

THE HERALD - AUGUST 08, 2008

OH! WHAT A LOVELY WAR - August 2008

As part of its summer festival, Scottish Youth Theatre has presented three different plays, one being the First World War satirical musical, Oh! What a Lovely War. Directed and designed by former Citz-based Kenny Miller, from opening scenes of cannon-fodder by the seaside in 1914 the atmosphere of the production is oppressive and bleak. With a monochrome candy-striped motif in staging and costuming, camp showgirls merge with thin young men destined for death.

The production juxtaposes elements of circus performance with the rising death toll. The Master of War and puppeteer character is the linking element, overlooking everything from his balcony. Why he mimics the make-up and mannerisms of Batman's Joker so blatantly remains a mystery, but the American drawl seems a nod to all those transatlantic millionaires who feared a time of peace.

Musically, there are moments wide of the mark. Proper diction and the projection of the text are frequently lacking. Had all the soloists been amplified, and not merely a select few, that might have been addressed.

The show's most powerful moment comes when the young cast breach the frontier of the stage and sing in the aisles by candlelight. Their voices create a greater feeling of remembrance than the prominently-placed poppy wreath.