen there, to keep the tykes and the fowls enclosed so they don't have to chase 'em all the time.

(Beat. KIRA takes this in.)

KIRA. Who's the strongest voice against me?

MATT (*hesitates, quietly*). Vandara.

(He charges off and lights shift. VANDARA enters opposite. She's a muscular woman, her tangled hair tied back, with a ragged scar running from her chin to shoulder.

Another MAN steps over to grab a jagged plastic bucket in the background, turns it over and begins pounding out a steady rhythm on it. Primitive. Calling.)

VANDARA. What are you doing here?

(KIRA hobbles around to face her, summoning all her courage.)

KIRA. I've returned to rebuild my hut.

VANDARA. Your space is gone. It's mine now.

KIRA. This was my father's space before I was born, and my mother's after he died. Now that she's dead, it's mine.

(WOMAN #2 and SCRAGGLY MAN emerge from other areas of the stage. Perhaps shadows begin to slither around KIRA. She is surrounded.)

WOMAN #2. We need it. For the tykes.

KIRA. You can build a pen somewhere else.

(VANDARA picks up a chunk of concrete the size of her fist.)

VANDARA. We don't want you here. You don't belong in the village anymore. You're worthless with that leg. Why didn't you just stay in the Field of Leaving?

(The others pick up rocks and chunks of pavement as well, waiting for VANDARA.)

KIRA *(keeping it together)*. You know that in a village conflict that could bring death, we must go to the Council of Guardians.

(VANDARA is ready to throw.)

KIRA *(cont'd, holding the woman's gaze)*. Because if a conflict is not taken to the Council of Guardians, and if there is a death ...

MAN *(hesitates)*. ... If there is a death ...

(KIRA waits.)

WOMAN #2. ... The causer of death must die.

KIRA. The causer of death must die.

(The others quietly repeat it, slowly setting down their rocks one by one.)

VANDARA and KIRA stare at one another a moment longer. Then VANDARA throws down her stone.)

VANDARA. Good. I will take her to the Council of Guardians. I will be her accuser. They will cast her out. No need for us to waste a life getting rid of her. Tomorrow this ground will be ours, and the girl will be in the Bone Field

waiting for the beasts—(*Running a finger along her scar.*) I faced them, I faced the beasts. I remember what it was like, to see your own blood pour upon the ground. (*Calling out.*) I survived! I survived when no one else did because of my strength! By night start tomorrow, when she feels the claws at her throat, this two syllable mistake of a girl will wish she had died of sickness beside her mother!

(VANDARA spits at the ground and walks out. The others nod, disappear. KIRA slumps to the ground.

A woman appears behind her in a separate light, also in rough simple clothes. This is KIRA's mother, KATRINA.)

KATRINA. They came to take you before, Kira.

KIRA (*nodding, not looking at her*). But that's when you were here to protect me.

KATRINA. You were only one day old, not yet even named your one-syllable infant name. They brought me food and were going to take you away to the Field of Leaving—

KIRA. Tell me again. I need the story of how you stopped them—

KATRINA. Your father had been taken by beasts. It had been several months since he went off to hunt and did not return.

(KIRA doesn't look at her; eyes closed.)

KATRINA (*cont'd*). And as I held you, even with your leg bent wrong so it was clear you would not ever run—even then I could see the beginning of something remarkable in your eyes. And your fingers were long and well-shaped—

KIRA. And strong. My hands were strong.

KATRINA. They grasped my thumb fiercely and would not let it go. And I couldn't let you go. I told them no.

KIRA. And they were angry—

KATRINA. But I was firm. And of course my father was still alive. He was old then, four syllables, and he had been Chief Guardian for a long time. They respected him. And your father had already been chosen to be a Guardian before he died.

KIRA. Say his name to me.

KATRINA (*smiling*). Christopher. You know that.

(A separate light comes up on a man in rough shirt and pants, 40s, CHRISTOPHER. KIRA looks over at him.)

KIRA. I can see just what he looks like.

KATRINA. You never even saw him, you can't.

KIRA. I do. I need him now. I need you.

KATRINA. They made me promise you would not become a burden.

KIRA. I'm not. I'm sturdy and reliable. I help in the weaving sheds, and the stories I tell the tykes, the pictures with words, with thread! I need someone to tell them I'm not a burden now. I need a mother again. A father.

(Her mother steps back, lights fading.)

KIRA (*cont'd*). Please. I don't know how to live in this world—I don't have any place here—Please ...

(Her mother is gone. She looks to her father, who watches her ... and then his light is out as well.)

KIRA (*cont'd*). Please!!

(Drumming starts again.)

A man circles around, pulls a makeshift sash or belt over his ragged clothes and grabs Kira by the arm as a GUARD. He forces her forward.

She hobbles into the ruin as lights shift. Her walking stick echoes as it taps across the solid floor, perhaps the effect of light through broken stained glass plays over the walls and floors.

BOOM. Drumming stops.)

GUARD (*calling out*). The accused orphan girl Kira is here!

(KIRA faces out and up to us, squinting into the flickering lights of unseen torches and oil lamps, facing a tribunal.)

GUARD (*cont'd, calling out*). The accuser, Vandara!

(VANDARA enters and glances at KIRA. She faces out to the tribunal, puts her hands together worshipfully, cupped together, fingertips below her chin, and bows. KIRA notices the bow, realizes she forgot to give respect and quickly imitates the gesture.

The CHIEF GUARDIAN's voice echoes over them.)

CHIEF GUARDIAN (*offstage*). We meet to pass judgement on a conflict. The accuser will speak first.

VANDARA. This girl should have been taken to the Bone Field when she was born and still nameless. It is the way.

She is imperfect.

And fatherless as well. We have all tolerated her presence for these years. But she has not contributed. She cannot dig or plant or weed, or even tend the domestic beasts the way other girls her age do. She drags that dead leg around like a useless burden. She is slow.

And she eats a lot.

(KIRA watches her ... afraid.)

VANDARA (*cont'd*). She was kept, against the rules, because her grandfather was still alive and had power. But he is long gone, replaced by new leaders with more power and wisdom ...

There is reason to think her mother may have carried an illness that will endanger others—

KIRA. No! I lay beside her when she died, and I am not—

VANDARA. And the women need the space where her hut was. She can't marry. No one wants a cripple. She causes problems with the discipline of the tykes, telling them stories, teaching them games so they make noise and disrupt the work—

CHIEF GUARDIAN (*offstage*). Enough.

(VANDARA pauses then bows.)

CHIEF GUARDIAN (*offstage, cont'd*). Kira. As a two-syllable girl, you are not required to defend yourself.

KIRA. Not—?? But she can't— *(She catches herself, bows quickly.)*

CHIEF GUARDIAN (*offstage*). Because of your youth you have a choice. You may defend yourself—

KIRA. Yes!

CHIEF GUARDIAN (*offstage*). Or one of us will defend you, using our greater wisdom and experience. Take a moment to think about this, because your life may depend on it.

(KIRA hesitates, her hand shoved into her rough shirt pocket. She touches something within and pulls out a small square of decorated cloth. Looks at it. Lights come up on her mother and father in separate areas. She glances back at them, squeezes the scrap of cloth and nods.)

KIRA. Please appoint a defender.

CHIEF GUARDIAN (*offstage*). Jamison.

(A tall man, kind but firm, with longish dark hair neatly combed and pulled back with an ornate wooden clasp, steps forward. He carries papers and a large book. This is JAMISON.)

JAMISON (*nods to them*). Kira. Vandara.

I will address the accusations one by one.

(Reading.) “The girl should have been taken to the Bone Field when she was born. It is the way.” The accuser is correct, that is the way.

(KIRA looks at him. VANDARA smiles.)

JAMISON (*cont'd, opening his book to a marked page*).

Turning, though, to the third set of amendments ... it is clear exceptions can be made.

CHIEF GUARDIAN (*offstage*). Exceptions can be made.

JAMISON. So we may set aside the assertion that it is the way. It need not always be the way.

(To KIRA.) Do you wish to speak?

(KIRA shakes her head no.)

JAMISON (*cont'd, reading*). “She is imperfect and fatherless as well ... ” These accusations are true. She has a visible and incurable defect. And before her birth, her father was taken by beasts. Her father was Christopher. He was a fine hunter, one of the best. I was with the hunting party that day. I saw him taken.

(KIRA blinks at him.)

CHIEF GUARDIAN (*offstage*). Her father was a fine hunter.
JAMISON (*to KIRA*). Do you wish to speak?

(KIRA watches her father in his pool of light. She shakes her head no.)

JAMISON (*cont'd, reading*). “She has not contributed. She cannot dig or plant or weed ... And she eats a lot.”

Let us start with the final charge: Does she eat a lot? Look at how thin she is. She must be near starving. And I believe she has found a way to contribute. Am I correct, Kira, that you work at the weaving shed?

KIRA (*quietly*). I help there. I’m good with the threads. And I clean up scraps and help others prepare the looms. It is work I can do with my hands and arms. I am strong.

JAMISON (*to the council*). Some of you have seen for yourself, her work is more than competent. She goes each day for regular hours, and she is never late. The women there value her help.

(Calling off.) Bring out the chest.

(To KIRA.) Do you wish to speak?

(She shakes her head no.)

A male SERVANT sets a large box on the floor and opens it. He removes and unfolds a magnificent colorful robe—though much of it is turned away from us—we can’t get a clear look at it.)

KIRA. The Singer’s Robe!

VANDARA (*trying to get a look*). This—this has no relevance ...

JAMISON. Most villagers see this robe only one day a year, when we gather to hear the Ruin Song.

KIRA. My mother worked on this robe every year. On the left shoulder, there, just last year, some threads had pulled and torn, and my mother stitched new ones in their place—pinks and roses and crimsons—

JAMISON. Your mother had been teaching you the art—

KIRA. Since I was small.

JAMISON. We are told your skills are greater than hers.

(Beat.)

KIRA. ... I still have much to learn.

JAMISON. And she taught you coloring as well?

KIRA *(nods)*. She was beginning to teach me. She told me she had been taught by a woman named Annabel.

JAMISON. Annabella, now.

KIRA. She's still alive? And four syllables?

JAMISON. She is very old. Her sight is diminished. But she can still be used as a resource.

VANDARA. I request that proceedings continue. This is a delaying tactic—

CHIEF GUARDIAN *(offstage)*. You may go, Vandara.

(VANDARA pauses.)

CHIEF GUARDIAN *(offstage, cont'd)*. These proceedings are complete, and we have reached our decision.

(VANDARA doesn't move, glares. A GUARD moves for her.)

VANDARA. I have a right to know your decision!

CHIEF GUARDIAN *(offstage)*. You have no rights at all.

But I am going to tell you so there will be no misunderstanding. The orphan girl Kira will stay. She will have a new role.