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# **The Story of Opal: The Journal of an Understanding Heart**

Adapted by

**GALE CHILDS DALY**

From the book by

**OPAL WHITELEY**

**Dramatic Publishing Company**

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*The Story of Opal: The Journal of an Understanding Heart* was first produced by the Clarence Brown Theatre in Knoxville, Tenn., on Oct. 30, 2010.

CAST:

Musician..... Rachel Schlafer-Parton  
Opal 1..... Chelsea Sparkes  
Opal 2..... Lindsey Jenne' Hansom  
Opal 3..... Lauren Elyse Fitzgerald  
Opal 4..... Kevin Bohleber  
Opal 5..... James McGuire

PRODUCTION:

Director ..... Casey Sams  
Music Director and Composer ..... Rachel Schlafer-Parton  
Scenery..... Kerry Chipman  
Costumes..... Alayna Pinion  
Lighting..... Jason Hiatt  
Sound .....Mike Ponder

# **The Story of Opal: The Journal of an Understanding Heart**

## **CHARACTERS**

OPAL 1

OPAL 2

OPAL 3

OPAL 4

OPAL 5

MUSICIAN

## **CHARACTER NOTES**

The Musician is an integrated part of the production. She has her own area onstage and is always a part of the picture. She can see and respond to the action onstage, and Opal 1 can see her.

# The Story of Opal: The Journal of an Understanding Heart

## ACT I

### SCENE 1: Song of Summer

*(The lights come up as the MUSICIAN starts to play a morning bird song. As the light expands, the ensemble is gradually revealed. OPAL 1 is in her bed, which is made up of two benches. The other ensemble members are scattered around the stage. The morning music becomes individual bird calls. The bird names are also spoken like bird calls.)*

OPAL 5. *Sansonnet.* (Beat.) *Sansonnet.*

OPAL 4. *Farlouse.*

*(Beat.)*

OPAL 5. *Sansonnet.*

OPAL 2. *Roitelet.*

OPAL 4. *Farlouse.*

OPAL 1. Very early in the morning of today, I did get out of bed and get dressed in a quick way.

OPAL 3. *Chardonneret.*

OPAL 4. *Farlouse.*

OPAL 2. *Rousserolle.*

OPAL 1 *(climbing over the bench as if through a window).*

Then I climbed out the window of the house we live in.

OPAL 2. *Rousserolle.*

OPAL 5. *Épevier.*

OPAL 3. *Chardonneret.*

OPAL 1. The sun was up, and the birds were singing.

OPAL 5. *Épevier.*

*(During the next section the ensemble members begin to wake up.)*

OPAL 2, 3, 4 & 5 *(overlapping)*. *Nonnette, ibis, tourterelle, épevier, rousserolle, chardonneret, tourterelle, loriot, nonnette, aigle, roitelet, farlouse, sansonnet, rousserolle, lanier ...*

*(Bird calls continue under dialogue.)*

OPAL 1. I went on my way. As I did go, I did have hearing of many voices ...

OPAL 3. They were the voices of the earth, glad for the summer.

OPAL 1. I did listen.

OPAL 5. The wind made ripples on the grass as it went over.

OPAL 4. There were voices from out the earth.

OPAL 1. And the things of their saying were the things of the gladness of growing.

OPAL 4. They did say what they had to say in the growing of the grass,

OPAL 2. And in the leaves growing out from tips of branches.

OPAL 1. The birds did have knowing, and sang what the grasses and leaves did say of the gladness of living.

*(Bird calls from the MUSICIAN and ensemble have faded away.)*

OPAL 3. There was music,

OPAL 2 & 3. And in the music,



OPAL 2, 3 & 5. There was sky tinkles,  
OPAL 4. And earth tingles,  
OPAL 1. That was come of the joy of living.

### SCENE 2: Glad Feels

OPAL 1. I too did feel glad feels. (*Musician plays wind music.*) The wind did say,  
OPAL 5. *Je viens, je viens.*  
OPAL 1. The plants did answer make,  
OPAL 2, 3 & 4. *Nous entendons, nous entendons.*  
OPAL 1. Then the wind did say,  
OPAL 5. *Petite française—l'èté approche, l'èté approche,*  
OPAL 1. And the plants did answer make,  
OPAL 2, 3 & 4. *Nous fleurirons bientôt.*  
OPAL 1. I did have glad feels, from my toes to my curls.

*(MUSICIAN plays a lighthearted folk tune, and the ensemble dances a reel.)*

### SCENE 3: Three Roads

*(OPAL 3 and OPAL 5 form willows on the bench where OPAL 1 is sitting.)*

OPAL 5. Between the ranch house where the grandpa does live, and the house we live in is the singing creek,  
OPAL 3 & 5. Where the willows grow.  
OPAL 3. We have conversations.  
OPAL 5. It goes singing on.  
OPAL 1. Its joy-song does sing in my heart. And there, I do dabble my toes beside the willows. I feel the feels of gladness they do feel. I do sit here and make prints.

OPAL 3. And often it is, I go from the willows to the meeting of the road,

OPAL 5. That is just in front of our ranch house.

OPAL 1. There the road does have divides.

OPAL 2, 3, 4 & 5. It goes three ways.

OPAL 3. One way, the road does go to the house of ... (*OPAL 3 becomes the character.*) Sadie McKibben.

OPAL 1. It doesn't stop when it gets to her house, but mostly I do.

OPAL 2. The road just goes on to the mill town, a little way away.

OPAL 4. About the mill live some people,

OPAL 4 & 5. Mostly men-folks.

OPAL 5. There does live (*OPAL 5 becomes the character.*) The Good Man That Wears Gray Neckties And Is Kind To Mice.

OPAL 4. Another way, the road does go the way I go when I go to the schoolhouse where I go to school.

OPAL 3. When it is come there, it does go right on,

OPAL 2. On to the house of (*OPAL 2 becomes the character.*) The Girl Who Has No Seeing.

OPAL 1. When it gets to her house,

OPAL 1 & 2. It does make a bend, and it does go its way to the blue hills,

OPAL 4. So go two of the roads.

OPAL 1. The other road does lead to the upper logging camps,

OPAL 5. In the far woods.

OPAL 3. It goes only a little way from the ranch house, and it comes to a *rivière*.

OPAL 5. Long time ago, this road did have a longing to go across the *rivière*.

OPAL 3 & 5. Some wise people did have understandings,

OPAL 2. And they did build it a bridge to go across on.

*(OPAL 3 and OPAL 5 set another bench as if it were a bridge and OPAL 1, OPAL 2 and OPAL 3 cross over it.)*

OPAL 1. It went across the bridge,

OPAL 1 & 2. And it goes on,

OPAL 1, 2, 3 & 5. And on,

OPAL 1, 2, 3, 4 & 5. Between the hills—the hills where dwell—the talking fir trees.

*(The ensemble become trees, and the MUSICIAN plays wind music. The music continues as the actors slowly move into position for the next scene. As OPAL 4 and OPAL 5 begin hoeing the field, the music changes to a percussive working rhythm.)*

#### **SCENE 4: Lars Porsena of Clusium**

*(OPAL 4 and OPAL 5 are working in the field. OPAL 2 stands on a bench overlooking them as Lars Porsena of Clusium. OPAL 3 is in the house.)*

OPAL 1. Today was a warm, hot day. It was warm in the morning and hot at noon. Before noon and after noon and after that I carried water to the folks in the field in a jug. The folks were glad to have that water in the jug. While I was taking the water in the jug to the folks in the field, from her sewing-basket Lars Porsena of Clusium took the mamma's thimble ...

OPAL 2. Caw! Caw!

OPAL 1. And Mamma didn't have it and she couldn't find it.

OPAL 3. Opal!

OPAL 1. She sent me to watch out for it, in the house and in the yard and everywhere. I know how Lars Porsena of Clusium has a fondness for collecting rocks; so I ran to his hiding place in the old oak tree. There I found the mamma's thimble.

OPAL 2. Caw! Caw! (*Gives thimble to OPAL 1.*) ... Caw.

OPAL 1. But she said the pet crow's having taken it was as though I had taken it, because he was my property—so I got a spanking with the hazel switches that grew near unto our back steps. (*OPAL 3 mimes spanking OPAL 1 three times.*) Inside me, I couldn't help feeling she ought to have given me thanks for finding that thimble. (*OPAL 1 crawls under the bench as if under her bed.*)

*(OPAL 3 puts the switch back and walks across the stage. Lars Porsena jumps down and attacks OPAL 3, who runs screaming.)*

OPAL 2. Caw!

*(The MUSICIAN plays a joyful tune that carries through the next scene.)*

## SCENE 5: Earth Songs

*(OPAL 1 is still under bench, one by one the ensemble gathers around her.)*

OPAL 2. The brook that does go by our house is always bringing songs from the hills.

OPAL 5. Morning is glad on the hills.

OPAL 2. The sky sings in blue tones.

OPAL 4. The earth sings in green.

OPAL 5. Earth voices are glad voices,

OPAL 3 & 5. And earth songs come up from the ground through the plants;

OPAL 2, 3 & 5. And in their flowering,

OPAL 2, 3, 4 & 5. They do tell the earth songs to the wind.

OPAL 3. When I grow up, I am going to write for children—

OPAL 1. And grownups that haven't grown up too much—

OPAL 1, 2, 3, 4 & 5. All the earth songs I now do hear.

### SCENE 6: Great Fir Tree

*(The ensemble uses the two benches to form a barn roof.*

*OPAL 5 becomes Michael Angelo Sanzio Raphael.)*

OPAL 1. I went to talk things over with my chum, Michael Angelo Sanzio Raphael. He is that most tall fir tree that grows just back of the barn. *(Starts to climb on the barn roof.)* I scooted up the barn door. From there, I climbed onto the lower part of the barn roof. I walked up a ways. Up there, I took a long look at the world about. One gets such a good wide view of the world from a barn roof. I said a little prayer.

OPAL 4. I always say a little prayer before I jump off the barn in the arms of Michael Angelo Sanzio Raphael, because that jump is quite a long jump, and if I did not land in the arms of Michael Angelo Sanzio Raphael, I might get my leg or neck broken. That would mean I'd have to keep still a long time.

OPAL 1. Now I think that would be the most awful thing that could happen, for I do so love to be active. So I always say a little prayer, and do that jump in a careful way.

*(Ensemble gasps, and OPAL 1 jumps into the arms of OPAL 5.)*

OPAL 4. Today when I did jump, I did land right proper in that fir tree.

OPAL 1. It is such a comfort to nestle up to Michael Angelo Sanzio Raphael when one is in trouble. He is such a grand tree. He has an understanding soul. After I talked with him,

OPAL 1 & 5. And listened unto his voice,

OPAL 1. I slipped down out of his arms.

*(OPAL 5 slowly begins to drop OPAL 1. OPAL 4 becomes Peter Paul Rubens at their feet.)*

OPAL 2. I intended to slip into the barn corral, but I slid off the wrong limb, in the wrong way.

OPAL 3. I landed in the pigpen,

OPAL 2 & 3. On top of Peter Paul Rubens!

*(OPAL 1 falls on OPAL 4, who gives a big grunt. All the pig noises are done by the actor and are supported by pig sounds played by the MUSICIAN.)*

OPAL 1. He gave a peculiar grunt. It was not like those grunts he gives when he is comfortable. I felt I ought to do something to make up to him for having come into his home out of the arms of Michael Angelo Sanzio Raphael, instead of calling on him in the proper way. I decided a good way to make it up to him would be to take him for a walk. I went to the woodshed. *(OPAL 2 retrieves rope and ribbon.)* I got a piece of clothesline rope. I took my Sunday best hair-ribbon. I made a bow. I put that bow just over his ears. That gave him the proper look.

*(OPAL 1 and OPAL 4 go for a walk.)*

OPAL 4. Grunt.

OPAL 3 *(as the mamma)*. When the mamma saw us go walking by, she took the bow from off the pig. She put that bow in the trunk. Me, she put under the bed.

*(OPAL 1 crosses to crawl under the bench.)*

OPAL 1. I don't think I'll print more tonight. Now I think I shall go out the bedroom window *(Climbs the other bench like a ladder.)* and talk to the stars. They always smile so friendly. This is a very wonderful world to live in.

*(MUSICIAN plays star music.)*