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Theater review

Theater wages a 'Lovely War'

By Jonathan Siegle

With all the examples we've had by now, one would think mankind would have learned that going to war is just not a nice thing to do on a Sunday afternoon.

Of all man's wars, however, The Great War, 'the war to end all wars,' may have been the worst. It was ugly.

It was ugly because it was so foolishly begun. It was ugly because a 19th century mentality was made to confront 20th century technology.

It was ugly because its generals fought a war of attrition, laying waste to all their resources, but especially people. Were it not for the entrance of the fresh blood of the Americans, both sides might very well have collapsed in their trenches. No winner, just losers.

It began almost as a lark, a family feud between cousin George in England and cousin Wilhelm in Germany who became involved after Austria promised only a "bright, brisk little war" against Serbia.

Through the University Theatre's production of "Oh What A Lovely War," by Joan

Littlewood and Charles Chilton, we are reminded that war sucks. The play documents the course of World War I by following the popular songs of the times, with images and news items from the front mingled in. It doesn't have to make a statement; the truth does it well enough.

The show is a cabaret revue and begins as the war itself began, bright and gay. As the war turns grim, the gaiety fades. From "It's a Long Way to Tipperary" to "When This Lousy War is Over," the music follows closely the course of the war. Air battles, gas attacks and trench warfare are all depicted.

The play is held together by the cabaret host as it cuts from scene to song and back again. Dan Conroy is the master of ceremonies, and he is superb.

Conroy's timing is impeccable. He has a sense for British dance hall humor, how to play an audience, how to be in a scene and how not to be. And perhaps best of all, he has a wonderful singing voice.

Conroy is assisted by Carol Burger as Miss Bertha V. Nation. She too can sing. And dance. Together they portray an air battle which manages both

grand humor and pathos.

The remainder of the roles are traded around among the cast members, a mad parade of nations, soldiers, officers, nurses, civilians.

Linda Chace stands out from the throng. Her voice is pure, her delivery understated. Chris Dolman, who plays a variety of British officers, likewise stands out.

The young cast is spirited. They work well together. But there are two clunkers.

The majority of the cast are women. It is understood that finding enough males for such roles is difficult. However, relying on the audience to accept so many feminine faces as British soldiers in the trenches is stretching credibility too far.

The other problem is one of pitch. Too many of the songs are simply too high for some voices. It would not be too difficult to transpose down.

These are really small matters. "Oh What A Lovely War" is a fine production. Director John Rindo has captured both the flavor of a British dance hall and the futility of battle.

Film Continued from Page 3B

angry Hoffman tries to prove his acting ability by auditioning as a woman. He lands a part in a soap opera and finally achieves fame — as a woman. Teri Garr and Jessica Lange join Hoffman in this comic look at the world of daytime soaps.

The Toy presents an interesting experiment in chemistry between comic actors Richard Pryor and Jackie Gleason. Directed by Richard Donner (Superman), "The Toy" has Gleason playing a rich Southern tycoon who "buys" a flat-broke

journalist (Pryor) as a plaything for his spoiled son. Pryor finds — like everyone else — that he has his price as he submits to being "The Toy."

Hal Ashby's ninth film in a decade is **Lookin' To Get Out**, a character study of two streetwise New Yorkers getting ready for a chancy Las Vegas gamble. Jon Voight stars as an incorrigible charmer who runs up a large tab with the local loan sharks. In a risky attempt to raise the needed money, Voight escapes to Vegas to "win big."

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