



## **DID OH WHAT A LOVELY WAR SHAPE OUR VIEW OF WW1?**

### **Video transcript – “Songs, a few battles and some jokes”**

Oh What a Lovely War was not a downbeat theatrical experience – far from it!

The cast performed numerous cheerful, catchy, funny and sentimental songs such as Pack up Your Troubles and Keep the Home Fires Burning - even raising the house lights and encouraging the audience to join in.

But this was a Joan Littlewood production and so points had to be made.

The first was the pointlessness of the war. As the Pierrots performed their jolly musical numbers from the trenches a newspanel logged the number of casualties against ground gained, suggesting the futility of such attacks.

The second point was that lessons could be learned from the past.

With the increase in military might and the power of modern nuclear weapons, military incompetence was more dangerous than ever before.

Reviews were very favourable, but noted that it was a production with a partisan point of view. The Guardian called it “as unfair as any powerful cartoon”.

However, the show successfully appealed to a wide cross-section of the public.

Veterans of the war could buy tickets and turn up for a nostalgic sing song; experienced theatre-goers lapped up the ‘challenging’ production, and angry young men and women identified with the radical politics.