Welcome…

To the Oh What A Lovely War Education Pack. Blackeyed Theatre is delighted to be working with theatres in Bracknell, Hereford and Greenwich to bring you Joan Littlewood’s famed anti-war satire.

The following pages have been designed to support study leading up to and after your visit to see the production. This pack was put together by the education department at Hereford Centre for the Arts in 2008, reformatted and extended in 2011 by Blackeyed Theatre. This pack aims to supply thoughts and facts that can serve as discussion starters, handouts and practical activity ideas.

If you have any comments or questions regarding this pack please email info@blackeyedtheatre.co.uk We hope that you will enjoy the unique experience that this show offers. See you there!

Blackeyed Theatre.

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About Blackeyed Theatre

Blackeyed Theatre is a mid-scale touring theatre company established in 2004 to create exciting opportunities for artists and audiences alike, and to offer challenging, high quality theatre to the mid-scale touring circuit. The company specialises in reviving modern classics and staging established titles in innovative ways, using small ensembles of actor/musicians to create theatre that is audacious, fresh and far bigger than the sum of its parts. Since 2004 Blackeyed Theatre has embarked on national tours of Alfie (Bill Naughton), The Cherry Orchard (Anton Chekhov), The Caucasian Chalk Circle (Bertolt Brecht), the world premiere of Oedipus (Steven Berkoff) and The Resistible Rise of Arturo Ui (Bertolt Brecht).

In 2009, Blackeyed Theatre became an associate company of South Hill Park Arts Centre. In 2008, the company produced its first Christmas show, A Christmas Carol, and a year later Peter Pan.

Blackeyed Theatre is totally self-sufficient and receives no funding, creating innovative, challenging theatre that’s also commercially viable. It achieves this by producing work that audiences want to see but in ways that challenge their expectations, by bringing together artists with a genuine passion for the work they produce, and through an appreciation that works of art with a mass appeal do not have to be presented in a dumbed-down way. By offering a theatrical experience that’s both artistically excellent and affordable, audiences and theatres are far more sustainable in the long term. And responding to demand ensures that more people see innovative theatre.

Blackeyed Theatre has a growing national reputation for creating dynamic theatre using live music and great performances to tell stories with honesty and passion.
The Cast

Robert Harding - Pierrot and Ensemble

Robert graduated from the Academy of Live and Recorded Arts (ALRA) in 2008 where his most notable credits include Vershinin in *Three Sisters* and Richard of Gloucester in *Richard III*. Since graduating Robert has been busy building his CV with a variety of credits. Work has included a five-month tour of Italy as Benjamin in *Animal Farm* and Alexi in the acclaimed Chernobyl-based play *The Common Good* which premiered at the Roundhouse, Camden before transferring to the Arcola Theatre in November 2009. Since turning professional, Robert has also appeared in the short films *Alone Together* for Scarecrow Productions and in *Goltho* where he played the demented Reverend Luke.

In 2010, he took the lead role in a commercial campaign for Suzuki Holland and appeared as Lanyon/Uterson in *The Scandalous Case of Dr. Jekyll and Mr. Hyde* at the Union Theatre, Southwark. Most recently, he has toured the south east of England as Torvald in *A Doll’s House*.

A keen musician, Robert plays trumpet, basic rhythm guitar and sings with the all-male group ‘Eschoir’.

Ben Harrison - Pierrot and Ensemble

This will be Ben’s fourth tour with Blackeyed Theatre, having previously toured of *Oh! What A Lovely War*, *The Resistible Rise of Arturo Ui*, and most recently *Alfie*.

Ben grew up in Cardiff, regularly attending the Sherman Youth Theatre, and performing regularly in school and summer school productions. This was highlighted when he played Benvolio in Sharman MacDonald’s *After Juliet* at the National Theatre, when his school won the National Connections competition.

Graduating in Drama in 2004 from Exeter University, Ben made his acting debut in *The Selfish Giant* (Sherman Theatre Company); Since that time he has worked on many shows with various companies including: *Pandora’s Box* (Mac Productions); *The Tiler of Gloucester* (Fairgame); *Shadow Play* (Travelling Light Theatre Co.); *Aladdin, The Wok n Woll Panto* (Stafford Gatehouse), *The Mowgli Stories* and *James and The Giant Peach* (Illyria Outdoor Theatre Company) and *We’re Going on a Bear Hunt!* (Kenny Wax Productions)

Primarily, Ben is an actor and musician, playing guitar, drums, piano, accordion and percussion and he is currently fronting the band *Keeping Jess Company*. He has recorded with various bands and projects including playing with *The Lasting Days* and singing on the *We’re Going on a Bear Hunt* soundtrack CD. Ben has also made his debut as a writer. His play for children *Finding Alice* (performed by a single leaf theatre co.) received great reviews at Edinburgh Festival in 2008, and has just completed it’s second tour. Ben also composed the music for the production.

Joseph Mann - Pierrot and Ensemble

Joseph grew up in Chester, performing with many local music and theatre groups, before training as an actor musician at Rose Bruford College, graduating in 2010.

Theatre credits include: Giovanni in *The White Devil* (The Rose Theatre), Jack Hunter in *The Rose Tattoo* (The Rose Theatre), Morales in *Carmen* (Leicester Square Theatre), Ron Strong’s *Magical Gymnasium* (Bexley TIE Tour), Herod in *Jesus Christ Superstar* (Theater Clwyd). He has also performed and musicaly directed with Pants On Fire Theatre in their multi-award-winning production of Ovid's *Metamorphoses*, winning both the Carol Tambour Best of Edinburgh Award and the WhatsOnStage Editor's Choice Award.
He is delighted to be joining Blackeyed's production and would like to dedicate his performance to his family for their endless support.

Paul Morse - Pierrot and Ensemble

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

Theatre credits include the preview of the new musical Alvaro’s Balcony featuring Susannah York (Her Majesty’s Theatre, London), A Midsummer Night’s Dream playing Demetrius & Snout (UK Tour), the UK National Tour of Oh! What A Lovely War (Inc Theatre Royal Portsmouth, Buxton Opera House & Grand Theatre Lancaster), Macbeth playing Malcolm (Swan Theatre Worcester, Theatre Colwyn, Germany & Switzerland Tour), We Did Them Our Way (10th Anniversary gala performance of the Courtyard Theatre Hereford), Twelfth Night playing Sir Andrew Aguecheek (Hastil Theatre, Kent open-air), the Feydeau Farce Better Late playing the role of Lucien (Grange Court Theatre, London), Kenneth Halliwell in the musical The Boys In The Front Room based on the lives of Joe Orton and his partner and killer Kenneth (Gatehouse Theatre, London), The Clock Strikes Ten playing Bernard Jeffreys (Grange Court Theatre, London), King Neptune in The Little Mermaid (Playhouse Theatre Weston-super-mare & Palace Theatre Southend), The School for Scandal playing Sir Benjamin Backbite & Charles Surface (Cambridge open-air), Still Life and Shadow Play from Noel Coward’s Tonight at 8.30 (Leatherhead Theatre).

Radio play credits include Harry and Ted in Vegas and Film credits include the lead role in The Temp and Narcissus.

Not wanting to miss out on the fun of Pantomime Paul has been playing Dame and Ugly Sister for the last 8 years. He was resident Dame at the Victoria Theatre Halifax for 2 years playing Dame Dolly Mixture in Snow White & Widow Twankey in Aladdin. Paul has also played Ugly Sister in Cinderella at the Pavilion Theatre Worthing, Thameside Theatre Grays, Pomegranate Theatre, Chesterfield and Leatherhead Theatre. Last year Paul played Widow Twankey in Aladdin at the Pomegranate Theatre, Chesterfield and this Christmas Paul will be back in Chesterfield playing Nurse Glucose in Robin Hood and The Babes in the Wood. For more information visit www.paulmorseactor.com

Tom Neill - Pierrot and Ensemble

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.

He is delighted to have the opportunity to work on this important post-war drama, re-joining the cast following Blackeyed’s production in 2008. His other acting credits include Trofimov in The Cherry Orchard, Givola in The Resistible Rise of Arturo Ui, Raymond in Blue Remembered Hills (all Blackeyed Theatre), Don’t Look Back (dreamthink punishable), 1000 Revolutions Per Moment (Periplum), Kaspar in Kaspar (Atom Theatre), Mason in Journey’s End (J.D. Productions), White Rabbit in Finding Alice (A Single Leaf), Stephano in The Tempest, Montmorency in Three Men In A Boat, Mole in The Adventures of Mr. Toad (all South Hill Park), Theatre In Education tours with Bitesize Theatre Company and pantomimes for various companies.

His media work includes Lenny Denton in The Bill (ITV1), Nelson’s Trafalgar (BBC), various characters in Zooleburst (Channel 4), voiceovers for the Whatadiddle Puppet Company and XBOX game Windhaven: Spirit of Flight (Bitphase Entertainment).

Tom also works as a theatre director, composer and script writer. For more details please visit www.tomneill.co.uk
The Creative Team

Fiona Davis - Costume Design

Fiona graduated from De Montfort University with a BA Honours degree in Design Crafts. Initially her experience began with working as a production tutor for Pegasus Theatre in Oxford. Whist there she designed costumes and sets for a number of independent projects. Incredibly passionate about theatrical costume, Fiona then embarked on a professional career as a freelance costume designer from 2004. She has costumed Cinderella, Henry V, Aladdin, Oliver!, Beauty and the Beast, Talking Heads, The Tempest, Peter Pan and The Importance of Being Oscar (all for South Hill Park), The Resistible Rise Of Arturo Ui, Oedipus and Oh What A Lovely War (all for Blackeyed Theatre), Buccaneer for Ocean Theatre, R&J for Original theatre, Vincent In Brixton, Othello and Journey’s End for Original and Icarus theatre, and M*ss*ing for Talawa Theatre Company. She has had exhibitions of her work in Banbury, Oxfordshire and two exhibitions as part of the New Designers Show in Islington, London. Fiona continues to relish the challenge working with directors, set designers and performers to capture their vision and is delighted to be working with Blackeyed theatre again.

Adrian McDougall - Producer and Director

Adrian is the founder of Blackeyed Theatre and a professional actor, director and producer.

Acting credits include Little John in The Legend of Robin Hood, Don Pedro in Much Ado About Nothing and Macbeth in Macbeth (Oddsocks Productions), Creon in Oedipus, Aston in The Caretaker, Donald in Blue Remembered Hills and Marc in Art (Blackeyed Theatre), Matt in Tractor Tom and the Treasure Hunt (Premier Stage Productions), King Rat in Dick Whittington (Broadway Barking), various roles in Monty Python & the Holy Grail, Bucket in Aladdin and Alderman Fitzwarren in Dick Whittington (Wilde Theatre, Bracknell), Les T Furdish in Office Rocker (Freeflow Productions), Captain Black in Petula Grace and the Magic Hat, Perks in The Railway Children and Oak/Boldwood/Troy in Bathsheba (Phoenix Theatre Company), Bertie Wooster in By Jeeves (EBOS Musical Theatre), Oscar Wilde in Wilde At Heart (Edinburgh Fringe), Nick in Dead Funny (Mirror Mirror Theatre), Stanhope in Journey’s End and Shelley in Bloody Poetry (JD Productions)

As a director, credits include Masquerade (World Premiere - ICAB), Closer (Mirror Mirror Theatre), House & Garden (South Hill Park), The Long Lost Legend of Robin Hood and Oh What A Lovely War (Blackeyed Theatre).

As a producer, touring productions include Effie’s Burning, The Caretaker, Misery, Art, The Resistible Rise of Arturo Ui, Oedipus, Oh What A Lovely War and The Cherry Orchard (Blackeyed Theatre), Dead Funny, Shirley Valentine, Popcorn and Closer (Mirror Mirror Theatre Company).

Adrian graduated from Southampton University in Modern Languages in 1997 before working in PR and marketing (including a post at The Anvil in Basingstoke) for a number of years, then becoming a professional actor in 2000. As well as running Blackeyed Theatre, he is a founding director of CentreStage Partnership, a leading learning and development consultancy.

Victoria Spearing - Design

Victoria became a freelance theatre designer after graduating from Bretton Hall in 2001. She has worked with Blackeyed Theatre on The Madness of George III, Oedipus, Oh What A Lovely War, Alfie, The Cherry Orchard, The Resistible Rise of Arturo Ui, The Caretaker, Blue Remembered Hills, Misery, The Long Lost Legend of Robin Hood and Art. Other set designs include Summer Holiday, The Wizard of Oz, Around the World in 80 Days, Norfolk’s Rose, Whistle Down the Wind and The BFG. In addition she has designed the sets for the last nine pantomimes at South Hill Park and recently for the Broadway Theatre in Barking. She also runs art and theatre workshops for children and adults, and has made props for most of the major London museums.
Ellie Verkerk - Musical Director

Ellie graduated from the Royal College of Music as a pianist and brass player in 2001. Specialising in accompanist, she played for many of her RCM colleagues for their final recitals, competitions and master classes. She also specialised in orchestration and arrangement, and has led musical workshops with members of the London Philharmonic Orchestra. She was a member of the National Musicians Symphony Orchestra, and accepted her first job as Musical Director when she was 17. She was invited to become the MD for Surrey County Youth Theatre in 2003, where she stayed until 2007. In 2009 she started working at the Guildford School of Acting, and became the MD for Interval Productions (www.intervalproductions.com) and for Procyon Productions (www.procyonproductions.com).

In the past, she has played as the solo pianist for a production of The Last Five Years (March 2009) and Company (2009). Other favourite productions include Moby Dick The Musical, and The Life (GSA), Archy and Mehitabel (SCYT), Once Upon A Mattress (SCYT), performances in the theatre tent at Guilfest (2009), a William Finn review (2009), and Honk! (2009).

Ellie has completed her British Sign Language Level 1 course, and is currently having vocal lessons and studying jazz trumpet with Pip Eastop, who was formerly her horn teacher at RCM. Her website can be found at www.ellieverkerk.com.

Oliver Welsh - Lighting Design

Oliver formerly worked at the hire company Whitelight, then the New Victoria Theatre in Woking, subsequently moving on to the position of Deputy Chief Electrician at Southampton’s Mayflower Theatre in 2005. He is now a freelance lighting designer / technician based in Berkshire. Recent work includes Deputy Electrician for Matthew Bourne's Edward Scissorhands (international tour), Chief Electrician for They Never Gave (Bill Kenwright - UK tour), Lighting Programmer for the 2009 production of Hello Dolly! at Regents Park Open Air Theatre, production and event electrics for Golf Live 2010, Capital FM’s Help a London Child 2009 Christmas Auction, Taste London Festival 2010, City of London Festival 2010, the Bloodstock/ Slammin’ Vinyl Festivals in Derbyshire and various corporate conference events. Recent lighting design work includes Beauty and the Beast (Blackeyed Theatre) African Sanctus 2010 at Canterbury Cathedral (This World Productions), Othello and Hamlet (Icarus Theatre Collective - UK tours), Carousel (Crowthorne Musical Players), the 2010 Oxford Castle Summer music season, the main stage for Big Day Out 2007 - 2009 (South Hill Park / Sandhurst Carnival). Oliver also regularly designs for Thames Valley based Park Opera, Opera at Bearwood and other local community groups.

Pamela Wiggin - Costume Design

Pamela trained at West Sussex College of Art and Design. She has designed costumes for many productions at South Hill Park, where Christmas shows include Sleeping Beauty and Jack and the Beanstalk. For The Castle, Wellingborough she has designed Alice in Wonderland, The Ice Queen and many more. For Jersey Arts Centre, she has worked on the youth theatre production of The Last Voyage of Phillipe Deverne and Secret Weapons. As well as being a freelance designer, Pamela works at the University of Reading in the Film Theatre and Television Department, where research productions include Savannah Bay by Magaret Duras and The Four of Them, The Mistress, The Man by Gabriela Zapolska.
Joan Littlewood

Full Name - Joan Maud Littlewood

Born - London, 5 October 1914
Died - London, 20 September 2002

Littlewood was born in Stockwell, London, in a poor family, the daughter of a young Cockney servant girl, and was raised mostly by her grandparents. Her grandmother Caroline (“Mumski” to Littlewood) worked in the kitchens of a Threadneedle Street pub. The family home in the Stockwell Road had a constant stream of lodgers whose left-behind books kindled Joan’s passion for literature and knowledge.

She trained as an actress at RADA but left after an unhappy start and moved to Manchester in 1934 where she met folk singer Jimmie Miller who was later known as Ewan MacColl. After joining his troupe, Theatre of Action, Littlewood and Miller married. After a brief move to London, they returned to Manchester and set up Theatre Union in 1936.

MI5 placed the couple under surveillance early in 1939, with Littlewood described in the files as “highly intellectual and a keen communist”. Their home in Hyde, Cheshire was regularly watched - “A number of young men who have the appearance of communist Jews are known to visit Oak Cottage. It is thought they come from Manchester”, MI5 was warned in April 1939.

In 1940, Lancashire’s chief constable told MI5 that Last Edition, a play performed by Theatre Union, amounted to “thinly-veiled communist propaganda” portraying “the workers’ struggles in Britain, Spain and the empire”.

The following year, 1941, the BBC banned Littlewood from broadcasting - “Clearly I could not allow people like this to have the use of the microphone or be prominently identified with the BBC” the corporation’s then regional director for the north, John Coatman, wrote.

The BBC lifted the ban two years later when MI5 said Littlewood had broken off her association with the Communist party. However, MI5 kept her under surveillance until the 1950s.

In 1945, after the end of World War II, Littlewood, her husband, and other Theatre Union members formed Theatre Workshop, touring for the next 8 years.

In 1953, Theatre Workshop took up residence at the Theatre Royal in Stratford, east London, where it gained international fame, performing plays across Europe and in the Soviet Union. One of Littlewood’s most famous productions was the British première of Bertolt Brecht’s Mother Courage and Her Children (1955), which she directed and also starred in the lead role. Her production of Fings Ain’t Wot They Used T’Be, a musical about the London underworld, became a hit and ran from 1959 to 1962, transferring to the West End.

When Gerry Raffles joined the troupe, MacColl and Littlewood divorced, though they still worked together for many years and Littlewood was godmother to MacColl’s two children. Littlewood and Raffles were life partners until his death in 1975.

The works for which she is now best remembered are probably Shelagh Delaney’s A Taste of Honey (1958), which gained great critical acclaim, and the satirical musical Oh, What a Lovely War! (1963), her stage adaptation of a work for radio by Charles Chilton - a radical combination of slapstick humour and serious satire. Both were subsequently made into films. Theatre Workshop also championed the work of Irish playwright Brendan Behan, and Littlewood is often rumoured to have a significant role in his work.
After Raffles's death in 1975, Littlewood left Theatre Workshop and stopped directing. After a time of drifting she settled in France and became the companion of Baron Philippe de Rothschild, the vintner and poet, and wrote his memoirs, *Milady Vine*.

In 1984, *Milady Vine*, described as “the autobiography of Philippe de Rothschild, by Joan Littlewood” was published and in 1986 came *Joan’s Book*, subtitled “Joan Littlewood’s Peculiar History as she tells it”. She ended her own story with Raffles’s death. Many of his letters to her are included, one of which she held especially dear and which catches the essence of Theatre Workshop’s credo:

> You are right to tell us never to lose humanity. Audiences respond to a love of life. If there is none, I for one want no part in it. Our work has such a short life. A painting lasts until the canvas rots; ours fades the moment it is accomplished.

Littlewood died, in 2002, of natural causes at the age of 87 in the London flat of Peter Rankin, her UK base for the previous 23 years.

**Productions**

**With Theatre Union**

Lope de Vega’s *Fuente Ovejuna*

English premieres of Clifford Odets’ *Waiting For Lefty*

and Jaroslav Hasek’s *Good Soldier Schweyk*

New work such as Miller’s *Last Edition*

**With Theatre Workshop**

*Uranium 235* (1952)

*Twelfth Night* (1953)

*Hindle Wakes* (1953)

*Juno and the Paycock* (1953)

*The Alchemist* (1953)

*Richard II* (1954)

*The Traveller* (1954 Edinburgh Festival)

Brecht’s *Edward II* for the 1955 Devon Festival

*Mother Courage and her Children* (1955)

Jonson’s *Volpone* at Paris International Festival of Theatre in 1955

*Arden of Faversham* (1955)

Brendan Behan’s *The Quare Fellow* (1956)

Shelagh Delany’s *A Taste of Honey* (1958)

Behan’s *The Hostage* (1958)

Frank Norman’s *Fings Ain’t Wot They Used T’be* (1959)

Wolf Mankowitz’s *Make Me An Offer* (1959)

Stephen Lewis’ *Sparrers Can’t Sing* (1960)

*Oh, What a Lovely War!* (1963, transferring to Wyndham’s, 1963 and Broadhurst, NY, 1964)

*Twang!* (Shaftesbury, 1965)

*Hostage* (1973)

John Wells / Carl Davis’ *The Projector* (1970)
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 Pierrot 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.
Actor’s Experience

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, raffle 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 humour 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
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
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 rewritten 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 antiestablishment and anti-war feelings which had been present since before the Second World War, but had become more dominant in its aftermath.

Notes
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'.
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
12. Theatre Workshop, Oh What a Lovely War, 35, 77
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.
20. My thanks to Professor Alex Danchev for this point.
22. Quoted in Gregory, Silence of Memory, 82.
Joan Littlewood could never be silenced

The irony of the BBC’s wartime gag on the great free-thinking theatre director is that it just serves to remind us of her importance.

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, Miriam Karlin, Murray Melvin, Victor Spinetti and Brian Murphy. It also survives through her successor, Philip Hedley, who carries on the heroic battle against petty-minded Arts Council bureaucracy.

But, above all, it survives in the work that appears on British stages. Not just in the occasional revival of the Littlewood landmark, Oh! What a Lovely War, but in the work of a company like Kneehigh. I haven’t endorsed everything Emma Rice’s company has done but there are moments in its current Brief Encounter, with its fluid mix of song, dance and drama that breathtakingly echo Joan’s magical flair.

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.

By Michael Billington
Performance Elements

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.

*Examples*

**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!

*Good moaning... I am the bronger of bad toadings.*
**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!”
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
- During the war, he unified the Allied army with the commander French Marshal Ferdinand Foch

Field Marshall 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

**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
World War I 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 Blightly!**

Take me back to dear old Blightly!
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 Blightly,
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 your 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 +

Siegfried Loraine Sassoon (8 September 1886 – 1 September 1967) was an English poet, author and soldier. Decorated for bravery on the Western Front, he became one of the leading poets of the First World War. His poetry both described the horrors of the trenches, and satirised the patriotic pretensions of those who, in Sassoon’s view, were responsible for a pointless war.

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

“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 is 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, focussed on the wider thematic significance of the scenes beyond the characters” The costumes made us think the play was from a common man’s 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
Practical Exercises

Suitable for English and History KS2-3. 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 Pierrot 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:
- Clown
- Song
- Slow motion
- 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”
Written Work and Research

Marketing in the Theatre

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
- Radio Interviews
- Two brochures hitting 15,000 houses each time
- Competitions in newspapers and magazines
- E Flyer

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

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.
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.

Joan ____________________ 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 _________________ 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 to _________________ the views and lives of everyday people, they would take the piece on tour through the _________________ 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 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 Music Hall performance styles. Along with the _________________ 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.

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<th>working class</th>
<th>1963</th>
<th>Littlewood</th>
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<td>15</td>
<td>strong</td>
<td>devise</td>
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Lovely script
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 Music 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.
### Post Show Notes

**Acting** (characters, relationships, vocal delivery, physical traits, use of space, etc.)

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**Music** (instruments, moods, styles, etc.)

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**Set and props** (time period, location, moods, etc.)

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**Costume** (time period, status, masks, materials, etc.)

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**What is the play about?**

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**The bit that worked the best for you, and why**

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**A bit that didn’t work for you, and why**

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**How would you have done that bit differently?**

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