

## Number the Stars

Based on the book by Lois Lowry

Adapted by Dr. Douglas W. Larche

Directed by Brittny Rebhuhn

Best enjoyed by children and adults 9 years and older; with proper preparation regarding World War II, Nazi beliefs, and the Jewish Holocaust, younger children could also enjoy the show.

Run Time: Approximately 1 hr. 25 min. including a 15-minute intermission

### Things to Know About the Show

- The play takes place in occupied Denmark during World War II
- Young children may not understand why the German soldiers want to capture the Jewish people and send them away
- The German soldiers and their dog puppets may scare younger children
- No actual violence takes place during the play

### Synopsis (SPOILERS)

#### Act 1, Scene 1

ANNEMARIE, ELLE, and KIRSTIE are walking home from school. ANNEMARIE is coaxing ELLEN to race her to the house, but ELLEN doesn't think that it is ladylike to run. Their classmate SAMUEL approaches them on an out-of-control bicycle. The girls, who claim not to like SAMUEL, start running towards him, laughing. He is forced to alter his path and crashes his bicycle as he barely misses them. They continue to race.

A German soldier appears. He questions the girls about why they are running, what they have in their backpacks, and whether they are good students. He tells them to go directly home and not to run. They are scared but agree to keep this encounter secret so as not to worry their parents. However, as they enter their apartment, Kirstie immediately tells their mother, MRS. JOHANSEN, and ELLEN's mother, MRS. ROSEN about the incident. MRS. JOHANSEN questions ANNEMARIE about what happened. ANNEMARIE brushes it off, but MRS. JOHANSEN and MRS. ROSEN are concerned and tell the girls to take a different route to school since the soldiers will remember their faces and that is not a good thing. ANNEMARIE asks for something to eat but MRS. JOHANSEN tells her there is only bread.

#### Act 1, Scene 2

It is bedtime in the JOHANSEN household. KIRSTIE asks for a play before they go to bed, as she does every night. They do a play in which KIRSTIE is a princess who has tea with the King. Two German soldiers ask about the king and his lady-in-waiting tells them that any Danish citizen would die for him. The play ends and KIRSTIE goes to bed.

ANNEMARIE asks PAPA why the king couldn't protect the Danish people from the Nazis. PAPA tells her that the King was wise in not going to war with the Nazis because thousands of people would have died if he had done so because the Danes were so outnumbered by the Germans. He tells her that Norway, Holland, Belgium, and France all fought and lost. She reminds him that Sweden is still free.

#### Act 1, Scene 3

ANNEMARIE is kneeling in front of an open trunk, handling mementos of her sister and talking to her. She tells her sister, Lise, that she misses her and Peter, her fiancé, who never visits anymore. Lise has been killed in a car accident. ANNEMARIE tells Lisa that it is hard to be the big sister and wishes she had more courage. She tells Lise good night and closes the trunk.

#### Act 1, Scene 4

MRS. JOHANSEN wakes the girls. They tell her it is too cold, and she tells them they will soon have to add another blanket to their bed, since there is no fuel oil because of the war. ELLEN enters, chastising them for still being in bed. MRS. JOHANSEN tells them to get dressed and notices that there is a broken button on Lise's sweater, that is now worn by KIRSTIE. She tells ANNEMARIE to stop at Mrs. Hirsch's shop and try to buy one button to match the others on the sweater. ANNEMARIE tells her mother that the shop is closed and there is a sign written in German on the door. KIRSTIE thinks the Hirsch's have gone on vacation to the seashore. MRS. JOHANSEN tells the girls to finish getting ready and to eat some breakfast. She asks ELLEN to stay. MRS. JOHANSEN goes to talk to ELLEN's mother.

#### Act 1, Scene 5

ANNEMARIE enters the house after school and finds PETER sitting at the table with MR. and MRS. JOHANSEN. She hugs him and kisses him on the cheek, then asks why he is dressed the way he is. PETER replies that he does not want to be recognized. He gives the girls seashells and their parents two eggs, which they have not had in three months. PETER tells them that the Germans have issued orders to close stores run by Jews, which they have also done in other countries. ANNEMARIE realizes that the ROSENS are Jewish as well. Her parents think that the Rosens will be all right because Mr. Rosen is a teacher. They tell ANNEMARIE to keep an eye on ELLEN and stay away from soldiers. ANNEMARIE says Denmark must be bodyguards for the Jews, just as Danes are bodyguards for their king. PAPA tells her they will be.

#### Act 1, Scene 6

ELLEN and ANNEMARIE are doing another play acting out the story of SAMUEL following ELLEN home from school. KIRSTIE and MRS. JOHANSEN burst into the room. KIRSTIE is protesting that she will never wear the shoes MRS. JOHANSEN has bought for her. They are made of fish skin since there is no leather available. ELLEN says that it's only their green color that is ugly and offers to have her father cover them with his black ink. KIRSTIE agrees if no one tells anyone that they are made of fish skin.

KIRSTIE asks to join the play that ANNEMARIE and ELLEN are doing. ANNEMARIE, as SAMUEL, asks ELLEN to go with her to Tivoli gardens. They all fondly remember Tivoli and the fireworks there. But ELLEN and ANNEMARIE know the fireworks did not come from Tivoli but rather from the harbor where the Danish Navy blew up their own ships so the Germans could not steal them and use them in the war. They no longer feel like playing and ELLEN tells them she must go home to help her mother clean for the Jewish New Year. She invites KIRSTIE to come and watch her mother light the candles.

#### Act 1, Scene 7

ANNEMARIE and KIRSTIE enter their house after school to find MRS. JOHANSEN and ELLEN, who is very quiet. MRS. JOHANSEN tells them that ELLEN is going to stay overnight with them and be their guest for a few days because Mr. and Mrs. Rosen have been called away to visit relatives.

#### Act 1, Scene 8

After dinner and after KIRSTIE has gone to bed, ANNEMARIE, sensing that something is wrong, asks her parents and ELLEN what is happening. PAPA tells her that the Nazis have taken the synagogue lists of all the Jews as they plan to arrest all the Danish Jews and take them away as early as that night. ANNEMARIE asks where they are taking them and why. PAPA tells her they don't know, but they call it "relocation" and it is dangerous for everyone. ANNEMARIE asks where the Rosens are and PAPA tells her that PETER has helped them go elsewhere but they don't know where. They will hide ELLEN by pretending she is ANNEMARIE's sister, Lise. PAPA tells the girls to get ready for bed and they both hug him.

#### Act 1, Scene 9

As they get ready for bed ANNEMARIE and ELLEN discuss whether anyone will come. ELLEN says that if they do it will give her a chance to practice her acting by pretending to be Lise. ANNEMARIE hopes that she can be as brave as ELLEN. ELLEN asks how ANNEMARIE's sister died. ANNEMARIE tells her she does not know exactly but she remembers there being a phone call telling them there had been an accident and that her mother and father and rushed to the hospital while MRS. ROSEN had watched the children. ANNEMARIE notices the necklace around ELLEN's neck and looks at it. ELLEN tells her it is the Star of David. ANNEMARIE tells ELLEN that her parents locked up Lise's belonging in the trunk in the corner. ELLEN says that being dead young is the worst thing in the world, worse than the Germans taking her family away. ANNEMARIE tells her that she is safe with them.

There is a loud pounding at the front door. Frightened, the girls sit upright in bed. MRS. JOHANSEN opens the door and two German soldiers demand entrance. Telling MRS. JOHANSEN and PAPA that they know they are friends with the Rosens, the soldiers ask where they are, since the Rosen apartment is empty. PAPA tells them they are mistaken in thinking the Rosens are visiting them. The Germans tell them they want to look around and MRS. JOHANSEN asks them not to wake the children. ANNEMARIE looks in the living room, sees the soldiers, and jumps back in bed, telling ELLEN to take off her necklace. ELLEN can't get it open and doesn't even remember how since she never takes it off. ANNEMARIE breaks the chain and closes her fingers around the necklace as the soldiers are about to enter their bedroom. They push by the JOHANSENS and sweep the room with their flashlights, opening closets, then shining the lights on the girls. They ask them to get up and tell them their names. They question why one of the children has brown hair when the others are blond, grabbing ELLEN, and asking if she is the ROSEN's daughter. PAPA goes to the trunk in the corner and lifts the lid. He tears three pictures from the pages of the photo album and hands them to the SOLDIER. Each is a picture of his daughters as babies, with her name written on it. The SOLDIER looks at the pictures, two with blond hair and one with dark hair, and leaves. ELLEN apologizes for having dark hair that made them suspicious. MRS. JOHANSEN tells her it is beautiful and not to be sorry for it.

#### Act 1, Scene 10

Before dawn, MRS. JOHANSEN wakes the girls and tells them to get dressed in their warmest clothes. PAPA tells them they can't go to school because it is possible that the Germans are looking for Jewish children in the schools. PAPA says that they must take the girls to MRS. JOHANSEN's sister, Helen. MRS. JOHANSEN argues that it will be safer if she takes the children by herself and PAPA stays and goes to work as usual. PAPA goes to call Helen. MRS. JOHANSEN gives ELLEN a scarf and tells them to hurry so they can catch the train.

#### Act 1, Scene 11

MRS. JOHANSEN, ANNEMARIE, ELLEN, and KIRSTIE get off the train in Klompenborg, a suburb of Copenhagen. German soldiers stop them and ask where they are going. MRS. JOHANSEN tells him they are going to visit her sister in Gilleleje. They try to trap her by asking if they are visiting for New Years. She is not tricked and answers that it is only October. While MRS. JOHANSEN goes to call her sister HELEN, the girls go down to the water, from which they can see Sweden. MRS. JOHANSEN warns them not to talk to anyone because it would be difficult to explain who ELLEN is. They leave to find Aunt Helen.

#### INTERMISSION

#### Act 1, Scene 12

ANNEMARIE and ELLEN are in AUNT HELEN's kitchen. ELLEN asks ANNEMARIE where her necklace is. ANNEMARIE tells her it is in a safe place. ELLEN is concerned about her parents' safety and ANNEMARIE assures her that they are safe. They marvel at all the fresh food they have here, including milk and butter which AUNT HELEN has managed to save from the Germans.

AUNT HELEN enters and greets everyone. She tells MRS. JOHANSEN that tomorrow will be a good day for fishing (a code that MRS. JOHANSEN recognizes) and they will leave early in the morning. AUNT HELEN asks MRS. JOHANSEN if she has

prepared the living room, which she has. ANNEMARIE asks what they are preparing the living room for and AUNT HELEN tells them that great-aunt BIRTE has died and will be resting in the living room in her casket until she is buried tomorrow.

#### Act II, Scene 1

ANNEMARIE and AUNT HELEN are alone in the kitchen. ANNEMARIE tells her aunt that she knows that she and Mama are lying to her since she knows there is no Great-aunt Birte, since she has never heard stories or seen pictures of her. AUNT HELEN finally tells her that she is correct that there is no Great-aunt Birte. They did not tell any of the girls to help them be brave and she is not going to tell her anything else. AUNT HELEN tells her not to tell ELLEN and KIRSTIE anything. A commotion is heard as the casket is brought into the living room. AUNT HELEN tells her it is time for the night of mourning to begin.

#### Act II, Scene 2

A wooden casket is seen in the middle of the living room of Aunt Helen's house, surrounded by lowers the girls picked. MRS. JOHANSEN is lighting candles. HELEN, ANNEMARIE, ELLEN, and KIRSTIE are also in the room. MOURNERS enter and greet each other somberly, finding places in the room to stand or sit.

ELLEN tells ANNEMARIE she is sorry for her aunt's death and asks ANNEMARIE about her. As ANNEMARIE stammers, AUNT HELEN jumps in and describes her. Other MOURNERS enter, including MRS. HIRSCH and SAMUEL. SAMUEL greets ANNEMARIE, KIRSTIE, and especially ELLEN. ELLEN is embarrassed but also pleased. PETER enters with ELLEN's mother, who hugs ELLEN. With everyone at the house, AUNT HELEN prepares to leave for the boat. As she is about to go out the front door, the sound of a car is heard and headlights sweep through the windows. As people begin to panic, PETER reassures them that they know what to do and AUNT HELEN leaves out the kitchen door.

SOLDIERS pound on the door and MRS. JOHANSEN answers it. They ask why so many people have gathered at the house this evening. She explains that there has been a funeral and people have come to pay their respects. He asks her why the casket is closed when it is Danish custom to leave it open MRS. JOHANSEN agrees with them but explains that the doctor has told them to keep it closed since Aunt Berte has died of typhus and germs may still be present. But she discounts the doctor's warning and goes to open the casket when the SOLDIER slaps her to prevent it. The tell her to open it after they leave and to put the candles out. They leave and the girls run to comfort MRS. JOHANSEN. Peter tells her she was very brave and then gathers them all as he reads a psalm. Peter then tells them it is time as he opens the casket and takes out blankets, coats, hats, etc. to keep them warm on the sea. Since they have nothing for the baby, KIRSTIE gives it her favorite pink sweater. Peter drugs the baby so it won't cry. The baby's mother protests, but PETER convinces her that he must give the baby a drug so it will not cry. Peter then takes a packet out of the coffin and tells MRS. JOHANSEN to make sure that it is delivered to Aunt Helen on the boat. He leads the first group out to take them to the harbor. He tells MRS JOHANSEN to wait 20 minutes and then bring the Rosens so they are not seen together. She is to come directly back to the house after she has delivered them to the boat. PETER then bids them all goodbye.

#### Act II, Scene 3

MRS. JOHANSEN and the Rosens are preparing to leave. MRS JOHANSEN gives the packet to MRS. ROSEN to safeguard. She tells the girls that she will be home by 12 and they leave. MRS. ROSEN trips on the step outside but MRS. JOHANSEN tells the girls that she is okay, and ELLEN follows, after hugging the girls goodbye.

#### Act II, Scene 4

ANNEMARIE and KIRSTIE are asleep in the living room as the clock strikes 4 a.m. MRS. JOHANSEN is outside the door, calling for ANNEMARIE. She wakes and runs to the door, where she finds her mother in a heap on the steps. MRS. JOHANSEN tells her that the important thing is that the Rosens are safely on the boat with AUNT HELEN, as are the others. But, MRS. JOHANSEN's ankle is broken as a result of tripping over a tree root. As ANNEMARIE helps her into the house, she notices the packet on the ground and holds it up for her mother to see. ANNEMARIE remembers that MRS. ROSEN tripped on the step and tells her mother that she must have dropped it then. MRS. JOHANSEN, almost in tears,

tells ANNEMARIE that they may all die since the packet did not reach AUNT HELEN. ANNEMARIE tells her mother that she will take the packet to AUNT HELEN. Although her mother protests, she is determined to do this. MRS. JOHANSEN fills a basket with food, hiding the packet underneath. MRS. JOHANSEN tells ANNEMARIE that if the soldiers stop her, to pretend she is just a silly little girl taking lunch to her fisherman aunt who forgot it. ANNEMARIE runs out to deliver the packet.

#### Act II, Scene 5

ANNEMARIE is running through the forest, encouraging herself to keep going. SOLDIERS with a fierce, barking dog step into ANNEMARIE's path, asking what she is doing there. She tells them she is taking AUNT HELEN her lunch, which she forgot. A soldier takes the bread out of the basket and throws half of it to the dogs, who bark in return. He asks where the meat is and, looking further, finds the packet, which holds a handkerchief, which he tells the other soldier to put in his pocket while the dogs bark and whine for it. ANNEMARIE tells him she does not know what it is. The SOLDIER tells her to go to her aunt and tell her they loved her lunch and the handkerchief.

#### Act II, Scene 6

AUNT HELEN is working on her boat when ANNEMARIE runs to her, crying. She tells her aunt that she is sorry, but the soldiers took everything from the basket. AUNT HELEN asks if they took the handkerchief and ANNEMARIE tells her that they kept it. AUNT HELEN tells her she did her best and thanks her. They hear the dogs barking and AUNT HELEN tells ANNEMARIE that she must go and ANNEMARIE runs as fast as she can.

#### Act II, Scene 7

ANNEMARIE is exhausted, on AUNT HELEN's sofa. MRS. JOHANSEN, on crutches, and KIRSTIE enter the door, happy to find ANNEMARIE has returned. KIRSTIE has taken their mother to the hospital to have her ankle looked at. MRS. JOHANSEN asks about the handkerchief and ANNEMARIE, crying, tells her that the soldiers took it. MRS. JOHANSEN assures her she did everything she could and that it is in God's hands.

#### Act II, Scene 8

MRS. JOHANSEN, KIRSTIE, and ANNEMARIE are sleeping in the living room when AUNT HELEN comes in. KIRSTIE wakes, squeals, and runs into her arms. MRS. JOHANSEN goes to HELEN on crutches and KIRSTIE explains that she broke her ankle. MRS. JOHANSEN brushes it off and asks about the others. AUNT HELEN tells them that they are all safe in Sweden. AUNT HELEN tells them that they arrived safely because ANNEMARIE delivered the packet, which was intended for the German soldiers. ANNEMARIE had not seen the ROSENS and other Jewish people because they were hidden in a room underneath the deck of the boat so they would not be found when the Germans searched the boat. The packet was important because it was soaked in a mixture of cocaine and rabbit blood that temporarily destroyed the dogs' sense of smell so they could not smell the people hidden on the boat. AUNT HELEN assures ANNEMARIE that the ROSENS are safe in Sweden and that she will see her friend, Ellen, again after the war ends.

#### Act II, Scene 9

It is one year later and the JOHANSENS are celebrating KIRSTIE'S birthday. KIRSTIE asks to do a play about how brave ANNEMARIE was. MRS. JOHANSEN tells them how glad she is that the war is over. PAPA tells them how proud he is of his daughters, both ANNEMARIE and LISE, who, with PETER, was in the resistance and was killed by the Germans, as was PETER. Unlike PETER, who was shot, LISE was run down by a German car. They hear a knock on the door and find the ROSENS waiting there to help celebrate KIRSTIE's birthday. KIRSTIE brings them pink cupcakes. ANNEMARIE takes ELLEN into her bedroom to LISE's trunk. ANNEMARIE reaches in and pulls out the Star of David, which she gives back to ELLEN. ELLEN places the necklace around ANNEMARIE's neck and tells her that she is her Star of David.