

WHOOPI GOLDBERG



STARS IN CLARA'S HEART



Clara Mayfield is an extraordinary woman – wise, warm, independent and irreverent. She has an important influence on a young boy's life, providing him with the affection and laughter that his divorcing parents are no longer capable of. Whoopi Goldberg stars in **Clara's Heart** her finest dramatic performance since her Oscar-nominated role as Celie in *The Color Purple*. The characters of Clara and Celie are not dissimilar. Celie said "I don't know how to fight, all I know how to do is to stay alive." Clara also has become passive and it takes the emotional pain of a child to restore her joie de vivre.

Clara's Heart focuses on the bond that develops between Clara, a mature black woman from Jamaica, and David Hart, a white and wealthy pre-adolescent. What they share is greater than what divides them. They both suffer from hurts they can't express but, fortunately, they both have inherent humor and strength which will see them through. Also, they both have each other.

Clara first enters the Hart family when Leona and Bill Hart (Kathleen

Quinlan and Michael Ontkean) flee to a Jamaican resort to escape the reality of their infant daughter's death. Leona's grief is beyond consoling until Clara, their hotel maid, senses how to penetrate her sorrow. "Oh Bill, come meet the most wonderful person" Leona says, a smile crossing her face for the first time.

The Harts are so enthused by Clara, they hire her as their housekeeper in an upper-class suburb of Baltimore. But young David Hart is not as easily reached as his mother. He resents Clara from the start, believing his parents are dumping their responsibility for him onto her.

Clara's arrival does in fact signal irrevocable changes in the Hart family. As David is uneasily poised on the edge of adolescence, his parents are poised on the edge of divorce. Clara has the sharp wit to combat David's wisecracks and the wisdom to understand his pain and insults. She introduces him to her world of Jamaican friends living in the inner city, a colorful change from the formal and frigid environment he is used to. But, above all, she offers him love and guidance, making his rite of passage easier and happier.

Whoopi Goldberg's diverse talents were ideal for playing Clara.

"**Clara's Heart** is a wonderful love story about deep friendship" Goldberg says. "It's about the changing over from youth to manhood and about letting go and coming to terms with what has happened. Clara's heart died after she experienced a great trauma in her life. She lost the joy of living until she meets David. Through David she remembers how to live again. The young boy allows her to get through her pain and, at the same time, she is able to help him through his."

Since her film debut in Steven Spielberg's *The Color Purple* in 1985, Goldberg has starred in four films: *Jumpin' Jack Flash*, *Burglar*, *Fatal Beauty* and *The Telephone*. She began performing in New York when she was eight and subsequently helped found the San Diego Repertory Theatre. When she moved to San Francisco, she became a member of Berkeley's Blake Street Hawkeyes Theatre. The characters she developed there led to *The Spook Show*, which successfully toured the US. In 1984, director Mike Nichols brought her show to Broadway and the following year it was produced for cable TV.

Whoopi Goldberg has collected many honors in the last four years, starting with an Academy award

nomination for Best Actress in *The Color Purple*. In 1985, she won a Grammy for best comedy album and in 1986 she received an Emmy nomination for her guest appearance on the hit TV show *Moonlighting*.

Goldberg is a founding member of the Comedy Relief benefit, along with Robin Williams and Billy Crystal. Though her recent film commitments are making it more difficult for her to devote time to her comedy, she insists that it will always be an integral part of her life.

Michael Ontkean (Bill Hart) started his career as a child actor in his native Vancouver. He moved to Toronto when he was eight and worked regularly for the Shakespeare Festival in Stratford, the CBC and the National Film Board. At the age of 14, his interest drifted away from acting to ice hockey.

Shortly after attending university on a hockey scholarship, Ontkean began a two-year stint as a costar of the television show *The Rookies*. However, it was in 1977 that he was able to combine his two loves in the hockey film *Slap Shot*, playing one of Paul Newman's teammates. Ontkean's film credits include *Voices*, *Willie and Phil*, *Maid to Order* and *Street Justice*.

Kathleen Quinlan (Leona Hart) made her screen debut in 1973 playing Peggy in George Lucas' *American Graffiti*. She won rave reviews for her lead performance in the movie *I Never Promised You a Rose Garden*, playing a schizophrenic who triumphs over mental illness. She has also appeared in such films as *Independence Day*, *Twilight Zone The Movie*, *Wild Thing* and *Sunset*.

Neil Patrick Harris (David Hart) was born in New Mexico on June 15, 1973. He fell in love with acting when he was five, after his parents took him to a local production of *Annie*. He was discovered by the screenwriter of **Clara's Heart**, Mark Medoff, at a drama camp he was conducting in the boy's home state. Medoff sent a videotape of Harris to the film's producer and director who immediately cast him in the movie's pivotal role.

Clara's Heart is directed by Robert Mulligan, whose credits include such film classics as *To Kill a Mockingbird*, *Summer of '42* and *Same Time, Next Year*. Screenwriter Mark Medoff received an Academy award nomination for his screenplay of *Children of a Lesser God*, based on his Tony award-winning play. **Clara's Heart** also features the fine acting talent of Spalding Gray (*Swimming to Cambodia*) and Beverly Todd (*Baby Boom* and *Moving*).

— Nicole-marie Squires

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