



GALLERY  
PLAYERS  
present

# OH, WHAT A LOVELY WAR!

SIR JOHN  
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IPSWICH

26TH MARCH  
TO 4TH APRIL  
2014

# OH, WHAT A LOVELY WAR!

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## Words from WW1

*A glossary of terms, expressions and slang words used in 1914*

<b>Ack emma:</b>	military shorthand for a.m.
<b>Alleyman:</b>	army slang for a German soldier, from the French word for Germany – <i>Allemagne</i> .
<b>The Boche:</b>	The Germans. The term is derived from the French slang word <i>Alboche</i> , which means German cabbage.
<b>Jerry:</b>	nickname given to Germans.
<b>Joe Soap:</b>	slang for an average man.
<b>Lucifer:</b>	slang for match.
<b>Napoo:</b>	slang for “it's over”, “there's nothing more” (a corruption of the French “ <i>il n'y a plus</i> ”).
<b>A number 9:</b>	army slang for laxative.
<b>Phosgene:</b>	a poisonous colourless gas used as a chemical weapon.
<b>Salient:</b>	a battlefield feature that projects into enemy territory. The area around Ypres was also known as the Salient.
<b>Sub:</b>	reference to a sub-lieutenant, the rank below lieutenant in the British army.
<b>Sweep:</b>	reference to a sweep-stake. The soldiers would put bets on who was most likely to be the next man killed in action.
<b>Tar:</b>	slang for a sailor.
<b>Tommy:</b>	British army slang used to refer to the lowest ranking soldier (a private). It is said to have originated from Private Tommy Atkins who distinguished himself in Wellington's army at the Battle of Waterloo.
<b>Skite:</b>	boast (from Scotland and Northern England).
<b>Trench feet:</b>	soldiers in the trenches found themselves continually walking through mud and water. When the feet were unable to dry out the skin became rotten and resulted in a painful condition where the feet swelled up. In severe cases soldiers were unable to walk and had to be hospitalised.
<b>Whizz bang:</b>	originally, the noise made by shells from German 7mm field guns. The soldiers would hear the whizzing sound made by the travelling shell before the “bang” from the gun itself. Later used to refer to any form of German field artillery shells.
<b>Wipers:</b>	British soldiers' name for the Belgian town of Ypres.



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COMMENCEMENT OF THE FIRST WORLD WAR  
1914-1918

BY JOAN LITTLEWOOD'S THEATRE WORKSHOP,  
CHARLES CHILTON, GERRY RAFFLES  
AND MEMBERS OF THE ORIGINAL CAST

## Production Team:-

Director	<b>James Hayward</b>
Musical Director	<b>Joe Cleary</b>
Dances Choreographed by	<b>Alison Baker</b>
Stage Management	<b>Ellie Whitmore &amp; Steve Wooldridge</b>
Set Design	<b>Dave Borthwick</b>
Lighting Design	<b>Dan Scarlett</b>
Lighting Operative	<b>Claire Simpson</b> <i>Assisted by Ed Maudsley &amp; Nick Cooper</i>
Sound	<b>Steve Rowe</b>
Costumes	<b>Khaki Devil &amp; Lynne Mortimer</b>
Properties	<b>Khaki Devil &amp; Lynne Mortimer</b>
Front of House	<b>The Merry Roosters</b>
Programme	<b>Steve Taplin</b>
Publicity	<b>Lynne Mortimer &amp; Steve Taplin</b>
Schools Liason	<b>Steve Wooldridge</b>
Producer	<b>Steve Taplin</b>
Production Assistant	<b>Steve Wooldridge</b>



# OH, WHAT A LOVELY WAR!

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## ***The First World War – a Pierrot Show?***

It was when Joan Littlewood, the visionary director and co-creator of *Oh What A Lovely War* was working with her partner Gerry Raffles on the first outline script that the idea struck her:

“Gerry! They must all be pierrots. The War is a pierrot show. It's the right period and, after all, war is only for clowns.”

And so the framing device for what was to become one of the most significant pieces of British theatre in the latter part of the 20<sup>th</sup> Century was decided.

The initial idea for the Theatre Workshop to create a “musical entertainment” using songs from the First World War came from Gerry Raffles, the company's general manager. He had heard a BBC radio programme written by Charles Chilton called, after one of the songs, *A Long, Long Trail*.

Raffles wrote (in the sleeve notes to the original cast recording): “When I heard the 1914-18 soldiers' songs on Charles Chilton's programme, the soldiers seemed to come alive again and I was left wondering how many of the men who wrote the songs had lived through to see the peace ... We thought that if we could present these songs on our stage it might bring home to the young people of today that war as it is lived is not the thing of glory that it is often presented as being.”

The format adopted by Littlewood allowed her to juxtapose the jaunty songs and improvised sketches delivered by her performers, with an overhead panel that at key moments screened the ever-mounting casualty figures.

The show opened at the Theatre Royal Stratford East in 1963 – something of an eventful year – the Beatles released their first LP and the political establishment was rocked by the Profumo affair. It was an instant success, moved into the West End and then ran on Broadway in 1964, where it was nominated for four Tony awards, with the “Best Performance by a Featured Actor in a Musical Award” picked up by Victor Spinetti.

The Pierrot Show framing device was dispensed with in the film adaptation (1969), although the sea-side location was retained, and the much of the action was shot on Brighton's West Pier. Joan Littlewood supported the making of the film, but took no part in its production. The director was Richard Attenborough and its cast included a roll-call of the aristocrats of the British acting establishment: Sir Laurence Olivier, Maggie Smith, Sir Michael Redgrave and his daughter Vanessa. Field Marshall Douglas Haig was played by Sir John Mills.

The 1963 production was heavily influenced by the widespread historical view that the conduct of the First World War was a shambolic mess and the common soldiers were “lions led by donkeys”. It was also produced when the “Ban the Bomb” campaign was at its height and the establishment was for the first time being subjected to biting attack from satirical publications (e.g. *Private Eye*) and on television (*That Was The Week That Was*).



In many ways, it says more about 1960s attitudes than it does about the First World War. But it is wrong to claim, as Education Secretary Michael Gove has done recently that the show “denigrates the patriotism, humour and courage demonstrated by ordinary British soldiers”. On the contrary, central to its success is the fact that the story is told from the point of view of the Tommies in the trenches.

In our production we have tried, without in any way playing down the horror of war or the magnitude of the slaughter, to emphasise the play's portrayal of our forebears, the ordinary men and women who, by accident or design, were caught up in the terrible conflict.

## What is a Pierrot Show?

British audiences in 1963 would have been more familiar with the concept of the Pierrot Show than we are today. Sea-side variety entertainment is a dying tradition now, except in the major holiday resorts or holiday villages and parks like Butlins. Early in the last century, Pierrot Shows, were all the rage, and Edwardian holidaymakers and day-trippers would flock to them. They were performed either in the purpose-built sea-side theatres – often at the end of the pier – or on make-shift stages put up on the beaches and promenades with the audience seated in deck-chairs. Each member of the “concert party” would be able sing and dance, and all the companies shared one common feature – the trademark white costume of the sad-faced clown with a ruffle at the neck and black pom-poms sewn down the front. Larger resorts would boast several Pierrot Shows, and it is reckoned that between 1890, when the first troupe was created by singer and banjo-player Clifford Essex, and 1930 some 500 professional companies worked the British sea-side.



A “Concert Party” in 1916

**Theatre director Joan Littlewood**, was a subversive genius who, with her pioneering Theatre Workshop, broke the mould of British drama.

She set up her forum for the people, the first of its kind since Shakespeare, in defiance of establishment-supported theatre.

With her long-time love Gerry Raffles, Littlewood settled her workshop at Stratford, East London, as a "*place where people could act happily*".

Raffles dealt with all the administration of the Theatre Royal productions, leaving Littlewood free to express her creative spirit. Out went fussy sets, footlights, stage make-up and ham acting.

The creator of *Look Back in Anger*, John Osborne, called his characters soft in comparison with hers. Richard Harris, Brian Murphy and Barbara Windsor all flourished under Littlewood's guidance.

Radical and outspoken, she was feared by the authorities and snubbed by the Arts Council. She was spurned by the BBC and refused entry to a radio studio where she was due to record a play.

It seemed she was ahead of her time. Fifty years later, the same corporation serialised her memoirs, and brought to radio for the first time Littlewood's most celebrated creation, *Oh What a Lovely War*.

This play came about after a conventional play about World War I was dramatically altered in 1963, when Littlewood decided that "*war is for clowns*".

With her incomprehensible sergeant-major's drill and French Cavalrymen charging into battle on hobby-horses, Littlewood combined slapstick humour with serious satire to set a new style in improvised theatre.

But the company was scuppered by its own success. Over the next decade, its actors were poached for television, and when Gerry Raffles died suddenly in 1975, Littlewood's life took on the aspect of one of her own dramatic creations.

Grief stricken and dismayed by the decline in quality of her ensemble, she closed the door on her Theatre Workshop.

In 1975, she left the theatre forever and moved abroad. A woman of extremes, Littlewood shared her time between a tiny flat in southern France, the vineyards of Bordeaux and a convent, where she steadfastly withstood any religious conversion.

In this environment of self-induced poverty, she was found and befriended by Baron Philippe de Rothschild. His long-time platonic consort, Littlewood lived at times in his Chateau Mouton Rothschild, which she always called "*a stable, converted in the 18th century*".

When Playboy magazine came to interview the Baron, Littlewood arrived at the dinner table dressed as a rabbit, complete with pompom attached.

### ***Enduring legacy***

This very individual self-creation had dragged herself from the poverty of South London to RADA on a scholarship. But she soon left, walked to Manchester and entered repertory theatre there.

Neither of her parents could read or write, and she was a self-professed "*vulgar woman of the people*".

In 1998, the only caveat Littlewood imposed on a young company's revival of *Oh What a Lovely War*, was that it wasn't staged at the National, that "*elitist and middle class anathema*".

She attacked everyone in the industry, and was freshly incensed in her eighties by the BBC's staging of *Oh What a Lovely War* as a radio piece, saying it was a visual event.

One of her most derided colleagues was her former assistant Philip Hedley. He once remarked: "*To know Joan is to be attacked by Joan, but the fact is she is a wonder. A ragamuffin, a nuisance, but a wonder.*"

Joan Littlewood, died aged 87 in 2002.





# OH, WHAT A LOVELY WAR!

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*Joan Littlewood,  
Theatre Royal Stratford East,  
& Oh, What A Lovely War!*



James Hayward (far right) our Director in a school production!



# OH, WHAT A LOVELY WAR!

## THE CAST

### *'The Merry Roosters Pierrot Troupe'*

Stephanie Brown *Britannia, 'Chanson de Craonne'*

Mike Cook *General Wilson, 'I Wore A Tunic'*

Phil Cory *Kaiser, Sir John French*

Ruth Hayward *'Keep The Home Fires Burning'*

Sam Horsfield *'I'll Make A Man of You'*

Roger Jackaman *M.C., Sergeant*

Martin Leigh *Lanrezac, Douglas Haig*

Laura Lucock *'Hitchy - Koo' Girl*

Tom Mayhew *'There's a Long, Long Trail'*

Matt Soper *'Far, Far From Wipers'*

Emily Watt *Sylvia Pankhurst, 'Sister Susie'*

Stephen Watt *Moltke, 'Goodbye-ee'*

**Generals, Officers, other ranks, British,  
Germans, Austrians, French, Russians,  
nurses, civilians etc. played by Members  
of the Cast.**





## The Merry Roosters



photos courtesy EADT

## In Rehearsal



## The Outbreak of the First World War – a brief history lesson

**Baldrick:** 'I heard that it started when a bloke called Archie Duke shot an ostrich 'cause he was hungry.'

**Blackadder:** 'I think you mean, it started when the Archduke of Austro-Hungary got shot.'

**Baldrick:** 'Nah, there was definitely an ostrich involved, sir.'

(from *Blackadder Goes Forth*, BBC 1989)

Although most of us will have a passing acquaintance with the notion that the First World War was, as Blackadder says, triggered by the assassination of the Archduke Franz Ferdinand, only the keenest historians are likely to know the reasons why or the full sequence of events. The opening scenes of *Oh What A Lovely War* only go some way to explaining the background to the conflict.

At the beginning of 1914, Britain, with George V on the throne, is the number one world power – ruling one quarter of the habitable surface of the globe. France also has a empire, as do Holland and Belgium. Russia, despite its huge land mass and massive resources is economically backward and still recovering from a humiliating defeat in a war with Japan in 1905.

Germany is a new nation, formed only in 1871 from Prussia and various smaller German states, but both its population and industrial output now exceed Britain's. Although a constitutional monarchy, the Kaiser has considerable power, including the right to declare war, and Kaiser Wilhelm II has ambitions to make Germany a world power on a par with his European neighbours. His army is some three million strong, compared to Britain's less than one million.

France, which was at war with Prussia in 1870, is distrustful of German ambitions, but thinks it can protect itself by forming an alliance with Russia. These two have an "understanding" with Britain that the countries will come to each other's defence – the "Triple Entente".

In the middle of Europe, the Austro-Hungarian Empire, capital Vienna, is still ruled by the Hapsburg dynasty, which once controlled much of the continent.



Kaiser "Bill"



Austria lost territory when Italy was unified in 1871, but still tries to keep control of the Slavic states to its south east. A “Quadruple Alliance” has been formed between Austria-Hungary, Germany, Bulgaria and the Ottoman Empire (Turkey).

Enter Serbia. The Serbs would like to see all the Slav people united within their own state – and they are backed by Russia. But this would mean unification with neighbouring Bosnia-Herzegovina, and that country was taken over by Austria in 1908. Nationalist sentiment is running high in Serbia and Bosnia.

In June 1914, to consolidate its hold over Bosnia, Austria sends in 70,000 troops.

Then, on 28 June 1914, Archduke Franz Ferdinand, the heir to the Austrian throne, and his wife Sophie arrive in Sarajevo, the Bosnian capital, to review those troops. When their car takes a wrong turn, and the driver attempts to reverse, the couple, who are in the back seat, are shot dead at point blank range by militant Bosnian Serb Gavrilo Princip.

The assassination sparks a month of desperate diplomatic and military manoeuvring.

Serbia refuses to give in to Austria's demands to stop interfering in Bosnia, so Austria declares war on Serbia (28 July). Russia will not stand by and see Serbia threatened, and mobilises its forces (29-30 July). In support of its ally Austria, Germany demands that Russia demobilises, at the same time mobilising its own forces. When Russia refuses to back down, Germany declares war on Russia (1 August).

Germany demands that Russia's ally France remain neutral, then sends troops into Luxemburg on 2 August, declaring war on France the next day. On 4<sup>th</sup> August, the Belgians refuse to let German troops cross their borders to invade France, so Germany declares war on Belgium, too. On the same day, Britain declares war on Germany.

And, as the British Soldier puts it in *Oh, What a Lovely War!* “Blimey! We're off!”



The Archduke Ferdinand and his family



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Buttermarket Centre  
All at Eastern Angles Theatre Company

**Gallery Players** were formed in 1985 by Pat Taplin to produce rarely performed plays and musicals that larger companies would find uneconomic or which only use a few actors. The company quickly established a reputation for quality and excellence. Our aims are broadly speaking:

**To exploit a niche for staging productions that are progressive and exciting in both content and execution.**

**To embrace both new and established works.**

**To act as vehicle for engaging new talent as well as established members.**

**To foster a group of actors and technicians that are truly a community.**

**To foster links with schools and colleges.**

We generally stage three productions a year.

Performing lesser known shows is always difficult, particularly when it comes to building an audience and balancing the books, but by sticking to our aims we have grown an audience, that, hopefully, trust us to produce interesting work.

Although we have a strong pool of performers new blood and talent is always welcome as are people who want to work on the technical side.

The company is run by a small steering group: Dave Borthwick, Helen Clarke, Richard Healey, Steve Taplin and Steve Wooldridge .

We encourage other directors to take the reins of their own pet projects, allowing them to cast freely and create individual shows with the backing of our excellent technical and production crew. Our only insistence is that the final show should entertain and stimulate our discerning audience and should exude that sense of professionalism we strive for.

Gallery have won several awards including the NODA Eastern Area Shield for Best Production with 'Carnival' & 'Putting it Together' and the Councillors Cup for 'The Bakers Wife' and 'Kiss Me Like You Mean It'.

Please visit our website at [www.galleryplayers.co.uk](http://www.galleryplayers.co.uk) for details of all our shows past and future. Please sign up with your email address if you would like us to keep you informed of what we are doing and receive our 'newsletters' which will give details of any workshops/auditions we may be holding.

Our Motto is '**Making Theatre Exciting**' which we like to think we do, most of the time!

## *Past Shows:-*

1985 Cowardy Custard, 1986 Happy as a Sandbag, 1987 Sail Away, 1988 Something's Afoot, 1989 Company, 1990 The Best Little Whorehouse in Texas, 1991 The Hired Man, 1992 Snoopy - The Musical, A Little Night Music, 1993 Stepping Out, Cabaret, 1994 Assassins, The Ghost Train, Into the Woods, Hobson's Choice, 1995 Man of La Mancha, Steel Magnolia's, City of Angels, Scent of Flowers, 1996 Little Shop of Horrors, The Most Happy Fella, Blue Remembered Hills, 1997 Dancing at Lughnasa, Pacific Overtures, Chicago, Hard Times, 1998 The Resistible Rise of Arturo Ui, Sweeney Todd (The Demon Barber of Fleet Street), Shadowlands, Something's Afoot, 1999 Carnival, Trip to Bountiful, The Boys From Syracuse, Tons of Money, 2000 On Golden Pond, The Bakers Wife, Kiss of the Spiderwoman, A Slice of Saturday Night, One Flew Over The Cuckoo's Nest, 2001 Mrs Warren's Profession, A Funny Thing Happened On The Way To The Forum, Billy, Breezblock Park, 2002 The Memory of Water, Flora The Red Menace, A Slice of Saturday Night, Radio Times, 2003 Kiss Me Like You Mean It, Days of Hope, Honk!, And A Nightingale Sang, 2004 Bouncers, Merrily We Roll Along, Talking Heads, You're A Good Man Charlie Brown, 2005 Kindertransport, She Loves Me, A Night At The Dogs, 2006 Amy's View, Passion, With Love, Colder Than Here, 2007 This Happy Breed, Grand Hotel, You Want Chilli Sauce With That & Marry Me A Little, The Sunshine Boys, 2008 Oh Kay!, Spend Spend Spend, To Kill A Mockingbird, 2009 The Long Road, Follies, Flare Path, 2010 Ordinary Days, Rent, Spring & Port Wine, 2011 My Mother Said I Never Should, Our House, Heroes, 2012 Putting it Together, Love Story, Be My Baby, 2013 A Man of No Importance, Into the Woods, The Importance of Being Earnest, 2014 Oh, What a Lovely War!

## **Forthcoming:-**

Summer, *Galileo* - New Wolsey Theatre (see back page for details)

Autumn, *The History Boys* - Sir John Mills Theatre.



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