

# Arts



**A TWO-FACED WAR:** Michelle Hart is one of 15 York Theatre students in *Oh What A Lovely War*, a play that deals with the hardships of combat along with some comic relief.

## Play mixes puns and guns

By HEATHER SANGSTER

The moustached barker, addressing the lobby crowd, shouts out the wonders of an amazing new pill available for the mere price of one dollar while a dance hall girl flutters her lashes, and a clown turns cartwheels. Welcome, ladies and gentlemen, to the carnival world of York Theatre Department's production of Joan Littlewood's Theatre Workshop's *Oh, It's A Lovely War*, directed by Tom Diamond, at Atkinson Theatre until Nov. 28.

The opening scenes of the play are a grand extension of the gaiety and the exuberance of the lobby performers. One is treated to whirling lights, a jaunty vaudeville piano tune, and the shrieks of a troupe of dancing girls and robust clowns as they twist, flip, and cartwheel across stage.

The Ringmaster, elegantly dressed in black top hat and tails and with just enough wax on his handlebar moustache to hold it up, sashays into the spotlight and welcomes one and all to the magnificent circus.

At this point, I grabbed my play-

bill and reread it. Yes, this play was about World War I. But, for fear of missing the excitement on stage, I ignored my confusion and enjoyed the singing, the dancing, the telling of jokes and the rolling of eyelids.

Luckily, the eloquent Ringmaster was able to clue me in. This evening's main attraction was to be a lovely little ditty, entitled "Wargame," in which various countries would compete for top spots by being "the biggest thieves and liars and profiteers of the war."

Light song and dance routines, and short, farcical sketches introduce the various player countries of the wargame. The humour of the play lies in cleverly delivered bad jokes and well-placed puns. A German officer wears "kaiser" rolls on his uniform lapels, pre-war affairs are discussed between two businessmen doing a lively soft-shoe, and the daily war events, from the British perspective, are presented in the manner of a cooking show.

And then, without warning, the amusing tone of the play is gone. One is catapulted from the excitement and glitter of the vaudeville

stage into the bleak and numb reality of trench warfare where men go mad in the mud and soldiers who speak of the war, cry and fall to their knees. A newspaper boy, who rollerskates across the stage with the grace of a figure skater, shouts out the number of missing, wounded, and dead. The sound of the piano blends into the sound of a machine gun.

The frequent transitions in this play are achieved smoothly, forcing the audience to juggle their feelings of amusement and shock. The troupe of actors should be congratulated for their talent of switching from burlesque humour to intense drama without a hitch.

It is as easy to laugh and enjoy the comical moments of *Oh, It's A Lovely War* as it is to remain breathlessly horrified at the sight of the men fighting and dying in the trenches. *Oh, It's A Lovely War* can still be seen at the Atkinson Theatre tonight at 7 pm, Friday, Nov. 27 at 2pm, and Saturday, Nov. 28 at 7pm. (But get there early for the show in the lobby. It shouldn't be missed). Phone the box office at 736-5157 for tickets.

## Dancers prepare for Olympics

By LAUREN GILLEN

If you missed last week's performances by York University's upper level dancers then you've missed some of the finest entertainment York has to offer. The three-day event ran from Wednesday to Friday and showed the unusually high calibre of the students in this year's dance department.

Several dance pieces were performed and although the choreography of some of the works was done by teachers, many students also had the chance to show off the products of their creativity. More often than not, pieces both choreographed and performed by students had the greatest impact. The dancers not only performed with professional grace, style, and precision but were able to handle any unavoidable problems that arose.

As with any live performance there are minor catastrophes and for

the dance department, there was no exception. Wednesday's program was interrupted by a fire alarm and Burton Auditorium has to be evacuated. Undaunted, however, by the delay the dancers simply resume the dance in progress.

Worthy of mention are two dancers, Daniel Bélanger and Yves Poulin, whose choreographic talents and ability as dancers were particularly apparent. Bélanger showed considerable talent in an original work entitled "Sleeping Beauty," a story of a sultry love triangle between husband, wife and mistress. The choreography of Poulin's "Lost Soul" brilliantly displayed the striking imagery of souls in Hell. Poulin and Bélanger collaborated in their performance of "Teenagers on Vacation," a hilarious and slightly bawdy view of teens and their awakening sexuality.

Eight of the dancers and three of

their instructors will be representing York University in a special cultural performance at the upcoming winter Olympics. The dancers have been working very hard in preparation for an event at the Olympics called "Danscene." This event is a non-competitive display of the talents of young dancers in universities and colleges all across Canada.

Along with the physical and mental task of preparing for the Olympics there are financial considerations as well. The dance department must raise enough money for transportation and accommodations in Calgary.

Apart from last week's performance to raise money, the department is also having a fund-raising luncheon and auction today (Nov. 26) from noon till 2 p.m. in the Purple Lounge of the Fine Arts Building.

## Theatre dept presents play about women in war

By CHRISTINE BOUCHARD

The booming voice of Prime Minister MacKenzie King is heard coming out of a speaker as he talks about the war. This is how the York Theatre Department's production of *Waiting for the Parade*, a play about five women living in Calgary during World War II, begins.

*Parade* examines the lives of five women who are all members of a war-time association, "The Red Triangle Hostesses," which for example knits socks for and sends food to the soldiers in the war. But on a deeper level, *Parade* is about any woman in any war who, left behind, must deal with her thoughts of infidelity, guilt, loneliness, fear, anger and resentment.

The contradictions between the feelings of the characters in the play and their duty to the war effort is best realized in a scene between two of the younger women. Wendy White portrays a woman whose husband is off fighting in the war but, because she is lonely, is working at the sandwich wagon of a near-by plant to meet men. On the other hand, Clare-Jane Denman plays a woman who is married to a man who because he is too old to fight, is unhappy that he is home. Her confession that she secretly wishes he go and fight creates the dynamic difference between the two women, but one that also brings them together under their mutual feelings of guilt.

While *Parade* works on the level of emotions, it also reflects the socio-political conflicts inherent in the war. For example, one of the women is a young German who has been in

Canada since she was 14. She must deal with the fact that her father has been placed in a POW camp because he was found to have German literature in his basement. Similarly, the older woman of the group considers herself to be the role model of patriotism and is trying to conceal the fact that her son has been arrested for distributing anti-war propaganda.

There are, however, some lighter moments in the play to contrast with the grim realities of the war. In one scene, the older woman makes a fuss about the lack of pears in a fruit package that the women are preparing for the soldiers. "We have red, orange, and purple," she says of the apples, oranges and grapes, "but there is no green to complement the other colours." The solution is suggested by one of the other women who says that she could go home and get her pickles.

During the performance, the audience was encouraged to participate when they were given the lyrics to "Lily Marlene" during a sing-song. Several people got into the spirit and sang along. Members of the cast paid special attention to the audience and on occasion addressed them directly in the course of the play.

Phyllis Nowakowski, Carolyn Hay, Diane Flacks, as well as, White and Denman, all must be congratulated on pulling off a difficult task: dealing with the ramifications of the war on a number of levels in a way that recognizes both the sad and humorous sides of the war. The play has two final performances on November 27 at 7pm and November 28 at 2pm in Atkinson Theatre.



**WHERE'S DR. SCHOLL'S WHEN YOU NEED HIM?** Wendy White portrays a lonely wife looking for male companionship in York's Theatre Department production of *Waiting For The Parade*.