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*Dramatic Publishing*

# **Our Hearts Were Young and Gay**

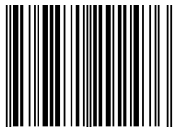
**By Cornelia Otis Skinner  
and Emily Kimbrough**

**Dramatized by Jean Kerr**

# Our Hearts Were Young and Gay

**Comedy. By Jean Kerr from Cornelia Otis Skinner and Emily Kimbrough's classic.** *Cast: 8m., 9w.* Here are the exuberant escapades of Cornelia Otis Skinner and Emily Kimbrough, determined to prove how "cosmopolitan" they can be on an uproarious trip to Europe. The ship sails and the girls are on their own. They have an adventure with a stowaway, mistake the leader of the ship's band for an admiral and meet two very handsome medical students. Then the girls are off to Paris. Here they get involved with a gas meter that explodes, sleep in a bed that Cardinal Richelieu once used, and convince a great French actor that he should give them acting lessons. *Unit set. Code: O24.*

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# Our Hearts Were Young and Gay

DRAMATIZED BY

JEAN KERR

FROM THE BOOK BY  
CORNELIA OTIS SKINNER AND  
EMILY KIMBROUGH



*THE DRAMATIC PUBLISHING COMPANY*

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JEAN KERR

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# Our Hearts Were Young and Gay

*A Comedy in Three Acts*

FOR EIGHT MEN AND NINE WOMEN

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"Our Hearts Were Young and Gay" was given its première production by the Speech and Drama Department of The Catholic University, Washington, D. C., under the direction of Walter Kerr, with settings and lighting by Ruth Shimigelsky. The cast was as follows:

*(In the order of their appearance)*

STEWARD	Anthony Brink
MRS. SKINNER	Eileen Whyte
CORNELIA OTIS SKINNER	Jacqueline Hastings
OTIS SKINNER	John McGiver
EMILY KIMBROUGH	Hyacinth Larkin
PURSER	Dan Rodden
STEWARDESS	Evelyn Schneider
DICK WINTERS	Albert Martin
ADMIRAL	John Easley
HARRIET ST. JOHN	Alice Dunbar
WINIFRED BLAUGH	Florence Ffrench
LEO McEVOY	Bill McGuire
INSPECTOR	Dorothy Chernuck
THÉRÈSE	Angelita Reynosa
MADAME ELISE	Dorothy Lynch
MONSIEUR DE LA CROIX	Aime Grandmaison
WINDOW CLEANER	Dan Rodden

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THE SCENES

ACT ONE: *A cabin, aboard ship. Summer. The year, 1923.*

ACT TWO, Scene One: *The same. About ten days later. Late evening.*

*Scene Two: The same. Early next morning.*

ACT THREE, Scene One: *A small hotel in Paris. Two weeks later.*

*Scene Two: The same. Eleven o'clock, the next morning.*

*Scene Three: The same. About a month later.*

NOTE: The Window Cleaner (Act III) can be doubled with one of the men on shipboard (Admiral, Purser, or Steward), reducing the number of men to seven.

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## GENERAL PRODUCTION NOTE

The play is devised to be done in one (unit) set, if desired. This means that the same essential flats in the same arrangement can be used for both scenes, with different properties blocking out certain features alternately to give an effect of change. In this manner:

The bunk beds in the cabin, with the aid of some drapes, cover up the two windows, which are then not seen at all until the hotel sequences.

The bathroom door in the cabin is blocked off by a hanging tapestry in the hotel arrangement, with the telephone stand against it.

The cabinet arrangement in the cabin becomes the full door to the bathroom in the hotel. Pictures cover the portholes on this wall.

The center door remains the same, although a rehinging of different actual doors into the door frame will help. The cabin door, then, would be painted to give an effect of steel, the hotel door of wood. The corridor backings beyond are to be changed, adding to the difference of effect.

The use of entirely new properties, of different character, and arranged very differently, will, of course, assist in varying the impression.

Further production notes, on costumes, properties, etc., will be found at the end of the play.



*“An evening filled with laughter.”*

—Richard L. Coe, *Washington Post*

# Our Hearts Were Young and Gay

Dramatized by Jean Kerr, from the best-selling  
book by Cornelia Otis Skinner  
and Emily Kimbrough

The Washington tryout found the  
critics extremely enthusiastic:

★ “Clever lines keep the play moving at a fast clip.”—N.E., *Washington Paper*.

★ “. . . loaded with laughs from start to finish. It’s blithe and bonnie, good and gay . . . the leading rôles are juicy plums.”—Richard L. Coe, *Post*.

★ “. . . the première audience was kept throughout in a high state of glee.”—Ernest L. Schier, *Times-Herald*.

★ “. . . Jean Kerr has a sure sense of comedy and a skill to communicate it gracefully and without strain.”—Jay Cramody, *The Evening Star*.

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# ACT ONE

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**SCENE:** *The interior of a cabin, aboard ship. The year, 1923. The entrance from the corridor is upstage center, with a very narrow corridor backing beyond it. A door down left leads to the bathroom. Just above this door are double-deck bunks for sleeping, against the wall. In the middle of the right wall is either a full door, or, if possible, a cabinet-effect opening which conceals a washbasin. Below this, at right stage, stands a small table. In the right wall, on either side of the cabinet-effect, are portholes. There is a wicker chaise lounge right of center, and a hassock down center.]*

**AT RISE OF CURTAIN:** *The cabin is empty. Whistles are heard offstage, and the normal banging and clanging of a ship's loading. Band music is heard somewhere in the distance. Aside from some remote shouting, there are now sounds of voices in the corridor outside, and the door up center is opened by the STEWARD, who steps in smartly, speaking back into the corridor.]*

STEWARD. Cabin for Miss Skinner and Miss Kimbrough. This way, please.

[MRS. SKINNER, *Cornelia's mother, appears in the doorway, up center, calling back.*]

MRS. SKINNER. Cornelia! Here it is! You don't have to look in all the cabins, dear. We've found it!

[MRS. SKINNER *heads for the table and deposits her purse and a package, as CORNELIA appears in the doorway, up center, wide-eyed and silent.*]

MRS. SKINNER. Now, Steward, you'll show Miss Skinner where everything is, won't you?

STEWARD. Yes, ma'am.

MRS. SKINNER. Cornelia, dear, make sure you understand everything!

STEWARD [*going to the door, down left, as CORNELIA tries to concentrate*]. This is the bath, miss.

MRS. SKINNER. Cornelia! Do you hear? That's the bath.

[*MRS. SKINNER tries the door herself, to make sure CORNELIA grasps it, as the STEWARD crosses to right stage. CORNELIA nods, automatically.*]

MRS. SKINNER. Oh, and here are your beds! Bunks, they call them, dear. So seaman-like! I wonder if you ought to sleep up—and Emily down, or Emily up and you down?

STEWARD [*as CORNELIA turns from one to the other, trying to grasp instructions*]. You'll find the washbasin here, miss.

[*The STEWARD opens the cabinet and shuts it. CORNELIA continues to nod, vacantly.*]

MRS. SKINNER. See, Cornelia? That's the washbasin. [*She tests the bunks with her hands.*] I do wonder about these beds— [*She speaks over her shoulder.*—Cornelia, who weighs most—you or Emily? [*She continues before CORNELIA can reply.*] I suppose you do, dear. Although I must say you've been looking very trim lately. It's nice to see you losing that baby fat.

CORNELIA [*embarrassed before the STEWARD*]. Mother! . . .

STEWARD [*quickly pointing to the button on the wall by the up center door*]. Just ring this if you wish anything, miss.

MRS. SKINNER. Now, where's your father? Cornelia, we've lost your father! [*She calls out the door, up center.*] Otis! Otis! Here we are!

STEWARD. May I have the tags for your trunks, miss?

CORNELIA. Oh, yes.

[*Hurriedly and awkwardly, CORNELIA dives into her purse, bringing out the tags. OTIS SKINNER, CORNELIA'S father, appears in the doorway, up center, hot and puffing slightly.*]

MRS. SKINNER. Otis, you *must* keep up with us! We've only got a few moments to say good-bye to our baby——

CORNELIA [*anguished*]. Mother! . . .

OTIS. Keep up with you! One more flight of stairs down and I'd have had a heart attack. [*He flops onto the end of the chaise lounge.*]

MRS. SKINNER. You've only yourself to thank. When you said you wanted to see the cabin, Cornelia *told* you it was below deck.

OTIS. What she neglected to mention was that it was so far down that it's actually resting on the keel!

STEWARD [*having put everything to rights*]. I'll see to the trunks immediately, miss. Will there be anything else?

CORNELIA [*anxious to be rid of the STEWARD*]. No. No, thank you. That's—all.

[*The STEWARD remains standing, expectantly. CORNELIA turns to MRS. SKINNER, vaguely.*]

CORNELIA. That *is* all, Mother, isn't it?

MRS. SKINNER. Cornelia, dear! . . .

[*MRS. SKINNER makes an elaborate silent motion to CORNELIA'S purse and the STEWARD, so that he cannot miss it. The STEWARD pretends to look away.*]

OTIS [*bellowing*]. Tip the man, Cornelia! He's in business.

CORNELIA [*blushing*]. Father!

[*CORNELIA hastily dives into her purse again and gives the STEWARD some change.*]

STEWARD. Thank you, miss. Which of the trunks do you want brought to the cabin, miss?

CORNELIA. Oh—all of them, of course.

MRS. SKINNER. Cornelia! You won't want them all just for the two weeks on shipboard!

CORNELIA [*firmly, with great patience*]. Mother! How would you know? My crepe dress is in one trunk, and the shoes that go with it in another, and——

OTIS [*with a flourish to end it*]. All the trunks, Steward. Ship ahoy!

STEWARD [*with a slightly peculiar look, but obediently going to the door*]. Yes, sir. Yes, miss. Right away, miss.

[*The STEWARD goes out, up center, shutting the door behind him.*]

MRS. SKINNER. Now, Otis, you can't sit there! Our own boat goes before Cornelia's does, you know——

CORNELIA [*who has opened the door to make sure the STEWARD is out of earshot, closing it, and turning to OTIS and MRS. SKINNER*]. Mother! Why did you have to humiliate me?

MRS. SKINNER. Humiliate you?

CORNELIA. Yes, exactly! Here I am, going on an ocean voyage with that man——[*She points to the door the Steward has used.*]

OTIS. You're *what*?

CORNELIA. —who doesn't know anything about me, and here you are, right off, giving him the impression I'm a *baby*!

MRS. SKINNER. Well, after all, Cornelia, you're only nineteen! [*She suddenly turns to OTIS.*] Oh, Otis! Do you think we should let her do it?

OTIS. I don't see any sense in it.

[*CORNELIA's eyes go to the heavens as "this" starts all over again.*]

OTIS. Here we are! You and I going to Paris—and Cornelia and Emily going to Paris. On two different boats! *What for?* There's room on our boat! It's not a canoe!

CORNELIA [*exasperated, throwing off her hat and going to OTIS, despairingly*]. But, Father! That's the whole point of this trip! Emily and I are growing up! Maturing! You might say that we were becoming emancipated.

OTIS. Yes, you *might*. I wouldn't, but you might.

CORNELIA [*with the patient exasperation of a child for its elders*]. Father, it's my money. I saved it up. Emily saved up hers, too.

OTIS. Well, they take money on our boat. They're taking *mine*!

CORNELIA. But it's more expensive! This may not be very stylish, but don't you see? It's all our own!

OTIS. Great Scott! You haven't *bought* the blasted thing, have you?

CORNELIA. You know perfectly well what I mean. We'll be independent. After all, I can't always be a leech, sucking away at your vitals.

OTIS [*to MRS. SKINNER, dramatically*]. Maud! Does this child *have* to talk like that?

MRS. SKINNER. Cornelia, dear, don't be so dramatic. [*She goes about her business.*] I'll turn down your beds for you.

OTIS. You'll be lucky if this old tub gets out the harbor. I know what it reminds me of! The tomb scene! [*Having fun for himself, he declaims.*]

"Shall we stay in this palace of dim night?

Alack, what blood is this which stains the stony entrance of this sepulchre?

[*He extends his hand to CORNELIA.*]

Lady, come away from this nest of death, contagion, and unnatural sleep."

[*CORNELIA pulls her hand back, starting to laugh in spite of herself.*]

MRS. SKINNER. Otis, we haven't time for "Romeo and Juliet."

CORNELIA. Besides, Father, I have to save extra for the lessons!

As soon as we get to Paris, I'm going to take acting lessons

from Monsieur de la Croix at the Comédie Française, if he'll take me.

MRS. SKINNER [*worried*]. Dear, I don't like you consorting with strange Frenchmen. Couldn't you have taken lessons from an American actor?

CORNELIA. Mother! There's no one in the American theatre today. Simply no one!

[*OTIS raises a magnificent eyebrow.*]

CORNELIA. Oh, Father! I don't count *you!* Besides, I know all your tricks.

OTIS [*thundering, to MRS. SKINNER, and enjoying himself*]. Tricks!

[*The STEWARD opens the door, up center, smartly.*]

STEWARD. All ashore that's going ashore!

[*The STEWARD closes the door, and disappears.*]

MRS. SKINNER [*looking at her watch*]. Oh, *dear*, I can't bear to think of leaving you until Emily gets here—but we've got our own boat to catch!

OTIS. Yes. I don't feel up to rowing across.

CORNELIA [*relieved now and very gay*]. I can hardly wait to see Emily. I've missed her so desperately.

OTIS. How long is it since you've seen her?

CORNELIA. Not since school closed, Father. Ten days ago!

OTIS. Well, I hope you won't find her too much changed.

MRS. SKINNER. Cornelia, dear. Before we go, there are a few things I must say to you.

[*CORNELIA becomes obedient and a little grave.*]

OTIS. I'll bet Emily's already on board and got lost in that labyrinth out there. [*He goes to the door, up center.*] E-mily! E-mily!

CORNELIA. Yes, Mother?

MRS. SKINNER. Whatever you do, dear, you must not talk to strange men.

[OTIS snorts in the doorway.]

MRS. SKINNER. And do stand up straight and keep your shoulders back—so you'll look pretty.

OTIS. So strange men will talk to her.

MRS. SKINNER [*with a hushing glance at OTIS*]. Don't be trying out your acting all the time, dear. Just when the occasion calls for it, like a ship's concert or something. Or better still, save it for that Monsieur Whatever-his-name is. I *do* hope he's a gentleman.

CORNELIA. Yes, Mother.

MRS. SKINNER. And, oh, yes! I have a little present for you.

CORNELIA [*surprised*]. You have?

MRS. SKINNER [*having taken the package from the table, where she put it earlier*]. Yes, dear. A going-away gift. And very sensible, too.

CORNELIA [*already disappointed*]. Oh.

MRS. SKINNER [*taking it out of the wrapping*]. See, dear? A safety-pocket!

CORNELIA. A what?

OTIS. For your old razor blades.

MRS. SKINNER. You put your valuables in it. I'll show you.

[MRS. SKINNER *takes the things out of CORNELIA'S purse and empties them into the pocket.*]

CORNELIA. But— isn't it sort of—*big*, Mother?

MRS. SKINNER. No bigger than your purse, dear—

CORNELIA. But—the long strap. What's that for?

MRS. SKINNER. Why, to fasten it around your waist, of course!

[*She slips it around CORNELIA'S waist.*]

CORNELIA. But, Mother—it's—it's heavy—I'd just as soon wear a papoose!

OTIS. Fortunately, you're not being faced with that alternative.



MRS. SKINNER. Cornelia, don't talk nonsense! Nobody's going to see it.

CORNELIA. Nobody's going to see it! How are they going to *miss* it? They'll be lucky if they're not *struck* with it every time I turn a corner!

MRS. SKINNER. But, baby! You wear it *inside* the dress! Like this!

[MRS. SKINNER *backs* CORNELIA *into a position where we cannot see the operation as she stuffs it inside her skirt.*]

MRS. SKINNER. It's the only safe way. I've read it in the papers about these young girls being accosted by bandits and brigands!

OTIS. Although conditions *have* improved since the Spanish Main. [*He has been getting restless in the doorway.*] I'll bet Emily *is* on board someplace. [*He disappears down the corridor, calling.*] Emily! Emily Kimbrough! Come out, come out, wherever you are!

[OTIS'S *voice fades as* MRS. SKINNER *completes the operation and steps aside.*]

MRS. SKINNER. There, now! You see? Nobody will ever notice it!

CORNELIA [*taking steps to try it, and sinking fast*]. Notice it! Look at that bulge! They'll think I'm a smuggler!

MRS. SKINNER [*unshaken*]. Cornelia, it's a necessary precaution. I want you to promise me you'll wear it all the time.

CORNELIA [*tragically*]. Oh, no, no! Mother, please! *Don't* make me promise!

MRS. SKINNER. Otherwise, I won't have a moment's peace about you.

CORNELIA. But, Mother, I'll never be able to face Emily!

MRS. SKINNER. Good heavens, why not?

CORNELIA. With a bean-bag bouncing around in my clothes? She'll think my parents are just plain primitive!

[OTIS appears in the doorway, up center, loaded with wrapped packages.]

OTIS. I *knew* she was on board and couldn't find her way! She was just heading into the boiler room.

[As OTIS steps out of the doorway, coming into the room, he reveals EMILY directly behind him. She has a basket of fruit in one hand and a dress on a hanger in the other.]

EMILY. Hello, everybody!

CORNELIA [*sinking onto the bunk with a groan and hiding the bulge*]. Em-ily!

MRS. SKINNER. There you are, Emily! We thought you were lost!

EMILY [*breezing into the room unconcernedly, letting MRS. SKINNER give her a peck on the cheek and running right on*]. Hello, Mrs. Skinner! No, I wasn't lost. Just misdirected. But he was so handsome while he was giving me the directions, I guess I didn't listen very carefully, and then I took a wrong turn. Hello, Cornelia! Mr. Skinner, you can just put those things down there. [*She indicates the chaise longue.*] And thanks ever so much.

MRS. SKINNER [*as OTIS unloads*]. We don't really have another moment to stay now. How is your mother, Emily?

EMILY. Oh, just fine! She saw me to the train in Muncie. Oh! I almost forgot! [*She goes to the chaise longue and begins to scatter the packages OTIS has put down.*] She gave me a book to give you for *your* trip. Oh, dear! Where *have* I put it?

MRS. SKINNER. Well, you don't have to bother, dear—

EMILY. Now, isn't that just like me! I opened it to read on the train, and then I wrapped it up again so you wouldn't notice, and now I don't remember which it is!

OTIS. Think nothing of it, Emily. We have a couple of extra timetables we can read.

EMILY [*blandly accepting this*]. Oh, then, that's fine! I'll give it to you in Paris, and you can read it on the way back. [*She flops down on the chaise longue.*] Oh, it's so *good* to be off!

MRS. SKINNER. I'm sure, now, your mother has given you all the necessary instructions——

EMILY [*sitting up quickly*]. Oh, yes, Mrs. Skinner! All of them.

MRS. SKINNER [*turning to CORNELIA, who rises and comes to her*]. And you'll remember everything I've told you, baby?

CORNELIA. Yes, Mother, I will.

MRS. SKINNER [*kissing CORNELIA*]. Good-bye, dear.

CORNELIA [*as both girls become very grave, with the parting at hand*]. Good-bye, Mother.

MRS. SKINNER [*kissing EMILY*]. Good-bye, Emily.

EMILY. Good-bye, Mrs. Skinner. And Mr. Skinner.

OTIS [*kissing CORNELIA*]. Good-bye, girls. You know our hotel in Paris, don't you?

CORNELIA. Yes, Father.

EMILY. Yes, Mr. Skinner. I have it written down in three places.

[MRS. SKINNER *sniffs and goes out, up center.*]

OTIS. Be sure to call us the minute you arrive.

[CORNELIA and EMILY *nod gravely.*]

OTIS. If that won't be too much of a strain on your emancipation.

[OTIS *winks at CORNELIA and EMILY and goes out, up center. The girls are silent for a moment, staring at the door, just a little dazed now that the time is here; then they turn to each other—hold for second, and then scream, shrilly, and throw themselves into each other's arms.*]

CORNELIA. Emily!

EMILY. Cornelia! We're adrift!

CORNELIA [*as they dive onto the chaise longue into school-girlish positions*]. Alone on the wide, wide sea!

EMILY. And without our mothers here to cluck over us every minute!

CORNELIA. Isn't it wonderful? Did you ever really believe it'd finally happen?

EMILY. And when we go back to Bryn Mawr in September! . . .

CORNELIA. Won't the girls simply swoon with envy!

EMILY. And Cornelia! You're going to take lessons from Monsieur de la Croix in Paris! The one you saw in the magazine. Do you suppose he'd take me?

CORNELIA. Oh, Emily, *you're* not going to be an actress!

EMILY. Well, I thought it might help me with my dancing. Make it more expressive.

CORNELIA. And after this trip, we'll be different!

EMILY. Once you've been to Paris, you're *cosmopolitan!*

CORNELIA. I'm feeling cosmopolitan already.

[*There is a knock at the door, interrupting CORNELIA and EMILY. They break off sharply, taking relaxed, poised attitudes, very cosmopolitan.*]

EMILY [*calling out in worldly tones*]. Ye-es?

CORNELIA [*ditto*]. You may come!

[*The STEWARD enters, up center, with a valise.*]

STEWARD. Your valise, Miss Skinner.

CORNELIA [*forgetting, diving for it*]. Oh, good! I'll want that right away! [*She pulls up short as she realizes that she hasn't been very cosmopolitan, and relaxes graciously.*] You may put it down somewhere. Anywhere at all.

STEWARD [*setting it down near the bunks*]. Yes, miss. May I have your tags, Miss Kimbrough?

EMILY. Oh. [*She remembers her manner, too.*] Surely you may. I have them here, I think.

[*EMILY gets the tags out of her purse and hands them over to the STEWARD rather elegantly.*]

CORNELIA [*airily*]. I'm having all my trunks brought in, dear. I think it's best.

EMILY. Oh, very well. [*She continues with a gesture.*] All mine, too, Steward. Please.