

# 'Oh! What A Lovely War'

At Court Theatre

anon.

1967

Detroit is going through a lot of changes. Plum Street has made the inner city a nice place to visit and the Grande Ballroom has made tripping out a routine. But the most important change is at 2555 Burns Avenue, home of the Court Players.

The Court Theatre is headed by Clyde Vinson, speech instructor at Wayne. His resident acting company consists of thirteen University students, most of whom are Detroiters. Their current production is Joan Littlewood's OH WHAT A LOVELY WAR.

LOVELY WAR is a British import revealing through song and dance, the futility of World War I. Vinson and company have revived the production hoping to satisfactorily replace MARAT/DE SADE which was called back to New York.

They've done a superior job.

David Darlow opens the show as a combination narrator/usher. After he comfortably seats the late comers, he introduces his troupe of twelve pierrots. They are going to perform a musical revue for the audience, but after the first few numbers, the audience begins to want out. The super blunders of World War hit a little too close to home. Songs like "Tipperary" and 'Pack Up Your Troubles' take on a new meaning when competing with electric news bulletins flashed on a screen at center stage.

Although LOVELY WAR starts on a cute note and the audience is tickled to see semi-bared bosoms, the authenticity of Miss Littlewood's history converts uproarious laughter into a nervous giggle.

Newspapers read: 21,000 AMERICANS BECOME MILLIONAIRES DURING WAR. BRITISH LOSE 11,619 MEN IN 15 HOURS, and TEN MILLION KILLED, SEVEN MILLION MISSING.

Even in a cabaret, war is hell.

Under Vinson's direction the Court Players have successfully integrated the music and muscle of the Great War. Rozanne Septak, Annette Winkler, Gail Bilto and Patricia Granfeldt assume the female roles as in the last Court production, HARRY THE RAT WITH WOMEN. Miss Septak especially shines in the song sequence BELGIUM PUT THE KIBOSH ON THE KAISER.

Fred Cahall, a newcomer at the Court Theatre comes through brilliantly funny as a Bayonet Drill Sergeant trying to teach his soldiers how to kill. Martin Molson, David Barlow and Dennis Patella portray the three soldiers.

In the CHRISTMAS DAY IN THE COOKHOUSE sequence, the music-hall atmosphere is replaced by a half-irritating silence in the audience. Half — irritating because we don't know how to react to the Germans singing carols for the British and exchanging gifts via an army boot tossed over the lines. It was an eerie scene.

But not as eerie as Detroit would be if this city did not support The Court Players. Since the demise of the Vanguard, the Hill-berry Classic (financed by Wayne) and the new Oakland group (financed by Bloomfield Hills) have tried to fill the void.

The Court Theatre Players have OH WHAT A LOVELY WAR February 1-4, 8-11 and 15-18. Tickets are at the FIFTH ESTATE Bookstore, Wayne Univ. Ticket office and at the door. Phone 822-6655 for information.

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