



The Time of Your Life

William Saroyan

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A programme text edition published in conjunction with the Finborough Theatre to coincide with the centenary of the birth of William Saroyan, *The Time of Your Life* runs from 26 November - 20 December.

'In the time of our life, live - so that in that wondrous time you shall not add to the misery and sorrow of the world, but shall smile to the infinite delight and mystery of it'

The Time of Your Life, a rich tapestry of human life, peopled by a profusion of wistful dreamers, pining lonely hearts, and beer-hall-philosophers, is a twentieth century American masterpiece.

The Time of Your Life was first presented at The Shubert Theatre, New Haven, USA, on 7 October 1939. It was the first play to win both the **New York Drama Critics' Circle award** and the **Pulitzer Prize**. . It has been revived three times on Broadway; was filmed in 1948, starring James Cagney; and twice filmed for TV. It was last seen in the UK in a star-studded Royal Shakespeare Company production in Stratford and London in 1983, and received the following review:

'A remarkable play which blazes forth like a brave beacon: warming and full of fire' *Daily Mail*

The Time of Your Life Details

Date : Published August 1st 1996 by Samuel French Inc Plays (first published 1939)

ISBN : 9780573616730

Author : William Saroyan

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From Reader Review The Time of Your Life for online ebook

Ana-Catrina says

Excellent! Really fascinating characters.

Kenny says

Wonderful

Sinara says

more like 3.75

Lauren says

What does it say about a book when, after reading an author's introduction, I decide the guy was an arrogant, long-winded narcissist?

William Saroyan might have been a wonderful person. How he comes across in the introduction of *The Time of Your Life*, however, is how I describe him above. I'm not actually sure I've ever before felt like I got someone's personality from just a few pages. The details he included – the type of cigarettes they smoked one night on the town – were so tangential and so very odd and unnecessary. I didn't think the introduction boded well for the play, which won the Pulitzer.

The play is similarly long-winded and bombastic. At a dive bar in San Francisco, a group of characters rotate in and out of the premises. Some interesting sections and ideas peek through the overabundance of words, but the play is so, so bogged down. It also doesn't help that, despite the long length, the women in the play are little more than cardboard cutouts. Not recommended.

Sohaib says

“Living is an art. It's not bookkeeping. It takes a lot of rehearsing for a man to get to be himself.”

I don't know where to start really. From my own personal identification with this snippet of wisdom? Or from the surge of thoughts from other books I read, things I've heard, that I can instantly glimpse beneath each and every word?

What is rehearsing but trial and error, self-reliance, putting yourself out there, to make mistakes and learn

from them, to have courage, to feel put-down, down on your luck, hurt, happy, good and bad ... to win the part or lose it. Rehearsal of Life.

This play is a Ceremony of Innocence in which tender men and women are set to emancipate the world in a honky-tonk from its foreboding seriousness, developing machines and aggression at the outset of World War II in 1939. They do this by demonstrating an unrelenting outflow of innocence, feeling, joy and love, with an unabashed sense of self-expression and vulnerability, painting an unrealistic yet inspirational picture of contrast between how the world should have been and how it actually was, and sadly still is now.

The play centers around Joe, the pivotal character who has long withdrawn from “normal” life and is now devoted to nothing but the generous act of giving. He gives money, hope, encouragement and time to everyone he encounters.

Much of the action happens inside the honky-tonk, with an international scope of characters (Indian, Arab, American, Assyrian, Irish and Italian) coming and going, interacting with Joe and everybody inside and then leaving. Everyone has his or her own eccentricities and tendencies, which Joe amiably receives, interacts with, embraces and encourages. He is, in his character and deeds, the true epitome of Goodness.

Julian Munds says

Every time I have returned to this play, and I have done so a couple of times, I am bowled over by the complexity of characters. The monologues and dialogue is rich. I can imagine, when staged, because of the perspective of Saroyan it's quite the theatrical piece. But it's not good theatre. It's a moving image. A painting as complex and detailed as any. But it is not a good play.

Dave says

All of humanity comes through this bar and they all come before Nick, who helps everyone. This is a well crafted story of somewhat mythic proportions, of a somewhat impotent god and of the 20th century. Saroyan's brilliance at creating atmosphere makes up for the somewhat dated dialog and plots in this nearly perfect play. It is a play, however, can't escape this. Everything happens in one day, on one set, in one place. By the end, one feels exhausted but somehow hopeful.

Nare says

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Victor Morosoff says

Marvellous. What Saroyan does is capture a glimpse of America - beautifully written - in just 100 pages. Drunkards, lovers, social classes - sadness, grief and pain. Some synonymous for that lost miserable honky-

Svetlana says

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John says

My very first lead role and to this day I wish I could go back and do it better.

Christopher says

I really wanted to like this play (it was suggested to me as a kind of west-coast "Iceman Cometh", which is of course an ill fitting narrative comparison) and, while it has many strengths, it has not faired well with the passing of time. I normally love these kinds of plays, but in order for them to work their situation must be exciting or informing enough to make up for the loose narrative structure and keep us focused. These characters are indeed familiar but presenting them in this manner does not feel particularly enlightening, which is a real shame.

The play does crescendo nicely and is particularly fun when the rich couple (stand-ins for the audience itself) come into the bar to "slum it up" for the night and observe these interesting characters. The play's heart is in the right place but it seems to be missing the spark of discovery it might have once worn so comfortably years before.

??? ???????? says

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Poly says

Otra tarea de la u... a mi me gustó, es como tierna.

Robby Johnson says

This play is tremendous. All of humanity walks into a bar.....

Katherine says

****I read a collection called "The time of your life and two other plays" -- which included "Love's Old Sweet Song" and "My Heart's In The Highlands"****

I first heard of Saroyan from Tennessee Williams and loved his exhortation, "In the time of your life, live," but his prose is so bloated with big, abstract words ("love" and "truth"), it mars the beauty of it. On top of that, from his sickening "introductions" to these plays, he seems like a pompous windbag—no better than the braggart Clifford Odets; why these two both worked with the enormously influential Group Theatre is beyond me. My Heart's In The Highlands is a weird play about a poor poet trying to raise his son when a vagabond, washed-up actor comes along playing his trumpet and dies in their house. The poet pays the grocer with his poetry and that dope accepts the "payment" gratefully — it's all non-sensical and stupid. The New York critics, their reviews included here, express confusion as to the "point." I thought I got the point—isn't it the devaluation of art in capitalism?—but wanted more rounded-out characterization. The title play has more interesting characters, and is probably the best in this bunch, it's got some good lines and you really get the colorfulness of this joint Nick's. Perhaps my favorite part of this book are the "lessons" Saroyan includes to aspiring playwrights. Despite having such a high opinion of himself, he identifies as an underdog and his advice comes from the heart.

Sarovar says

Hoping to read this play or see it. I think there is a film version. His other plays are great, especially "The Beautiful People."

Lyric says

Decent play. It can be a little preachy... but overall, it is a solid story.

Carlo Fortunato says

I read this when I was all of six years old, and it had a huge influence on the way I look at things. Saroyan understood the greatness in those that society views as cast-offs.

Mayalekach says

Life has no meaning but maybe we can make some.
