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Theatre Workshop **OH WHAT A LOVELY WAR**

OH WHAT A LOVELY WAR is a theatrical chronicle of the horrors of the First World War told through the songs and documents of the period. First performed by Theatre Workshop – under the direction of Joan Littlewood – in 1963 at the Theatre Royal, Stratford East, London, it was acclaimed by audiences and critics. It won the Grand Prix of the Théâtre des Nations festival in Paris that year, was staged in London's West End and then on Broadway, and has gone on to become a classic of the modern theatre. In 1969 a film version was made which extended the play's popularity and it was revived and toured by the Royal National Theatre in 1998. This new edition of the play, revised by Joan Littlewood, returns the script to the version created by the first cast. This volume includes a new Introduction by Joan Littlewood, photos of the 1963 production and an Afterword by the actor Victor Spinetti, a member of the original cast.

'A production of the first importance in the history of post-war theatre in Britain'

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Theatre Workshop **OH WHAT A LOVELY WAR**

Original version edited and introduced
by Joan Littlewood

B L O O M S B U R Y

Introduction

This is not a conventional play and will not come to life if treated as such. It was first performed by a company of fifteen skilled dancers and singers, accustomed to improvisation and guided by a director.

The idea came from Gerry Raffles, who had heard a BBC programme of songs from the First World War, the plot from Joan Littlewood, and the rest was worked out with the company. The first discussion went well until a recording of the radio programme was played to them.

'Terrible!'

'Sentimental.'

'All that feeling and no imagination.'

'Pure nostalgia.'

'It's not the songs, it's the way they're sung!' said Gerry. The BBC Singers, who'd attended this first session, left.

'They couldn't sing like that stuck in a trench!' said Griffith Davies.

'Waiting for the next bomb to blow their heads off,' said Ann Beach.

'Dirty ... lousy ... hungry ...' The company was awake now.

'And we never get up till the sergeant brings our breakfast up to bed.' It was Vic Spinetti singing. He'd had a taste of army life and that set the ball rolling. First one, then another had some story to tell, a story that had been handed down in the family, part of our national heritage.

We raided the local libraries, dug out facts and figures. A neighbour brought in a little tin box, with Princess Mary's profile stamped on the lid.

'It was my grandfather's - had cigarettes in it for Christmas - the princess sent them all one.'

Our story began to take shape! We had some taboos. No khaki on the stage. Even the word makes you think of war. No deaths.

What will we wear then? Pierrots were all the go in those

days. They'd perform on a platform set up on the beach, seats 3d. and 6d. Little red and blue bulbs would light up for the evening show. Their costumes were white with black bobbles and ruffs. Each costume was different to suit the style of the performer. And they could all sing and dance and make you laugh. They were the great joy of the seaside.

'Let's play our *Lovely War* as a Pierrot show.'

'And the girls?' cried Fanny Carby.

'Tiny crinolines and long black lace pants, caught in at the ankle -'

'And we must have pretty hats and head-dresses - and drapes for some of the scenes.'

'Sure.'

'And the fellers?' said Brian Murphy.

'You can change your Pierrot hats for helmets as the war wears on. Medals and stripes can be attached with Velcro. The weaponry's a problem.'

'No weaponry, please,' said Myvanwy.

'We'll make it ourselves, but it must look real.'

'I suppose we'll play on a bare stage,' said John Bury, our designer.

'Sure . . . but we could use a couple of balconies, one above the prompt corner, the other O.P. They can take the coloured bulbs that light up for festive scenes.'

Essential to the play:

A large screen, flown in and out, behind the acting area, on which slides of photographs taken during that war were projected to counterpoint the words of the songs.

A newspanel which traversed the stage on which the names of battles appeared, followed by the number of those killed and wounded and the number of yards gained or lost.

The Pierrots, the screen and the newspanel must all be in the same field of vision. If either the newspanel or the screen is suspended elsewhere, at the side of the auditorium for example, the audience will simply not look at them.

The only furniture: four truncated cones used as seats.

And a few tips for the performers:

No 'put on' accents. If you can't use somebody else's easily, use your own but take great care with the pronunciation of French and German if you don't want to sound like Field-Marshall Sir John French! The actor playing the Drill Sergeant must invent his own language. That used by a real drill sergeant who came to put the actors through their paces, was too repetitively obscene for delicate ears.

Play in the present tense. Avoid declaiming. Cut emotion. Find the action in a speech. Throw out your ad libs after one usage. However good they were, there are plenty more where they came from. Don't slow down.

This new edition attempts to restore the life of the play to my memory of the first production at Stratford East in 1963. It cuts the excrescences that crept in after the original cast dispersed, revives the flattened dialogue, and clarifies the inadequate, sometimes misleading, stage directions. I wish you well with your production.

Joan Littlewood 2000

Oh What a Lovely War

Act One

OVERTURE

LONG LONG TRAIL.

LAND OF HOPE AND GLORY.

OH IT'S A LOVELY WAR.

MADemoisELLE FROM ARMENTIÈRES.

GOODBYE-EE.

LINE OF LAND OF HOPE AND GLORY.

LONG LONG TRAIL.

PACK UP YOUR TROUBLES.

LINE OF NATIONAL ANTHEM.

I DO LIKE TO BE BESIDE THE SEASIDE.

Newspanel SUMMER 1914. SCORCHING BANK HOLIDAY
FORECAST . . . GUNBOAT SMITH FOULS CARPENTIER IN SIXTH
ROUND . . . OPERA BLOSSOMS UNDER THOMAS BEECHAM.

*The company stroll on, in their own time, towards the end of the overture. They smile, wave at someone in the audience or just take their place, sit quietly and chat-among themselves. The **M.C.** enters, wearing a mortar board. He ad libs with the audience. When ready, he announces the opening number, 'Johnny Jones'.*

Band

ROW, ROW, ROW

*The mime to the song represents a day on the river. Two **Pierrots** hold a light blue drape across the stage about 6 inches high. On the intro, one of them runs across with one end. Another **Pierrot** takes a pole and punts across the stage. A fourth 'swims', balancing himself on a minute platform on wheels. The rest mime while they sing on the imaginary bank upstage:*

Song

ROW, ROW, ROW

Young Johnny Jones he had a cute little boat
And all the girlyies he would take for a float.
He had girlyies on the shore,
Sweet little peaches, by the score --
But master Johnny was a wise 'un, you know,

His steady girl was Flo
And every Sunday afternoon
She'd jump in his boat
And they would spoon.

Chorus And then he'd row, row, row,
Way up the river he would row, row, row,
A hug he'd give her
Then he'd kiss her now and then,
She would tell him when,
They'd fool around and fool around
And then they'd kiss again.
And then he'd row, row, row,
A little further he would row, oh, oh, oh, oh
Then he'd drop both his oars,
Take a few more encores,
And then he'd row, row, row.

(Repeat the chorus until...)

A little further he would row, oh, oh, oh, oh
Then we'll drop both our oars,
Take a round of applause,
And then we'll go, go, go.

M.C. Off and change! *(All except the M.C. go off. The M.C. picks up a ringmaster's whip. Keep this ad lib fresh.)* Good evening, all: seat for you here, darling. Any more? Right; close the doors. Welcome to our little pierrot show; 'The Merry Roosters'. We've got songs for you, a few battles and some jokes. I've got the whip to crack in case you don't laugh. *(To the Pierrots.)* Are you ready?

Pierrots No!

M.C. Good. Time for a joke. *(These two must be throwaways.)* Did you hear the one about the German Admiral Graf Von and his three daughters, Knit Von, Pearl Von, and Plain Von. You should have laughed at that; it was the best gag in the show. *[Or: I'm glad you laughed at that 'cos it's the worst gag in the show.]* Shall I tell you another one? There were these two Generals went

paddling, you see; they were down at Southend and in the water, when one General looked at the other General and said, 'Good God, Reggie, your feet are filthy!' 'Damn it all, man,' said the other General, 'I wasn't here last year...' You see he couldn't get the soap... Oh, never mind. You ready now?

Pierrots Yes!

M.C. Good. Milords, ladies and gentlemen, we will now perform for you the ever-popular War Game!

Band MARCH OF THE GLADIATORS

Circus Parade: it is led by a Pierrot, cartwheeling. France wears an officer's cap, a sexy woman either side of him; Germany, a helmet and leather belt; beside him, Austria, a girl with two yellow plaits hanging from her hat. Ireland leads the British group, wearing a green wrap-over skirt. She jigs along. Great Britain, wearing a sun helmet, rides on a man's back. A character in a turban holds a square, tasselled sunshade over them. Two Russians, wearing fur hats, dance along. This parade must keep moving and not stop to let the performers declaim.

Newspanel TROOPS FIRE ON DUBLIN CROWD — AUG 1.
BRITISH CABINET VOTE AGAINST HELPING FRANCE IF WAR
COMES — LIBERALS VOTE FOR NEUTRALITY UNDER ANY
CIRCUMSTANCES — GERMANY SENDS 40,000 RIFLES TO ULSTER.

M.C. *(as the nations pass)* La Belle France — Upright, steadfast Germany — Good morning, sir — The first part of the game is called 'Find the Thief'.

Band A PHRASE OF LAND OF HOPE AND GLORY

Britain Look here, we own 30 million square miles of colonies. The British Empire is the most magnificent example of working democracy the world has ever seen.

Voice Hear absolutely hear.

M.C. And the lady on my right.

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Band SI LE VIN EST BON

Frenchwoman La République.

Frenchman The seat of reason, the centre of world civilisation – culture, and l'amour.

M.C. They're at it again. Stop it. If they're not doing that, they're eating. How big's your acreage?

Frenchwoman Six million square kilometres.

M.C. And you?

Band A PHRASE OF DEUTSCHLAND ÜBER ALLES

Kaiser Germany – a mere three million square kilometres. But we are a new nation united only since 1871.

Frenchman When you stole Alsace-Lorraine.

Kaiser Ours, German.

M.C. Hey, we haven't started to play the game yet.

Kaiser We are a disciplined, moral, industrious people. We want more say in the world's affairs.

M.C. Have to keep an eye on you . . . (To the **Band**.)
Let's have the Russian Anthem.

Band A PHRASE OF RUSSIAN ANTHEM

Russia They're all Yids.

Newspanel CHURCHILL ORDERS FLEET TO SCAPA FLOW.

M.C. (to audience) The second part of the War Game. The Plans.

Band GERMAN MUSIC

Kaiser War is unthinkable. It is out of the question.

Frenchman It would upset the balance of power.

Britain It would mean the ruin of the world, undoubtedly.

Act One 5

Frenchman Besides, our alliances make us secure.

Kaiser But if you threaten us, then we have the supreme deterrent, which we will not hesitate to use . . .

M.C. Ssh.

The M.C. whistles. The stage darkens and the screen comes down. Everyone leaves but the Kaiser and Austria. General Moltke enters. Russia, France, and Britain listen as if hiding.

Slide 1: Map showing the Schlieffen plan of 1914 for an attack on Paris.

Moltke (with a pointer to the map) The German Army will win this battle by an envelopment with the right wing, and let the last man brush the Channel with his sleeve.

Kaiser Violate the neutrality of Belgium and the Netherlands?

Moltke World power or downfall. Liège twelve days after mobilisation M. Day, Brussels M.19, French frontier M.22, and we will enter Paris at 11.30 on the morning of M.39. I send all the best brains in the War College into the Railway Section.

Kaiser And the Russians?

Moltke They won't be ready till 1916.

M.C. (whistles) Time's up.

Band SI LE VIN EST BON

Slide 2: Map showing the French 'Plan 17' of 1914 for a French offensive.

Frenchman France admits no law but the offensive. Advance with all forces to attack the German Army. France, her bugles sounding, her soldiers armed for glory, her will to conquer. An idea and a sword. Besides, they will attack Russia first.

Slide 3: Russian infantry marching with rifles.

1st Russian The Russian steam roller. We have a million and a half bayonets. Better than bullets any day. Once in motion, we go rolling forward inex - (*He luccups.*)

M.C. Inexorably! The bar's open. Go and have a vodka.

M.C. *blows bo'sun's pipe.*

Slide 4: A British battleship berthed at a pier.

Band A PHRASE OF THE SONS OF THE SEAS

British Admiral Well done. In the event of a war, the Royal Navy will keep more than a million Germans busy. We shall disembark on a ten-mile strip of hard sand on the northern shores of Prussia and draw off more than our weight of numbers from the fighting line. The overwhelming supremacy of the British Navy is the only thing to keep the Germans out of Paris.

M.C. Hear, hear.

British General On a point of order, sir, your plans appear to have little in common with those of the Army.

British Admiral Look here, you soldiers are a pretty grotesque lot with your absurd ideas about war. Happily you are powerless. We could go right ahead and leave you to go fooling around the Vosges. Have you got a plan?

British General Of course.

Slide 5: A blank.

British Admiral Yes, I thought so.

The Company intone the words: 'Peace in our time O Lord.'

M.C. *blows whistle.*

M.C. Any questions so far? Got all the plans off? Good. Can't help you any more. I want to watch the next scene.

Newspanel SARAJEVO.

Band SMETANA: RICHARD III

M.C. Lovely music, Smetana.

The music is the gentle phrase to go with the mood of a sunny afternoon promenade in the park at Sarajevo. The ladies look pretty in hats, gloves and sunshades with soft colours added to their Pierrot costume. A tiny dog is being walked by his mistress, he wears a rather large bow. Army officers salute the ladies en passant. A junior one is ousted by his senior. One wears a straw boater with a pale blue ribbon but he cuts no ice at all. A pistol shot and a roll of thunder break the atmosphere. Everybody runs for cover. A beer stall with a small portrait of the Archduke Ferdinand hanging on it is pushed on by a street vendor. Two drinkers keep up with the stall. They are in fact secret policemen in plain clothes.

Serbian Secret Policeman Ein dunkles Bier, bitte.

Austro-Hungarian Secret Policeman Did you hear anything?

Serbian You mean that shot?

Austro-Hungarian Ja.

Serbian No, I heard nothing.

Austro-Hungarian I'll have a Bier, please.

Serbian Lovely weather we're having.

Austro-Hungarian Ja, ja, very good.

Serbian You say somebody shot somebody?

Austro-Hungarian Ja, ja, the Archduke Ferdinand, the fat one.

Serbian No.

Austro-Hungarian Ja.

Serbian Who did he shoot?

Austro-Hungarian No, he was shot.

Serbian Do they know who did it?

Austro-Hungarian That is the question.

The Stallholder takes down the picture of the Archduke.

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He was driving a motor car.

Serbian Very dangerous things, motor cars.

Austro-Hungarian With the Archduchess.

Serbian Big fat Sophie.

The Austro-Hungarian starts taking notes.

Austro-Hungarian Ja, big fat Sophie. With a revolver.

Serbian Should have used a pistol. A Browning automatic. With a Browning automatic you can shoot twenty archdukes.

Austro-Hungarian Do you know who did it? (*To Stallholder.*) Do you know who did it?

Stallholder No. I never meddle in politics.

Austro-Hungarian Then what have you done with the Archduke Ferdinand's portrait?

Stallholder I had to take it down. The flies shit all over it.

Serbian I will tell you exactly who did it.

Austro-Hungarian Yes?

Serbian It was either a Catholic, a Protestant, a Jew, or a Serb, or a Croat, or a young Czech Liberal, or an Anarchist, or a Syndicalist. In any case it means war.

Austro-Hungarian You think so?

Serbian Of course. 'Bong!', says Austria, 'Shoot my nephew, would you? There's one in the schmackers for you.' Then in comes Kaiser Willie to help Austria, in comes Russia to help Serbia, and in comes France because they hated Germany since 1871.

Austro-Hungarian (*writing on a pad*) '... because they hated Germany since 1871.' Very good, thank you. Would you sign this please?

Serbian (*signing*) This war has been coming for a long time.

Act One 9

Austro-Hungarian Ja, I am glad you think so. Step out on to the pavement. I am a member of the Austro-Hungarian Secret Police.

Serbian And I am a member of the Serbian Secret Police.

Austro-Hungarian Ah! We liquidated you yesterday -- I arrest you for high treason.

Serbian What about him?

Austro-Hungarian Good idea. We arrest you.

Stallholder But I've said nothing!

Austro-Hungarian You said the flies could scheister on the Kaiser. Left, right, left, right ... (*As they move off.*)

Serbian This means war.

Band TWELFTH STREET RAG

All three go off. The music is fast and excited. People's hearts are beating. Two Newsboys run across the stage.

First Newsboy Special! Austria declares war on Serbia!

Second Newsboy Extra! Russia mobilises! Russia mobilises!

Two Girls cross the stage pushing a tandem bicycle.

First Girl Russia mobilises?

Second Girl Ja, and Papa says France must stand by Russia.

First Girl Oh! Is that good?

Two German Businessmen pass with bowler hats and dispatch-cases.

First Businessman I understand that we have ordered Russia to demobilise within twelve hours. The point is, will France remain neutral?

Blimey! We're off! They've crossed into Belgium an' all!

Explosion. The lights go out. Full stage lighting flashes on. The whole Company is standing in a semicircle grinning and clapping wildly but soundlessly. The band plays a line of the National Anthem. All the Pierrots stand to attention.

M.C. (*quietly and seriously*) Will the lady in the second row kindly remove that dachshund.

The Pierrots move to go off. The Band plays a line of 'The Marseillaise'. They move to go off again. The Band plays a line of the Belgian Anthem (two-thirds through). Nobody knows it. They turn to watch the newspanel.

Newspanel AUG 4 BRITAIN DECLARES WAR ON GERMANY.

The M.C. blows a whistle. The screen comes down.

M.C. Well, that's the end of Part One of the War Game.

The Band plays a chorus of 'Your King and Country', during which the Pierrots go off one by one, as slides of the coming of war in different countries are shown, ending up with the Kitchener poster.

Slide sequence:

Slide 5: British civilian volunteers, marching in column of fours from recruiting office.

Slide 6: Street parade of civilians led by young boys, one with Union Jack and another playing the bagpipes.

Slide 7: Crowd of German civilians cheering a military parade.

Slide 8: Another parade of British civilians being led by young boys, one with Union Jack, another playing a drum.

Slide 9: Young British girls dancing in the streets.

Slide 10: Crowd of British volunteers outside a recruiting office.

Slide 11: Eton schoolboys marching with rifles at the slope.

Slide 12: Poster of Kitchener pointing, with caption 'Your Country Needs You'.

The Girls sing.

Song YOUR KING AND COUNTRY

We've watched you playing cricket
And every kind of game.

At football, golf and polo,
You men have made your name.
But now your country calls you
To play your part in war,
And no matter what befalls you,
We shall love you all the more.
So come and join the forces
As your fathers did before.

Oh, we don't want to lose you but we think you ought
to go

For your king and your country both need you so.

We shall want you and miss you but with all our might
and main,

We shall cheer you, thank you, kiss you,
When you come back again.

The Band plays a half-chorus of the song. Mime tableau showing Belgium kneeling and Germany threatening with bayonet. Austria, the girl in plaits, is lost, pleading in between.

M.C. Gallant little Belgium.

The chorus is repeated during which there is a mime of recruiting. The Men hand in their Pierrot hats and kiss the Girls goodbye, marching off behind the screen.

They re-emerge wearing uniform caps and marching off saluting.

Newspanel COURAGE WILL BRING US VICTORY.

Band CAVALRY CHARGE MUSIC

Six Men, wearing the capes and caps of the French cavalry enter upstage, riding imaginary horses.

Standard-Bearer Bonjour, mes amis.

French Soldier Bonjour, mon capitaine.

Standard-Bearer Il fait beau pour la chasse . . . Vive la République!

French Officer En avant!

They gallop downstage. There is a sound of gunfire: an ambush. They retreat.

Standard-Bearer Maintenant mes amis!

French Soldier Ah oui.

Standard-Bearer Pour la gloire.

French Officer Charge!

Band PART OF THE MARSEILLAISE

*The cavalry charge. There is a sound of machine-gun fire and whinnying horses. The **Men** are killed and collapse. They hold their poses, standing, sitting or lying while a **Girl** enters, wearing a braided military style jacket and a shako. She sings briskly and triumphantly.*

Newspanel GERMANS HELD AT LIÈGE . . . LONDON WILD WITH JOY.

Band WHEN BELGIUM PUT THE KIBOSH ON THE KAISER

A silly German sausage
Dreamt Napoleon he'd be,
Then he went and broke his promise,
It was made in Germany.
He shook hands with Britannia
And eternal peace he swore,
Naughty boy, he talked of peace
While he prepared for war.
He stirred up little Serbia
To serve his dirty trick
But naughty nights at Liège
Quite upset this Dirty Dick.
His luggage labelled 'England'
And his programme nicely set,
He shouted 'First stop Paris',
But he hasn't got there yet.

For Belgium put the kibosh on the Kaiser;
Europe took a stick and made him sore;
On his throne it hurts to sit,
And when John Bull starts to hit,

He will never sit upon it any more.

His warships sailed upon the sea,
They looked a pretty sight
But when they heard the bulldog bark
They disappeared from sight.
The Kaiser said 'Be careful,
If by Jellicoe they're seen,
Then every man-of-war I've got
Will be a submarine'.
We chased his ships to Turkey,
And the Kaiser startled stood,
Scratch'd his head and said 'Don't hurt,
You see I'm touching wood';
Then Turkey brought her warships
Just to aid the German plot,
Be careful, Mr Turkey,
Or you'll do the Turkey Trot.

Belgium put the kibosh on the Kaiser;
Europe took a stick and made him sore;
And if Turkey makes a stand
She'll get gurkha'd and japanned,
And it won't be Hoch the Kaiser any more.

He'll have to go to school again
And learn his geography,
He quite forgot Britannia
And the hands across the sea,
Australia and Canada,
The Russian and the Jap,
And England looked so small
He couldn't see her on the map.
Whilst Ireland seemed unsettled,
'Ah' said he 'I'll settle John',
But he didn't know the Irish
Like he knew them later on.
Though the Kaiser stirred the lion,
Please excuse him from the crime,
His lunatic attendant
Wasn't with him at the time.

The cavalry rise and join in. All sing:

Belgium put the kibosh on the Kaiser;
Europe took a stick and made him sore;
We shall shout with victory's joy,
Hold your hand out, naughty boy,
You must never play at soldiers any more.

For Belgium put the kibosh on the Kaiser;
Europe took a stick and made him sore;
On his throne it hurts to sit,
And when John Bull starts to hit,
He will never sit upon it any more.

*All go off, except for one **French Officer** who sits on stage writing a letter.*

Newspanel BRUSSELS FALLS.

French Officer (*with quiet sincerity*) The battlefield is unbelievable; heaps of corpses, French and German, lying everywhere, rifles in hand. Thousands of dead lying in rows on top of each other in an ascending arc from the horizontal to an angle of sixty degrees. The guns recoil at each shot; night is falling and they look like old men sticking out their tongues and spitting fire. The rain has started, shells are bursting and screaming; artillery fire is the worst. I lay all night listening to the wounded groaning. The cannonading goes on; whenever it stops we hear the wounded crying from all over the woods. Two or three men go mad every day.

*The **French Officer** goes off. A **German Officer** is discovered on the opposite side of the stage, reading a letter.*

German Officer Nothing more terrible could be imagined; we advanced much too fast. The men are desperately tired. I feel great pity for many of the civilian population, who have lost everything, but they hate us. One of them fired at us; he was immediately taken out and shot. Yesterday we were ordered to attack the enemy flank in a forest of beeches, but the enemy gunners saw us and opened fire; the men were done for, the shells fell like hail.

*He goes off. **Pierrots** in army caps march on, accompanied by the **Girl** who sang 'Kibosh', still wearing her braided jacket and shako. She conducts them as they sing.*

Song ARE WE DOWNHEARTED?

Are we downhearted? No.
Then let your voices ring and all together sing
Are we downhearted? No.
Not while Britannia rules the waves, not likely;
While we've Jack upon the sea, and Tommy on the land
we needn't fret.
It's a long, long way to Tipperary, but we're not
downhearted yet.

She turns towards the audience to sing.

Song HOLD YOUR HAND OUT, NAUGHTY BOY

Hold your hand out, naughty boy.
Hold your hand out, naughty boy.
Last night, in the pale moonlight,
I saw you, I saw you;
With a nice girl in the park,
You were strolling full of joy,
And you told her you'd never kissed a girl before:
Hold your hand out, naughty boy.

*As this song begins, four young couples enter from the four corners of the stage. The **Girls** have pretty bits, a flower in the hair, pretty gloves, a posy at the wrist. One has a sunshade. Three of the **Young Men** wear straw boaters, two carry canes, one is bareheaded but he has a black and white umbrella. They stroll about and choose a moment to kiss their partner, hiding their faces behind their hats. The bareheaded one merely blows a kiss.*

Band FEW BARS OF SMASH-UP RAG

*The change of tempo brings on the **Drill Sergeant** and scatters the **Pierrots** in army caps. The **'Kibosh Girl'** waves at the **Drill Sergeant**, blows a kiss and goes.*

*The **Drill Sergeant** wears a Sergeant Major's cap and belt and has his trousers tucked into his socks. He carries a short stick. His*

number must be played in meaningful gibberish. He shouts at the four **Young Men** from the previous number 'ifle d'ill'. They don't understand. He curses unintelligibly and repeats 'ifle d'ill'.

The nearest **Young Man** carrying a cane says, 'We've no rifles.' This irritates the **Drill Sergeant** who indicates that in the army you use anything you can find. As he talks, he snatches the **Young Man's** cane, tries to bend it and throws it back.

1. He summons the **Young Men**. Two come with walking canes, one with a sunshade and the bareheaded one has his umbrella.

2. The **Drill Sergeant** has them at attention in a straight line, explains the rifle, shows them how to carry it, over one shoulder; corrects their stance, is especially hard on the bareheaded one with the umbrella.

3. Fix bayonets! He illustrates. It means holding the rifle between their thighs and fixing the imaginary bayonet. The **Umbrella One** fumbles, exciting the **Drill Sergeant** to more vituperation. Is he a sissy? Where does he come from? Does he have a family?

4. The lunge section: lunging and parrying to the left, to the right. More abuse. And do they know who the enemy is?

5. He creates as much hatred as he can. Maybe he's f—d your mother, your sister and your brother Go for his '—'. Ruin his chances. And he shows them how to lunge.

6. The Charge! They try. He is in despair. Tragic, he says. And exhorts them once more in the wildest of gibberish. **ONCE MORE!** he cries and they charge with some ferocity. The **Umbrella one**, now quite worked up, leaps into the audience and chases a **Programme Girl**, who screams for help.

7. The **Drill Sergeant** recalls the **Umbrella One**, dubs him sex-mechanic and touches his cap to the **Programme Girl**. 'Sorry, miss.' Then he turns on his recruits. 'Into line. Quick march. Left, Right. Left, Right.' And he marches them off. As they march off a **Girl Singer** enters. She sings, not with today's frank sexuality, but with the seductive splendour of the period. During the song the following slides are projected, at the points indicated by numbers in the text:



But on Saturday I'm willing, if you'll only take the shilling,
To make a man of any one of you!



Ruin his chances!



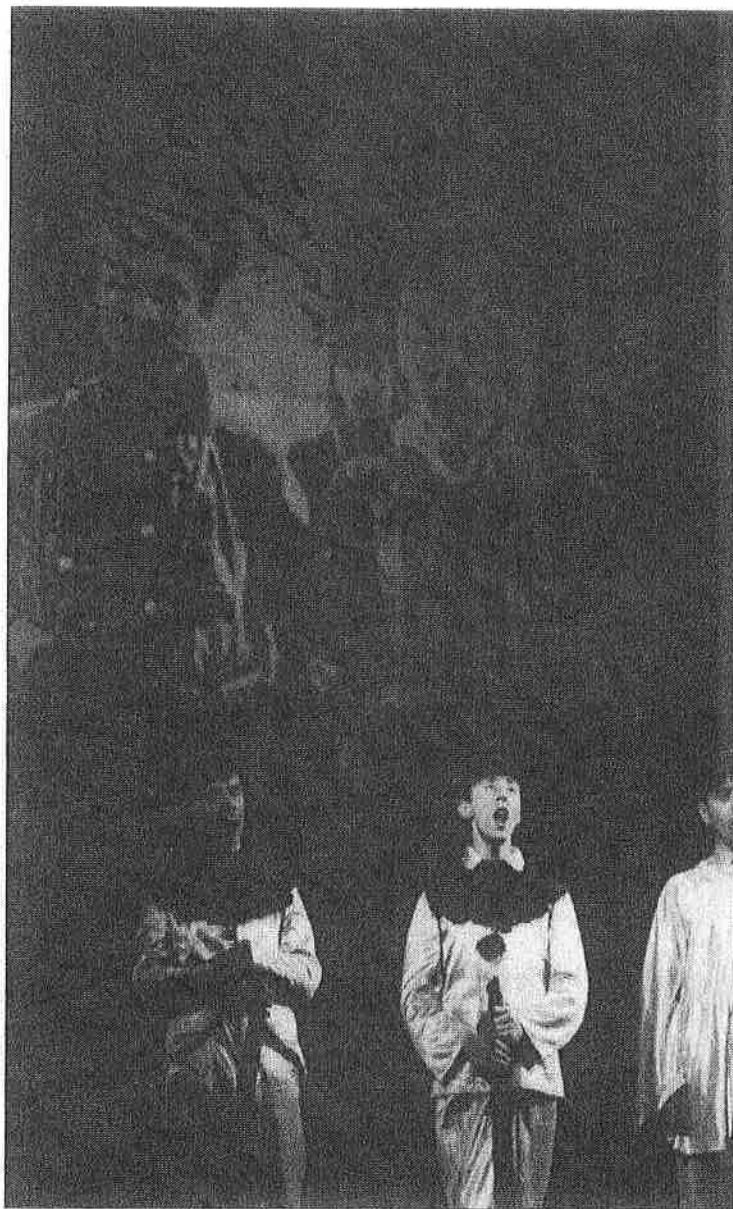
We want more say in the world's affairs



We don't want to lose you



Pack up your troubles in your old kit bag,
And smile, smile, smile...



And when they ask us, and they're certainly going to ask us,
The reason why we didn't win the Croix de Guerre,
Oh, we'll never tell them, oh, we'll never tell them
There was a front, but damned if we knew where!

Slide 13: 1914 poster - 'Women of Britain say - "GO",'

Slide 14: 1914 poster - 'Everyone should do his bit - Enlist now' - depicting a Boy Scout in uniform.

Slide 15: 1914 poster - 'Which? Have you a REASON - or only an EXCUSE - for not enlisting NOW?'

Slide 16: 1914 poster - 'Stand not upon the order of your going but go at once' - Shakespeare - Macbeth 3.4. Enlist now.'

Slide 17: Poster - 'Who's absent? Is it YOU?' - depicting a line of soldiers with John Bull in the foreground pointing accusingly à la Kitchener.

Song

I'LL MAKE A MAN OF YOU

The Army and the Navy need attention, [13]
The outlook isn't healthy you'll admit,
But I've got a perfect dream of a new recruiting scheme,
Which I think is absolutely it.
If only other girls would do as I do
I believe that we could manage it alone,
For I turn all suitors from me but the sailor and the
Tommy,

I've an army and a navy of my own.

On Sunday I walk out with a Soldier,
On Monday I'm taken by a Tar,
On Tuesday I'm out with a baby Boy Scout, [14]
On Wednesday a Hussar;
On Thursday I gang oot wi' a Scottie,
On Friday, the Captain of the crew;
But on Saturday I'm willing, if you'll only take the
shilling,

To make a man of any one of you. [15]

I teach the tenderfoot to face the powder,
That gives an added lustre to my skin,
And I show the raw recruit how to give a chaste salute,
So when I'm presenting arms he's falling in.
It makes you almost proud to be a woman.
When you make a strapping soldier of a kid.
And he says 'You put me through it and I didn't want to
do it

But you went and made me love you so I did.' [16]

Four Girls enter, two from each side, and join in. They wear revealing sexy costumes and military headgear.

On Sunday I walk out with a Bo'sun,
On Monday a Rifleman in green,
On Tuesday I choose a 'sub' in the 'Blues',
On Wednesday a Marine;
On Thursday a Terrier from Tooting,
On Friday a Midshipman or two,
But on Saturday I'm willing, if you'll only take the
shilling,
To make a man of any one of you.

The Band repeat the chorus.

Singer Come on, boys; we need a million.

First Girl A million.

Singer Be a man; enlist today.

Second Girl Enlist today.

Singer Have you a man digging your garden, when he should be digging trenches?

Third Girl He should be digging trenches.

Singer Have we any able-bodied men in the house?

Fourth Girl Any able-bodied men?

Singer (*picking up the last line of the chorus*) ... But on Saturday I'm willing, if you'll only take the shilling,
To make a man of any one of you.[17]

All go off.

An Army Driver sets four cones to represent a car, upstage right. He salutes as Field-Marshal Sir John French, his Aide and Field-Marshal Sir Henry Wilson take their places and sit in the 'car'. The Driver starts it up. The sound of the car running and lurching accompanies the scene.

Newspanel THE ALLIES CONFERENCE.

French Right driver ... (*They all bump up and down in their*

seats.) Steady on there! One must always remember the class of people these French (*Another bump.*) these French generals come from ...

Aide Yes, sir.

French Mostly tradesmen. Shan't understand a damn' word they say.

Aide With regard to that, sir, do you think I ought to organize an (*Another bump.*) an interpreter?

French Don't be ridiculous, Wilson; the essential problem at the moment is (*Another bump.*) is the utmost secrecy.

The car continues to run quietly, the light on it lowered. General Lanrezac, his Aide and the Belgian General de Moranneville enter downstage left. Moranneville's country, Belgium, is already lost.

Lanrezac (*spreading his arms in a gesture of despair*) Personnel! (*He strides up and down.*) Où se trouvent les Anglais? ... Pour l'amour de Dieu, où sont-ils?

Moranneville Your turn to wait now, mon général.

Lanrezac (*to his Aide*) Qu'est-ce qu'il dit, le Belge?

French Aide Ce sont les Anglais que nous avons attendu longtemps.

Moranneville Belgium has had her share of waiting -- when we held out at Liège hoping for the promised help -- that never came.

Lanrezac En français, s'il vous plaît, monsieur. L'anglais je ne comprends pas.

Moranneville (*shrugging his shoulders*) Ça m'est égal!

He walks off contemptuously, leaving the other two to pace up and down. Lights up on the car.

Wilson I've actually worked out the number of carriages we'll need for the first stage, sir, and even the quantity of forage for the horses; wouldn't care to see the figures, would you?

French No, no. (*They all lurch.*) Not just now, thank you.

Wilson I thought that . . . considering the terrain . . .

French Yes, yes, we all know about your bicycle rides round France, Wilson.

The car pulls up. They all lurch forward and back, then dismount.

Wilson (*moving forward enthusiastically*) Mon cher Lanrezac. (*They clutch hands, almost embrace.*) Splendid! Splendide de vous revoir.

Lanrezac Enchanté, mon général.

Wilson May I present Field-Marshal Sir John French, Commander-in-Chief of the British Expeditionary Force?

Lanrezac Bienvenu, monsieur.

French How do you do, sir?

Lanrezac Je vous présente le Général de Moranneville, Commandeur des Forces Belges.

French Belgian? (**Wilson** *nods.*) Splendid! Gallant little Belgium, what?

Lanrezac Oui, mais malheureusement, comme d'habitude, vous êtes en retard. Vous avez l'heure?

French What?

French Aide You are 'ere, mon général, and not a moment too soon.

French Dammit all, we came here as quickly as we could. You have damn' bad roads in France.

Lanrezac Intéressant! Roads? Roads, 'e say? Ah oui, c'est la route maintenant! Que des excuses, toujours des excuses! Et si c'est la fin! Si la France est perdu, c'est à cause de vous. Oui! Dieu sait où vous étiez –

French Aide God knows where you have been. If France should be lost . . .

Lanrezac Continuez, continuez.

French Aide We owe it to you.

French Dammit all! We're under no obligation.

Lanrezac (*to his Aide*) Tu as traduit tout ce que j'ai dit?

French Aide Oui, mon général, mot à mot.

Lanrezac (*angrily*) Je suis à bout de patience. J'en ai assez. J'en ai assez.

French Aide Je m'excuse, mon général.

Lanrezac Tais toi!

He repeats himself angrily.

Wilson (*to French*) I say sir, don't you think we need a translator?

French Certainly not, Wilson. I can handle this perfectly on my own! (*To Lanrezac.*) Mon général, promenade s'il vous plaît.

Lanrezac (*snorts*) Ah! On parle français maintenant.

French Bit of an 'accent' (*French pronunciation.*), I'm afraid.

Lanrezac Pas du tout, pas du tout.

French Eh? (*He sees the French Aide looking at a map.*) Excusez-moi, s'il vous plaît. (*He beckons the Aide to give him the map.*) Merci. Thank you! (*To Lanrezac.*) Mon général, les Allemands . . .

Lanrezac Oui, les Allemands. Je vous écoute, mon général.

French Of course! Yes! Bien sûr. Les Allemands traversent – (*Aside to Wilson.*) What's 'cross the river', Wilson?

Wilson Traverser le fleuve.

French Of course! (*To Lanrezac.*) Traversent le fleuve . . . ici . . . ahoy, à Hoy.

Lanrezac Je ne comprends pas. O-ie? O-ie?

French That's it! Ici. Ahoy.

Lanrezac Non, non, non, non! À Huy.

French Ahoy.

Lanrezac Huy! Ache. U. Ygrec.

French (*turns to Wilson, lost*) What? Eh? What, what, what?

Wilson (*studying the map*) Les Allemands traversent le fleuve à Huy, n'est-ce pas?

Lanrezac Oui! Mais peut-être pour aller à la pêche.

French Aide Perchance they will go fishing . . .

French (*laughing*) Most amusin'.

Wilson I think he means to say that the Germans will probably cross the river here, at the bridge.

French Of course, yes, of course. Plain as the nose on your face. Très bon, très bon! In that case, gentlemen, we will hold one division, une division, guarding the bridge – le pont – là; and another division will be held in reserve, by the clump of trees, le clump des arbres, là, and the French cavalry will govern the sector from there to there! Là à là.

Lanrezac Ah! Très bien! La cavalerie française doit porter le fardeau, comme d'habitude! Non! Ce n'est pas possible. Je n'accepte pas! Vous êtes en guerre, monsieur? Les Anglais sont en guerre, non?

French Yes! Oui! But we only have four divisions, my dear sir, not the six promised by Kitchener. The English cavalry must be kept in reserve.

Lanrezac Et le B.E.F.? Où se trouve le B.E.F.?

He walks off.

French Aide When may we expect the B.E.F. to come

into action, monsieur?

Lanrezac (*returning*) Le B.E.F., mon général! Le Breeteesh Expedeeshonaire Force!

French All in good time, old chap, all in good time.

Lanrezac Mais quand?

French Soon as possible . . . the twenty-fourth!

French Aide Le vingt-quatre, mon général.

Lanrezac Et les Allemands? Ils vont attendre jusqu'au moment où le dernier bouton est trouvé? Bah!

He waves his arms angrily.

French Dammit all, Wilson! This is no way to conduct a conference.

Wilson No sir, sorry sir.

French We're not here under any obligation.

Moranneville May I remind both gentlemen that my country has already fallen. So far, to help us, we have received a visit from one staff officer – to observe. Decisive action by Britain – and France – while my troops were holding Liège, and the war would have been over by now. Adieu, gentlemen.

He goes.

French Whatever our chaps can do, they will do! Which reminds me. Mon général, I have been entrusted by His Majesty, the King, to award you this medal. (*His Aide brings out a little box and opens it. French takes the medal and pins it on beside the array Lanrezac wears already. Lanrezac kisses French on both cheeks to the latter's embarrassment. French salutes.*) Vive la France!

Lanrezac and his Aide salute and go. Four young **French Girls**, bringing flowers, come running on. They give the flowers to **French and Wilson**, then hug and kiss the **Driver**.

Girls Bienvenus, les Anglais.

Band

MADEMOISELLE FROM ARMENTIÈRES

Wilson and French go. **The Driver** dances off with the **Girls**.

Newspanel AUG 25 RETREAT FROM MONS. AUG 30 FIRST BRITISH WOUNDED ARRIVE AT WATERLOO.

Two Women enter. The first wears a short, black shawl and carries a basket of violets, a single bunch in her spare hand. The second wears a man's cap and carries a bundle of newspapers.

First Woman Lovely violets . . .

Second Woman *Star, News, Standard* . . . First wounded arrive at Waterloo . . . Read all about it.

First Woman Lovely violets . . .

Second Woman *Star, News, Standard* . . . First wounded arrive from France.

A Sergeant and wounded Soldiers come on.

Sergeant Come on then, let's have you. Get yourself fell in. Mind your crutch . . . get moving.

First Soldier No flags, sarg?

Sergeant No.

First Soldier Waterloo, boys, can you smell it?

Sergeant Get yourselves in a straight line. (**Officers and Nurse enter.**) Eyes front.

First Soldier They can't do that, can they, sarg? They haven't got any.

First Officer Thank you, sergeant, carry on.

A Corporal enters.

Sergeant Yes, corporal?

Corporal Ambulances are ready, sarg. Officers only.

Sergeant What about the other ranks?

Corporal No arrangements made for them at the moment.

Sergeant All right, carry on, corporal. (*Exit Corporal. To Officers.*) Excuse me, sir, if you care to step this way we have transport laid on for you.

First Officer Nearly home, George. Thank you, sergeant.

Second Soldier Sir, sir, Higgins, sir, B Company.

First Officer Hallo, Higgins.

Second Soldier Better than up the old Salient, eh, sir?

First Officer Indeed yes, good journey home?

Second Soldier Yes, thank you, sir.

First Officer Chin up then. See you back at the front. (*Exit.*)

Second Soldier Yes, sir.

First Soldier (*to the Nurse, who has been talking to the Second Officer and is helping him off.*) You're wasting your time with him, darling, it's in splints.

Sergeant That's enough out of you.

Second Soldier What about us then, sarg?

Sergeant I'm waiting further orders.

The Soldiers begin softly singing 'WE'RE 'ERE BECAUSE WE'RE 'ERE', getting louder.

We're 'ere because we're 'ere, because we're 'ere, because we're 'ere,

We're 'ere because we're 'ere, because we're 'ere, because we're 'ere --

Sergeant All right, cut it out.

George What about a train back then, sarg.

Sergeant You'll get that soon enough.

Corporal *enters.*

First Soldier Mafeking's been relieved, sarg.

Sergeant All right – corporal.

Corporal All arranged, sarg. Some lorry drivers outside have volunteered to take the men to Millbank Hospital in their dinner hour.

Sergeant Thank you, corporal, carry on . . . All right, men, get yourself fell in. We've got transport laid on for you. Come on now, pick 'em up, keep smiling, you're out of the war now.

Nurse (*to Stretcher Case*) Don't worry, we'll have you back in the firing line within a week.

Wounded Soldiers (*singing as they march off*)

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. . . .

Newspanel 300,000 ALLIED CASUALTIES DURING AUGUST.

They begin to move off, the Sergeant and Corporal last of all. A Girl Singer enters, a tray slung from her neck.

Girl Chocolates, vanilla ices, bonbons. (*She offers the chocolate to the Sergeant, who declines as he moves off.*)

Slide 18 is projected and the following sequence during the song:

Slide 18: Poster – 'Carter's Little Liver Pills – for Active Service. For the Keen Eye of Perfect Health. Biliousness, Torpid Liver and Constipation.' Depicting a recruit stripped to the waist being examined by a Doctor.

Slide 19: Advertisement – 'PHOSFERINE The Greatest of All Tonics, Royalty Use Phosferine as a Liver Tonic, Blood Enricher, Nerve Strengtheners.'

Slide 20: Advertisement – 'Beware of umbrellas made on German frames. When you Buy an Umbrella Insist on Having a Fox's frame. Entirely British made. Look for

these Marks. S. FOX & CO. LIMITED. PARAGON.' Slide 21: Advertisement – 'IF YOU ARE RUN DOWN, TAKE BEECHAM'S PILLS.' Depicting a cyclist, who has just been run down by another cyclist.

Girl Next week at this theatre, a special double bill: the great American comedy Teddy Get Your Gun and He Didn't Want to Do It, featuring What a Funk, the conchie. Chocolates, vanilla ices, bonbons. (*Enter Male Dancer with sheet music.*) Have you got your copy of Gwendoline Brogden's latest hit – complete with pianoforte and banjo parts included –

Song

HITCHY-KOO

Oh! Every evening hear him sing,
It's the cutest little thing,
With the cutest little swing,
Hitchy-koo, Hitchy-koo. [19]

Oh, simply meant for Kings and Queens,
Don't you ask me what it means,
I just love that Hitchy-koo,
Hitchy-koo, Hitchy-koo.

Say he does it just like no-one could,
When he does it say he does it good,
Oh, every evening hear him sing
It's the cutest little thing
With the cutest little swing,
Hitchy-koo, Hitchy-koo. [20]

Band *verse: Dance routine* [21].

Say he does it just like no-one could
When he does it say he does it good.
Oh, every evening hear him sing,
It's the cutest little thing,
With the cutest little swing,
Hitchy-koo, Hitch-koo, Hitchy-koo. . . .

As the Singer and Partner go off, six British Soldiers come on, whistling and humming 'Hitchy-koo'. They set up signs

reading 'Piccadilly' (a fingerpost), 'Conducted tours of the German trenches', 'Apply to G.H.Q. 20 miles to the rear'. They settle within the area of the trench marked off by the signs, playing cards, writing, playing a mouth organ, etc.

Newspanel TRENCH WARFARE BEGINS . . . THE FIRST WINTER.

First Soldier Want a game?

Second Soldier Yeah.

First Soldier 'Ere you are, you're banker.

The Soldier with the mouth organ plays 'Clementine'.

Third Soldier Oi!

Fourth Soldier What's 'e doin'?

Third Soldier Writin' to 'is lady love.

Second Soldier Blimey! Not agin.

Third Soldier Third volume. My dearest, I waited for you two hours last night at 'Ellfire Corner, but you didn't turn up. Can it be that you no longer love me? Signed – Harry Hotlips.

Second Soldier What's she like?

Fourth Soldier Lovely.

Third Soldier S'right. Only she's got a nose like a five-inch shell.

Fourth Soldier Shut up, can't yer? I'm tryin' to concentrate.

Fifth Soldier You writin' for that paper agin?

Fourth Soldier Yeah, they don't seem to realise they're in at the birth of the Wipers Gazette. 'Ere, d'you want to 'ear what I've written?

Second Soldier No.

Fourth Soldier (to Fifth) Do you want to 'ear it?

Fifth Soldier Yeah, go on.

Fourth Soldier The Wipers Gazette. Agony column. Do you believe good news in preference to bad? Do you think the war will be over by spring-time? Have you got faith in our generals? If the answers to any of these questions is yes, then you are sufferin' from that dread disease, Optimism, and should take seven days' leave immediately.

First Soldier Wish you'd take ten.

Fifth Soldier Not a bad idea that paper.

Second Soldier No, you want to get it framed.

Fifth Soldier Yeah, put one in for me. Now the winter nights are drawin' in, wanted, cure for trench feet, corns, gripes . . .

First Soldier Black or white?

Fifth Soldier . . . chilblains and 'ow about some letters an' all – put that in.

Third Soldier How about some Christmas parcels – put that in!

First Soldier What's up with you, got company?

Sixth Soldier Yeah. (To his mates.) Last time I went down to that delousin' station, they only shoved a hot iron over my trousers, came out with more than I went in with.

Sound of distant bombardment.

Fifth Soldier Ssh. Listen.

Third Soldier Yeah. They're coppin' it down Railway Wood tonight.

Sixth Soldier That's Hill Sixty.

Fifth Soldier No, not that. Listen.

A German Soldier is heard singing. He should not be in the wings but at a distance consistent with the width of no man's land. The English and Germans calling to each other must suggest this distance.

Song

HEILIGE NACHT

Stille Nacht, heilige Nacht
 Alles schläft, einsam wacht,
 Nur das traute, hochheilige Paar.
 Holder Knabe im lockigen Haar,
 Schlaf in himmlischer Ruh'
 Schlaf in himmlischer Ruh'.

Second Soldier (*as the German sings*) What is it?

Fifth Soldier Singin'.

Third Soldier It's those Welsh bastards in the next trench.

Fifth Soldier No! That's Jerry.

First Soldier It's an 'ymn.

Sixth Soldier No – it's a carol.

Second Soldier Wouldn't 'ave thought they 'ad 'em.

Third Soldier It's Jerry all right, it's comin' from over there.

Fourth Soldier Sings well for a bastard, don't 'e?

First Soldier Sing up Jerry, let's 'ear yer!

Fifth Soldier Put a sock in it! Listen.

They listen as 'Heilige Nacht' finishes.

Second Soldier Nice, wasn't it? Good on yer, mate!

German Soldier Hallo, Tommy! . . . Hallo Tommy!

Fourth Soldier 'E 'eard yer.

Second Soldier 'Allo!

German Soldier Wie geht's?

First Soldier Eh?

German Soldier How are you? I am very well senk you, good night.

First Soldier Another day gone!

German Soldier Hey, Tommy. How is it vis you?

English Soldiers Lovely! Very good! Very well, thank you.

Third Soldier Guten singin', Jerry!

Second Soldier Got any more?

German Soldier Fröhliche Weihnachten!

English Soldiers Eh?

German Soldier Good – Happy Christmas!

Second Soldier Happy Christmas!

First Soldier Hey! It's Christmas!

Fourth Soldier No. Tomorrow.

Second Soldier (*to First Soldier*) What about openin' your parcel?

First Soldier I forgot it was Christmas.

German Soldier Hallo Tommy!

English Soldiers Yeah?

German Soldier It is for you now to sing us a good song for Christmas, ja?

English Soldiers Oh, ja!

Third Soldier Let's give 'em one.

Second Soldier Go on, then!

Third Soldier I can't sing.

First Soldier We know that.

Fourth Soldier Well, who's goin' to sing it?

Third Soldier (*to First Soldier*) Give them that one of your'n.

First Soldier What – Cook'ouse?

English Soldiers Yeah!!

First Soldier All right, Jerry, get down in your dugout – it's comin' over!

He sings.

Song CHRISTMAS DAY IN THE COOKHOUSE

It was Christmas day in the cook'ouse,
The 'appiest day of the year,
Men's 'earts were full of gladness
And their bellies full of beer,
When up spoke Private Short'ouse,
His face as bold as brass,
Saying, 'We don't want your Christmas puddin'
You can stick it up your —'

All Tidings of comfort and joy, comfort and joy,
Oh tidings of comfort and joy!

First Soldier It was Christmas day in the 'arem,
The eunuchs were standin' round,
And 'undreds of beautiful women
Was stretched out on the ground,
When in strolled the Bold Bad Sultan,
And gazed on 'is marble 'alls
Saying, 'What do you want for Christmas, boys?'
And the eunuchs answered '—'

All Tidings of comfort and joy, comfort and joy
Oh, tidings of comfort and joy.

Sound of Germans applauding: 'Bravo Tommy.'

Fourth Soldier Hey, listen.

German Soldier Bravo, Tommy. English carols is very beautiful! Hey, Tommy, present for you, coming over!

English Soldiers Watch out! Get down!

The Soldiers dive for cover. A boot is thrown from the darkness upstage and lands in the trench.

Third Soldier Quick, put a sandbag on it.

Sixth Soldier What is it?

Fifth Soldier It's a boot.

First Soldier Drop it in a bucket.

Fifth Soldier It's a Jerry boot.

Third Soldier What's that stickin' out of it?

Sixth Soldier It's a bit of fir tree.

First Soldier On a bit of ribbon.

Fifth Soldier Fags.

Fourth Soldier What's that?

Third Soldier That's chocolate, that is.

Second Soldier Is it?

Sixth Soldier Yeah.

English Soldiers Thanks Jerry – Good on yer, etc.

First Soldier That's German sausage.

Second Soldier Is it?

First Soldier Yeah.

Second Soldier It's yours.

Fifth Soldier Eh, we'll 'ave to send 'em somethin' back, won't we?

Second Soldier Come on then, get your parcel open.

First Soldier What about your'n then?

Second Soldier I ain't got one. They can 'ave my Christmas card from Princess Mary.

First Soldier 'Ere! What about the old girl's Christmas puddin'? Bet they've never tasted nuthin' like that before.

Third Soldier 'Ere y'are, I've been savin' this. My tin of cocoa – might make 'em sleep.

Fourth Soldier Ain't got nothin', 'ave I?

Fifth Soldier Right, Jerry, 'ere's your Christmas box.

He throws the box.

German Soldier Thanks, Tommy!

Explosion.

First Soldier Blimey! The Christmas puddin' wasn't that strong.

German Soldier Hey, Tommy! Are you still there?

English Soldiers Just about, yeah. No thanks to you.

German Soldier Many greetings to you, for your many presents and kindness to us, we thank you.

Second Soldier You're very welcome.

First Soldier That's all right.

German Soldier Hey, you like to drink vis us, ja?

English Soldiers Ja!

German Soldier You like some Schnapps – good Deutsche Schnapps?

Fourth Soldier Ja!! That's whisky!

English Soldiers Yeah! Same thing! etc.

First Soldier Sling it over!

German Soldier We meet you! Meet you in the middle!

Fourth Soldier Middle of Piccadilly?

First Soldier See you in the penalty area! Good night, Jerry.

Second Soldier Happy New Year, mate!

Third Soldier They're marvellous linguists, you know.

Second Soldier Oh yes, they learn it at school.

Fourth Soldier I reckon I'll put that in the Gazette.

Fifth Soldier What?

Fourth Soldier About Jerry sendin' us a present.

Fifth Soldier Eh! Here! They're comin'.

The German Soldiers appear upstage. The approach must be slow, tentative, both sides frightened of sudden death. The Germans must not appear too soon and even in the giving of the first present there is fear.

First German Hallo, Tommy.

The Third and Fifth British Soldiers go to meet the Germans.

Second German Alles gut, ja.

He gives a bottle to the Third British Soldier.

Third Soldier Thanks very much.

Second German Bitte schön.

Fifth Soldier Hello, how are you?

Third Soldier Merry Christmas.

They shake hands, the others follow.

Second Soldier Hello, nice to see you – all right, are you? You should have come over before . . . Stone the crows, it was him saying good night.

They greet each other.

Newspanel ALL QUIET ON THE WESTERN FRONT . . . ALLIES LOSE 850,000 MEN IN 1914 . . . HALF BRITISH EXPEDITORY FORCE WIPED OUT.

During this message the M.C. enters and the Soldiers turn to watch the newspanel in silence. The Soldiers pick up their signs and go off.

The M.C. sings 'Goodbye-ee' quietly and simply.

Song GOODBYE-EE

Brother Bertie went away

38 Oh What a Lovely War

To do his bit the other day
With a smile on his lips and his
Lieutenant's pips upon his shoulder bright and gay.
As the train moved out he said, 'Remember me to all
the birds.'

And he wagg'd his paw and went away to war
Shouting out these pathetic words:

Goodbye-ee, goodbye-ee,
Wipe the tear, baby dear, from your eye-ee,
Tho' it's hard to part I know, I'll be tickled to death to
go.
Don't cry-ee, don't sigh-ee, there's a silver lining in the
sky-ee,
Bonsoir, old thing, cheer-i-o, chin, chin,
Na-poo, toodle-oo, Goodbye-ee.

*The Girls come on and join in. The last lines grow fainter as they
go off.*

Goodbye-ee, goodbye-ee,
Wipe the tear, baby dear, from your eye-ee,
Though it's hard to part I know, I'll be tickled to death
to go.
Don't cry-ee, don't sigh-ee, there's a silver lining in the
sky-ee...

Newspanel WELCOME 1915 ... HAPPY YEAR THAT WILL
BRING VICTORY AND PEACE.

*Sound of shell exploding.
The last line of the song is inaudible.*

CURTAIN

ENTR'ACTE

KEEP THE HOME FIRES BURNING
HUSH HERE COMES A WHIZZBANG

Act Two

Newspanel APRIL 22 ... BATTLE OF YPRES ... GERMANS
USE POISON GAS ... BRITISH LOSS 59,275 MEN ... MAY 9 ...
AUBERS RIDGE ... BRITISH LOSS 11,619 MEN IN 15 HOURS ...
LAST OF B.E.F. ... GAIN NIL. SEPT 25 ... LOOS ... BRITISH
LOSS 8,236 MEN IN 3 HOURS ... GERMAN LOSS NIL.

The company dressed as Pierrots enter and sing.

Song 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 is 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.

Up to your waist in water,
Up to your eyes in slush,
Using the kind of language,
That makes the sergeant blush.
Who wouldn't join the army?
That's what we all inquire;
Don't we pity the poor civilian,
Sitting beside the fire.

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 is 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.

M.C. Ladies and gentlemen, when the Conscription Act was passed, 51,000 able-bodied men left home without leaving any forwarding addresses...

Men go off quickly.

Girls Shame!

M.C. ... and that's in West Ham alone.

As each of the Girls speaks her line to the audience she throws a white feather.

First Girl Women of England, do your duty, send your men to enlist today!

Second Girl Have you an able-bodied groom, chauffeur or gamekeeper serving you?

Third Girl If so, shouldn't he be serving his country?

Fourth Girl Is your best boy in khaki? if not shouldn't he be?

Fifth Girl What did you do in the Great War, Daddy?

Girls (*sing*) Oh, oh, oh, it's a lovely,
 Oh, oh, oh, it's a lovely,
 Oh, oh, oh, it's a lovely war!

Girls *exeunt.*

M.C. Sorry we had to interrupt the War Game in the first half, but hostilities took us by surprise; now it's business as usual – we'll drum up some char and we'll do part two of the War Game. What's the date?

Voice Off August the Twelfth.

M.C. August the Twelfth! Here am I talking to you when grouse shooting has commenced. (*Putting on a cloth cap.*) Whenever there's a crisis, shoot some grouse, that's what I always say. Here we are – part two of the War Game, find the biggest profiteer.

Newspanel 21,000 AMERICANS BECAME MILLIONAIRES DURING THE WAR.

A Scottish Ghillie enters, singing a Gaelic song. He is followed by a grouse-shooting party of British, French, German, and American munitions manufacturers with a Swiss banker. The Men need shooting sticks and the American, a wheelchair and black spectacles. 'Dead birds' falling from the flies are effective. The shooting party have a snack during the scene; bits of chicken, champagne, served by the Ghillie from a picnic basket.

Ghillie It's a beautiful day for a shoot, sir.

Germany Sehr schön – sehr schön.

Ghillie Shall we drive them into the guns now, your lordship?

Britain Do that for me, Ewan.

The Ghillie shouts Gaelic names and abuse.

Chivvy them along now, Ewan.

Ghillie Coming over now, sir.

All shoot grouse and cry with delight, counting the birds they have shot.

France A wonderful year, Bertie.

Switzerland Highly successful.

Britain Yes, we still manage to fatten 'em up.

France What were you saying about nickel, Von Possehl?

Germany That last consignment – we didn't get it.

France Well, we sent it.

Germany Yes, well, you sent us some before, but I mean the latest consignment.

France We sent it.

America By which route?

France Through Holland.

Britain Aah, there's the fly in the ointment – Holland – very unreliable. The Scandinavian countries are much more convenient.

All (to Germany) Bad luck – etc.

America Hazards of war – loss of consignments.

Britain Mind you, our navy's a bit to blame on that score, trying to set up a blockade of Germany.

America You're telling me. We had three ships stopped by the British Navy last month.

Britain Well, there you are – it's these unrealistic elements at work – they've just taken Jacks & Co. to court for exporting iron ore to Germany. They've got a blacklist, too – and I'm on it.

Germany My Government want to shoot me.

America You're on their shortlist!

Britain Mind you, they'll never publish it – we bought out some of the papers, you know. Can't break up a union like ours in a few minutes.

Germany (*shoots*) Another one for me.

Britain That's a duck, not a grouse.

Germany Well, I shoot anything.

Britain So I've noticed. We'll export it to you for fat via Denmark.

Germany When are you going to export some shillings for the Krupps fuses you are using in your English grenades?

Britain All in good time, all in good time . . .

Switzerland Swiss banks are always open, except in the lunch hour.

America Very funny. Look, do you stumblebums realize that there have been two peace scares in the last year? Our shares dropped forty per cent.

France What have your exports to Europe in the last three years amounted to? Ten and a half billion dollars.

America Yeah, but all we're getting paid in now is your beautifully engraved paper money. That's what we're worried about.

Switzerland What are you going to do with all that paper money if the Germans win?

Britain It's no use being the biggest creditor in the world if no-one can pay you.

America If the U.S. enters the war, that might just finish it.

Germany Now, now, that's very dangerous talk.

Britain I say, no need to lose your rag.

America All right, all right, so long as peace doesn't break out. What about that peace scare in France, Count? Caused a flutter on Wall Street, I can tell you. Have you scotched it?

France We flooded our papers with talk of defeatism and shot every pacifist we could find.

America Good. I've a cheque for sixty million dollars in my pocket. I want to be able to cash it.

Switzerland Who is it from?

America Russia.

Switzerland You'll never be able to cash it.

Germany Don't spoil a beautiful day. I have interests in Russia.

Ghillie How do you think the war's progressing, sir?

Britain Oh, not too badly – everything's under control.

Ghillie Do you think we'll have peace by Christmas?

America Peace?

Germany Peace? Where did he get that story?

France War to the finish.

Switzerland You must understand, my dear fellow, that war is a political and economic necessity.

Ghillie Yes, sir, we've six of the family at the front, sir.

Britain Keeps 'em off the streets.

Ghillie That's what my mother says, sir. She's very proud of them, and the allowance helps her and me quite a bit.

America Makes men of them.

France There will always be a problem of surplus population.

America I'm very glad you have due respect for your mother. I'll have you know, keeper, my President is deeply grieved by this war and you can tell your mother this – he regards the whole thing as a tragedy.

Britain I understand he's a very sick man.

America Yes, he's an idealist.

They all drink rapid toasts.

President Wilson!

France Président Poincaré!

Britain The King!

Germany The Kaiser!

America He's one of your shareholders, isn't he?

France La belle France – our published profit last year was eight million sterling.

They all congratulate him.

Britain Well done – new springs of wealth arise from war – as the saying goes.

America It advances scientific discovery.

France War is the life blood of a nation.

Germany Well, I wish you'd tell my Government that; they want to shoot me.

All No, why?

Germany You tell me. My wife, she wore her eyes out, rolling bandages for the boys. I had to buy her spectacles. She never had bad eyes before. Fifty thousand marks I gave to the widows' and orphans' fund.

All What's the trouble, old chap – why do they want to shoot you?

Germany It's my Russian munitions factory.

Britain Oh yes, how are they doing?

Germany Twenty-four hour shifts. They're turning out bombs and shells all the time.

All Good, well done – etc.

Germany I'm a patriot, but I'm also a businessman; my stock-holders must have dividends. If I didn't make the profits, the Russians would. The people who ought to be shot are those who break international agreements. Germany and France agreed not to bombard the iron-ore works at Briey and Thionville for the duration – and some idiot pilot bombs them. A Frenchman.

America What happened to him?

France He was court-martialled.

Germany Good.

America A hero – eh?

Britain (*finds this very funny*) Rather a shock to be court-martialled, isn't it? Nobody asked questions?

France Oh yes – we had delegations, protests – I dealt with them – a hush has fallen. (*All: Bravo!*)

America You're smart, Count – you know he got a consignment of barbed wire from Germany through for Verdun only two months before the battle. Isn't that right, Comte?

Britain You mean the German chappies were caught on their own barbed wire? I say that's a bit near the knuckle, what! Dashed clever, though.

Switzerland We must take some credit for that.

Britain Yes, ten per cent, no doubt.

America Talking of credit. I promised the guys back home – and I hope you'll meet them some day – to pass on some of their handouts. (*Hands a card.*) Bethlehem Steel – furnish arms to every quarter of the globe. Cleveland Automatic Machine Company. (*Offers one to Switzerland.*)

Switzerland Not for me, we're neutral.

America It's a recipe for hot chocolate. (*To Britain.*) Hermann Rapide, fires non-stop for fifty hours – we tried to sell these things to the Germans before the war, but they turned us down. Serve 'em right if they lose the war.

Germany Ah, the shrapnel-making machine – you use acids to kill men?

Britain Four hours it takes, very effective.

Germany You have some pretty good chemists in America, of German extraction, no doubt.

Britain If it's all the same to you, old boy, we'll stick to the dear old Enfield rifles, cheap and easy to make.

Germany (*looking at pamphlet*) No gas? Ah yes – der grausame stille Tod.

America Deadly silent death.

Germany We use phosgene – cylinders 1.4 metres long, highly portable in the trenches – go on a man's back – he can carry a rifle as well.

America Look at our arsenal at Edgeworth, Maryland. We've developed sixty-three different poison gases and we've got eight more ready.

Britain Well, the old chlorine's pretty good. Haig's trying it out this moment at Loos. Mind you, we haven't heard from him. Yet.

All off except the American, who remains in his wheelchair. Voices offstage sing 'Gassed Last Night' as a sequence of slides appear on the screen. The American goes off during the song.

Slide 22: Infantry advancing along the crest of a hill, silhouetted against a large white cloud.

Slide 23: Two German infantrymen running to escape an advancing cloud of poison gas.

Slide 24: A group of 'walking wounded' Tommies, some with bandaged eyes owing to being gassed.

Slide 25: Group of four German soldiers, carrying one of their gassed in a blanket.

Slide 26: Line-up, Indian file, of gassed Tommies, all with bandaged eyes, and one hand on the shoulder of the person immediately in front of them.

Slide 27: Another picture of 'walking wounded': two French Poilus, eyes bandaged, walking hand in hand, escorted by another Frenchman and a Tommy.

Slide 28: Photograph of a German infantryman diving for cover, beside a field gun, as a shell explodes nearby.

Slide 29: Three British infantrymen, full pack, standing in mud and slush, firing over the parapet of a trench.

Slide 30: Three Germans in a dugout, silhouetted against clouds of

smoke caused by a plane bombing overhead.

Slide 31: Four Tommies sitting in dugouts, which are merely holes, waist deep in mud.

Slide 32: A dead German soldier, lying in a slit trench.

Song

GASSED LAST NIGHT

[22] Gassed last night and gassed the night before, [23]
Going to get gassed tonight if we never get gassed any
more. [24]

When we're gassed we're sick as we can be,
'Cos phosgene [25] and mustard gas is much too much
for me.

They're warning [26] us, they're warning us,

One [27] respirator for the four of us.

Thank your lucky stars that three of us can run,

So one of us can use it all alone. [29]

Bombed last night and bombed the night before,
Going to get bombed tonight if we never get bombed
any more.

When we're bombed we're [29] scared as we can be.
God strafe the bombing planes from High Germany.

They're [30] over us, they're over us,

One shell hole for just the [31] four of us,

Thank your lucky stars there are no more of us,

'Cos [32] one of us could fill it all alone.

*A group of five **British Soldiers** enter and build a barricade with the cones.*

Sergeant Get this barricade up, quickly. Keep your heads down.

Lieutenant Have you got the trench consolidated, sergeant?

Sergeant All present and correct, sir.

Lieutenant The C.O. is going to have a word with the men.

Sergeant Right, lads – attention!

*The **Commanding Officer** enters.*

Commanding Officer You can stand the men at ease, sergeant.

Sound of machine-gun fire. They throw themselves down.

Lieutenant On your feet, lads.

Sergeant Come on – jump to it!

Commanding Officer You can let them smoke if they want to.

Sergeant The C.O. says you can smoke. But don't let me catch you.

Commanding Officer Now, you men, I've just come from having a powwow with the colonel; we think you've done some damn fine work – we congratulate you.

Soldiers Thank you, sir.

Commanding Officer I know you've had it pretty hard the last few days, bombs, shells, and snipers; we haven't escaped scot-free at staff either, I can tell you. Anyway, we're all here – well, not all of us, of course; and that gas of ours was pretty nasty – damned wind changing.

Lieutenant Indeed, sir.

Commanding Officer But these mishaps do happen in war, and gas can be a war-winning weapon. Anyway, so long as we can all keep smiling; you're white men all. (*To the **Lieutenant**.)* Sector all tidy now, Lieutenant?

Lieutenant Well, we've buried most of the second Yorks and Lancs, sir; there's a few D.L.I.s and the men from our own company left.

Commanding Officer I see. Well, look, let the lads drum up some char . . .

Sound of exploding shell.

Lieutenant Get down, sir.

Commanding Officer Good God!

Voice (*offstage*) Stretcher bearers! . . . Stretcher bearers! . . .

Commanding Officer You have no stretcher bearers over there?

Lieutenant No, I'm afraid they went in the last attack, sir. I'm waiting for reliefs from H.Q.

Commanding Officer Oh well, they're stout chaps!
Explosion.

Commanding Officer Yes, you'd better let the men keep under cover.

Lieutenant Thank you, sir.

Commanding Officer Damn place still reeks of decomposing bodies.

Lieutenant I'm afraid it's unavoidable, sir; the trench was mainly full of Jerries.

Commanding Officer Yes, of course, you were more or less sharing the same front line for a couple of days, weren't you?

Lieutenant Yes, sir.

Commanding Officer Oh well, carry on.

Lieutenant Thank you, sir.

Commanding Officer Ye Gods! What's that?

Lieutenant Oh, it's a Jerry, sir.

Commanding Officer What?

Lieutenant It's a leg, sir.

Commanding Officer Well, get rid of it, man. You can't have an obstruction sticking out of the parapet like that.

He goes off.

Lieutenant Hardcastle. Remove the offending limb.

Sergeant Well, we can't do that, sir; it's holding up the parapet. We've just consolidated the position.

Lieutenant Well, get a shovel and hack it off; and then dismiss the men.

He goes off.

Sergeant Right, sir. (*Aside.*) An' what the bloody 'ell will I hang my equipment on. All right, lads, get back, get yourselves some char. Heads, trunks, blood all over the place, and all he's worried about is a damned leg.

The Soldiers go off.

Newspanel EASTER 1916 . . . REBELLION IN IRELAND.

Band INTRO. TO ROSES OF PICARDY

A figure dressed in black enters, holding on his head a plant pot spouting pampas grass. He takes his place right of centre. An elegant lady and her partner enter and stand on either side of him. They sing 'Roses of Picardy' with simple sincerity.

Song ROSES OF PICARDY

Roses are shining in Picardy in the hush of the silver dew.

Roses are flowering in Picardy but there's never a rose like you.

And the roses will die with the summertime and our roads may be far, far apart

But there's one rose that dies not in Picardy. 'Tis the rose that I keep in my heart.

Band WALTZ: LONG, LONG TRAIL

The characters dance on in couples up left, circling round Plant Pot, timing their dialogue to be heard as they dance past him, downstage.

They are Sir John French and partner, Sir William Robertson and partner, Sir Douglas Haig and Lady Haig. The couple who sang 'Roses of Picardy' join them, becoming

*the **First Officer** and his **Partner**. Another army officer, dancing on with a partner, is the **Second Officer**. During the dance **Rawlinson** wanders in and stands looking on in a suitable pose.*

The ladies wear tiaras or feathers as head-dress and have long, light drapes of soft colours or white.

The scene should be played elegantly, using the upper-class accents of the period. The use of 'what' at the end of a sentence is not a question, merely an affectation of the period.

*Apart from **Lady Haig**, the actresses use their own names, with appropriate titles.*

Plant Pot Sir John French, Commander-in-Chief of His Majesty's Forces, Miss Fanny Carby.

Fanny Isn't that Sir Douglas Haig – the new man?

French Yes. Damned upstart. That other blighter Robertson's here, too.

Fanny Intrigue upon intrigue.

French Hold your tongue, Fanny.

Plant Pot Sir William Robertson, The Honourable Ann Beach.

Ann I was so thrilled to hear of your new appointment, Willy.

Robertson One takes these things as they come, you know, Annie.

Ann Sir Henry Wilson's green with envy.

Robertson Quite.

Ann He's just behind us, dancing with that frump, Lady Myvanwy.

Plant Pot Sir Henry Wilson, The Lady Myvanwy Jenn.

Wilson The mess was vastly relieved when they changed their name from Wettin to Windsor.

Myvanwy They're still Germans, Sir Henry.

Wilson But it's very unpatriotic to say so, Lady Myvanwy.

Plant Pot Sir Douglas and Lady Haig.

Haig Canter in the row tomorrow before breakfast, Doris?

Lady Haig Don't forget your fitting, Douglas, the new boots.

Haig And we're lunching at No. 10 – without French.

Lady Haig Congratulations, my dear.

Myvanwy What on earth do they see in him?

Wilson Shoots pheasant with the Prince of Wales. Lady Doris was one of Queen Alexandra's maids of honour.

Myvanwy Really . . . What!

Wilson So now he has the ear of the King, of course.

Fanny Haig! Sir Douglas Haig! The name rings a bell.

French Whisky.

Fanny (*stops in her tracks*) Trade!

French 'Fraid so.

*The dance ends with a swirl. The **Men** get together in clumps and guffaw over dirty jokes. The **Women** talk in groups.*

Robertson Toby Rawlinson!

Rawlinson You have the better of me.

Robertson Karachi!

Rawlinson Polo ponies!

Robertson Do excuse me.

Rawlinson Certainly.

Ann Well, I've volunteered for the V.A.D.

Myvanwy Really . . . What!

Ann The uniform is so becoming.

Sir John French *turns towards Robertson, who arrives back with a drink.*

Robertson Haven't had an opportunity to talk, sir, since my appointment was announced, but I'd like to say how proud I am to serve under you . . .

French *turns his back on him. Hushed reaction.*

French *(mutters)* Like to talk to my officers without interruption sometimes.

Rawlinson Rather, what!

Robertson May I take you home, Annie?

Ann *pulls a face.*

Rawlinson Good night, Sir John. Ball's in your court, Wilson.

First Lady *(the singer)* What was all that about?

Fanny Sir John thinks Sir Henry is the perfect man for the job.

First Lady Sir Henry Wilson?

Myvanwy *(aside to Lady Haig)* Keeps him waiting like a lackey.

French A word in your private ear, Wilson.

Wilson Yes, sir.

French Now do take that sour expression off your face.

Wilson I've always understood from you, sir, that the job was mine.

French Well, it's your own fault. You're such a brute. You'll never be nice to people you don't like. Anyhow, the day's by no means lost. You'll have to make love to Asquith when you meet him.

Wilson I'm too suspicious of Kitchener and Churchill to make love to anyone – anyway Asquith hates me – none of them are friends of yours either; you know that, of course.

French Oh yes, quite. Anyway, I'm showing them the sort of man I am. Giving Robertson the position I marked down for you. I've refused to mess with him – pretty good, what! Snubbing him just now in the middle of the room.

Wilson You made your attitude pretty clear, sir.

French Well, there you are then. You depend on me. I'm very fond of you, Henry.

Wilson Thank you, sir.

French So keep your pecker up and don't be so gloomy.

Myvanwy *(to Wilson)* I wouldn't trust him an inch.

Wilson I don't.

Lady Haig *(to the First Officer, the singer)* I will tell you in confidence, my dear, His Majesty very much hopes that my husband will succeed French.

First Officer My God!

Lady Haig Yes, oh yes, Douglas thinks French is quite unfitted for the high position he's been called to.

Second Officer *(turning to Haig, sotto voce)* Who was Sir John's little . . . lady friend?

Haig Rank outsider.

Second Officer I quite believe it.

Haig It's a flaw in his character, you know, his weakness for the fair sex. Loses all sense of decency.

Second Officer Really, sir!

Haig Yes, well, he had to borrow two thousand pounds from me at Aldershot over a woman.

Second Officer Good God, sir!

Haig And he was Commander of my Cavalry brigade at the time.

Second Officer Damn bad show, sir, borrowing from a subordinate.

Haig Appalling!

Band A MERE WHISPER OF COMRADES

French Haig!

Haig Sir John!

They advance and shake hands. Applause.

French You saw me snub Robertson just now?

Haig I did, Sir John.

French That's the way to treat 'em.

A Photographer comes in and takes a picture.

'Friends in sunshine and shadow' – put that in your photogravure, boy.

Photographer The right man in the right job, if I may say so, sir.

French You may, you may. Thank you, my man. Well, how did you leave the men at the front, Douglas?

Haig Oh, in fine heart, sir, just spoiling for a fight.

French Makes one feel very proud. A word in your private ear, Douglas. What do you think of that man Kitchener?

Haig Well, sir –

French The man's intolerable. He's behaving like a Generalissimo now – he's only a damned politician.

Haig With regard to that, sir. You know he turned up in Paris in his uniform again.

French My God, no! He's no damned right to a uniform at all – I mean Secretary of State for War – what

happened?

Haig Well, it raised some pretty tricky points of protocol.

French Yes, well what are we going to do about it?

Band WALTZ: APREZ LA GUERRE

Fanny Johnnie.

French Excuse me. They're playing my tune. That man Kitchener is more of an enemy to the B.E.F. than Moltke or Ludendorff.

The couples begin waltzing again and gradually go off.

Myvanwy How did that man Haig get his pips, if you tell me he failed all his staff college entrance examinations?

Wilson Duke of Cambridge.

Myvanwy What?

Wilson Friend of the family.

Myvanwy Oh! yes, on her side.

Wilson Waived the formalities and let him in.

French Yes, well, he may have lent me £2,000, but he made a terrible mess of his field exercises.

Second Officer (to **Haig**) Good night, sir.

First Officer and Lady (to **Haig**) Good night.

Haig (doesn't answer) That man is a terrible intriguer.

Lady Haig Yes, I can tell by his deceitful face.

Haig And he's flabby!

Lady Haig You've been loyal long enough, my dear.

Haig Well, No. 10 tomorrow, Doris.

Lady Haig And a field-marshal's job for you.

Voices Offstage 'My carriage!
Carriages!

Good night!

Men's voices offstage sing 'Hush, here comes a Whizzbang' very softly; a sequence of slides is projected as follows:

Slide 33: Night photographs of flares, and various Very lights.

Slide 34: Photograph of a cloud formation.

Slide 35: Three Tommies walking across duckboards in a muddy field.

Slide 36: Dead Germans lying in a shallow trench in a peaceful-looking country field.

Slide 37: A young French soldier, obviously on burial duty, laden with wooden crosses.

Slide 38: Dead French Poilus; one of them has a smile on his face.

Slide 39: A field with nothing but white wooden crosses as far as one can see.

Song

HUSH, HERE COMES A WHIZZBANG

(Tune: 'Hush, here comes the Dream Man')

[33] Hush, here comes a whizzbang, [34]
Hush, here comes a whizzbang, [35]
Now, you soldier men, get down those stairs, [36]
Down in your dugouts and say your prayers. [37]
Hush, here comes a whizzbang,
And it's making [38] straight for you,
And you'll see all the wonders [39] of no man's land,
If a whizzbang hits you.

Haig (entering) Germany has shot her bolt. The prospects for 1916 are excellent.

British General (entering) Permission to speak, sir.

Haig Of course.

Slide 40: A map of Ypres and the surrounding district, showing Kitchener's Wood, Hill 60, Passchendaele, etc.

British General If we continue in this way, the line of trenches will stretch from Switzerland to the sea. Neither we nor the Germans will be able to break through. The war will end in complete stalemate.

Haig Nonsense. We need only one more big offensive to break through and win. My troops are of fine quality, and specially trained for this type of war.

British General This is not war, sir, it is slaughter.

Haig God is with us. It is for King and Empire.

British General We are sacrificing lives at the rate of five to sometimes fifty thousand a day.

Haig One battle, our superior morale, bombardment.

Junior Officer (entering) Sir, tell us what to do and we'll do it.

Haig We're going to walk through the enemy lines.

British General and Junior Officer go off.

Slide 40 fades into Slide 41: Tommies advancing across no man's land, in full battle pack, silhouetted against clouds.

A man's voice, offstage, sings slowly as **Haig** speaks.

Song

THERE'S A LONG, LONG TRAIL

There's a long, long trail a-winding
Into the land of my dreams,
Where the nightingale is singing
And the white moon beams...

He carries on humming the tune, ending:

... till the day when I'll be going down that long, long trail with you.

Haig (during the song) Complete victory ... the destruction of German militarism ... victory march on Berlin ... slow deliberate fire is being maintained on the enemy positions ... at this moment my men are advancing across no man's land in full pack, dressing from left to right; the men are forbidden under pain of court-martial to take cover in any shell hole or dugout ... their magnificent morale will cause the enemy to flee in confusion ... the attack will be driven home with the bayonet ... I feel that every step I take is

guided by the divine will.

Sounds of heavy bombardment.

Newspanel FEBRUARY . . . VERDUN . . . TOTAL LOSS ONE AND A HALF MILLION MEN.

Haig (*looking through field-glasses*) This is most unsatisfactory. Where are the Sherwood Foresters? Where are the East Lancs on the right?

British General (*who has entered during above speech*) Out in no man's land.

Haig They are sluggish from too much sitting in the trenches.

British General Most of them, sir, will never rise again.

Haig We must break through.

British General Regardless of loss, sir?

Haig The loss of, say, another 300,000 men may lead to really great results.

British General Yes, sir.

Haig And will not impede our ability to continue the offensive. In any case, we have to calculate on another great offensive next year.

British General If the slackers on the Home Front see it our way, sir.

Haig Quite.

British General We are rather short of men, sir.

Haig What's left?

British General The new chappies from Ireland have just arrived.

Haig Rather wild untrained lot! Still, they'll be raring to have a crack at the Boche, and what they lack in training, they'll make up for in gallantry.

British General They've just got off the train. Most of them haven't eaten for forty-eight hours –

Haig They are moving against a weakened and demoralised enemy. Capture the German line, without further delay.

Three Irish Soldiers, one of them a Sergeant, enter. They wear English army caps and, over their Pierrot costumes, plain green kilts. The First Soldier carries a Union Jack on a pole. They must be good dancers.

Sergeant Right boys, up and at 'em!

First and Second Soldier Up the Irish!

Band IRISH WASHERWOMAN

All three dance an advance based on the jig, 'The Irish Washerwoman' played on the pipes. The flag is carried high. Bombardment. They fling themselves down, having reached their goal. The bagpipes fade. Birdsong.

Sergeant We made it.

First Soldier Where are we, Serg?

Sergeant I reckon we've broken into a lull.

Second Soldier Lovely, is it not? Peaceful.

First Soldier Peaceful? An' what's that dirty great mound of earth confrontin' us?

Sergeant Isn't it an earthwork then? An' near enough to protect us.

Sniper's bullet.

First Soldier What was that?

Sergeant Must have been a stray one. All the same, keep your heads down, fellers. You see, the trouble is, we've been fightin' too well. We've arrived ahead of ourselves.

First Soldier How many trenches did we capture, Serg?

Sergeant About nine, I reckon.

Second Soldier Ten.

Sergeant Make it a round dozen an' we'll be mentioned in dispatches!

Second Soldier We'll be heroes.

First Soldier 'Twill be one up for the Irish Fusiliers!

Distant birdsong.

Second Soldier What was that, Serg?

Sergeant What was what?

Second Soldier Sounded like someone callin'.

Sergeant Where?

Second Soldier Beyond the mound.

First Soldier It'll be Limey wounded. A lot fell in that last attack . . . in that shell hole over there.

Second Soldier There it is again.

They all listen.

Sergeant (*repeating what he hears*) 'Come back. Come back, you bloody fools.'

Second Soldier He's telling us to go back?

Sergeant (*calls*) T'anks, mush! Get that flag down!

First Soldier Get back thro' all that? Easier said than done.

Sergeant Shut up. (*He listens.*) He says we're drawin' their fire.

Sniper's bullet.

First Soldier Where did that come from?

Sergeant Bejasus, that was one of ours.

Second Soldier (*shouts*) Don't shoot, it's us. There's

human beings over here!

Heavy gunfire. They flatten themselves.

Sergeant Now see what you've done, you bloody eejit! Seamus!

First Soldier Serg?

Sergeant You're quick on your pins. Get back to H.Q.! Pronto! Tell the artillery to raise their bloody sights a bit an' --

First Soldier Back through all that?

Sergeant -- save their shells for Jerry.

First Soldier On me own?

Sergeant It's hard to give ground now we've got so near our goal.

First Soldier I see that. You want me to tell 'em we've won.

Sergeant Do that!

First Soldier The battle's won.

And tentatively he makes his way upstage and stops.

First Soldier (*calls quietly*) Hey, Serg! That last one got the bridge.

Second Soldier That means we're cut off.

Sergeant (*calls quietly*) Give yourself a treat! Swim for it. (*The Sergeant and the Second Soldier watch, listen.*) That'll be the first bath he's had this year. (*He watches, then whistles.*) Seamus! Bring us back a bottle of whiskey . . . Irish.

Sniper's bullet.

Second Soldier He's gone under, Serg.

Sergeant (*crosses himself*) Yeah, they got him. (*He looks at the Second Soldier.*) Well, someone's got to go.

Second Soldier Sure.

Sergeant Seamus is gone. (*A pause.*) They'll think there's hundreds of us here.

Second Soldier I could sprint that half a mile back in no time.

Sergeant Get yourself a medal! (*The Second Soldier leaps up and away. Sniper's bullet.*) Well if he's got shot, I'll kill him. (*Heavy gunfire.*) There they go! That's the bloody mad English, shelling for the next attack. (*Heavy gunfire and explosion.*) Don't shoot, it's us! Stop firing! (*Sniper's bullet. The Sergeant slowly twists round, wounded. He puts his hands up.*) Kamerad! Kamerad! (*A strain of 'The Irish Washerwoman' is reprised faintly and slowly as, turning and turning, the Sergeant moves towards darkness. As he goes.*) It's not so bad. After all, I'll escape the whole bloomin' war.

The M.C. comes on and sets a speaker's stand for Mrs Pankhurst. During the scene he stands at the edge of the crowd, a silent observer. Mrs Pankhurst enters, followed by a straggling crowd. As she steps up on to the stand one or two of the Men whistle.

Mrs Pankhurst Now before talking to you all, I should like to read you a letter from my friend George Bernard Shaw.

First Man (*shouts*) Who's 'e when 'e's at 'ome?

Mrs Pankhurst He says, 'The men of this country are being sacrificed to the blunders of boobies, the cupidity of capitalists –

First Woman (*aside*) What's she talking abaht?

Mrs Pankhurst '– the ambition of conquerors, the lusts and lies –

Second Woman (*on the word 'lusts'*) Oo-er!

Mrs Pankhurst '– and rancours of bloodthirsty men who love war because it opens their prison doors and sets them on the throne of power and popularity.'

Second Man (*shouts*) Now give us a song!

Mrs Pankhurst For the second time, peace is being offered to the sorely tried people of the civilised world –

Someone blows a raspberry.

Mrs Pankhurst At the close of 1915 President Wilson proposed an immediate armistice to be followed by a peace conference.

Third Man Watch it!

Mrs Pankhurst In April of this year, Germany herself proposed peace.

Third Man (*louder*) I said watch it!

Mrs Pankhurst The peace movements are strong in England, France and the United States and in Germany even.

Men and Women (*together*) That's enough! Leave it out! That'll do!

Mrs Pankhurst In the Reichstag –

First Man Who's 'e when 'e's at 'ome?

Mrs Pankhurst –the peace groups are active and outspoken; the exact terms of Germany's offer have never been made known to us and I should like to ask Lloyd George what his aims are –

First Woman An' I should like to arst you wot your ole man's gettin' for 'is dinner.

Mrs Pankhurst The politicians chatter like imbeciles while civilisation bleeds to death.

Third Man Treason! That's treason!

Second Man That's right.

Mrs Pankhurst I should like to ask that gentleman if –

Second Man Don't ask me, love. I'm iggerant!

First Man S'right! 'E don't know nuffink.

Mrs Pankhurst I would ask him to consider the plight of the civilised world after one more year! Do you know what you do? No! And the statesmen wash their hands of the whole affair.

First Woman Why don't you wash your face?

Third Man 'Aig's got 'em on the run! 'Aig!

Mrs Pankhurst Who tells you this? *The Times*?

Second Man 'E's right. 'Aig's the boy.

Mrs Pankhurst The newspaper that refuses to publish the pacifist letters, that distorts the truth about our so-called victories? Slowly but surely, we are killing off the finest and best of the male population!

First Woman (*shouting*) 'Ere, don't you address them words to me!

Second Woman No! Don't you address them words to 'er!

Mrs Pankhurst The sons of Europe are being crucified –

First Woman My ole man's at the front –

Second Woman She's 'ad 'er share of suffering!

Mrs Pankhurst – crucified on the barbed wire, because you, the misguided masses still cry for war.

Second Woman Yeah! Kill 'em all!

First Woman Down with the 'Un!

Mrs Pankhurst War cannot be won!

Cries and boos, 'Shut yer face!', 'Or we'll shut it for you!'

Mrs Pankhurst (*struggling to be heard*) No-one can win a war!

The cries mount.

Mrs Pankhurst Do you want the war to go on till

Germany is beaten to the ground?

Newspanel JULY 1 . . . SOMME . . . BRITISH LOSS 60,000 MEN ON THE FIRST DAY.

A roar of approval which melts into singing.

Crowd Rule Britannia! Britannia rules the waves, Britons, never, never, never, shall be slaves.

Two Drunken Soldiers come on as the crowd disperses and, without over-acting, sing.

Song I DON'T WANT TO BE A SOLDIER

(*Tune: 'I'll make a man of you'*)

I don't want to be a soldier,
I don't want to go to war,
I'd rather stay at home,
Around the streets to roam,
And live on the earnings of a lady typist.
I don't want a bayonet in my belly,
I don't want my bollocks shot away,
I'd rather stay in England,
In merry, merry England,
And fornicate my bleeding life away.

The other Soldiers run on.

Haig (*entering*) Attack on the Somme!

M.C. Right dress! Eyes front! Left turn! We're going along the line.

Sergeant Quick march!

The Men march round the stage whistling 'Pop Goes the Weasel'. They end up kneeling in line behind Haig.

Haig We shall launch a decisive attack which will carry us through the German lines. We shall advance on Belgium to the Channel Ports. The people at home have given us the means to mass every man, horse, and gun on the Western Front. It is our duty to attack the enemy until his last resources are exhausted and his line breaks. Then in

will go our cavalry and annihilate him. I am the predestined instrument of providence for the achievement of victory for the British Army.

Two Englishwomen enter on either side of the stage and shout across to one another.

First Englishwoman Hey, Bett!

Second Englishwoman Yeah? What?

First Englishwoman You know what they're doing now?

Second Englishwoman No, what?

First Englishwoman Melting corpses for glycerine.

Second Englishwoman Get away! Who?

First Englishwoman The Germans. It's in this morning's paper.

Two German Women enter on the balconies, left and right, and shout to one another.

First German Woman Emma! Emma!

Second German Woman Ja?

First German Woman Weisst du, was sie jetzt tun?

Second German Woman Nein, was?

First German Woman Sie schmelzen Körper für Glyzerin.

Second German Woman Wirklich! Wer?

First German Woman Die Engländer. Es war in der Zeitung heute Morgen.

First Englishwoman Bett – do you want to know something else? They say there's another big push coming.

Second Englishwoman Oh God.

First German Woman *(during preceding two speeches)* Emma! Man sagt noch ein Angriff kommt.

Second German Woman Sagst du? Mein Gott.

The four Women go off.

Haig Advance!

The Soldiers rise and march round singing.

Song

KAISER BILL

(Tune: 'Pop goes the Weasel')

Kaiser Bill is feeling ill,
The Crown Prince, he's gone barmy.
We don't give a cluck for old von Fluck
And all his bleeding army.

Australian Voice *(distant, high up in the auditorium)* Are you the reinforcements?

Sergeant Yeah! On our way up to Vimy.

Voice Wouldn't go up there if I were you; they've got a shortage!

One of the Soldiers What of? Ammunition?

Voice No. Coffins!

Sergeant Right, lads. Form fours. Rum ration.

The Men kneel again.

Haig It's now or never.

British General Runners!

The Men are centre stage and sing, marking time. Two Runners set up tables with field telephones at opposite sides of the stage. Haig and the British General sit talking into the phones and two Runners cross backwards and forwards taking messages.

Song

THEY WERE ONLY PLAYING LEAPFROG

(Tune: 'John Brown's Body')

One staff officer jumped right over another staff officer's back.

And another staff officer jumped right over that other

staff officer's back,
A third staff officer jumped right over two other staff
officers' backs,
And a fourth staff officer jumped right over all the other
staff officers' backs.

They were only playing leapfrog,
They were only playing leapfrog,
They were only playing leapfrog,
When one staff officer jumped right over another staff
officer's back.

*The song is sung a second time quietly under Haig and the
British General, who are talking simultaneously.*

Haig Hello. G.O.C.-in-C. Clear the line, please. Look, I
must have the Eighth Division forward on the right . . . Yes
I must have Eighth Division . . . I see, seventy per cent
casualties . . . I must have Eighth Division forward on the
right wing . . . (*The following sentence heard clearly.*) No, you
must reserve the artillery; we are using too many shells.

British General Are you ready there? We are ready
here . . . Have receipted your orders to advance . . . Are
you ready there? . . . We are ready here . . . Are you ready
there? . . . We are ready here . . . and approved. . . . (*The
following sentence heard clearly.*) Night has fallen. The clouds are
gathering. The men are lost somewhere in no man's land.

Runner Seventy per cent casualties, sir.

British General Then there is a corner of some foreign
land that is forever England.

Haig We shall attack at dawn!

Sergeant Right. Dig in for the night, lads. Pack off.

Haig and the British General continue working at their tables.
The Soldiers remove their kit and settle down for the night.

First Soldier (*sings*) Old soldiers never die,
The young ones wish they would.

Second Soldier Can you hear those poor wounded

bleeders moaning in no man's land?

Third Soldier Sounds like a cattle market.

Haig Attack at five ack emma.

British General Attack, five ack emma.

The two Runners sleep, standing up. The Soldiers sing softly.

Song IF YOU WANT THE OLD BATTALION

If you want the old battalion,
We know where they are, we know where they are,
We know where they are,
If you want the old battalion, we know where they are,
They're hanging on the old barbed wire,
We've seen them, we've seen them,
Hanging on the old barbed wire,
We've seen them, we've seen them,
Hanging on the old barbed wire.

Haig Monday, noon. Our offensive commenced this
morning; satisfactory progress. Monday evening. The
trouble was that the men waved their hats instead of flags
as His Majesty rode by. I tried the mare out the day
before. The King did clutch the reins too firmly . . .
correction . . . the King did clutch the reins rather firmly.
No reflection on His Majesty's horsemanship. The grass
was very slippery and the mare moved backwards; she was
upset. I'd exercised her every day for a year.

Song FAR FAR FROM WIPERS

(*Tune: 'Sing me to sleep'*)

Far far from Wipers, I long to be,
Where German snipers can't get at me,
Damp is my dugout, cold are my feet,
Waiting for whizzbangs to put me to sleep.

A bugle sounds reveille.

Haig So unfortunate it had to be my horse that threw
the King.

Reveille sounds again.

Haig's Runner Five ack emma, sir.

Haig (*into the telephone*) Press the attack immediately.

British General (*into the telephone*) The losses were very heavy last night, sir. The Canadian corps had very heavy casualties . . .

He continues his report on losses. The Soldiers begin to pick up their kit. One of them sings.

Song IF THE SERGEANT STEALS YOUR RUM

(*Tune: 'Never Mind'*)

If the sergeant steals your rum, never mind,
If the sergeant steals your rum, never mind;
Though he's just a blinking sot,
Let him have the bloody lot,
If the sergeant steals your rum, never mind.

British General (*continuing*) . . . the 13th London were isolated and completely wiped out by their own cross-fire.

Haig There must be no squeamishness over losses. Give orders to advance immediately.

The two Officers retire upstage and watch.

Sergeant Right, over the top, boys.

Explosion. They charge and fling themselves on the ground. Machine-guns.

Jerry's doin' well.

First Soldier What are all them little yellow flags out there?

Second Soldier They give them to our blokes.

First Soldier What for?

Second Soldier So they'd know where we was.

Sergeant Did you say our blokes?

Second Soldier Yeah.

First Soldier Oh, I get it, so our guns don't get us before Jerry docs.

Explosion.

Sergeant You stick with me, lads. I'll see you through this lot. Heads down and keep spread well out.

Second Soldier (*sings*) Far far from Wipers I long to be.

Sergeant Blimey! You still here?

Second Soldier Yeah! Why?

Sergeant I drew you in the sweep.

A shell explodes.

I've had enough of this.

Second Soldier Me and all.

Sergeant Every man for himself.

Third Soldier Every man for himself.

Second Soldier See you after the war, sarg.

Sergeant Yeah, in the Red Lion.

First Soldier Eight o'clock.

Sergeant Make it half past.

First Soldier Eh?

Sergeant I might be a bit late.

The Soldiers go off.

British General Permission to speak, sir? I have been wondering, or rather the staff and I have been wondering, perhaps this policy of attrition might be a mistake. After all, it's wearing us down more than it is them. Couldn't we try a policy of manoeuvre on other fronts?

Haig Nonsense. The Western Front is the only real front. We must grind them down. You see, our population is

greater than theirs and their losses are greater than ours.

British General I don't quite follow that, sir.

Haig In the end they will have five thousand men left and we will have ten thousand and we shall have won. In any case, I intend to launch one more full-scale offensive, and we shall break through and win.

Junior Officer (*entering*) I say, sir, did you know that the average life of a young subaltern at the front has now increased to three weeks.

Second Officer (*entering*) Yes, sir, and replacements are coming in by the thousand; it's marvellous. (*Exit.*)

Junior Officer It's an empire in arms. (*Exit.*)

Haig You see, the staff are in complete accord.

British General Yes, sir. And the morale of the civilian population has never been higher.

The murderer, Landru, enters, dragging the body of a Woman followed by a Gendarme.

Landru Excusez-moi, s'il vous plaît.

Gendarme Hey! M. Landru! Where are you going with that body?

Landru I am going to bury it. With all this killing going on and they never called me up, I thought I'd settle a few private scores.

Gendarme Good idea! . . . How many have you done?

Landru Twelve wives, so far.

Gendarme Hey! Just a minute. You're for the guillotine.

Both go off.

Newspanel NOVEMBER . . . SOMME BATTLE ENDS . . . TOTAL LOSS 1,332,000 MEN . . . GAIN NIL.

The band plays a few bars of 'Twelfth Street Rag'. Three couples dance wildly and continue as the Soldier in uniform sings.

Song

I WORE A TUNIC

(*Tune: 'I wore a Tulip'*)

I wore a tunic, a dirty khaki tunic,
And you wore your civvy clothes,
We fought and bled at Loos, while you were on the
booze,
The booze that no one here knows.
You were out with the wenches, while we were in the
trenches,
Facing an angry foe,
Oh, you were a-slacking, while we were attacking
The Germans on the Menin Road.

The dancers go off. Haig, a Chaplain, a Nurse and Soldiers come on.

Chaplain Let us pray.

All sing. These soldiers' songs must be sung like hymns. The Chaplain, Haig, and the Nurse sing the correct words.

Song

FORWARD JOE SOAP'S ARMY

(*Tune: 'Onward Christian Soldiers'*)

Forward Joe Soap's army, marching without fear,
With our old commander, safely in the rear.
He boasts and skites from morn till night,
And thinks he's very brave,
But the men who really did the job are dead and in
their grave.
Forward Joe Soap's army, marching without fear,
With our old commander, safely in the rear.
Amen.

Chaplain Dearly beloved brethren, I am sure you will be glad to hear the news from the Home Front. The Archbishop of Canterbury has made it known that it is no sin to labour for the war on the Sabbath. I am sure you would like to know that the Chief Rabbi has absolved your Jewish brethren from abstaining from pork in the trenches. And likewise his Holiness the Pope has ruled that the

eating of flesh on a Friday is no longer a venial sin . . .

Soldier (*aside, thrown away*) High time we had an Irish pope . . .

Chaplain And in far-away Tibet, the Dalai Lama has placed his prayers at the disposal of the Allies. Now, brethren, tomorrow being Good Friday, we hope God will look kindly on our attack on Arras.

Men Amen.

Sergeant We will now sing from Hymns Ancient and Modern, number 358, 'Waft, Waft, ye winds, waft, waft ye'.

Song FRED KARNO'S ARMY

(*Tune: 'The Church's One Foundation'*)

We are Fred Karno's army,
The Ragtime Infantry,
We cannot fight, we cannot shoot,
What bleeding use are we?
And when we get to Berlin,
The Kaiser he will say,
Hoch, hoch, mein Gott, what a bloody rotten lot,
Are the Ragtime infantry!
Amen.

Chaplain Let us pray. O God, show thy face to us as thou didst with thy angel at Mons. The choir will now sing 'What a friend we have in Jesus' as we offer a silent prayer for Sir Douglas Haig for success in tomorrow's onset.

Song WHEN THIS LOUSY WAR IS OVER

(*Tune: 'What a friend we have in Jesus'*)

When this lousy war is over,
No more soldiering for me,
When I get my civvy clothes on,
Oh, how happy I shall be!
No more church parades on Sunday,
No more putting in for leave,
I shall kiss the sergeant major,

How I'll miss him, how he'll grieve!
Amen.

Chaplain O Lord, now lettest thou thy servant depart in peace, according to thy word. Dismiss.

Corporal (*blowing a whistle*) Come on, you men, fall in.

The Soldiers sing as they march off.

Song WASH ME IN THE WATER

Whiter than the whitewash on the wall,
Whiter than the whitewash on the wall,
Oh, wash me in the water that you wash your dirty
daughter in,
And I shall be whiter than the whitewash on the wall,
On the wall . . .

Chaplain Land of our birth, we pledge to thee, our love and toil in the years to be.

Haig Well, God, the prospects for a successful attack are now ideal. I place myself in thy hands.

Chaplain Into thy hands I commend my spirit.

Nurse The fields are full of tents, O Lord, all empty except for as yet unmade and naked iron bedsteads. Every ward has been cleared to make way for the wounded that will be arriving when the big push comes.

Haig I trust you will understand, Lord, that as a British gentleman I could not subordinate myself to the ambitions of a junior foreign commander, as the politicians suggested. It is for the prestige of my King and Empire, Lord.

Chaplain Teach us to rule ourselves away, controlled and cleanly night and day.

Haig I ask thee for victory, Lord, before the Americans arrive.

Nurse The doctors say there will be enormous numbers of dead and wounded, God.

Chaplain That we may bring if need arise, no maimed or worthless sacrifice.

Haig Thus to grant us fair weather for tomorrow's attack, that we may drive the enemy into the sea.

Nurse O Lord, I beg you, do not let this dreadful war cause all the suffering that we have prepared for. I know you will answer my prayer.

Explosion. They go off.

*A sequence of slides is shown as **Soldiers'** voices sing offstage.*

Slide 42: A group of eight or nine Highland infantrymen, around a small camp fire.

Slide 43: Two captured wounded German infantrymen, both sitting, one nursing a badly wounded leg, the other sewing.

Slide 44: A lull in the fighting. A trench of Tommies 'at ease' – some smoking, others doing running repairs on their kit.

Slide 45: Three Tommies walking through a rain-soaked muddy field.

Slide 46: Two captured Germans between two Tommies. One of the Germans is being given a drink of water by one of the Tommies.

Slide 47: A group of Tommies, skylarking and obviously off-duty, with a damaged old horse-drawn coach, upon which they've chalked '10 Downing Street'.

Song I WANT TO GO HOME

[42] I want to go home, [43] I want to go home, [44]
I don't want to go in the trenches no more,
Where whizzbangs and shrapnel they whistle and roar.

[45]

Take me over the sea, [46] where the Alleymen can't get
at me; [47]

Oh my, I don't want to die, I want to go home.

Newspanel BY NOV 1916 ... TWO AND A HALF MILLION
MEN KILLED ON WESTERN FRONT.

*The screen goes up to reveal **Soldiers** in gas capes doing burial squad duty in mime. **Haig** is on one of the balconies.*

Haig I thank you, God; the attack is a great success.

Fighting has been severe, but that was to be expected. There has been some delay along the Menin Road, but the ground is thick with enemy dead. First reports from the clearing station state that our casualties are only some sixty thousand: mostly slight. The wounded are very cheery indeed.

*The **Soldiers** sing as they work.*

Song THE BELLS OF HELL.

The bells of hell go ting-a-ling-a-ling,
For you but not for me,
And the little devils how they sing-a-ling-a-ling,
For you but not for me.
Oh death, where is thy sting-a-ling-a-ling,
Oh grave, thy victory?
The bells of hell go ting-a-ling-a-ling
For you but not for me.

Newspanel APRIL 17 ... AISNE ... ALLIED LOSS 180,000
MEN ... GAIN NIL.

*The **Soldiers** sing again, more gaily. **Haig** conducts them, wearing a Pierrot hat, as they dance.*

The bells of hell go ting-a-ling-a-ling,
For you but not for me,
And the little devils how they sing-a-ling-a-ling,
For you but not for me.
Oh death, where is thy sting-a-ling-a-ling,
Oh grave, thy victory?
The bells of hell go ting-a-ling-a-ling
For you but not for me.

*A **Medical Officer** and a **Nurse** enter.*

Medical Officer We'll have to start burning them soon, nurse, instead of burying them.

Nurse Yes, it's such an unpleasant duty, doctor. The men always try to get out of it.

Medical Officer Oh, well it'll be good farming country after.

Nurse If there are any of us left to see it.

First Soldier Still got my water on the knee, doc.

Medical Officer I'll fix you up with a number nine later.

First Soldier On my knee! – I said, sir!

Sergeant All right, you men. I want this trench clear in half an hour; get stuck in. Come on, jump to it!

The Men form up, as in a slit trench, digging.

Band OH IT'S A LOVELY WAR
(*Very slow.*)

Haig (*reading a letter*) From Snowball to Douglas. Water and mud are increasing and becoming horrible. The longer days when they come will be most welcome, especially to the officers, who say the conditions are impairing their efficiency. The other ranks don't seem to mind so much.

First Soldier Look out – we're awash! Hey, give us a hand; he's going under.

Second Soldier Cor – he's worse than old Fred.

Third Soldier Here, whatever happened to old Fred?

Second Soldier I dunno. Haven't seen him since his last cry for help.

Fourth Soldier That's right; he got sucked under.

Third Soldier Oh no, he went sick.

Fifth Soldier No, he went under.

Third Soldier He went sick.

Second Soldier He got sucked under, mate.

Third Soldier Well, I bet you a fag he went sick.

Second Soldier Don't be daft. You can't go sick here.

You've got to lose your lungs, your liver, your lights . . .

Sergeant Watch it!

The Nurse crossing in front stumbles.

First Soldier I think she's lost hers.

Nurse Thank you.

Medical Officer Put that man on a charge, sergeant.

First Soldier On a raft.

Haig Everything points to a complete breakdown in enemy morale. Now is the time to hit him resolutely and firmly. I understand the Prime Minister has been asking questions about my strategy. I cannot believe a British Minister could be so ungentlemanly.

The Soldiers go off.

Nurse (*reading back her letter to check it*) Thank you for the copy of *The Times*. I am glad that in spite of all it is still a victory; it does not seem so here. It is beyond belief, the butchery; the men look so appalling when they are brought in and so many die.

Haig September 17th. Glass still falling. A light breeze blew from the south. Weather unsettled.

Newspanel AVERAGE LIFE OF A MACHINE-GUNNER UNDER ATTACK . . . FOUR MINUTES.

The Nurse goes quietly into.

Song 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 hardship,
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 the lads are far away,
They dream of home.
There's a silver lining,
Through the dark clouds shining,
Turn the dark cloud inside out,
Till the boys come home.

Newspanel SEPT 20 . . . MENIN ROAD . . . BRITISH LOSS
22,000 MEN GAIN 800 YARDS . . . SEPT 25 . . . POLYGON WOOD
. . . BRITISH LOSS 17,000 MEN GAIN 1,000 YARDS.

During the newspanel two Lancashire Lasses walk across the stage, as if walking along a street.

First Girl Hey look, another casualty list. *(She goes with the Second Girl to look at the list.)* Makes you shiver, don't it?

Second Girl Ee! All those Arkwrights. That's three she's lost.

First Girl Four. It'll be 'Arry this time, used to be a loom jobber.

A Third Girl comes.

Third Girl *(calls)* What you looking at?

Second Girl Casualty list.

Third Girl Oh my God! Let's 'ave a look.

First Girl All those Arkwrights. Y'know they're bringing 'em 'ome at night now, don't yer?

Third Girl They're letting 'em out of the prisons an' all.

Second Girl What for?

Third Girl Because there's another big push coming, that's what I 'eard.

Second Girl 'Course, you work in munitions, don't yer?

Third Girl Yeah, first to 'ear about these things.

First Girl Get a good screw too, don't yer?

Third Girl Yeah! One girl in my department knocked up three pounds las' week.

First Girl Get away!

Second Girl That's where the money is! Wouldn't like to work down there, tho' . . . all those men . . .

Third Girl Yeah! An' it can be a bit dangerous an' all! We 'ad an explosion only last week, one of the girls got blown to smithereens. No use worrying, tho', is it? You've just got to carry on.

First Girl We're on overtime.

Third Girl Oh yeah! You're on cotton, aren't yer? My sister works down there.

First Girl Well, they're on some funny stuff this week. They say it's for shrouds! Makes yer shiver, don't it?

They all shiver.

Third Girl Gives me the willies! Sooner be on munitions.

Band WALTZING MATILDA

The music is distant at first.

Second Girl What's that then?

First Girl It's a band, innit?

They run downstage and peer out towards the back of the audience.

Third Girl It's the Aussies! *(Shouts.)* Up the Aussies!

The Girls smile and wave.

Newspanel OCT 12 . . . PASSCHENDAELE . . . BRITISH LOSS
13,000 MEN IN 3 HOURS . . . GAIN 100 YARDS.

Third Girl Don't they look brown!

First Girl 'Andsome.

Second Girl Lovely fellers!

They all shout, 'Up the Aussies!' 'Up the Anzacs!'

First Girl Oh, they've gone.

Band WALTZING MATILDA FADES OUT

Third Girl My sister goes out with an Aussie.

First Girl What the one in shrouds?

Third Girl No, she's on shirts. (*Half singing.*) Sister Susie's sewin' shirts for soldiers ... (*To the Band.*) Give us a note.

She is humming the tune.

Second Girl (*to First Girl*) Come on, we'll be late for work.

First and Second Girl Ta ra! See you later!

The First and Second Girl go. The Third Girl sings.

Song SISTER SUSIE'S SEWING SHIRTS

Sister Susie's sewing shirts for soldiers,
Such skill at sewing shirts my shy young sister Susie
shows,
Some soldiers send epistles, say they'd sooner sleep on
thistles,
Than the saucy, soft, short shirts for soldiers, sister Susie
sews.

Third Girl (*to the audience*) Hey, the war won't go on for ever. Let's sing, shall we? If I sing it again, will you join in with me?

She sings.

Sister Susie's sewing shirts for soldiers,
Such skill at sewing shirts my shy young sister Susie
shows,
Some soldiers send epistles, say they'd sooner sleep on
thistles,
Than the saucy, soft, short shirts for soldiers, sister Susie
sews.

She sings the chorus at double speed, but doesn't sing the last line, saying to the audience:

Can't 'car you! etc. (*When the song finishes.*) I'm off to work now. Ta ta.

Two Pierrots come on with three hats.

Newspanel 800,000 GERMANS STARVE TO DEATH THROUGH BRITISH BLOCKADE.

First Pierrot (*wearing British General's hat*) The prospects for 1918 are excellent. This year will see final victory.

Second Pierrot (*wearing German helmet*) Sieg für Deutschland.

First Pierrot (*putting on French kepi*) Et pour la France la gloire et la victoire.

Second Pierrot (*wearing German helmet*) Gott mit uns. (*Puts on British General's hat.*) And with us, old boy. If we continue this campaign the way we are going, we'll sew the entire thing up by 1918.

First Pierrot (*putting on German helmet*) Neunzehn hundert, neunzehn.

Second Pierrot Nineteen, twenty, twenty-five.

First Pierrot Fünf und zwanzig, dreissig...

Second Pierrot Thirty, thirty-five ... forty, forty-five, fifty, fifty-five, sixty, sixty-three, sixty-four – any advance on sixty-four? Plenty more numbers where they came from.

The three Lancashire Lasses reappear.

The Pierrots and the Girls Some soldiers send epistles, say they'd sooner sleep on thistles,

Than the saucy, soft, short shirts for soldiers,
Sister Susie sews.

Exeunt.

Band MARSEILLAISE

French Soldiers *line up for an advance.*

French Officer Alors. Again for the glory of France, prepare for the attack. En avant! ... En avant! ... Are you deaf?

French Soldier Non, mon capitaine.

French Officer What is this? A mutiny?

French Soldier We think it is stupid to go into the trenches again.

French Officer You don't think – you obey. If you refuse, you will be shot!

French Soldier Very well. We follow you – like lambs to the slaughter.

French Officer Bon. Like lambs to the slaughter ... Pour la gloire de la France! En avant!

French Soldier Baaa.

French Officer Vive la République!

The Men begin to advance towards the footlights.

Soldiers Baaa.

French Officer En avant!

Soldiers Baaa – baa.

French Officer and Soldiers Baaa – baaa – baaa ...

There is a burst of machine-gun fire. They collapse. Pause.

French Soldier Adieu la vie.

In believable French accents, all sing.

Song CHANSON DE CRAONNE

Adieu la vie,
Adieu l'amour,
Adieu à toutes les femmes.
C'est bien fini,
C'est pour toujours,

De cette guerre infâme.
C'est à Craonne,
Sur le plateau,
Qu'ils ont laissé leur peau:
Car ils sont tous condamnés,
Ce sont les sacrifiés.

Song I DON'T WANT TO BE A SOLDIER

I don't want to be a soldier,
I don't want to go to war,
I'd rather stay at home,
Around the streets to roam,
And live off the earnings of a lady typist.

Newspanel THE WAR TO END WARS ... KILLED TEN MILLION ... WOUNDED TWENTY-ONE MILLION ... MISSING SEVEN MILLION.

I don't want a bayonet in my belly,
I don't want my bollocks shot away,
I'd rather stay in England,
In merry, merry England,
And fornicate my bleeding life away.

Slide Sequence:

Slide 42: Repeated.

Slide 48: Canadian infantrymen in trench. One fast asleep, another writing home.

Slide 31: Repeated.

Slide 49: Five Tommies trying to pull a field gun out of the mud.

Slide 50: A company of French Poilus marching past with rifles at the slope.

Slide 51: Two weary British officers, both in battle dress, one with bandaged head.

Slide 52: Two young Canadian soldiers, leaning against spiked boards, one writing a letter.

Slide 53: A long line of Tommies walking away from the camera, following the direction of a trench.

Song

AND WHEN THEY ASK US

(Tune: 'They wouldn't believe me')

The Men sing.

[42] And when they ask us, how dangerous it was, [48]
Oh, we'll never tell them, no, we'll never tell them: [31]
We spent our pay in some café, [49]
And fought wild women night and day,
'Twas the cushiest job we ever had. [50]

And when they ask us, and they're certainly going to ask
us, [51]

The reason why we didn't win the Croix de Guerre, [52]
Oh, we'll never tell them, oh, we'll never tell them [53]
There was a front, but damned if we knew where.

Finale

OH IT'S A LOVELY WAR

The Women join in.

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,
Oh, oh, oh, it's a lovely,
Oh, oh, oh, it's a lovely war!

CURTAIN

Afterword

by Victor Spinetti

I didn't relish the idea of a show about World War One. The thought of that war made me sick. Poppy day, the Last Post, silence at the Cenotaph! All those young lives lost! To what purpose? God, how I hated those songs! But Gerry Raffles assured us it was only the way the BBC crowd sang them. Joan said she agreed and began to distribute books, memoirs and histories by men who'd lived through it all, poets and patricians, generals and general dogsbodies. There were copies of *The Illustrated War News*, which was published during that war, photographs, statistics and paper for notes.

We all knew something of the background to that war but I never knew that all the fuses for the shells were made in Britain and that the Germans bought their share from us, during the war. I didn't know that the women who worked in the munitions factories had their hands dyed yellow, permanently, from the saltpetre. Nor did I have any idea of our losses in that war. Ten million dead. Twenty-one million wounded. Seven million missing. At Passchendaele alone, thirteen thousand men were lost in three hours. Haig's comment was, 'Mostly gamekeepers and servants'.

They'd gained one hundred yards.

Joan had a way of working of her own. One of the earliest sessions stays in my mind. It was a trench scene.

'Put out all the lights in the theatre,' she said, 'Rehearsal lighting, exit signs too.'

The men on stage were sitting or half lying down. It was very dark. Only a little grey light filtered in high up in the flies.

'Half of you make your way to the back of the stalls. Not a sound, mind. Right? Now listen . . .'

Long silence . . .

Someone at the back changed position and clutched at a seat.

'What was that?' she asked the group on stage. Several guessed. One got it right.

'Who was it?' No one knew. 'Listen again. . . . What can you hear outside?'

We told her, one by one. Someone actually heard the traffic on Stratford Broadway, a quarter of a mile away.

'Well that's how it would be when one says, "They're copping it down Railway Wood tonight."'

'That's Hill sixty.'

'No, not that. . . . Listen! . . .'

And she made Colin Kemball climb the highest ladder to the flies to sing, 'Stille Nacht'.

'It's somebody singing.'

'Is it those Welsh bastards in the next trench?'

'No, it's Jerry!'

They kept that atmosphere, throughout the run.

There was a drill scene in Joan's outline and Gerry contacted a real army sergeant and asked him to drill us.

'We'll get this right, if nothing else,' said Gerry.

Well, the sergeant arrived just when we were working on the gentle promenade scene.

'Clear the decks!' he commanded, 'And no women!'

The women disappeared. I didn't know but they crept quietly into the gallery, to enjoy the fun.

'Where are your rifles?'

'We don't have any . . . sir.' said Murray Melvin.

'That's O.K. The Old Contemptibles didn't 'ave none neither, when war broke out.'

'Will these do?' said Murray. He'd found some walking sticks and a sunshade from the promenade scene. With a lot of bullying and blaspheming the drill sergeant took over. It may have done us all good but it was far too obscene for public consumption, let alone the Lord Chamberlain.

'What can we do with it?' said Joan, 'I don't want to lose his expression.'

'Don't think the audience would have a clue as to what he was saying.' I told her, 'I know I didn't when I was in the army. It was "Yer uckenspinskerdereye. Yersilbucharficsuden."'

'That's it!' she cried, 'You've got it! Do it in gibberish! Try it!'

I went right into it. The men played up. When I turned around Joan was crying with laughter.

'They'd give a thousand quid for that at the Palladium.'

Indeed, that's how I remember working with her, gales of laughter. She could get mad and throw her hat at us but the next minute she'd be laughing.

'I've just committed a murder!' she said one day, after she'd thrown out some inquisitive journalist. Then she burst out laughing.

Joan was my university. We were never without books -- books about architecture, art, music, literature, language, poetry. We'd delve into the backgrounds of the plays we did, and of some we couldn't afford to do. There would be great discussions sometimes. The most timid person would suddenly prove to be the cleverest.

Joan should have been running an academy of Dramatic Art. If you wanted to understand her, you'd have to pull back the camera, first, finding her in the part of London the theatre was in, then in the city and then this island, finally, the world.

She spoiled me for much of the West End acting. Often, when I go to the theatre, I feel like shouting, 'No! I don't believe you!' Not because they're wrong but because they're all doing it so beautifully.

So, it seems, If you're to act truly, you must stop 'acting'. It sounds ridiculous but it only means cutting the superfluous, cutting trying to be great . . .

Alright, so you're feeling depressed tonight. Well, be depressed. Hamlet or Falstaff or whoever it is, will soon recover their spirits. Even if you're in mourning . . . Well, who isn't? Just don't try forcing yourself to be full of joy. Don't rise to a performance. Just step on to that stage. You've come from the place you've discovered. Now, you're there!

Our work at Stratford was not interpretation. It was creation. You don't invent a character. You imagined everything that surrounded him, influenced him, gave him his history.

We never learnt a line. We were never given moves. We knew, instinctively, where we would be in relation to the other characters. On a two-minute scene, in which you weren't playing a leading part but just walking the street, hearing a shot -- learning that Archduke Ferdinand had been assassinated -- she

might spend hours. We had to re-evaluate everything, question God, religion, the state, power, belief and disbelief.

'Here's your cybernetics,' she told us, 'Put all your findings into a computer, with your loves, hates and fears – don't leave them out, they're your strength . . . And then, forget them all. You don't worry about such things when you're on stage.'

On our opening night, in Stratford, I was standing in the wings when the glow of a cigarette appeared. It was herself.

'We don't have an opening for the show,' she said.

'Yes, you do! You have "Row, Row, Row".'

'That's a song, not an opening. Why don't you go out there and talk to the audience?'

'Me? What about?'

'Don't ask me! You always have plenty to say for yourself. Ask them how they are – and wait for an answer – but don't tell jokes!'

Well, I did it! For the first time in my life I just stood there and talked to friends. Joan wanted me to break the ice, to destroy the barrier between them and us. Perhaps she thought it would encourage them to participate in the show. The proscenium arch has often served as a rood screen behind which the priests perform their mystery and magic. It can be of service, of course, if you wish to distance your picture by framing it. In our case, we needed them with us for our lovely war.

So, every night I would go out and talk, sometimes for a minute, sometimes for a while. If anyone joined in, as they did at Stratford, it became a feature of the show. Sometimes I felt like the chap running the Pierrot troupe – on the beach at Ramsgate.

'Everybody in? Only twenty of you? We'd better get going. If it comes on to rain, we'll get the deck chairs wet.'

One night, a journalist from one of the big papers was supposed to be coming. We went up on time. There was no sign of him. We carried on as usual. It must have been close on ten minutes before he rolled up.

'Hullo!' I shouted, 'Good evening. Where have you been?'

He was embarrassed.

'Couldn't find a parking space,' he muttered.

'You've missed some of my best bits. We could go back and do it again.'

'No!' from some of the audience. And we went on.

Lovely War was one of the two shows I was proud to be in. The other was *The Hostage* by Brendan Behan, where we let fall all the world's flags when we heard that the young hostage, who'd been parked with us, was about to be shot. But *Lovely War* wasn't just a show. It was a revelation.

