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Dramatic Publishing

*"Times of War is at times brilliant.
This is theater worth seeing!"*

—Metroland

Times of War



Drama
by
Eric Lane

“Gripping in its subject matter and daring in its delivery.”

—*Times Union*

“This play is entertaining, absorbing and deeply moving.

You’ll love it!” —*The Post Star*

Times of War

Drama. By *Eric Lane*. Cast: 2 to 7m., 3 to 7w. This award-winning play beautifully examines the changing American landscape. It tells the story of one woman’s struggles set against the backdrop of four wars—from World War II to the present. “Filled with luscious poetic imagery,” (*The Record*) *Times of War* is written in four sections: *The Nearness of You*, *How to Boil a Frog*, *Early Morning* and *Now Comes the Night*. The play begins with the comically poignant romance *The Nearness of You*. Young Doris and her brassy friend, Arlene, meet two soldiers heading off to World War II. Set in a dance hall, romance blooms as the characters’ fears and dreams for the future are revealed. *How to Boil a Frog* (set in 1969)—“with the older, wiser Doris clandestinely meeting a young man at a carnival—is dazzling old-fashioned theater, all words and gestures and genuine drama.” (*Times Union*) Doris is accused of a shocking crime in *Early Morning* (set in 1994). A tense cat-and-mouse drama ensues at the police precinct between Doris and Detective Diamantini. He feels compassion for her, yet is driven to discover the truth of what actually happened. *Times of War* ends with *Now Comes the Night* (set in 2006) as Doris must face a life-threatening challenge. Refusing to be discarded, Doris comes full circle while cared for by her daughter and a young male nurse. *Unit set. Approximate running time: 2 hours. These plays may be performed individually or as a full evening. Code: TQ2.*

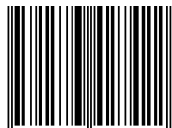
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(l-r) Jeanne Willcoxon, Jimmy Georgiades, David Gunderman.

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TIMES OF WAR

A Full-length Play
Comprised of Four One-acts by

ERIC LANE

The Nearness of You

How to Boil a Frog

Early Morning

Now Comes the Night



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(TIMES OF WAR)

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To Martha Banta

For her friendship, guidance and direction

Many thanks

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:

“*Times of War* received its world premiere at the
Adirondack Theatre Festival, Glens Falls, New York.
Martha Banta, Artistic Director,
David Turner, Producing Director.”

Times of War received its world premiere at the Adirondack Theatre Festival in Glens Falls, N.Y. Martha Banta, artistic director; David Turner, producing director. The set design was by Eric Renschler; the lighting design was by Matthew Frey; the costume design was by Susan J. Slack; the sound design was by Douglas Graves; and the stage manager was Gerry Cosgrove. Martha Banta directed the following cast: Jimmy Georgiades, David Gunderman, Maggie Low and Jeanne Willcoxon.

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Times of War received readings at La MaMa, New York Theatre Workshop, Ensemble Studio Theatre, A.T.F., Circle East and the Ohio Theatre. The play was developed by Orange Thoughts Productions.

A NOTE ON CASTING

Times of War may be cast many ways. It was originally conceived for a cast of 5 actors: 2m, 3w. The play also may be performed by up to 14 actors: 6m, 7w, 1 either gender (for Dr. Taylor). However the roles are divided, there should be the feeling of an ensemble.

For the minimum cast of 5, the roles may be divided as follows:

ACTRESS 1– Part 1: DORIS. Part 2: MARY SUE.
Part 4: YOUNG DORIS.

ACTRESS 2– Part 1: ARLENE. Part 2: DORIS.
Part 4: MARGIE / MIDDLE DORIS.

ACTRESS 3– Parts 3 & 4: DORIS.

ACTOR 1– Part 1: KARL or WARREN. Part 2: SCOTT.
Part 4: BRIAN.

ACTOR 2– Part 1: KARL or WARREN. Part 2: TOM.
Part 3: DIAMANTINI.
Part 4: DR. TAYLOR.

TIMES OF WAR

<i>The Nearness of You</i>	8
<i>How to Boil a Frog</i>	30
<i>Early Morning</i>	61
<i>Now Comes the Night</i>	88

The full-length play is to be performed with an intermission between *How to Boil a Frog* and *Early Morning*. The individual one-acts may also be performed on their own.

The Nearness of You

CHARACTERS

DORISa pretty, spirited young woman who is fighting against her loss. Likes to dance. Late teens to 20s.

KARLa pilot in the Army Air Forces. Masculine, physical, with an underlying sensitivity. 20s.

WARREN..... a “marked man.” A bad dancer, he is awkward though trying his best. Always a step behind.

ARLENEan expert dancer with confidence, if a bit showy.

TIME AND PLACE

Dance hall. Small-town America. 1944. Spring.

* * *

“It’s just the nearness of you.”
— Hoagy Carmichael / Ned Washington

The Nearness of You

AT RISE: *An American flag with 48 stars UC. A mirror ball hangs.*

(DORIS enters. She sips Coca Cola from a bottle with a straw. On a small table, she places her soda. A big band song of the era, like "Pennsylvania 6-5000," starts. Lights up. Mirror ball spins. She smiles and sways to the music. She finds comfort in the dance hall and enjoys dancing. She places down her purse.

ARLENE enters. She claps her hands, dances in time with the music. She smiles at DORIS, who joins her dancing. As bells ring in the song, they spin around.)

DORIS & ARLENE *(straight out, in time with the song).*
Pennsylvania 6-5000.

(WARREN, in uniform, enters, then stumbles slightly. He listens really hard to the music, counts in his head as he tries to get the beat. WARREN moves his feet slightly. He watches his feet which are almost always off.

KARL, in uniform, enters, begins dancing. While not a trained dancer, KARL has an ease with his body. After a couple of steps, he looks over at DORIS, attracted to her.

As bells ring, they all turn, with WARREN not quite in step.)

ALL. Pennsylvania 6-5000.

(DORIS and ARLENE dance together. KARL and WARREN watch, dancing in place. Then, in two lines, DORIS dances opposite KARL, ARLENE opposite WARREN. DORIS and KARL laugh, enjoying themselves.

Just as they are about to speak, ARLENE makes her move. ARLENE dances between DORIS and KARL, taking his hand. She leads him off. KARL politely follows, looking after at DORIS. She watches, trying to act nonchalant, hiding her disappointment.

WARREN continues to try to get the step down. DORIS looks over to him. Song plays underneath, gradually fading out.)

DORIS *(over music)*. You know who you look like?

WARREN *(stops dancing)*. My father?

DORIS. Mickey Rooney.

WARREN. You're just saying that.

DORIS. No, it's true. Soon as you walked in, I had to check twice to make sure it wasn't him.

WARREN *(embarrassed)*. Go on.

DORIS. Would I make that up?

WARREN. People say I look like my dad, but then, you don't know him.

DORIS. Well, if your dad's Mickey Rooney, I'd say they're right. I'm Doris. What's your name?

WARREN. Warren.

DORIS. That's a nice name.

WARREN. I don't like it.

DORIS. Why not?

WARREN. Never have. (*Pronounces it, over-articulating.*)

War-ren. (*Shakes his head, makes a face.*) Doris is nice though.

DORIS. Thank you. (*WARREN nods.*) This music sure is sounding nice.

WARREN. Uh-huh.

DORIS. Just gets my feet tapping.

WARREN (*pretends to knock*). Tap. Tap.

DORIS. Who's there?

WARREN. I don't know.

DORIS. No. Like a joke. (*Repeats his knocking.*) Tap. Tap.

You know. Knock knock.

WARREN. Who's there?

DORIS. I thought you were saying...

WARREN. No.

DORIS. Oh.

(*A beat.*)

WARREN. Knock knock.

DORIS. Who's there?

WARREN. Orange.

DORIS. Orange who?

WARREN. Knock knock.

DORIS. Who's there?

WARREN. Orange.

DORIS. Orange who?

WARREN. Knock knock.

DORIS. Who's there?

WARREN. Orange.

DORIS. Orange who?

WARREN. Knock knock.

DORIS. Who's there?

WARREN. Orange.

DORIS. Orange who?

WARREN. Knock knock.

DORIS. Who's there?

WARREN. Orange.

DORIS. Orange who?

WARREN. Knock knock.

DORIS. Who's there?

WARREN. Banana.

DORIS. Banana who?

WARREN (*realizes he got it backwards*). No, wait. Oh.

O.K. Knock knock.

DORIS. Warren, would you like to dance?

WARREN. Nooo.

DORIS. Why not?

WARREN. I'm a terrible dancer.

DORIS. I bet you're just saying that.

WARREN. No. I wouldn't lie. It's true.

DORIS. You can walk, can't you? (*He looks at her, indicates so-so.*) Well, if you can walk, you can dance.

WARREN. You don't know. My mom always says, it's like when we weren't looking, God permanently tied my two shoelaces together. Big joke...ha. I'm a marked man.

DORIS. What's that?

WARREN. Every time something falls, it lands on me. Since a kid. Can't walk down the street without an acorn

hitting me on the head or falling in some hole. I go off to battle, watch out.

DORIS. Warren, that's just silly.

WARREN. Not if you're the one getting hit.

DORIS. It doesn't mean... Well, maybe all this is happening now, so when you ship out, trouble'll steer clear of you.

WARREN. I don't think so. A marked man.

DORIS. Well, I'm sure you have other skills to compensate for any slight awkwardness.

WARREN. No.

DORIS. Other accomplishments...

(WARREN thinks hard for a moment, then shakes his head 'no.')

DORIS *(cont'd)*. Some contest you won, or maybe participated in...

WARREN *(thinks, then)*. Once I ate seventeen egg rolls at the China Garden buffet.

DORIS *(encouraging)*. Well that's something.

WARREN *(getting excited)*. It was. In one sitting. Even the waiter was impressed. And he's from China. Do you like Chinese food?

DORIS. Yes, I do.

WARREN. Me, too! I love it. Especially egg rolls. Put a plate in front of me with some duck sauce, and I'm a happy man! *(A beat.)* They're very tasty, you know.

(DORIS nods, smiles. He smiles back. Then looks down at his feet. She is losing him. She takes WARREN's hand and leads him onto the "dance floor.")

DORIS. C'mon, Warren. Let's dance.

WARREN. Uh-oh.

DORIS. C'mon. We'll start real simple.

WARREN. This is a very bad idea.

DORIS. All you have to do is follow me. O.K. Now:

Right. Left. Back step.

Right. Left. Back step.

Right. Left. Back step.

(WARREN is looking down, not moving.)

DORIS *(cont'd)*. Warren, move your feet. Now:

Slow. Slow. Quick quick.

Slow. Slow. Quick quick.

(WARREN picks up his feet, moving slightly.)

Slow. Slow. Quick quick.

That's it. You're a regular Fred Astaire.

(He makes a mistake.)

WARREN. You threw me off.

DORIS. O.K. Warren, look at me.

(He looks up, then quickly back down. She holds his chin up.)

DORIS *(cont'd)*.

Right. Left. Back step.

Right. Left. Back step.

(His confidence growing.)

DORIS (*cont'd*).

Right. Left. Back step.

Right. Left. Back step.

Right—

(He steps on her foot. DORIS tries to hide the pain.)

WARREN. Oh, geez.

DORIS. It's O.K.

WARREN. I told you it was a bad idea.

DORIS. It's all right, Warren.

WARREN. Are you maimed?

DORIS. I'll be fine.

WARREN. Maybe we should have it looked at.

DORIS. No, that's O.K.

WARREN. I'm gonna get some punch. You want some?

DORIS. No thank you.

WARREN. If you're sure... *(She nods 'yes.')* O.K. Well, thanks for the lesson. *(He turns and heads off. Exits.)*

DORIS *(to herself, under her breath)*. Owwwwwww
wwwwwwwww! *(Rubs her foot.)*

(KARL enters. Heads toward her, stops. DORIS realizes he's looking at her. Pretends to finish brushing off her shoe. Stands, feigns nonchalance. She looks over at him, then away. KARL looks at her, takes a step closer.)

KARL. Do you want to dance?

DORIS. No thank you.

KARL. Oh. *(Starts to go.)*

DORIS. I mean, I'd like to, but my toe...

KARL *(stops)*. Warren?

DORIS. You saw?

KARL. Not exactly. I mean, I saw you dancing with him. I figured it was a just matter of time. You know Warren's the army's best kept secret.

DORIS. How do you figure?

KARL. We let the enemy capture him. Then he's *their* problem. (*DORIS smiles.*) What's your name?

DORIS. Doris Noll.

KARL. Karl Hanson.

DORIS. Handsome?

KARL (*laughs, corrects her*). Hanson.

DORIS. Oh, I thought you said handsome. Anybody ever tell you you look like Tyrone Power?

KARL. Get outta here.

DORIS. You do. Soon as you walked in, I could see. Especially around the eyes.

KARL. You look more like Tyrone Power than I do.

DORIS. Well, thanks a lot.

KARL. I just meant... Well, just around the eyes.

DORIS. Oh.

KARL. Especially around the eyes.

DORIS. Did you see *A Yank in the R.A.F.*?

KARL (*non-committal*). Uh-huh.

DORIS. What's the matter, didn't you like it?

KARL. It was O.K.

DORIS. I thought it was romantic. Especially the ending, when he returns.

KARL. If you like that kind of thing.

DORIS. But you don't.

KARL. No, it's not that. It's just that, well... I thought it was kinda corny.

DORIS. Oh.

KARL. I liked the fight sequences though. They were good.

DORIS. Weren't they?

KARL. Yeah. I liked them.

(An awkward moment.)

KARL *(cont'd)*. You want some ice or something?

DORIS. No, it'll be O.K.

KARL. You sure?

DORIS *(nods)*. Thanks... *(A moment.)* You in the Army Air Force?

KARL. Yup.

DORIS. I could tell by your wings. My brother Johnny's a bomber pilot.

KARL. Where's he stationed?

DORIS. Outside London.

KARL. I hear it rains there all the time.

DORIS. He says it's gray. All gray. Sky's gray. Earth's gray. Sometimes it's hard to tell the difference.

KARL. I been learning Italian.

DORIS. You already know where you'll be stationed?

KARL. Not for sure. But one of my buddy's been teaching me. Only a couple of weeks.

DORIS. I bet you're good at it.

KARL *(indicates 'so-so')*. Enough to get by. When I'm overseas.

DORIS. Teach me something in Italian.

KARL. O.K. Um... *(Thinks. Gets it.)* *Il cielo*.

DORIS. *Il cielo*.

KARL *(corrects her, gestures with bravura)*. *Cielo*.

DORIS *(correctly, gestures with bravura)*. *Cielo*.

KARL. Good. *Il cielo è bellissimo*.

DORIS. *Il cielo è bellissimo.* What's it mean?

KARL. The sky is beautiful.

DORIS. Another.

KARL. O.K. . . . *L'acqua brilla.*

DORIS. *L'acqua brilla.*

KARL (*nods*). The water shimmers.

DORIS. I like that. *L'acqua brilla.*

KARL. O.K. Now, you ready? (*DORIS nods.*) *Le tue labbra sono rosse come rubini i tuoi piedi puzzano di parmigiano.*

DORIS. That's a long one.

KARL. Yeah, I know. *Le tue labbra.*

DORIS. *Le tue labbra.*

KARL (*corrects her*). *Labbra.*

DORIS (*pronounces it better*). *Labbra.*

KARL. *Sono rosse come rubini.*

DORIS. *Sono rosse come rubini .*

KARL (*emphasizes second syllable*). *Rubini.*

DORIS (*repeats*). *Rubini.*

KARL. *I tuoi piedi puzzano di parmigiano.*

DORIS. *I tuoi piedi puzzano di parmigiano.*

KARL. *Le tue labbra sono rosse come rubini i tuoi piedi puzzano di parmigiano.*

DORIS. *Le tue labbra sono rosse come rubini i tuoi piedi puzzano di parmigiano.* That's beautiful. What does it mean?

KARL. Your lips are the color of rubies and your feet smell like Parmesan cheese.

(*DORIS laughs. So does KARL.*)

DORIS. Oh, go on.