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# **Girls in the Boat**

By

ALICE AUSTEN

**Dramatic Publishing Company**

Woodstock, Illinois • Australia • New Zealand • South Africa

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(GIRLS IN THE BOAT )

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“Originally produced by First Stage in Milwaukee, Wis.”

*Girls in the Boat* was originally produced by First Stage in Milwaukee in December 2019.

CAST:

Bow .....Kayla Salter  
Girl 2 ..... Emily Fedewa  
Girl 3 ..... Mary Jensik  
Girl 4 ..... Molly Boyle  
Girl 5 .....Ila Koch  
Girl 6 ..... Mathilde Prosen-Oldani  
Girl 7 ..... Reese Parish  
Coxswain.....Selma Rivera  
Stroke ..... Sylvie Arnold  
Coach/Dad/Man ..... Jennie Babisch  
Boy/Journalist/Boy Rower..... Kate Lepianka

PRODUCTION:

Director ..... Marcella Kearns  
Assistant Director..... Megan Watson  
Scenic Designer ..... Kristin Ellert  
Lighting Designer ..... Marisa Abbott  
Costume Designer..... Caitlyn De Araujo  
Sound Designer.....Erin Paige  
Stage Manager .....Emily Wright  
Assistant Stage Manager..... Elliott Brotherhood  
Director of Artistic Development.....John Maclay  
Director of the Young Company .....Matt Daniels  
Artistic Director ..... Jeff Frank  
Managing Director ..... Betsy Corry

# Girls in the Boat

## CHARACTERS

Girls:

Bow

Girl 2

Girl 3

Girl 4

Girl 5

Girl 6

Girl 7: Black.

Stroke

Coxswain

Coach/Dad/Man

Boy/Journalist/Boy Rower

Announcer: Recorded voice.

NOTE: Girl 2, 3, 5, 6 and Bow also double as various mothers.

## SETTING

Shadows and sound, a boat, imagination.

## Girls in the Boat

*(Throughout the play—the click, click, click of oars in locks and the sound of oars in water.)*

*Lights up—outline of a boat and GIRLS in it—rowing.)*

JOURNALIST. The final of the women's eight is lining up for the start in the last race of this 2016 Rio Olympics. It's Great Britain, Romania, Canada, Germany, the Netherlands and the United States.

*(The sound of oars stops. Silence.)*

COXSWAIN. Two seat stroke. I need my point.

JOURNALIST. The boats are setting their points.

COXSWAIN. Two seat!

*(GIRL 2 takes a couple strokes.)*

COXSWAIN *(cont'd)*. Sit ready!

JOURNALIST. The coxswain of the U.S. boat was cut before 2012.

COXSWAIN. Hey! Focus on the positives. Getting cut? Best beeping thing that ever happened to me.

JOURNALIST *(aside)*. She doesn't really say *beeping* ... all ages show ... you get the idea. *(Formal.)* The U.S. women have a lot at stake here. *(To GIRL 6.)* What do you think about when you're in that starting position?

GIRL 6. I don't think, I *row*.

COXSWAIN *(to JOURNALIST)*. You trying to psych us out?

JOURNALIST. No.

COXSWAIN. Then tell you what—shut the beep up.

STROKE. What she means to say is ...

GIRL 3. On the line ... everyone is ...

STROKE. On the line.

GIRL 7. That is to say. In the boat, at the start. We're equals.

Every single person in every single boat. Equals. The race determines everything. It's not what came before—it's what happens now.

ANNOUNCER. Attention. *Row!*

*(Sound of a horn.)*

COXSWAIN *(shouting)*. Three-quarters, half, three-quarters, lengthen, full—pull! Beeping pull!

*(The GIRLS—a chorus—in rhythm with the sound of the oars.)*

GIRLS. Pull, pull, pull, pull ...

COXSWAIN. We are the U.S. women's eight! Pull!

GIRLS. Pull, pull, pull, pull ...

GIRL 2 *(quoting The Great Gatsby by F. Scott Fitzgerald)*.

“And we beat on, boats against the current, borne back ceaselessly into the past ...”

JOURNALIST. Gatsby ... writing about the oldest American sport ...

GIRLS. Pull, pull, pull, pull ...

GIRL 6. The oldest American sport for men. For women ...

GIRL 4. It was another story.

*(Lights down over boat as COXSWAIN gets out and moves downstage.)*



COXSWAIN. How we got here ...

*(The GIRLS join COXSWAIN as JOURNALIST becomes BOY ROWER.)*

GIRL 4. Sweat ...

GIRLS. Sweat, sweat, sweat, sweat ...

STROKE. Hang on. Girls don't sweat.

*(GIRLS give STROKE looks.)*

GIRLS. Sweat, sweat, sweat, sweat ...

STROKE. What? *I don't sweat.*

GIRL 7. Pain ...

GIRLS. Pain, pain, pain, pain ...

BOY ROWER. Pain? No. Girls can't handle pain.

STROKE. Excuse me? We have babies.

GIRLS. Pain, pain, pain, pain ...

BOY ROWER. Yeah but ... is childbirth really that painful?  
*I'll never know.*

GIRL 4. Hard work, discipline, drive, focus, competitive spirit—

GIRL 6. Win or die trying ...

GIRLS. Win, win, win, win, win ...

BOY ROWER. Win or die? Women? Since when?

GIRL 4. 1833. France. Ann Glanville and her *women's* four  
beat all the men in the Le Havre boat race.

GIRLS. Win, win, win, win ...

GIRL 3. FYI—Ann had fourteen children. So yeah, she could  
do pain.

COXSWAIN. 1892. California. Four women establish the  
world's oldest continuously existing all-women's rowing  
club in San Diego. Yes! California.

GIRL 5. 1927. England. First women's boat race between Oxford and Cambridge.

GIRL 7. 1938. Pennsylvania. Ernestine Bayer establishes the Philadelphia Girls Rowing Club. Where I will start rowing in 1972.

COXSWAIN. We're getting ahead ...

GIRLS. How we got here ...

GIRL 6. I am born in 1958, the year the United States creates NASA.

GIRL 5. National Aeronautic and Space Administration.

GIRL 6. The year the U.S. launches the Explorer Satellite and the USSR—i.e., Russia; e.g., the enemy—launches Sputnik.

COXSWAIN. Sputnik. Where do Russians come up with these names?

GIRL 6. In 1958, the microchip is invented and Elvis becomes a star.

COXSWAIN. Wait. Elvis is a real person?

GIRL 6. *Was*. For a while. In 1958 nearly every American watches *The Ed Sullivan Show*.

GIRL 3. Is that like, a reality show?

STROKE. A *variety* show. I watch Ed Sullivan with my parents. We love it.

GIRL 4. In 1958, the biggest movie in the country is *Gigi*.

GIRL 3. About a very young girl who marries a very old man and lives happily ever after.

COXSWAIN. Weirdly.

GIRL 6. Boys born in 1958 are expected to grow up to be firemen, athletes, president.

GIRL 5. Girls born in 1958 are not expected to do any of those things.

GIRL 7. Because ... ?

GIRL 6. Because ...

GIRLS. Because girls!

STROKE. Girls born in 1958 are expected to grow up and be ladies. Which is completely in keeping with how I'm raised.

BOW. Calm.

GIRL 2. Quiet.

GIRL 3. Controlled.

GIRL 4. Compliant.

GIRL 5. Agreeable.

GIRL 6. A good listener.

GIRL 7. A good housekeeper.

STROKE. Hang on ...

COXSWAIN. A good cook ...

STROKE. I do like to cook.

GIRL 6. I ... don't. And I'm not growing up to be ... any of those things.

*(GIRL 6 runs around. She stomps. She makes noise.)*

BOW. Would you stop thumping around?

*(GIRL 6 sits. A beat. She taps her hands. Her feet. She wiggles in the chair.)*

GIRL 2. Can you *please* sit still?

*(GIRL 3 holds up a piece of paper.)*

GIRL 3. I can't read your handwriting!

*(GIRL 4 holds up a shirt with a scorched hole in the shape of an iron.)*

GIRL 4. Were you ironing again?

*(GIRL 5 holds up a burnt cookie.)*

GIRL 5. Were you baking?

*(GIRL 6 puts her hands over her ears so she can't hear any of this.)*

GIRL 6. No, no, no, yes, yes—

GIRLS. No, no, no, yes, yes ...

STROKE. Speak softly.

GIRL 6. *No!*

GIRLS. *No!*

*(GIRL 6 jumps up.)*

GIRL 7. Sit down.

*(GIRL 6 sits.)*

COXSWAIN. Cross your legs.

*(GIRL 6 crosses her legs. A beat. She gets up and runs.)*

BOW. Walk don't run!

GIRL 6. But I do run.

*(BOY enters.)*

BOY. You run like a girl.

GIRL 6. Run a little faster and you can too.

*(GIRL 6 runs.)*

*BOY runs after GIRL 6. They stop running.)*

GIRL 6 (*cont'd*). My brother and I are best friends. We are savages. Wolves. We run with the pack in the neighborhood. Our parents are unconcerned. They work hard and they have cocktails at five.

GIRL 2 (*as MOTHER*). I don't want to see you until dinner time.

GIRL 6. I jump out of swings, climb trees—

GIRL 2 (*as MOTHER*). Take off those filthy shoes before you come in this house.

GIRL 6. We will, Mom.

GIRL 2 (*as MOTHER*). Did your brother get sunburned again?

GIRL 6. Yes.

GIRL 2 (*as MOTHER*). You never get sunburns. Do you?

GIRL 6. Nope.

GIRL 2 (*as MOTHER*). Oh my lord, he's blistering.

GIRL 6. I know, Mom.

GIRL 2 (*as MOTHER*). Did you wash your hands? What on earth is on your hands?

GIRL 6. Earth. And spit.

GIRL 2 (*as MOTHER*). Spit!?

GIRL 6. I can throw spitballs and a spiral pass ...

*(GIRL 6 holds up a football to pass to BOY.*

*BOY backs away, shaking his head "no."*

*GIRL 6 doesn't get it and looks confused.)*

BOY. Sorry.

GIRL 6. But now, we are older and everything we used to do together ...

BOY. Can't. I'm sorry. Really. It's ... no girls.

GIRL 6. Just like that. I'm out. Off the field. Off the team.

GIRL 4. In the 1960s, boys have teams. But girls ... don't.

GIRL 5. Hey ... come on ... there ARE sports for girls.

Women have competed in the Olympics since—

COXSWAIN. 1900. In sports that are considered suitable for

ladies—Sailing. Golf. Croquet. Really. Croquet.

STROKE. I like croquet.

GIRL 4. Gradually, other sports are added.

BOW. Diving, horseback riding ...

STROKE. Both of which I do.

GIRL 3. Riflery ...

STROKE. Riflery?

GIRL 3. Yes. Riflery.

GIRL 7. Running ...

GIRL 5. But not the marathon.

COXSWAIN. No women's Olympic marathon until 1984.

GIRL 4. Um ... we're getting ahead again.

GIRL 5. I am born in 1958. I'm an ACTIVE child.

BOW (as MOTHER). I planned to have fourteen children.

GIRL 5. Like Ann Glanville?

BOW (as MOTHER). I don't know who that is.

GIRL 5. Why didn't you have fourteen children?

BOW (as MOTHER). You came along. And that was that! I don't know what to do with you!

GIRL 5. My mother doesn't know what to do with me.

*(DAD enters in a sweat jacket, jogging.)*

GIRL 5 (cont'd). My dad is a runner.

*(DAD tosses GIRL 5 a matching sweat jacket. GIRL 5 puts it on.)*

GIRL 5 (*cont'd*). We run races together in matching clothes.  
People think it's adorable.

BOW (*as MOTHER*). Oh. My. God. Adorable. She's so little.  
He's so tall. Would you look at them go.

*(GIRL 5 and DAD jog together.)*

GIRL 5. How long is the race?

DAD. It's a 10k.

BOW (*as MOTHER*). Thataway! Tire. Her. Out!

GIRLS. Tire her out! Tire her out! Tire her out!

*(GIRL 5 and DAD stop and stretch together.)*

GIRL 5. My dad has no sons. Maybe he would still run with  
me if he had sons. Would you, Dad?

DAD. I have no sons. So we will never know.

GIRL 5. We run 10ks and 5ks and even a half-marathon. We  
win trophies and ribbons and medals. I like winning. Do  
you like winning, Dad?

DAD. I've always liked winning.

GIRL 5. And then something happens ...

DAD. When did you get so tall?

*(GIRL 5 takes off the sweat jacket.)*

BOW (*as MOTHER*). Honey, would you stop growing out of  
your clothes?

GIRL 5. It's 1972. I'm in high school. I'm not little anymore.  
I'm not adorable. I'm tall.

DAD. By God you're tall.

BOW (*as MOTHER*). *Very* tall.

GIRL 5. Unnaturally tall ...

STROKE. For a girl.

DAD. Maybe you can play basketball?

GIRL 5. There is no basketball team for girls at my school.

BOW (*as MOTHER*). Can you run, dear? You were such a graceful runner.

GIRL 5. There is no running team for girls at my school.

GIRL 4. No teams for girls. Period.

GIRL 5. I am not allowed to play boys' basketball. And the boys don't want me to run with them. Even though I can beat most of them.

COXSWAIN. Um ... hello ... why do you think they don't want you to run with them?

GIRL 7. But this is your lucky year. Because it's 1972. Big year.

COXSWAIN. Big beeping year.

GIRL 7. Title IX.

GIRLS. Title IX, Title IX, Title IX ...

GIRL 7. No person in the United States shall, on the basis of sex—

COXSWAIN. As in girl—

GIRLS. Title IX, Title IX, Title IX ...

GIRL 7. No person in the United States shall ...

COXSWAIN. Because girl ...

GIRL 7. Be excluded from participation in, be denied the benefits of, or be subjected to discrimination under any education program or activity receiving Federal financial assistance.

GIRL 5. Wait—Title IX doesn't mention sports!?

GIRL 7. Nope. Title IX is not about sports. It is about discrimination generally. Including sports.

GIRL 5. Hang on ... run that by me again.



GIRL 7. Denied benefits of or subjected to discrimination under any education program or activity receiving Federal financial assistance.

GIRL 5. Like a school?

GIRL 7. Like a school.

*(GIRL 5 turns to MAN.)*

MAN. I'm so sorry—

GIRL 5. You don't look sorry.

MAN. The fact is ... we don't have a girls' basketball team here.

GIRL 5. Then you have to cut the boys' team.

MAN. Excuse me?

GIRL 5. If you have a boys' team, you have to have a girls' team. *(To GIRL 7.)* Right?

GIRL 7. Right!

GIRL 5. It's 1972—and my school establishes its first girls' basketball and track teams. Not because it wanted those teams but—

COXSWAIN. Because Title IX.

GIRL 5. It had to have those teams. In 1972, finally, I can play basketball.

GIRL 6. You're tall. You should row.

GIRL 5. Because I'm tall?

COXSWAIN. The physics of rowing—A.K.A. does height matter?

GIRL 6. Yes.

GIRL 2. Duh.

STROKE. Levers.