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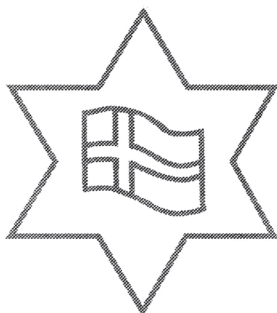
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*Dramatic Publishing*

Lois Lowry's

# Number the Stars



*Adapted By  
Dr. Douglas W. Larche*



*The Dramatic Publishing Company*

# Number the Stars

*Drama. Based on the book by Lois Lowry. Adapted by Dr. Douglas W. Larche, with educational and editorial assistance by Susan Elliott Larche.*

*Cast: 7m., 7w. (extras as desired).* During the German occupation of Denmark in World War II, the Nazis closed down Jewish-owned businesses and began to round up the Jews for relocation to concentration camps for the final solution. Danish freedom fighters of all ages risked everything in daring, hurried rescue attempts of the entire Jewish population. In this stirring new play, young Annemarie and Kirsti Johansen face soldiers, interrogations, fierce dogs, personal danger, the loss of loved ones and their own fears as they try to help their friend Ellen Rosen escape across the ocean to Sweden and safety. Courage, faith, ingenuity and even their fledgling acting skills eventually win the day. All the drama, pathos, adventure, terror and humor that have made *Number the Stars* a National Best-seller (and winner of the Newbery Award and the American Library Association Book of the Year Award) come to life in this powerful adaptation. *Area staging.*

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Number the Stars

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# **NUMBER THE STARS**

by

**DR. DOUGLAS W. LARCHE**

with

**Susan Elliott Larche**

**Based on the Novel**

by

**LOIS LOWRY**



**Dramatic Publishing**

Woodstock, Illinois • London, England • Melbourne, Australia

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DR. DOUGLAS W. LARCHE

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## Preface and Acknowledgments

Susan Elliott Larche is an advocate of fine literature, especially for young readers. An extraordinary teacher of reading and creative writing for over twenty-five years, when she talks, I listen.

In preparation for the Danish Lutheran Grand View College Centennial celebration, my family and I were exploring Danish language and culture to equip us for my upcoming sabbatical to Copenhagen, Elsinore and Aarhus. When I found *Number the Stars* in our college bookstore and brought it to Susan as a “Danish cultural gift,” I was surprised that she already knew the book.

Her students loved it, she said. She couldn’t keep it on the shelf, she said. The story was beautiful. It had won the prestigious Newbery Gold Medal and the American Library Association Book of the Year Award. Lois Lowry absolutely understood the psyche of the young adult. But there was more. She thought I was the right person to adapt it, because of my background in playwriting, children’s literature, social issues and education. One reading of the riveting novel convinced me it would be a worthy challenge. Throughout the process Susan became my educational and editorial associate.

She began by extrapolating dialogue. I worked on issues of stagecraft, framing, oral dialogue, character and scenic combination-expansion and wrote the first draft for a dramaturgical project at the University of Iowa for Dr. Art Borecca. He helped shape the play and Nadine Andrews offered general research. Sherry Kramer, Acting Director of the University of Iowa Playwrights Workshop, gave valuable insights as well. Franklin Miller enthusiastically guided a screen adaptation. Gayle Sergel and her colleagues at Dramatic Publishing were excellent, instantly supportive editors who made substantive

contributions. Gratitude to Lois Lowry for a moving, powerful, world-class book; and to Lois and Wendy Schmalz at Harold Ober Associates for choosing us and for their confidence in this adaptation. Thanks to my wife, Susan, most of all.

The sabbatical to Denmark never happened—I spent it at Oxford University and Iowa in their respective Playwrights Workshops—but I wrote four other Danish shows: *Great Danes*, *The Treasure*, *Eating Danish* and *The Little Match Girl*, and served as dramaturg for two more—*Into Africa* by Erika Wilkins and *Coffee and Spirits* by Mark Gruber—for the Centennial cycle at Grand View College. The centerpiece of the celebration, *Number the Stars*, will premiere September of 1996 in the official Centennial slot. This edition had already gone to press, but all future editions of the play will include the cast and staff of that premiere performance.

For the Danes of every stripe whose courage saved a people and made a nation proud. And happy birthday, Grand View.

-DWL  
Iowa City and Indianola  
1996

# NUMBER THE STARS

A Play in Two Acts

For 7 women and 7 men with doubling

CHARACTERS (in order of appearance)

ANNEMARIE JOHANSEN . . . . . a fourteen-year-old girl  
ELLEN ROSEN . . . . . a fourteen-year-old girl  
KIRSTIE JOHANSEN . . . . . ten-year-old sister of Annemarie  
THE GIRAFFE . . . . . a German soldier  
MRS. INGE JOHANSEN . . . mother of Annemarie & Kirstie  
MRS. SOPHY ROSEN . . . . . mother of Ellen  
PAPA JOHANSEN . . . . . father of Annemarie & Kirstie  
PETER NEILSEN . . . . . a young member of the Resistance  
SOLDIER . . . . . with the German military  
KLAMPENBORG SOLDIER . . . . . a German soldier  
UNCLE HENRIK KNUDSEN . . . uncle of Annemarie & Kirstie  
COUPLE WITH A BABY . . . Danish Jews escaping to Sweden  
MAN WITH A BEARD . . . a Danish Jew escaping to Sweden  
SAMUEL HIRSCH . . . . . a schoolmate of Ellen & Annemarie  
MRS. HIRSCH . . . . . mother of Samuel  
MR. ROSEN . . . . . father of Ellen  
GERMAN OFFICER . . . . . with the German military

## Doubling is Possible

With the HIRSCHES, MR. ROSEN, The SOLDIERS, MAN WITH BEARD and COUPLE WITH A BABY

## For Larger Casts

It is possible to add German soldiers throughout, and members of the Resistance at the funeral.



WHAT PEOPLE ARE SAYING about *Number the Stars*  
(str)...

"This enduring story of young Annemarie was embraced! When many of our students heard we would perform *Number the Stars*, I heard nothing but excitement! Many of them had read and loved the novel by Lois Lowry while in elementary school."

*Sara Kohnen, Jefferson Junior High School,  
Dubuque, Iowa*

"*Number the Stars* was an excellent, entertaining and educational script. It was relatively easy to produce, and it was very true to the original novel by Lois Lowry."

*Diana Champlin,  
Prescott High School,  
Prescott, Wis.*

"*Number the Stars* captures the essential plot and characters of the novel in a suspenseful, easy-to-stage drama. We performed it before elementary school audiences who were enraptured at the drama."

*Claire Teague,  
Tacoma Baptist Schools,  
Tacoma, Wash.*

"This play was a beautiful story that the students really connected with. The messages of courage and friendship proved powerful. Our student audiences loved seeing the favorite novel come to life!"

*Susan Derr,  
Wyomissing Area Junior High School,  
Wyomissing, Pa.*

"Fabulous play as the leading characters are females, which we all know most of us have plenty of in our departments."

*Drama Director, Peoria High School,  
Peoria, Ariz.*

# ACT ONE

## SCENE ONE

AT RISE: ANNEMARIE, ELLEN and KIRSTIE appear in light in the aisles of the theatre. They are walking home from school, along Østerbrogade Street, wearing backpacks and carrying schoolbooks.

ANNEMARIE. I'll race you to the house, Ellen! Ready?

ELLEN. No! You know I can't beat you—my legs aren't as long. Can't we just walk, like civilized people?

ANNEMARIE. I was second at the athletic meet last week, so I need to practice every day. Come on, Ellen, please? Are you a coward?

KIRSTIE. I can race! I can race!

ANNEMARIE. Come on, Ellen! Please? Please? *Vaer så venlig?*

ELLEN. No! It isn't ladylike!

*(We hear a bicycle bell. KIRSTIE looks up and sees SAMUEL approaching, almost out of control on his wooden-wheeled bicycle.)*

KIRSTIE. S-s-sam!

ANNEMARIE. What are you trying to say?

KIRSTIE. Samuel!

ELLEN. Not again! I do not like Samuel!

ANNEMARIE. I hear wooden wheels!

**KIRSTIE** (*sing-song*). Ellen loves Samuel! (*ELLEN and ANNEMARIE look up and see SAMUEL bearing down on them. The possibility of a crash seems imminent. But ELLEN takes the matter into her own hands preparing to run directly at the startled SAMUEL, forcing him to alter his path to miss the girls.*)

**ELLEN**. Let's race!

**KIRSTIE**. But he'll kill us!

**ELLEN**. Right at him!

**ANNEMARIE**. I'll win!

**ELLEN**. Go! (*The two older girls take off on a mad dash right through SAMUEL's path, laughing, then continue through the theatre [aisles, apron, etc.] towards the stage, with KIRSTIE trying in vain to keep up. SAMUEL barely misses them and has a soft crash, then is out of light.*)

**KIRSTIE**. Wait for me!

(*They run wildly, happily through the audience, almost making their way to the stage when two German SOLDIERS appear as if out of nowhere.*)

**GIRAFFE**. *Halte!* Why are you running?

**ANNEMARIE** (*frightened, barely able to speak*). I—was racing with my friend. We have races at school every Friday, and I want to do well, so I—

**GIRAFFE**. What is in here? (*He motions to her backpack.*)

**ANNEMARIE**. Schoolbooks.

**GIRAFFE**. Are you a good student?

**ANNEMARIE**. Well, yes.

**GIRAFFE**. What is your name?

**ANNEMARIE**. Annemarie Johansen.

**GIRAFFE**. Your friend—is she a good student, too?

**ANNEMARIE**. Better than I am.

GIRAFFE. What is her name?

ANNEMARIE. Ellen. (*ELLEN nods warily.*)

GIRAFFE. And who is this?

ANNEMARIE. My little sister. (*The SOLDIER reaches down to stroke KIRSTIE's hair. She pulls his hand away.*)

KIRSTIE. Don't!

GIRAFFE (*speaks German to his partner. They laugh.*). You are pretty, like my own little girl. Go home, all of you. Go study your schoolbooks. And don't run. You look like hoodlums when you run. (*The SOLDIERS walk away. The GIRLS start toward the stage then stop.*)

ELLEN. I was so scared.

ANNEMARIE. So was I. I still am. I can barely breathe.

KIRSTIE. Not me. He looks like a silly old giraffe.

ANNEMARIE. Kirstie!

KIRSTIE. With a long neck. I bet he eats leaves from trees!

ELLEN. Are you going to tell your mother? I'm not. My mother would be upset.

ANNEMARIE. No, I won't, either. Mama would probably scold me for running on the street.

ELLEN. Let's keep this just between us. See you later.

ANNEMARIE. Good-bye. (*ELLEN goes up the side stairs to her apartment as ANNEMARIE and KIRSTIE walk up the front steps to theirs.*) Now, Kirstie, there's no need to tell Mama.

(*KIRSTIE bursts in the door and runs directly to her mother, MRS. JOHANSEN, and ELLEN's mother, MRS. ROSEN.*)

KIRSTIE. Mama! Mama! The soldier stopped us, and he had a gun and he grabbed my hair! But I wasn't scared. Annemarie was, and Ellen, too. But not me!

MRS. JOHANSEN. Annemarie, what happened? What is Kirstie talking about?

MRS. ROSEN. Where's Ellen?

ANNEMARIE. Ellen's in your apartment. She didn't realize you were here. Don't worry. It wasn't anything. It was the two soldiers who stand on the corner of Østerbrogade—you've seen them; you know the tall one with the long neck?

KIRSTIE. I slapped his hand and shouted at him.

ANNEMARIE. No, she didn't, Mama. She's exaggerating, as she always does. There is no need to be frightened.

KIRSTIE. You were! You said you could barely breathe!

MRS. JOHANSEN. It would be foolish not to be afraid. They must be edgy because of the latest Resistance incidents. *(She turns to MRS. ROSEN.)* Did you read in *De Frie Danske* about the bombings in Hillerød and Nørrebro?

MRS. ROSEN. I must go and speak to Ellen. You girls walk a different way to school tomorrow. Promise me, Annemarie. And Ellen will promise, too.

ANNEMARIE. We will, Mrs. Rosen, but what does it matter? There are German soldiers on every corner in Copenhagen.

MRS. ROSEN. They will remember your faces. It is important to be one of the crowd, always. Be one of many. Be sure that they never have reason to remember your face. *(She leaves.)*

KIRSTIE. He'll remember my face, Mama, because he said I look like his little girl. He said I was pretty.

MRS. JOHANSEN. If he has such a pretty little girl, why doesn't he go back to her like a good father? Why doesn't he go back to his own country?

ANNEMARIE. Mama, is there anything to eat?

MRS. JOHANSEN. Take some bread. And give a piece to your sister.

KIRSTIE. With butter?

MRS. JOHANSEN. No butter. You know that.

KIRSTIE. I wish I could have a cupcake. A big yellow cupcake, with pink frosting.

MRS. JOHANSEN. For a little girl, you have a long memory. There hasn't been any butter, or sugar for cupcakes, for a long time. A year, at least.

KIRSTIE. Will there be cupcakes next week for my birthday?

MRS. JOHANSEN. Not this year. When the war ends. When the soldiers leave. (*BLACKOUT.*)

## SCENE TWO

*AT RISE: It is later that evening. KIRSTIE is ready for bed. ANNEMARIE, PAPA and MRS. JOHANSEN sit with her in the living room.*

MRS. JOHANSEN. It's time for bed. Tomorrow is a school day.

KIRSTIE. A play first! Let's do a play!

PAPA. Every night it's the same! A play. A story. A fairy tale.

ANNEMARIE. I wish we could go to Tivoli Gardens.

MRS. JOHANSEN. We'll make our own Tivoli! Let's do the play.

ANNEMARIE. Please. Not the Little Mermaid.

KIRSTIE. Let's do the one that starts with a king and a queen. And they have a beautiful daughter.

PAPA. All right. You know your parts. Annemarie?

ANNEMARIE. Again?

PAPA. Annemarie?

ANNEMARIE. Yes, Father. Once upon a time there was a king—

KIRSTIE. And a queen. Don't forget the queen.

ANNEMARIE. And a queen. They lived together in a wonderful palace, and—

KIRSTIE. Was the palace named Amalienborg?

ANNEMARIE. Shhh. Don't keep interrupting or we'll never finish the play. No, it wasn't Amalienborg. It was a pretend palace.

MRS. JOHANSEN. Is the princess in tonight, Your Highness?

PAPA. Do you mean Princess Kirstie, Your Grace?

KIRSTIE. No, I'm not in! I'm having a tea party with the King of Denmark!

MRS. JOHANSEN. A tea party?

KIRSTIE. Yes! With pink cupcakes!

ANNEMARIE. And how is King Christian today?

KIRSTIE. He is fine. He was out riding on his horse.

ANNEMARIE. Like that time with Lise. He waved at us. Lise told me, "Now you are special forever because you have been greeted by a king."

KIRSTIE. No fair! This is my story.

ANNEMARIE. I'm sorry, Kirstie, I was just missing...

KIRSTIE. Princess Kirstie!

PAPA. Princess Kirstie: Did the king like his cupcakes?

KIRSTIE. He loved them! He ate four and saved me the icing!

PAPA. Did he tell you that he saw two German soldiers today?

KIRSTIE. Did one of them look like a giraffe?

PAPA. They asked of the lady-in-waiting, "Who is that man who rides past here every morning on his horse?"

ANNEMARIE. "He is our king. He is the King of Denmark."

PAPA. "But where is his bodyguard?"

ANNEMARIE. "All of Denmark is his bodyguard."

KIRSTIE. Is it true, Papa? What the lady-in-waiting said?

PAPA. Yes. It is true. Any Danish citizen would die for King Christian, to protect him.

ANNEMARIE. You too, Papa?

PAPA. Yes.

KIRSTIE. And Mama?

MRS. JOHANSEN. Mama too.

ANNEMARIE. Then I would too, Papa. If I had to.

KIRSTIE. And I would too. But I would rather not.

MRS. JOHANSEN. You won't have to, Princess. But you do have to go to bed. Too many cupcakes.

KIRSTIE. I know. I'm so full my eyes are bulging out. I'd better go get some sleep. Good night, Your Majesty. Good night, Your Grace. Good night, Annemarie. And you were too, afraid! (*KIRSTIE runs to her bedroom.*)

ANNEMARIE. Papa, sometimes I wonder why the king wasn't able to protect us. Why didn't he fight the Nazis so that they wouldn't come into Denmark with their guns?

PAPA. We are such a tiny country. And they are such an enormous enemy. Our king was wise. He knew how few soldiers Denmark had. He knew that many, many Danish people would die if we fought.

ANNEMARIE. In Norway they fought.

PAPA. They fought very fiercely in Norway. They had those huge mountains for the Norwegian soldiers to hide in. Even so, Norway was crushed.

ANNEMARIE. Are there German soldiers in Norway now, the same as here?

PAPA. Yes.

MRS. JOHANSEN. In Holland, too, and Belgium and France.

ANNEMARIE. But not in Sweden!

PAPA. That's true. Sweden is still free.

ANNEMARIE. Just across the water. Not twenty miles. Free. No soldiers. Free. (*BLACKOUT.*)



## SCENE THREE

**AT RISE:** *KIRSTIE is asleep in their bed. ANNEMARIE is on her knees in front of an open trunk. She handles mementos of her sister.*

**ANNEMARIE.** I miss you, Lise. I miss your stories. I miss your hands. The pillowcases are so pretty. Just like you. You did everything so well. I'm so sorry you never got to wear your wedding dress. It's still here. *(She picks up a well-worn photo album and leafs through it.)* And I miss Peter. He was so good to us. So funny. He used to tickle Kirstie. Once he danced with me. He never comes anymore. Maybe we make him sad. But we weren't driving the car that hit you. We hurt just as bad as he did. Instead of just losing a sister, we lost a brother too. Listen to me, feeling sorry for myself. You lost a husband and a life. Oh, Lise! It's so hard being the big sister. Sometimes I feel younger than Kirstie. She is much braver than I am. I wish I had your courage. I wish I had you. Mama and Papa won't even look in this trunk, Lise, not since the day they packed it away. Papa won't even say your name. But I know they miss you. It just hurts them too much. I miss you. *(She kisses the wedding dress and puts it back in the trunk.)* Godnat, Lise. Good night. *(She closes the trunk.)*  
**BLACKOUT.**

## SCENE FOUR

AT RISE: *It is the next morning in the bedroom. MRS. JOHANSEN comes in to wake the girls.*

MRS. JOHANSEN. Wake up, girls! Good morning!

KIRSTIE. No, Mama. It's too cold!

MRS. JOHANSEN. Soon we will have to add another blanket to your bed.

ANNEMARIE. Kirstie and I are lucky to have each other for warmth in the winter. Poor Ellen, to have no sisters.

MRS. JOHANSEN. She will have to snuggle in with her mama and papa when it gets cold. After the war there will be fuel oil again.

ANNEMARIE. I remember when Kirstie slept between you and Papa. She was supposed to stay in her crib, but in the middle of the night she would climb out and get in with you.

MRS. JOHANSEN. I remember, too. Sometimes she wet the bed in the middle of the night!

KIRSTIE. *Nej!* I never, ever did that!

*(ELLEN pops her head in, then enters the bedroom.)*

ELLEN. You're still in bed! It was too cold upstairs. I've been up since before dawn.

MRS. JOHANSEN. Hurry and get ready, girls. *(She lays their clothes out on the bed.)* Oh, dear, look. This button has broken right in half on Lise's sweater.

KIRSTIE. Mama, that's my sweater.

MRS. JOHANSEN. Yes, dear, it is now. Annemarie, take Kirstie with you, after school, to the little shop where Mrs. Hirsch sells thread and buttons. See if you can buy just

one, to match the others on her sweater. I'll give you some *kroner*—it shouldn't cost very much.

ANNEMARIE. Oh. Didn't you know, Mama? The shop is closed. There's a padlock on the door and a sign written in German. I wonder if Mrs. Hirsch is sick.

ELLEN. I saw her Saturday. She was with her husband and their son. They all looked just fine. Well, not Samuel.

KIRSTIE. Ellen likes Samuel!

ELLEN. I do not! He looks goofy! And his bicycle has wooden wheels!

KIRSTIE. Ellen likes Samuel! All of our bicycles have wooden wheels! There's no rubber! I think the Hirsches all went on a vacation to the seashore.

MRS. JOHANSEN. Are you sure?

ANNEMARIE. We can find another button someplace. Or we can take one from the bottom of the sweater and move it up. It won't show very much.

MRS. JOHANSEN. Are you sure the sign was in German? Maybe you didn't look carefully.

ANNEMARIE. Mama, it had a swastika on it.

MRS. JOHANSEN. Girls, finish getting ready for school and go eat some breakfast. Ellen, please stay. I'll be right back.

ANNEMARIE. Where are you going?

MRS. JOHANSEN. I want to talk to Ellen's mother. (MRS. JOHANSEN exits. BLACKOUT.)

## SCENE FIVE

AT RISE: *It is after school that evening. MR. and MRS. JOHANSEN sit at the kitchen table with PETER. ANNEMARIE comes in the front door.*

ANNEMARIE. Mama! I'm home from school! Mama! Oh! Is that you, Peter!

PETER. Hello, Annemarie!

ANNEMARIE (*runs to him, hugs him and kisses his cheek*).

It's been so long! Why are you dressed like that?

PETER. So no one would know it was me.

ANNEMARIE. But why don't you want anyone to...

PETER. You've grown taller since I saw you last. You're all legs!

ANNEMARIE. I won the girls' footrace last Friday at school.

Where have you been? I've missed you.

MRS. JOHANSEN. We've all missed him.

PAPA. But we understand.

ANNEMARIE. I don't understand...

PETER. Look, I brought you something. One for Kirstie, too.

(*He takes out two seashells for the girls, then carefully unwraps two eggs from his handkerchief.*) For your mama and papa, I brought something more practical.

MRS. JOHANSEN. Oh, Peter. Eggs! We haven't had any in three months. We'll share them with the girls.

PETER. I knew you would.

PAPA. Annemarie, Peter tells us that the Germans have issued orders to close many stores run by Jews.

ANNEMARIE. Jews? Is Mrs. Hirsch Jewish? Is that why the button shop is closed? Why have they done that?

PETER. It is their way of tormenting. For some reason, they want to torment Jewish people. It has happened in the other