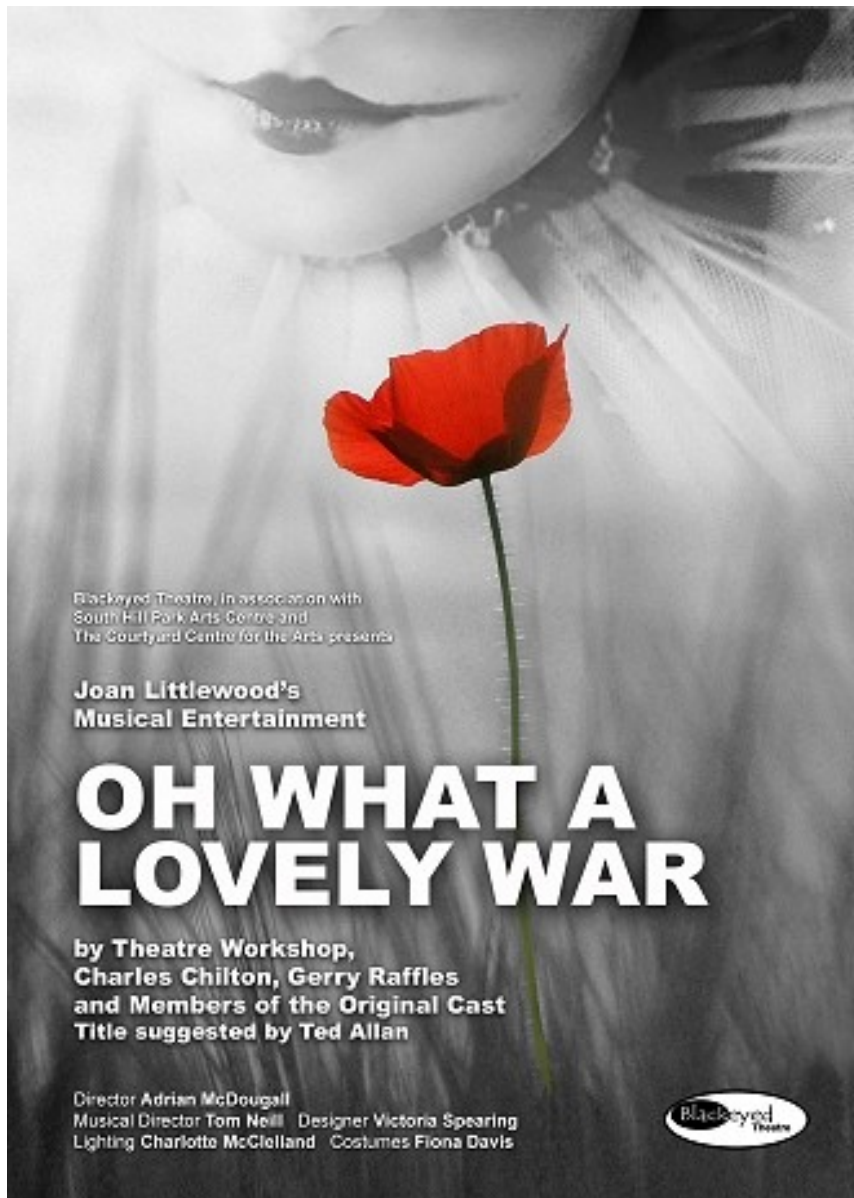


Education Pack



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Oh What A Lovely War History & Synopsis

Its beginnings

The title 'Oh What A Lovely War' is derived from the music hall song 'Oh! It's a Lovely War', which is one of the major numbers in the production. Charles Chilton, producer of the film, created a radio musical of World War I songs called *The Long Long Trail* (1962), named for the popular music hall song, 'There's a long, long trail a winding'. The piece was a radio documentary that used facts and statistics, juxtaposed with songs of the time, as an ironic critique of the reality of the war.

The Stage musical

'Oh What A Lovely War' evolved as a devised stage production through the work of Joan Littlewood and the members of the original cast at the Theatre Royal Stratford East in 1963 as a production by her Theatre Workshop. The play was based on 'The Donkeys' by historian Alan Clark, with some scenes adapted from 'The Good Soldier' Švejk by Czech humorist Jaroslav Hašek. The play was an ensemble production with no stars as such, but featured members of the company, such as Brian Murphy, Victor Spinetti and Glynn Edwards playing multiple roles. The play opened at the Theatre Royal on 19 March 1963, and the production transferred intact to Wyndham's Theatre in June, the same year. This satire on World War I (and by extension against war in general) was a surprise hit, and the stage musical was adapted by the BBC for radio more than once. The stage show is traditionally performed in Perriot costumes, and features such World War I-era songs as *Pack up Your Troubles and Keep the Home Fires Burning*. Harsh images of war and shocking statistics are projected onto the backdrop, providing a stark contrast with the comedy of the action taking place before it.

Theatre Workshop

Theatre Workshop was a theatre group noted for their director, Joan Littlewood. Many actors of the 1950s and 1960s received their training and first exposure with the company and many of its productions were transferred to the West End. The Theatre Workshop Company began as a touring company founded in the North of England in 1945. Joan Littlewood pioneered an ensemble approach, with her husband Ewan MacColl, seeking to involve cast and audience in drama as a living event. Previously, Littlewood had worked with MacColl in developing radio plays for the BBC that had taken script and cast from local workers. They had met and married in 1934, while working with the Theatre of Action. Both MI5 and the Special Branch maintained a watch on the couple, as Communists; this had precluded Littlewood working for the BBC as a children's programme presenter, and had also caused some of MacColl's work to be banned from broadcast. In the late 1930s they formed another troupe - the Theatre Union. This dissolved in 1940. With the ending of World War II in 1945 many of the members of Theatre Union met up and formed Theatre Workshop.

The Film

In 1969 Richard Attenborough transformed it into a film. His star-studded cast included Dirk Bogarde, John Gielgud, John Mills, Kenneth More, Laurence Olivier, Jack Hawkins, Corin Redgrave, Michael Redgrave, Vanessa Redgrave, Ralph Richardson, Maggie Smith, Ian Holm, Malcolm McFee, Jean-Pierre Cassel, Nanette Newman, Edward Fox, Susannah York, John Clements, Phyllis Calvert and Maurice Roëves. The 1969 film transferred the mise-en-scene completely into the cinematic domain, with elaborate sequences shot at West Pier, Brighton, elsewhere in Brighton and on the South Downs, interspersed with motifs from the stage production. These included the 'cricket' scoreboards showing the number of dead, but Attenborough did not use the pierrot costumes. However, as many critics noted, including Pauline Kael, the treatment diminished the effect of the numbers of deaths, which appear only fleetingly. Nonetheless Attenborough's final sequence, ending in a crane shot of hundreds of war graves, each individually hammered into the South Downs chalk for the shot, is regarded as one of the most memorable of the film.



Oh What A Lovely War Cast

Lee Drage



Lee recently graduated from the Guildford School of Acting. Whilst at GSA, his theatre credits included: Leontes in **A Winter's Tale**, Lloyd Dallas in **Noises Off!**, Yepikhodov in **The Cherry Orchard**, Barrildo and Flores in **Fuente Ovejuna**, Laurie in **Little Women**, Scrooge in **A Christmas Carol**, Frank in **The Kitchen**, Policeman and musician in **A Man of No Importance** and Zac Zackerman in **Serious Money**.

As a member of the NYMT, Lee appeared in their successful productions of **Oklahoma!** (UK Tour/Sadler's Wells) and **Orvin**; written and directed by Alan Ayckbourn. Lee is delighted to be making his professional debut with Blackeyed Theatre.

Ben Harrison



Ben first worked with Blackeyed Theatre in 2007 on Bertolt Brecht's **The Resistible Rise of Arturo Ui**, and he is delighted to be back on tour with yet another challenging text in **Oh What A Lovely War**. Ben works primarily as an actor-musician, playing guitar, piano, accordion and drums. His other theatre credits include Oscar Wilde's **The Selfish Giant** (*Sherman Theatre, Cardiff*), and MAC productions' **Pandora's Box** (*UK tour and Assembly Rooms, Edinburgh Fringe*). He has just finished a 6-month tour with Travelling Light's **Shadow Play** and in his spare time plays with his band **The Lasting Days**.

Paul Morse



Paul trained as an actor at Drama Studio London (DSL) after gaining a degree in Drama and Theatre Studies from the University of Surrey, Roehampton.

Recent Theatre credits include, the role of Kenneth Halliwell in the new musical **The Boys In The Front Room** based on the lives of Joe Orton and his lover and killer Kenneth Halliwell (*Gatehouse Theatre, London*), **Alvaro's Balcony** (*Her Majesty's Theatre, London*), **The School for Scandal** playing Sir Benjamin Backbite and Charles Surface (*Cambridge*), the Feydeau Farce **Better Late** playing the role of Lucien (*Grange Court Theatre, London*), **Macbeth** playing Malcolm (*Swan Theatre Worcester, Colwyn Theatre & European Tour*), **A Midsummer Night's Dream** playing Demetrius and Snout (*UK Tour*), **Twelfth Night** playing Sir Andrew Aguecheek (*Hazlitt Theatre Kent, open air tour*), **The Clock Strikes Ten** playing Bernard Jeffrey's (*Grange Court Theatre, London*), **Still Life** and **Shadow Play** from Noel Coward's **Tonight at 8.30** (*Leatherhead Theatre*) and lead male vocalist in **Swell Party** (*South Wales Musicals Tour*).



Tom Neill

Tom grew up in Wokingham, Berkshire and spent his early years performing with community drama and music groups. He studied Music with Theatre Studies at Huddersfield University and graduated in 2002.

His theatre credits include Givola in **The Resistible Rise of Arturo Ui**, Raymond in **Blue Remembered Hills** (*both Blackeyed Theatre*), Kaspar in **Kaspar** (*Atom Theatre*), Mason in **Journey's End** (*J.D. Productions*), Mole in **The Adventures of Mr. Toad** (*South Hill Park*), Theatre In Education tours with Bitesize Theatre Company and various pantomimes.

Tom also works as a music composer, orchestrator and theatre director.



Mark Pearce

Mark trained at the Central School of Speech and Drama. His television appearances include MTV's comedy series **Strutter**, the **Branflakes** commercial, BBC's **Crimewatch** and ITV's **Hornblower**.

His theatre credits include: Buttons in **Cinderella** (*The Lowry*), Mamaji in **Life of Pi** (*Twisting Yarn*), Phil in **Up 'n' Under** (*Reform Theatre*), Feste in **Twelfth Night** (*The Festival Players*), John Proctor in **The Crucible** (*Dukes, Lancaster*), The Butler in the **Man of Mode** (*Directed by Nicholas Hytner*) and Richie Valens in the musical **Heaven Can Wait** (*Perth Rep*).

Mark is a successful sketch-comedian. He has enjoyed working with the Perrier nominated **Infinite Number of Monkeys** and the BAFTA award-winning **Treason Show**.

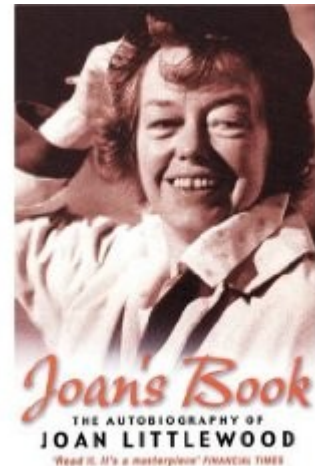
Most recently Mark starred as Champagne Charlie in **Wink The Other Eye** (*Wiltons Music Hall*), and Joe DiMaggio in **The Marilyn Monroe Show**. He has recorded voice-overs for several computer games and filmed a TV comedy pilot **Taste The Milk**.

Joan Littlewood? Who is she and what is her style!

Name : Joan Littlewood
B 1914 D 2002

Lived : Stratford, London, Britain

Name of Theatre :
Theatre Workshop
The Theatre Royal Stratford East
London



Financial Status : Poor

History : Involved in Theatre of Action 1934 (Theatre groups intent on challenging political views)

Know for saying : Lots of swear words! “She cursed like a trooper and Wouldn’t take No for an answer”

Known as : “Vulgar woman of the People”

What Drama techniques she liked : Song, Narration, Projection, Factual content in plays, Audience interaction, Clowning, Improvisation

“Littlewood Combined slapstick humour with serious satire to set a new style in Improvised Theatre”

When and where was “Oh What a Lovely War” first staged : 1963 in Stratford East Theatre

What two British Objects describe her work : Knickers and Plimsolls

Who did she tell to “P* off to the west End!” :** Michael Caine

What two practitioners inspired her work : Meyerhold and Piscator

Actors Experiences

Oh What A Lovely War is a satire of World War I but its messages and warnings are, it seems, timeless, for there have always been wars, and by the looks of things, there always will be. Men will always die in the most distressing ways on the front line, and war will never be dictated by those fighting but by the politicians, the corporations and businessmen, Kings, Queens and Dictators. In this way, the play is not only satirical about the 1st world war, but is also political in its anti-war undertones. It is an absolutely delicious piece to get your teeth into, and we will certainly have to.

Just three days into rehearsal and you can feel that there is a camaraderie in the cast, and I think it is especially prevalent when we think about the groups of lads that spent so much time together in the trenches, and would have built up friendships and respect for each other, that could be ended in an instant. It certainly helped to have two soldiers from the British army, just back from Afghanistan, come in and teach us to march, rifle drill and salute, but also to have their particular insight into the realism of war. For our generation war seems to be a collage of print, pictures, slides, television footage, news, and history lessons. It is for most of us something that happens far away from us and those we love. For those boys in Afghanistan, the camaraderie, and “Brit spirit” are things that mean everything to them, you put your life in the hands of those around you, and some lay down their lives to protect others.

The realities of war have not changed, even if the methods of conducting it have. This is what I try to think about when creating characters, and although it is sometimes necessary to play up the characters in the play for humours sake, we also have to think about being true to the spirit of the men in the trenches, both in victory and defeat.

I spent some time looking at photos of WWI and hope that we can attempt to portray the spirit and sometimes demoralisation of those who fought (on all sides). My favourite moment, from the piece is maybe most poignant because it actually happened; A German soldier stepping out of the trenches under a Christmas truce and meeting the British soldiers in no-man’s land, to share drink, food, and other gifts, showing that there is decency in human nature that takes over from the hate attached to fighting. Rehearsing this show is a huge undertaking musically and dramatically but I was quite unprepared for how it might affect me emotionally, but we are fighting fit, ready to do our duty and “raring to have a crack at the bosch!” (So to speak)

Ben Harrison



***Oh What a Lovely War* : Retelling the First World War in Post-War Britain**

[Dan Todman](#)

Lecturer in Modern History
Queen Mary University of London

Suitable read and task for teachers and As/A level Students

But why make a musical about war? Surely there are more cheerful topics? Actually times of war have produced some of the best and most powerful art – take a look at the poetry of Siegfried Sassoon and Wilfred Owen for example. Whilst being treated for shellshock, Owen and Sassoon became friends. Whilst discussing poetry Owen said he could never imagine writing poetry about the war because it was so ugly. Sassoon replied that this was exactly why he should write about it; that we should use the best skills we have to write the truth about what we witness.

Task : Read this article and discuss why theatre is or is not a powerful medium for work with a message. Does *Oh! What a Lovely War* achieve its aims?

The main focus of my research is the ways in which the First World War was mythologised in Britain in the eighty years after its end, with its focus concentrated on the interactions between family and national myths of war. In recent years, British military historians have pointed out the difference between modern popular beliefs about the war and the ways it was constructed, experienced and fought at the time. I have taken part in this - what is now too well developed to be called a 'revisionist' – interpretation, but my main concern has been to find out how this gap in perceptions developed.

I'd like to discuss these different strands in relation to a specific example: the 'musical entertainment' *Oh What a Lovely War*, first performed by the radical company Theatre Workshop in 1963. *Oh What a Lovely War* is based around the songs which were sung by ordinary British soldiers during the war – often bowdlerised versions of popular classics, filled with parody and self-mocking humour. These songs quickly became a site both of identity and, in latter years, of memory. *Oh What a Lovely War* combines these songs with scenes from the trenches and the home front, all played out – in the play's central conceit – by a band of travelling clowns. The play immediately enjoyed great success on the London stage, and subsequently became a favourite of repertory theatre and amateur dramatic societies. It reached extremely large audiences through widespread media coverage and local productions. Even more important in extending *Oh What a Lovely War*'s overall reach was the film version, released in 1969, which will be known to some of you. Starring many of the leading lights of Britain's acting profession in the late 1960s, this film was not only a critical and audience success at the moment of its first release, but – largely because of the eminence of its cast – became a staple of public holiday television scheduling in subsequent years. Purely in terms of audience figures, *Oh What a Lovely War* is arguably one of the most influential texts in forming modern British attitudes to the war.

Certainly the 'musical entertainment' has been blamed by modern military historians for falsifying popular perceptions of the First World War. They would argue that, if Britons now think of the war in terms of mud, blood, futility and asinine generals, it is not because that accurately represents what happened, but because in the intervening years a false version of the war has become culturally dominant. Alex Danchev, and more vehemently Brian Bond, have both argued that the 1960s was a key moment in that transformation (1). In that decade,

they have suggested, new myths of the war were created to fit the rapidly changing social and political context. The war was used by those on the radical left to present ways of understanding the nuclear arms race, the war in Vietnam and the conflict between old and young, or between social conservatism and liberalisation (2). Here, it is claimed, *Oh What a Lovely War* was a crucial text: creating powerful images of the betrayal of soldiers by their stupid, uncaring generals which have become embedded in British popular culture.

I have argued elsewhere that although this explanation has some useful components, it is simplistic in its treatment of the decade in general and of audience reactions in particular (3). What I will suggest here is that by examining the production and reception of the different versions of *Oh What a Lovely War* we gain an insight into how wide a variety of factors shaped this popular text. These included, but went far beyond, the political and social context of its creation. By studying this range of factors we achieve a better understanding of the complex ways in which the memory and mythology of the First World War were re-written in the 1960s to meet a range of personal, political, representational and financial needs. We also come closer to understanding the ambiguous place that the First World War continues to hold in British popular culture.

The first version of what eventually became *Oh What a Lovely War* arose out of the family experience of a BBC radio producer called Charles Chilton. His father had been killed in action just after his son was born, in early 1918. Chilton's mother died shortly afterwards. He was brought up by his grandmother in circumstances of extreme poverty. Although his father was lionised, nobody knew anything of what he had done in the war or how he had died. Chilton attended Armistice Day parades in the 1920s and laid a wreath at the Cenotaph wearing his father's medals. After leaving school, he got a job working at the BBC in 1932. One of his tasks was to make deliveries to the 'Addressing Department', from where the listings magazine *Radio Times* was sent out to subscribers. This department was staffed by facially disfigured veterans, men who could not work with others because of the disturbing nature of their wounds. Chilton fetched them lunch. Both Chilton and these broken faced men shared a conviction that they were being looked after because the Director-General of the BBC, Sir John Reith, was himself a facially scarred veteran, determined to look after his own. Whether or not this was actually Reith's intention is not important here: what matters is that Chilton grew up in a culture where the shared traumas resulting from conflict had formed powerful emotional bonds. (4)

Fascinated by his experience, in 1961 Chilton wrote and produced a radio programme for the BBC Home Service called *The Long Long Trail*. It contrasted the songs of soldiers on the Western Front with those sung at home. The primary emphasis of *The Long Long Trail* was on the valour, humour and endurance of the ordinary soldier: 'In spite of mud, blood, hell and high water they smiled – and carried on.' (6) The programme attracted a large audience and a very favourable response from listeners. It was rebroadcast twice the following year.

One member of that large audience was the theatrical producer Gerry Raffles, consort of Joan Littlewood, one of the founders of the East London-based Theatre Workshop group. They took up the concept created by Chilton, and with his help and that of the Labour MP and editor of *Tribune*, Raymond Fletcher, transformed the radio play into the stage production of *Oh What a Lovely War*. It was first performed at the Theatre Royal, Stratford, on 19 March 1963.

The final form of this production was Littlewood's idea: a show put on by a band of pierrots, with the stylisations of the music hall added to Chilton's more realistic script. In the transformation from radio to stage, the play became more ardent in its expression of radical left wing views, with the importation of scenes designed to stress the callous incompetence of the High Command and the ruling classes. The result was also affected by Littlewood's own directorial style. Although ultimately extremely autocratic, this attempted to involve the actors more fully in the play by encouraging a collective development of the script through research and improvisation by the whole cast. To this end the actors read a number of autobiographical and historical works about the war. The process of improvisation and alteration was far from complete when the play appeared before the public: indeed, a key part of Littlewood's directorial model was that the play would change over time as it was performed. (7)

For both Littlewood and Fletcher there were striking political and contemporary reasons for presenting their material as they did. Littlewood was keen to recast history from the perspective of the common man:

The story of us – the victims, the people, the underprivileged – has not been told before. We've heard the poets speak – and we admire them – and we've had Journey's End, and we know about the sacrifice of the people who supported the system. But what about our fathers, who went as their dupes? I know I have been accused by some critics of having an anti-officer bias. But the officers have had their day. They've had their theatre. They've had their poetry. They've had their culture long enough. (8)

Her intention was to make this representation of the war dramatic and didactic from an extremely left-wing perspective. For this reason she rejected scripts which offered a purely realistic depiction of life in the trenches. Littlewood and her cast were also, at this stage, eager to avoid what they saw as Chilton's overly sentimental approach. Littlewood, in her own memoirs, wrote of the songs which formed the core of the play: 'Those songs took me back to childhood – red, white and blue bunting, photos of dead soldiers in silver frames, medals in a forgotten drawer, and that look as family and friends sang the songs of eventide – God, how I loathed those songs.' (9) Introducing a new edition of the playscript published in 2000, both Littlewood and Victor Spinetti, a member of the original cast. They stressed that the cast of *Oh What a Lovely War* aimed for a more 'authentic' approach. (10) Littlewood made her actors play against any sentimental feelings, telling them: 'Stop falling in love with it; it's not a sentimental subject. And don't ever mention a poppy in a corner of a foreign field, where there's likely to be some poor bugger screaming to death.' (11)

The result of these efforts was an original production which offered a black and white picture. Officers at all levels are stupid, callous cowards, while their men are sardonic heroes. The debunking of officers' culture is cruel, historic and funny. Travelling to a meeting with their allies, Lieutenant General Henry Wilson asks his superior, Field Marshal Sir John French, whether he should organise an interpreter. 'Don't be ridiculous,' is French's response, 'the essential problem at the moment is that we must have the utmost secrecy.' French's successor, Sir Douglas Haig, prays to God for victory 'before the Americans arrive'. (12)

Littlewood, Raffles and Fletcher were also concerned with the spectre of a war which had not yet occurred. They wanted to teach the audience about the dangers of nuclear holocaust. The power of modern weapons made military incompetence even more dangerous than before. As Littlewood put it: 'the whole business – the accidents, the chaos, the small minority who were really for it – seems to be more like what we are trying to avoid now than the last war...' (13)

It is clear that some audience members shared Littlewood's suspicion of the establishment and the military and accepted what they were shown as the 'truth' about the First World War. For example, one reacted to the play's use of statistics – flashed on a digital display board at the back of the stage – by declaring his deep emotion at: '... the fact, never so clearly stated, that ten million men had died in unimaginable squalor for Kitchener's pointing finger, for a few yards of worthless mud, for patriotic lies, for the vanity of bad commanders'. (15)

This was, however, by no means the only reaction. Two things stand out from contemporary reviews of *Oh What a Lovely War*. First, very few reviewers perceived the play as an objective representation of historical truth. This was not an unsophisticated audience: they came expecting performances that were left-wing, experimental and controversial. It is worth bearing in mind that, despite Theatre Workshop's aim of bringing theatre to the working class, much of its audience at Stratford consisted of regular theatregoers who were willing to travel out from the West End. "Everything spoken during this evening either happened or was said, sung or written during 1914-18", many in the audience were critical of what they were watching on historical grounds. The *Guardian*'s reviewer noted that *Oh What a Lovely War* was 'as unfair as any powerful cartoon'. (16) The *Times* criticised the play for portraying:

The familiar view of the 1914-18 war as a criminally wasteful adventure in which the stoic courage of the common soldiers was equalled only by the sanctimonious incompetence of their commanders and the blind jingoism of the civilians. This approach is hardly likely to send audiences storming out of the theatre: the war is a sitting target for anyone who wants to deliver a bludgeoning social criticism without giving offence. (17)

Many in the audience might have considered themselves well informed about the war. *Oh What a Lovely War* was not produced in a cultural vacuum. Most adult Britons in 1963 had either lived through it or grown up, like Chilton and Littlewood, in an inter-war Britain in which it was a cultural constant. With an estimated two million veterans of the war still alive in 1961, the First World War had yet to disappear over the boundary of lived experience.

The second feature that stands out about critical reaction to *Oh What a Lovely War* that, no matter what their attitude to its politics, audience members approved wholeheartedly of its songs. The tunes and words themselves were less important than the emotions they inspired. An older reviewer suggested that:

For those who fought in that war and were lucky enough to survive it, this show conjures up memories that are not all painful. To hear the songs we sang – even though the younger generation doesn't know how to sing them – is to catch again a whiff of that wry, disillusioned, humorous resignation with which our armies faced trench life. (18)

As the *Sunday Times* put it: 'this immensely brisk charade gives nostalgia a top-dressing of belated anti-establishment respectability.' (19) At least some of the audience interpreted the play in a way which was essentially nostalgic. There is even some anecdotal evidence that, following the play's transfer to the West End, groups of old comrades visited it together as an informal regimental reunion. (20) Perhaps this should not surprise us. During the war, knowledge of these songs had been a crucial part of soldiers' entertainment and identity.

We did not realise until last night that the songs we sang in the army were bits of history. In them is embodied the comic fatalism which carried us through four years in hell. How easily we slipped back into it! ... It seemed to me that we had caught the only decent thing in the war – the spirit of comradeship. We had come to the hall as individuals: we were now once more an army marching in our imagination to the old music. (22)

How exactly the creators of *Oh What a Lovely War* reacted to the wave of nostalgia they had unleashed is unclear. Their protestations about avoiding sentimentality notwithstanding, it seems that they altered the play to endorse precisely this reaction. In his history of Theatre Workshop Howard Goorney writes:

When I saw it in Stratford Victor Spinetti made the closing speech, which went something like 'The war game is being played all over the world, by all ages, there's a pack for all the family. It's been going on a long time and it's still going on. Goodnight.' This cynical speech, which followed the charge of the French soldiers, was quite frightening and left you crying your heart out. When I saw it again, in the West End, I was shocked by the change of ending. After Victor's speech the whole cast came on singing 'Oh What a Lovely War' followed by a reprise of the songs. All frightfully happy and guaranteed to send the audience home happy. I think it was George Sewell who said 'The Management didn't take to a down ending'. As far as I knew, Joan and Gerry were the Management. (23)

Note that I am not suggesting that *Oh What a Lovely War* encapsulated many modern beliefs about the First World War. For younger audience members, seeing the play was a formative event in their attitudes towards the war. But whilst the emotional connection to the war and its

aftermath remained, audience reactions were complex. Indeed, the only way to explain the play's success – and hence its ability to influence subsequent generations – is to acknowledge the nostalgia which suffused its first performances.

As time went on, of course, what had become an iconic representation of the First World War in its own right became subject to its own process of myth-making. When, in 1998, the play was revived for a national tour – for the first time in thirty five years – it sparked of a new wave of nostalgia, not for the comradeship of the trenches but for a mythical hedonistic, radical 1960s. 'I well recall', wrote the *Financial Times* critic, 'the impact simply of hearing about this show during my 1960s childhood.' (27) The *Guardian* critic, Michael Billington, confessed that: ' *Oh What a Lovely War* itself has also become part of theatrical legend: for someone of my generation, present experience is overlaid by past memories.' (28)

To conclude, then, it is overly reductive to view *Oh What a Lovely War* simply in terms of the reaction by a radicalised 1960s audience to a specific set of cultural, social and political circumstances. Rather, we can see five distinct manipulations of a well established 'site of memory': soldiers' songs of the First World War. First, Charles Chilton made use of them for a reason that was personal rather more than political – a rediscovery of, and tribute to, his dead father. Second, Littlewood, her associates and cast used Chilton's radio play to make explicit political points in a satire which was in some ways shaped by the medium of radical theatre. The form and meaning they intended, however, was subverted by some members of the audience in 1963. In a third manipulation, they rejected political caricatures, and celebrated instead their own emotional connection to the songs at the play's heart. The power of this audience reaction seems to have been strong enough to affect the play's final form.

It was precisely these sorts of multiple re-writings of memory that made the 1960s so important to the continuing 'memory' of the First World War in Britain. They encoded the anti-establishment and anti-war feelings which had been present since before the Second World War, but had become more dominant in its aftermath.

Notes

1. B. Bond, *The Unquiet Western Front* (Cambridge, 2002), 65.
2. E. MacCallum-Stewart, 'The First World War and Popular Literature', PhD (Sussex) 2005, makes the point that this represented a shift from 'myth' to 'parable'.
3. D. Todman, *The Great War: Myth and Memory* (London, 2005, forthcoming).
4. Details of Charles Chilton's life from interviews with him by Alex Danchev, 8 August 1988 and by Dan Todman, 14 May 2000.
5. *Oh What a Lovely War Programme*, Liddell Hart Centre for Military Archives (LHCMA), LH 13/61)
6. C. Chilton, *The Long Long Trail* As Broadcast Script, 27 December 1961, BBC Written Archives Centre Caversham, 22.
7. A. Danchev, 'Bunking and Debunking: The Controversies of the 1960s' in B. Bond, ed, *The First World War and British Military History* (Oxford, 1991), 282.
8. Unsigned article, 'Joan Littlewood', *Tribune*, 19 April 1963, 9.
9. J. Littlewood, *Joan's Book* (London, 1994), 676.
10. Theatre Workshop, *Oh What a Lovely War* (London, 2000), ix, 89.
11. H. Neill, 'When Did You Last See Your Father Cry? *Times* , 18 March 1998, 41.
12. Theatre Workshop, *Oh What a Lovely War*, 35, 77

13. 'Joan Littlewood', *Tribune*, 9.

14. *Oh What a Lovely War Programme*. This theme of the failure of deterrence was attractive to AJP Taylor, who dedicated his *Illustrated History* of the First World War, which came out in 1963 and has the same underlying theme, to Littlewood.

15. P. Lewis, 'I'm with you Mr Levin ... raving!' *Daily Mail*, 21 June 1963, LHCMA LH 13/61.

16. P. Hope Wallace, 'Review', *Guardian*, 21 June 1963, LHCMA LH 13/61.

17. Unsigned and untitled review, *Times*, 21 March 1963, LHCMA LH 13/61.

18. R. Hastings, 'Sketches Aid 1914-18 War Songs', *Daily Telegraph*, 20 March 1963, LHCMA LH 13/61.

19. J. Lambert, untitled article, *Sunday Times*, 23 June 1963, LHCMA LH 13/61.

20. My thanks to Professor Alex Danchev for this point.

21. A. Gregory, *The Silence of Memory: Armistice Day 1919-1946* (Oxford, 1994), 80-86

22. Quoted in Gregory, *Silence of Memory*, 82.

23. H. Goorney, *The Theatre Workshop Story* (London, 1981), 127-29.

24. D. Pryce-Jones, 'Theatre Review', *Spectator*, 2 July 1964, LHCMA LH 13/61.

25. A. Dougan, *The Actor' Director: Richard Attenborough Behind the Camera* (Edinburgh, 1994), 17.

26. D. Malcom, 'Fun and War Games', *Guardian*, 9 June 1969, LHCMA LH 13/61.

27. A. Macaulay, 'How to survive in the post-war era', *Financial Times Arts*, 25 August 1998, 9.

28. M. Billington, 'Laugh? I really cried', *Guardian Week*, 4 April 1998, 24.

29. R. Morrison, 'Marriage of daring and imagination', *Times*, 26 May 1998, 18.

Joan Littlewood could never be silenced

March 4, 2008

The irony of the BBC's wartime gag on the great freethinking theatre director is that it just serves to remind us of her importance



The great Joan Littlewood. Photograph: Jane Bown

I suppose we shouldn't be surprised to learn that the great director, Joan Littlewood, was once banned by the BBC and kept under surveillance by MI5. It was all part of a mood of wartime panic, of which she was not the only victim. In 1941, the year that Joan was banned from the airwaves, a similar fate greeted Michael Redgrave who was then one of the most popular actors in Britain. He was a signatory to the People's Convention that called for "a people's war" and "a people's peace". Although neither a pacifist nor a communist, Redgrave found himself ostracised by the BBC and his film-career jeopardised. Even in the post-war era, a Christmas tree was still placed against the names of BBC employees regarded as politically suspect. Revelation of the ban on Joan Littlewood may, however, have one beneficial side effect. It reminds a whole generation of who she was and why she was so important. Her spirit still haunts the Theatre Royal, Stratford East, which was taken over by her company, Theatre Workshop, in 1953. But just as important is the fact that many things we take for granted in modern theatre stemmed from her pioneering vision. She believed in taking theatre to the people and toured everywhere from village halls to Butlin's Holiday Camps. She also proved serious issues could be dealt with in popular forms: one of Theatre Workshop's earliest hits was Ewan MacColl's Uranium 235,

which explained the process of nuclear fission. And she broke down the fourth wall that divides actors from audiences, by making theatre a communal experience. I guess few people under 40 would ever have seen one of her productions. Yet, although the work of genius directors is inevitably writ on sand, Joan's influence is still palpable. It is there in surviving members of her Stratford East company including Barbara Windsor

I never met Joan Littlewood but I adored her work. What I loved was its physical beauty, its mixture of discipline and freedom and its belief in theatre's capacity to enhance life. At a time when people bang on about the supposed leftish dominance of theatre, Joan's work is a reminder that all the great advances have sprung from a generous liberality of spirit.

And if she was briefly a member of the Communist party, so what? She was the least ideologically pure of directors in that her work was driven by a detestation of imposed authority and a passionate faith in people. How mean-minded and futile those attempts to monitor and ban her now seem! The ultimate irony is that, by being reminded of them, we are driven to recall a great artist who left her unmistakable imprint on modern British theatre.

Performance Elements within the play.

Littlewood required some essential elements to the performance of “Oh What a Lovely War”. Littlewood wanted the play to be performed very specifically. These are a few essentials she requested...

STAGING

Screen that can be flown in and out, behind the acting area, on which slides or photographs taken during the war were projected to counterpoint the words of the songs.

Example :



Newspanel that is carried across the stage, on which the names of the battles appeared, followed by the number of those killed and wounded and the number of yards gained or lost.



Furniture ONLY four truncated cones or chairs used as seats! And that's it!!!



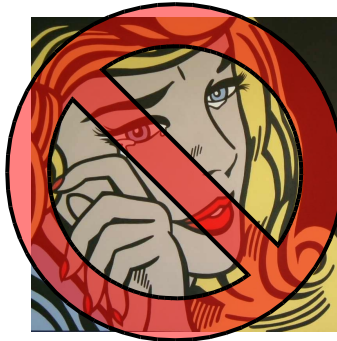
ACTING

No 'Put on' accents. If you can't use somebody else's easily, use your own but take care. Don't try too hard to produce a French accent just focus on the words you are saying!



*Y'all gotta speak in your British accents now...
ok!*

Cut the Emotion. Don't get emotionally involved, the play is designed to be fun and performed to entertain the audience not make them all cry and fill the auditorium with tears!!!



Ad Lib. Improvise on stage!!! You don't have to stick to the script. Make it fun for you and the audience. **BUT DON'T USE THE SAME AD LIB TWICE!** Throw it out and come up with a new one. However good they are, there are plenty more where they came from.

Don't slow down. Keep the pace in the piece, quick changes of scene and costume. Lots of moving and lively action.

Find the action in all the words.

"Need the vitality of Street theatre ...some of our actors must be able to dance, sing, play a musical instrument and act!"



Key Figures of the First World War

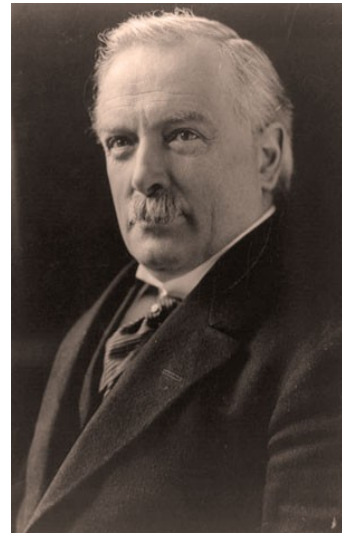
Below are the major players, generals and leaders, of 'The Great War'. Actors will often research characters before playing them, in order to understand their **motivation** and **circumstances**. Why not get your students to take on the role of a character and argue their position. What were their reasons for going to war?

Task : Create a scene in which two of these political leaders meet. Use the information you are given and feel free to quote the Characters.

David Lloyd George –Political Leader of Britain

"Don't be afraid to take a big step if one is indicated; you can't cross a chasm in two small jumps."

- 1863 - 1945
- Lloyd George was Chancellor of the Exchequer when WWI started
- He was appointed Minister of Munitions in 1915
- He was then appointed Minister of War in 1916
- In December of 1916, he became Prime Minister of Asquith
- During the war, he unified the Allied army with the commander French Marshal Ferdinand Foch



Field Marshal Douglas Haig – Military Leader of Britain

"We were unprepared for war, or at any rate for a war of such magnitude."

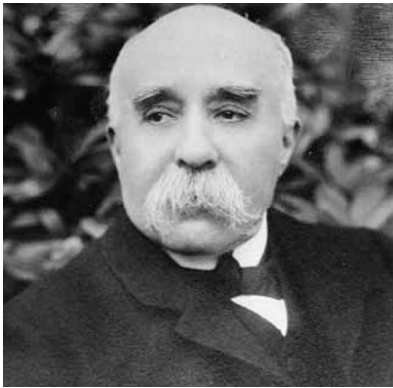
"When armies of millions are engaged, with the resources of great Empires behind them, it will inevitably be long."

- 1861-1928
 - He is considered to be the most controversial war leader
 - He became Commander in chief of the BEF (British Expeditionary force) in 1915
 - Haig Led forces into battle at Mons and Ypres and at Verdun and Somme
- In 1918 Haig led allies to a victory on the Western front

Kaiser Wilhelm II – Political Leader of Germany

"Gentlemen, you will regret this."

- 1859-1941
- Wilhelm was the 9th King of Prussia and the 3rd Emperor of Germany
- He led Germany into the World War I
- Believed it was very important to have a large army, so he began to form his army before the war even began
- His biggest mistake was undoubtedly in 1890, before the war began, when he broke an alliance with Russia. This caused Russia to ally with France and Britain, which made Germany lose the war
- During November of 1918, Germany was suffering from food shortages and Germany was going to lose the war, so Wilhelm fled to the Netherlands until he died in 1941



Georges Clemenceau- Political Leader of France

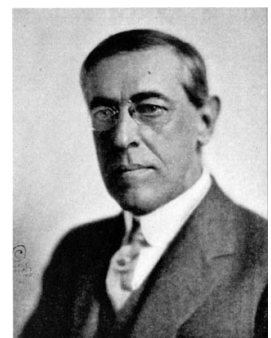
"America is the only nation in history which miraculously has gone directly from barbarism to degeneration without the usual interval of civilization."

- 1841-1929
- When he was growing up, he admired people who fought for freedom and social justice
- He became minister of war when France declared war on Germany in 1914
- He really wanted the French people to support the war and he held rallies to do this
- He became known as the "Tiger of France" because of his determination to defeat Germany in the war
- He was part of the Treaty of Versailles after the war was over - This treaty made Germany pay for all of the damage caused in France, and it took a large toll on the German economy

Woodrow Wilson- Political Leader of America

"The world must be made safe for democracy."

- 1856-1924
- Wilson wanted to keep the U.S.A. neutral when the war started
- He tried to get both sides to sit down and talk out their differences, but they refused
- Even when a German torpedo sank a passenger ship and killed 128 Americans, Wilson still wanted to stay neutral
- It was not until the Germans began to shoot at US ships in February of 1917, that Wilson asked for a declaration of war
- When the US went into the war, it created patriotism all across the US



Woodrow Wilson

Archduke Ferdinand- Political Leader of Austria-Hungary

"What is the good of your speeches? I come to Sarajevo on a visit, and I get bombs thrown at me. It is outrageous."

"Sophie dear, Sophie dear, don't die! Stay alive for our children."

- 1863-1914
- The Archduke of Austria-Hungary
- His assassination set off diplomatic measures, which started the war
- Killed on June 28 1914 in Sarajevo
- He was shot by Gavrilo Princip, a Serbian nationalist
- When he died, Austria made a declaration of war against Serbia
- Russia, ally of Serbia, mobilized the armed forces against Austria-Hungary
- Then Germany, ally of Austria-Hungary, declared war on Russia



WWI SONG LYRICS

A musical about war? To keep spirits up in the trenches AND on the home front, dozens of ditties were written about our Tommies and our Tars! Can you spot any of these tunes in the show? Which songs would have been sung at home and which abroad?

Keep the Home Fires Burning?

They were summoned from the hillside
They were called in from the glen,
And the country found them ready
At the stirring call for men.
Let no tears add to their hardships
As the soldiers pass along,
And although your heart is breaking
Make it sing this cheery song:

Keep the Home Fires Burning,
While your hearts are yearning,
Though your lads are far away
They dream of home.
There's a silver lining
Through the dark clouds shining,
Turn the dark cloud inside out
'Til the boys come home.

Overseas there came a pleading,
"Help a nation in distress."
And we gave our glorious ladies
Honour bade us do no less,
For no gallant son of freedom
To a tyrant's yoke should bend,
And a noble heart must answer
To the sacred call of "Friend."

Keep the Home Fires Burning,
While your hearts are yearning,
Though your lads are far away
They dream of home.
There's a silver lining
Through the dark clouds shining,
Turn the dark cloud inside out
'Til the boys come home.

Take me back to dear old Blighty!

Take me back to dear old Blighty!
Put me on the train to London town!
Take me over there,
Drop me anywhere,
Liverpool, Leeds, or Birmingham, well I don't care!

I should love to see my best girl,
Cuddling up again we soon should be,

Whoa!

Tiddley iddley ighty,
Hurry me home to Blighty,
Blighty is the place for me!

Oh! It's a Lovely War!

Oh, oh, oh it's a lovely war.
Who wouldn't be a soldier, eh? Oh it's a shame to take the pay.
As soon as reveille has gone we feel just as heavy as lead,
but we never get up till the sergeant brings our breakfast up to bed.
Oh, oh, oh, it's a lovely war.

What do we want with eggs and ham when we've got plum and apple jam?
Form fours. Right turn. How shall we spend the money we earn?
Oh, oh, oh it's a lovely war.

When does a soldier grumble? When does he make a fuss?
No one is more contented in all the world than us.
Oh it's a cushy life, boys, really we love it so:
Once a fellow was sent on leave and simply refused to go.
Chorus

Come to the cookhouse door, boys, sniff the lovely stew.
Who is it says the colonel gets better grub than you?
Any complaints this morning? Do we complain? Not we.
What's the matter with lumps of onion floating around the tea?
Chorus

Pack up your troubles in an old Kit bag

Private Perks is a funny little codger
With a smile, a funny smile.
Five feet none, He's an artful little dodger,
With a smile, a funny smile.
Flush or broke, he'll have his little joke,
He can't be suppressed.
All the other fellows have to grin,
When he gets this off his chest, Hi!

Chorus

Pack up your troubles in your old kit bag,
And smile, smile, smile!
While you've a Lucifer to light your fag,
Smile, Boys, that's the style.
What's the use of worrying?
It never was worthwhile.
So, pack up your troubles in your old kit bag,
And smile, smile, smile!

Private Perks went a-marching into Flanders,
With a smile, his funny smile.
He was lov'd by the privates and commanders
For his smile, his funny smile.
When a throng of Bosches came along,

With a mighty swing,
Perks yell'd out, "This little bunch is mine!
Keep your heads down boys and sing", Hi!

Chorus

Private Perks he came back from Bosche shooting,
With his smile, his funny smile.
Round his home he then set about recruiting,
With his smile, his funny smile.
He told all his pals, the short, the tall,
What a time he'd had,
And as each enlisted like a man,
Private Perks said "Now my lad," Hi!

Siegfried L. Sassoon

Written task for year 9 +

This is the declaration of wilful defiance, or statement against the continuation of the War that Sassoon wrote in July 1917, which led to him being sent to Craiglockhart Hospital. Sassoon was awarded the Military Cross for bravery.

Task : Compare his statement to Mrs. Pankhurst's speech on page 64 of the play. What are the similarities?

Statement against the continuation of the War - 1917



Siegfried Sassoon

"I am making this statement as an act of wilful defiance of military authority, because I believe that the war is being deliberately prolonged by those who have the power to end it.

I am a soldier, convinced that I am acting on behalf of soldiers. I believe that this war, upon which I entered as a war of defence and liberation, has now become a war of aggression and conquest. I believe that the purposes for which I and my fellow-soldiers entered upon this war should have been so clearly stated as to have made it impossible to change them, and that, had this been done, the objects which actuated us would now be attainable by negotiation.

I have seen and endured the sufferings of the troops, and I can no longer be a party to prolong these sufferings for ends, which I believe to be evil and unjust.

I am not protesting against the conduct of the war, but against the political errors and insincerities for which the fighting men are being sacrificed.

On behalf of those who are suffering now I make this protest against the deception which is being practiced on them; also I believe that I may help to destroy the callous complacency with which the majority of those at home regard the continuance of agonies which they do not share, and which they have not sufficient imagination to realize."

Siegfried L. Sassoon. July 1917

History Of Pierrot

Pierrot is a stock character of mime and *Commedia dell'Arte*, a French variant of the Italian Pedrolino. His character is that of the sad clown.

Commedia dell'arte, a type of improvised theatre that flourished in northern Italy and elsewhere in Europe from the sixteenth century forward.

Joan Littlewood employed the use of the Pierrot costume as a method of illustrating how the soldiers were the butt of the joke in war. Much like the soldiers the **Pierrot is tricked into believing in war** in the play.

Also by decking her men and women in Pierrot and Pierrette outfits, she puts *Commedia Dell'arte* garb on the Brechtian notion that in the 20th century the **individual is no longer a meaningful entity**.

“The Pierrot costumes, with tin helmets for ordinary soldiers and belts for generals, focused on the wider thematic significance of the scenes beyond the characters” **The costumes made us think the play was from a common mans perspective.**



“He is usually depicted wearing a loose, white tunic. The noticeable feature of Pierrot's behaviour is his naivety, he is seen as a fool, always the butt of pranks, yet nonetheless trusting”

Task

Joan Littlewood used Pierrot, what would you use? Discuss...

What costume would you use to make the soldiers look the same

And why?

- School student
- Blond Bombshell
- Clown
- Boiler suits
- Chavs



ACTIVITES
Suitable for English and History
K\$2-3

Why don't you?

- 1** Do what the soldiers did and write alternative, or satirical lyrics for a popular song? Maybe to protest about conditions at school, or a political issue such as 'hug a hoody'?
- 2** Put a dot on a piece of A4 paper for every 10,000 Soldiers who died in each country. How many dots do you end up with?
- 3** Make a pack of 'mementoes' that you might have taken with you to the front. Include photographs, letters, and keepsakes.
- 4** Look at some contemporary poetry, such as *Dulce et Decorum est*, or *Counter-Attack*. *Oh What a Lovely War* uses juxtaposing images to highlight the horror and loss of war. What images could you select to accompany these poems?

Drama Warm Up Exercises and Performance pieces

British Bull dogs Unite!!!

First read Act 1 Lines **Newspanel** "TROOPS FIRE ON DUBLIN..."
to **M.C** "Ssh"

In the opening of Oh What Lovely War there is a war game. For a bit of fun and a physical warm up play British Bull Dogs in your Drama Studio. The M.C. begins and is on it, and the first three he/she tags become Britain, France and Russia. They then form a united team. And are against the others.

This is a simple warm up designed to get students having fun and reading sections of the play.

Remote war

First read Act 2 **Band** "Irish Washerwoman"
to **Sergeant** "Its not so bad. After all, I'll escape the whole bloomen war"

After reading the scene, in groups of 3 re-enact the scene. Don't worry about saying the lines right just have fun and improvise. Another team member will have a remote control. They will be able to pause, rewind, forward and play the scene as much as they like. Take 10 minutes to block and improvise it then 5 minutes to work it through with the person controlling the action.

This is designed to get the students working physically with the text and acting. The scene and the remote controller can have fun with the actors and push their physical abilities.

Theatre Workshop rehearsal method. Clowning about

Suggested for year 9 +

Taking the clowning and silliness of the Pierott characters in "Oh What a Lovely War", apply this to a modern issue. For example create a scene where the actors are clowns and they joke about. The subject matter however will deal with Eating Disorders, Iraq War, and Stabbings in Britain etc

Your Scene must contain:

- 1 Clown
- 2 Song
- 3 Slow motion
- 4 Statistics

Eg "U.S. Monthly Spending in Iraq - \$12 billion in 2008"

"At least 1.1 million people in the UK are affected by an eating disorder"

"In London last year there were 1,200 reported stabbings"

Marketing “Oh what Lovely War”

Our Marketing team use a series of carefully planned marketing method to advertise “Oh What a Lovely War”

Here are a few:

- Press releases
- Direct Mail out
- Flyer and poster
- Listings in the adverts of papers
- Chief Executive Martyn Green did radio interviews with Hereford and Worcester, Sunshine FM and Radio Wyvern.
- Two brochures hitting 15,000 houses each time.
- Hereford Times and Hereford Society magazine competitions
- E Flyer (Flyer via email)

TASK

Choosing one of the following Marketing methods, write about “Oh What a Lovely War”

On the following pages there are three examples. A press release from The Courtyard Centre for the Arts, a press release from The Black Eyed Theatre Company and an E-Flyer from The Courtyard Centre for the Arts.

1 : Press release: A **press release** is a written communication directed at members of the news media for the purpose of announcing something claimed as having news value. Typically, it is mailed, faxed, or e-mailed to assignment editors at newspapers, magazines, radio stations and television networks

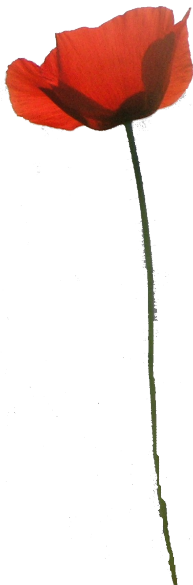
2 : Direct **Mailout Letter** : A letter aimed at our customers to tell them specifically about the show. This aims to sell the show in more detail than the brochure provides.

3 : Design an **e flyer** for the event. (Flyer that is sent via email) You may want to do this free hand or on the computer. Remember to add the logos of the companies involved.



Press release

Join us in September as the 10th annual Courtyard musical - ***Oh What A Lovely War***, kicks off this years autumn season at The Courtyard. It will run from **Thursday 11 to Saturday 20 September** (*please see enclosed flyer for individual times and dates*)



Brought to you as a co-production between Blackeyed Theatre Company and The Courtyard Centre for the Arts, and South Hill Park Arts Centre, ***Oh What A Lovely War*** will premiere in Hereford before starting a nationwide tour. This wonderful musical was written in 1963 by the Joan Littlewood Theatre Workshop and tells the story of life in World War I. We are delighted to be staging this musical now as 2008 marks the 90th anniversary of the ending of World War I, the famous 'war to end all wars'.

A po

Oh What a Lovely War combines live music, dance, sketches and songs with dramatic audio-visual effects to create a picture of life for those on the front line of World War I, and of those left behind. It serves as a powerful reminder of the human cost of war, and is as relevant to audiences today, experiencing the current issues with Iraq and Afghanistan, as it was 40 years ago.

An extremely talented cast of five actor musicians portray all the characters, play all the music and sing all the songs. Starting at the beginning of the war with a big opening number, the songs are taken from the time and include *Oh It's a Lovely War*, *Rule Britannia*, *Pack Up Your Troubles*, *Goodbye* and more.

In its 10 years The Courtyard has established a great tradition for the annual autumn musical. The first show in 1998 was the much celebrated *Cabaret*, while 1999 saw *West Side Story*

and *Romeo and Juliet* in Rep starring the then un-known James McAvoy (*Atonement; The Lion, The Witch and The Wardrobe*) in his first professional role. Last year's autumn musical *The Hired Man*, was a resounding success. It received rave reviews in the local and national press and after leaving Hereford went on a national tour of the UK. The show has since moved to New York, where it is showing off-Broadway with members of the original cast still appearing in it.

Tickets on sale now

Tickets range from £10 to £14 and are on sale now. Or why not join us for a gala night performance on **Thursday 18 September 7.30pm** to celebrate The Courtyards 10th anniversary. Tickets for this special birthday night gala are £20 and include celebratory drinks after the show and a chance to meet the cast.

Call our friendly box office team on 0870 1122330 or book online at www.courtyard.org.uk.

We look forward to welcoming you to The Courtyard now and for another 10 years.

The Courtyard Centre for the Arts, Edgar Street, Hereford, HR4 9JR
Administration 01432 346500 * Box Office 0870 1122330 * Fax 01432 346549 *
www.courtyard.org.uk
Registered Charity No. 1067869 * Company Registration No. 3342581 * VAT No. 682 4368 12





Joan Littlewood's Musical Entertainment

OH WHAT A LOVELY WAR

By Theatre Workshop, Charles Cilton, Gerry Raffles and Members of the Original Cast

Blackeyed Theatre's Autumn 2008 National Tour

Director **Adrian McDougall**
 Musical Director **Tom Neill**
 Designer **Victoria Spearing**
 Lighting Designer **Charlotte McClelland**
 Costume Designer **Fiona Davis**
 Producer **Blackeyed Theatre with South Hill Park and The Courtyard Centre for the Arts**
 Cast **Lee Drage, Ben Harrison, Paul Morse, Tom Neill, Mark Pearce**

Wednesday 30 July 2008 – In Autumn 2008, Berkshire-based Blackeyed Theatre Company brings to the stage Joan Littlewood's classic *Oh What A Lovely War*. The production, which tours to theatres across England until 15th November, coincides with the 90th anniversary of the end of the First World War.

Oh What A Lovely War remains a classic of the modern theatre and a powerful reminder of the atrocities of a war that cost twenty million lives. Told through the songs and documents of the period, it is a satirical attack on the military incompetence and inconceivable disregard for human life the First World War has come to represent and a chilling reminder of man's inhumanity to man. Satirical, funny and deeply moving, *Oh What a Lovely War* has a style all of its own, combining live music, dance, songs and sketches to create a picture of life for those on the front line and those behind it. Created and first performed by Joan Littlewood's Theatre Workshop in 1963, it received the acclaim of London audiences and critics, and won the Grand Prix of the Theatre des Nations festival in Paris the same year. In 1969, a film version was made which extended the play's popular success. Blackeyed Theatre's production features a small, highly talented cast, fabulous design, live music and multi-media effects. It tours nationally from 11th September until 15th November. Blackeyed Theatre, which is supported in this production by South Hill Park Arts Centre in Bracknell and The Courtyard Centre for the Arts in Hereford, is a nationally renowned producer of challenging mid-scale touring theatre. Audiences can find out more at www.blackeyedtheatre.co.uk.

E Flyer

Our spectacular autumn musical



Brought to you as a co-production between Blackeyed Theatre Company, The Courtyard Centre for the Arts, and South Hill Park Arts Centre, ***Oh What A Lovely War*** will premiere in Hereford before starting a nationwide tour. This wonderful musical was written in 1963 by the Joan Littlewood Theatre Workshop and tells the story of life in World War I. We are delighted to be staging this musical now as 2008 marks the 90th anniversary of the ending of World War I, the famous 'war to end all wars'.

A powerful reminder

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'Oh It's a Lovely War', 'Rule Britannia', 'Pack Up Your Troubles', 'Goodbye' and more.

In its 10 years The Courtyard has established a great reputation for the annual autumn musical, and this show is set to continue that fine tradition.

Tickets on sale now

Tickets range from £10 to £14 and are on sale now.

Or why not join us for a gala night performance on **Thursday 18 September 7.30pm** to celebrate The Courtyard's 10th anniversary. Tickets for this special birthday-night gala are £20 and include celebratory drinks after the show and a chance to meet the cast.

Post Show Challenge

Following the production write as much as you can about each of these elements to production.



Period of Production



Costume



Light and sound



Propaganda



Actors encouraged to change the script each night



Slides



Song and Dance



Class differences

Fill in the Gaps worksheet

TASK : Taking the words below fill in the gaps in this description of the Theatre Workshop and “Oh What a Lovely War”.

The production of “Oh what a War” was first performed in..... The play was not a pre written piece but created by the “Theatre Workshop”, closely together Actors, Writers and Directors research all they can about the World War 1 and then come together to create and the piece. This creative method is known as ensemble. Where the cast and crew all work together and on the same rate of pay to create a piece.

Joangave the actors scenarios to improvise and information to create drama from. She would swear, laugh and shout all in one rehearsal and she was a strong and feisty director. There were actors in the piece. They had to be able to also dance and sing as the work was lively and highly..... Through a series of workshops and rehearsals Littlewood and the Theatre Workshop came to create the“Oh what a Lovely war”, later in 1969 this was developed into a film and was a huge success in its own right.

Theatre Workshop wanted the piece tothe views and lives of everyday people, they would take the piece on tour through thecommunities such as in community centres, church halls and social clubs. When Theatre Workshop first began they had no home to perform in, they found the Stratford East Theatre. run down, empty and derelict the cast and crew moved in. They would live there, work there and in their spare time renovate the building.

“Oh What a Lovely War” was designed to give a political message in a popular format they drew their ideas from Agit-Prop theatre mixed with Musical Hall performance styles. Along with themessage of anti war and statistics from their research they placed songs, the audience of the time, would have known well and joined in with.

working class	1963	Littlewood
impact	15	strong
devise	physical	script
Lovely		

Fill in the Gaps worksheet Teachers Answers

The production of “Oh what a **Lovely** War” was first performed in **1963**. The play was not a pre written piece but created by the “Theatre Workshop”, closely together Actors, Writers and Directors research all they can about the World War 1 and then come together to create and **devise** the piece. This creative method is known as ensemble. Where the cast and crew all work together and on the same rate of pay to create a piece.

Joan **Littlewood** gave the actors scenarios to improvise and information to create drama from. She would swear, laugh and shout all in one rehearsal and she was a strong and feisty director. There were **15** actors in the piece. They had to be able to also dance and sing as the work was lively and highly **physical**. Through a series of workshops and rehearsals Littlewood and the Theatre Workshop came to create the **Script** “Oh what a Lovely war”, later in 1969 this was developed into a film and was a huge success in its own right.

Theatre Workshop wanted the piece to **impact** the views and lives of everyday people, they would take the piece on tour through the **working class** communities such as in community centres, church halls and social clubs. When Theatre Workshop first began they had no home to perform in, they found the Stratford East Theatre. Run down, empty and very derelict the cast and crew moved in. They would live there, work there and in their spare time renovate the building.

“Oh What a Lovely War” was designed to give a political message in a popular format they drew their ideas from Agit-Prop theatre mixed with Musical Hall performance styles. Along with the **strong** message of anti war and statistics from their research they placed songs, the audience of the time, would have known well and joined in with.

How to write a Theatre Review

Oh What A Lovely War review The Stage. From a production in The Octagon Theatre

Published Monday 29 October 2007 by Natalie Anglesey

Devised, mainly through improvisation, but with a masterly hand at the helm, legendary Joan Littlewood and her famous Theatre Workshop produced this musical entertainment in the early sixties and it remains as fresh today.



Sadly, it is rarely performed these days, because it requires a large cast of 13 excellent actors who are also musicians.

Artistic director Mark Babych ensures, although this indictment of war is specifically about the needless loss of life during the First World War, it remains a pertinent message for today.

Richard Foxtan has designed a two tier, end of the pier show, with a couple of sweeping staircases, on which the cast, using the minimum number of props, re-tell history as they play a variety of characters, as well as performing the music. Howard Gray is once more in charge of the musical production and the juxtaposition of the enforced jollity of the songs is in dramatic contrast with the visual

images shown on a screen.

The ensemble cast, who sing and dance superbly through numerous costume, hat, wig and moustache changes, work seamlessly as a team. Led by award-winning Matthew Kelly and Matthew Rixon, this excellent cast also includes more good performances from John McArdle and Jeff Hordley. This entertaining and accessible production is a worthy tribute to the quality performances presented by the Octagon, Bolton, over the past 40 years. Here's to an equally productive future.

Task

Now it's your turn. Imagine you are a journalist and write a review of the "Oh What a Lovely War" you saw by The Blackeyed Theatre Company.

Resources

Web sites

<http://www.bbc.co.uk/religion/remembrance/poetry/wwone.shtml>

<http://www.firstworldwar.com/origins/index.htm>

www.peopleplayuk.org.uk

Books

Todman, Dan. *'Oh What A Lovely War: Re-telling the First World War in Post-War Britain*, 2005

Modern British Drama: The Twentieth Century, By C. D. Innes, Published by Cambridge University Press, 2002, ISBN 0521016754

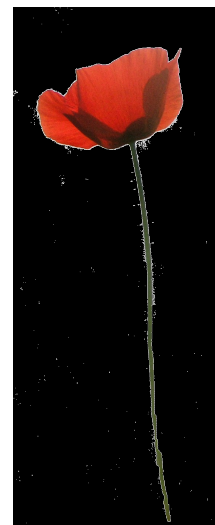
The Theatre Workshop Story, Howard Goorney, Methuen Publishing Ltd, 2008, 0413487601

Oh what a lovely war, Theatre Workshop and Jon Littlewood, Methuen Modern Plays, 1965, 0413302105

Articles

Socialist Review, 2002, Joan Littlewood - Worker's Playtime, by Jane Shallice, November 2002

BBC News, 2002, British Theatre Pioneer Dies, Sat 21st Sept



Education and Outreach Department Partnership



This education pack was written and produced from the Education Department here at The Courtyard in partnership with South Hill Park and Black Eyed Theatre Company. If you need this in larger print or in electronic form feel free to call or email Sarah Thomas and I will forward it to you as soon as possible.

The work of The Courtyard's Education and Outreach department covers four main areas: Schools and Colleges, Young Courtyard, Courtyard Lifelong & Family Learning and The Courtyard in the Community.

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We hope you and the pupils enjoyed the show feel free to contact us if you would like any more information.

Sarah Thomas and Jo Wright

TEACHER'S EVALUATION FORM
THE COURTYARD CENTRE FOR THE ARTS



This education pack was created in Partnership between The Courtyard Centre for the Arts and South Hill Park Arts Centre.

We would appreciate your feedback. Please take a few moments to review the pack and please return the evaluation form to Sarah Thomas, Education Department, The Courtyard Centre for the Arts, Edgar Street, Hereford, HR4 9JR.

NAME, SCHOOL.....
Year group.....

Please tick the following

	Outstanding	Good	OK	Bad	Terrible
The Quality of the content					
Suitability for use within the classroom					
Layout					
Adequate information					
Suitability for your pupils					

Did you find the Education pack was beneficial for your pupil? If so why?

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Would you like to see more education packs provided for productions in your local theatres?

.....
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What pages in the education pack were most helpful to your work and why?

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.....

Please add any other comments

.....
.....

Thank you so much for taking the time to fill out this evaluation form. Please be in touch if you have any further feedback or would like to talk more about the education department and what we do.

We look forward to hearing your thoughts. Many Thanks