

# Rosie the Riveter

By Trey Clarkson

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## **DEDICATION**

*To Holly Smith and the last play she saw. Holls, we miss you.*

## **STORY OF THE PLAY**

It's January 1942, in the throes of World War II. Eddie, the owner of Eddie's Auto Parts Factory in Cook County, Illinois, is struggling now that there is a freeze on the manufacturing of car parts. His secretary, Rosie, wonders if the factory can secure a government contract and be converted to make airplane parts instead— if only they can find the manpower. At a time when the radio and the mail were the main sources of information, and ration books were in every household, Rosie is willing to shed tradition, roll up her sleeves and do her part. She is chosen to become the iconic image that will inspire so many women workers to join the cause. Full evening.

## **ORIGINAL PRODUCTION**

Bishop Sullivan Catholic High School Theatre Company, Barry Robinson Theatre and Fine Arts Center in Virginia Beach, Virginia, April 26<sup>th</sup>, 2013. Directed by Trey Clarkson. Original Cast: Sarah White, Lizzy Gardiner, Bill Cussen, Carter Garner, Hannah Brown, Catherine Hutchens, Sydney Powell, Luke Sicard, Ryan Layton, Dana Baraki, Rachel Ciampoli, Elizabeth Douglas, Caitlin Stone, Kira Wilson, Megan Wolf, Mariah Moghadam, Sara Hutchens, Julia Lopez, Meghan Hall, Rylee Holihan, Taylor Durham, Justin Sobczak, Austin Lundrigan, Maryanne Peck, Kyrie McLeod, Brett Barney, Brooke Drew.

**CAST OF CHARACTERS:**

*(6 m, 8 w, and ensemble cast of 7 w or more.)*

**ROSIE O'CONNELL:** Eddie's secretary, soon to become a famous face.

**HELEN HENLEY:** Fiancée of John and head of social club, a traditionalist.

**EDDIE KENDRICK:** Owner of Eddie's Auto Parts Factory, northern accent.

**JOHN STANLEY:** Helen's fiancé and top salesman at Eddie's. Also Rosie's love interest.

**KATHERINE HARTLEY:** Rosie's second-in-command.

**MARGARET MILLER:** Part of the social club and friends with Katherine.

**MARJORIE STINSON:** A new hire and the most qualified factory worker.

**TOMMY:** A mechanic who works for Eddie.

**JASPER:** A mechanic who works for Eddie.

**MARY JANE HILTON:** Eddie's niece and a factory worker.

**ENSEMBLE:** LUCY / MARTHA / IDA / NANCY PRYOR / EVELYN RICHARDSON / EDNA CLIFTON / BONNIE / VALERIE. Factory workers as well as society club members. Extras as desired.

**COLONEL COLE:** Military official in charge of reproducing Eddie's success.

**HENRY:** A mailman.

**MARY:** Secretary to Colonel Cole.

**MELINDA:** A model.

**Acknowledgements:**

Many of the stories and lines are taken from actual letters and accounts of women workers during the WW II time period. Special thanks to Mark Zafra and Lauren Ciampoli for their help editing and researching the script. Thanks to Brant Powell for creating the original art design for the script.

**Set Notes:**

The play works best when three distinct areas are created and isolated both with light and spacing. The main area should be the factory set. We visited a local WW II airplane museum and were able to borrow period pieces for the actors to work with. Multiple work stations should be created to keep the stage business interesting and part of the production. The other two areas should be Eddie's office and Helen's parlor. Another main element of the play is the radio broadcasts. Each interior set should have a radio prominently displayed. The radio voice and information is important to the show. The classic image of Rosie on the "We Can Do It" poster should also be incorporated into the set for Act II. Images and projections can be used but are not necessary.

**Sound Design:**

The music of the day is important and easily obtainable. Music opportunities are noted throughout the play. Try to record the radio broadcasts like a period piece. It is important to capture the vocalization from the time period. Resist the urge to cast this character as a live actor because the faceless voice giving the characters the information in "real" time adds to that sense of urgency the characters have about the war.

**ACT I**  
**Prologue**

*(AT RISE: AUDIO of Roosevelt's famous radio broadcast about the attack on Pearl Harbor with his "Date that shall live in infamy" quote. Audio fades to military-type background drum song. Various ACTORS can say the lines separately, or give the lines to two or three actors and have them voice them simultaneously. Actors can either emerge or are in place and lit.)*

December 7<sup>th</sup>, 1941, changed the lives of a generation of Americans as the United States, the sleeping giant, is awakened and filled with terrible resolve.

*(Roosevelt AUDIO clip continues linked with images now.)*

This generation of American men and women would later be called the greatest generation as their remarkable actions, during times of war and peace, ultimately made the United States a better place in which to live.

Their perseverance through difficult times is a testament to their extraordinary character and their commitment to the iconic values of duty, honor, personal responsibility, and faith.

These characteristics helped them to defeat Hitler, build the American economy, make advances in science, and at every stage of their lives made them part of historic achievements of a magnitude the world had never witnessed before.

Their hard work and sacrifices gave the succeeding generations the opportunity to accumulate great economic wealth, political muscle, freedom from foreign oppression, the ability to make whatever choices they liked...

*(Another brief AUDIO clip of Roosevelt linked with projected images runs followed by a change in music to represent the times.)*

*Rosie the Riveter*

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World War II was a global conflict of an unprecedented scale.

The absolute urgency of mobilizing the entire population gave rise to the expansion of the role of women in the work force.

What was previously considered man's work was now in the domain of women.

*(Change in MUSIC to represent the times.)*

By 1945 more than 2.2 million women were working in our war industries building ships, aircrafts, vehicles, and weaponry. Women were in the factories, munitions plants, farms, trucks, and all the professional areas that were previously the preserve of men.

By the end of the war, 18 million women were in the country's workforce, accounting for one third of the workers in America.

But let's be clear...working was not new to women. Women have always worked.

As every factory in the US was converted to the war time efforts by 1942...

Women now had the responsibility of both their private lives and the country's needs placed in their skilled hands...

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