

The horrors of war -- 'life through death'

By J. MAGGOT

We come after the fact. Our pens and paper can only report what they see as a result. We are just observers on the scene. The participants lie rotting.

There are ditches winding in every direction imaginable. They come out of the blue, and swirl towards some equally unknown place. Quite a metaphor of man's path in relation to his existence, for it starts and ends, at no place special, for no reason.

And it is apparent in the midst of this rather depressing remainder of war, that mankind's raison d'existence lies somewhere not far away serving little maggots. Have you ever seen a maggot? They are porky little white sausages that squirm through open sores full of pus, or through the sockets of eyeballs, as a head lies shriveled like a prune, from natural decay.

The smell of the stacked bodies in the ditches is overwhelming. We have to wear masks, other-wise puke. My eyes are tearing from the stench. Rats are waddling around, incensed with the idea of their meal about to be disposed of properly... if there is such a thing.

A British soldier in a bull-dozer is scraping up the corroded limbs and buttocks and trying to pile them in mass graves. He's grasping hold of a crucifix and repeating over and over, "sweet Jesus... sweet Jesus..."

You can hear the caterpillar tracks squeaking and crunching on the mud as the wind blows. Barbed wire seems to be wrapped around every possible corner. There are four watch-towers in each corner. There is a sign in German that is faded, but I can make out the word Juden.

A chaplain is sitting at a make-shift desk in what once was the commandants office. To his left, since the war probably started, is a bible. It seems so small.

The commanding officer paces back and forth chain smoking on smelly Russian butts. A Russian counter-part stands at the window picking on his warts rooted deep in his fat chin.

Apparently the Americans and British aren't the only ones to have come across this horrid type of place. Reports claim Russians as far away as Romania, liberating such camps.

Make no mistake. This was a systematic plan. It didn't happen over night. It has its two elements of crime, actus reus and mens rea. Men sat down for weeks planning how to dispose of human beings. At first shooting them in ditches was fun. Eichman would come himself and blast a couple of them with his luger. They say one day though, some brains squirted on his SS ensign on his collar, causing him to turn green. A chicken-farmer turned mass murderer even has his moments of fear.

You should see the chimney. They say on peak days when they were shoveling them in like coal on a steam train, a red haze covered the horizon. Smoke from burning corpses is thick you know. Lots of carbon. Smells just dreadful, makes even the loyalist of nazis, wrench away.

But then, it wasn't just in Germany with them, now was it? Go anywhere in Europe. Political prison camps have long been

situated all over the continent like pimples on a man with acne.

An old stumped-over man has been brought in. Oh what a sight, to see a living skeleton. He is so yellow and drawn. His hair is white as snow. He is mumbling in yiddish. The Russian commander understands a bit... he's still talking.

It seems the old man was only forty, and a rabbi, before they grabbed him from Munchen and plopped him in. He insists on a proper service. The chaplain is beginning to cry again.

And yet, as they lead the townspeople through to see what the hell went on only minutes away from their dining rooms, where they sat eating the flesh of other animals, nothing seems to have changed.

It's as if this had been happening forever. Man always has war. Man always thrives on the destruction of his own kind. Even in the gas chambers you can see evidence of this struggle of naturally violent man.

When they dropped the cyanide pellets down into the vents, the poor bastards stuffed in there like sardines in a can, fought to get to the top of the little chamber to breathe the last air that didn't choke them to death. It could take up to half an hour before they would stop piling up like a pyramid. The gas goes to the bottom first.

Here is the vertical mosaic of our society. Here is the natural order of man. Mighty on the top, weak on the bottom. And it is here we ask, what good is it to live like this, fighting to get to the top? Look at them! Did they survive? This is what the struggle of life leads to... a most tragic ending, where everyone is no better off for it.

But who remembers? People will not care if billions are wiped out. And the answer is obvious. For while they lay moaning night after night, gay old Munchen carried on. Why not support such a spectacle in your backyard... does it affect you? Can you see what you are doing? No. You have a political conception, yes, and in theory you believe in it... but then when it becomes physical, when it becomes real and put into practice, you can not see what it has turned in to! And this error we make, will happen over and over again, because no man has dared stand up and question himself... except perhaps the victims of these places. And do you know what happened to them when they began to question what they meant to themselves... to God... they lost hope and the will to survive.

In the end, they marched passively to their deaths. Why fight what you can't change, they said. If it's not the gas, a gun, bat, knife, or German Shepherd will do it anyway.

And this rationale of, why fight it... spreads everywhere. Got to university and listen to its prisoners. Why fight the system its members say... everyone makes money and puts profit before their brother, so why shouldn't we. University, concentration camp, asylum, penitentiary, corporation, or church... they are all so similar. They have their member or prisoners whatever the case may be, and they all follow one another in line, reaching even higher levels of absurdity. No one dares speak what they feel. They

must fit, like a number in a computer or be regurgitated upon yet another chamber of idiocy we call life.

It is now, that I say, how truly hideous the face of life is... how small the individual should feel if he is honest with the predicament before him... but alas... man is dead... only his remains have been left behind to rot. We call this festering — life, but we all know we are born dying.

The men and women who have felt this overwhelming despair, have long been blocked from us by an invisible and absurd measurement of life called time. We can not properly communicate with

the generation preceding us. We can not hear, their warnings. We can not hear. And so, we will have forsaken the blackness of their memories... and it is this immature act that will cause us to, to fall for the same mistake, and our children after us... until...

Who knows how long our cycle of destruction can last... some say not much longer, others say for ages. Either way it does not matter. For the moment man forgets... everything is nullified. With no past there can be no present... and so no future. Try to remember.

EPILOGUE:

and can you see?
the god you rush to
every now and then
isn't there
don't look in your sheltered
cozy church
go out
into the fields
the camps
the streets
the seas
and see him
lying, twisted, half rotted, and so
very
alone.



photo — Kavanagh

Gilbert and Sullivan Fools and lovers - a review

By BECKIE LEAMAN

With all the words in the English language it is still impossible to accurately reproduce, between the pages of a newspaper, the atmosphere of a Gilbert & Sullivan Cabaret.

A Cabaret is not a show for the uninitiated. It is not designed to be an introduction to the witty world of G & S musicals. The whole idea of a cabaret is to tantalize the appetite with enticing musical tidbits, built around a central theme by some modern-day kindred spirit - in this case Peter MacRae.

Yes, it was a good show, a good evening.

"Fools and Lovers" (is there a difference?) is a topic loaded with infinite possibility, and one which was fully developed by Frederickton's G & S buffs.

Peter MacRae narrated what was more or less his brain-child; in a swirl of black velvet he swept by the candlelit tables and seated himself on stage with all the wellbred composure of the average Victorian gentleman, while under the flying fingers of pianist Leon Cole Memorial Hall turned into another world.

Suddenly the center aisle was filled with people - a quick impression of silk and lace, cummerbunds and tails, which sorted itself into twelve singer/dancers parading to the stage.

As they performed the first number "La Cachuca"; the players

achieved a sense of unity in their movements that is the basis of a successful performance.

Six ladies (Constance Atherton, Susan Dobson, Lexy Ervin, Anne Ingram, Maureen Miller and Andrea Walsh) and six men

(Frank Good, Matthew Hendrickson, Terry Horner, Kevin Patterson, Terry Pond and Richard Scott) formed the company. The dance number was an energetic introduction to the cast, almost bursting with spontaneous gaiety that infected the audience immediately.

A good beginning, it was unfortunately followed too soon with a handful of gentle solos that came too soon, and too many together. It was a disappointment that we were unable to fully appreciate Maureen Miller's "The Sun Whose Rays" - the song was right, but the mood of the moment was wrong.

The pace picked up remarkably with three perennial favourites from "HMS Pinafore".

"John Wellington Wells" was a triumph for Kevin Patterson, who sang it, and a real joy to listen to, especially enjoyed by the few children in the audience. It was the only break in a miracle of thematic continuity, having little or nothing to do with "Fools and Lovers".

Lexy Ervin was "Little Buttercup", perhaps one of the best loved G & S characters. Her voice is clear, true and strong; she handled the number well.

The youngest member of the cast and a recent addition to the Gilbert & Sullivan Society, Matthew Hendrickson, proved his worth with two pieces from the ever-popular "Mikado" - "Tit Willow" and "I've Got A Little List". Both well suited Mr. Hendrickson's comic talents.

Followers of Frederickton Gilbert & Sullivan will be familiar with Frank Good and Terry Horner, both of whom came up to their usual high standard of sound both in solo numbers and chorus work.

The ladies were certainly very competitive vocally, which seemed appropriate to the theme. The conclusion reached by Mr. MacRae in his entertaining narrative seemed to be that men and women were equal but different; a conclusion most of us reached long ago!

With wicked little jabs at Air Canada, politicians, and maiden aunts, the Vicoriana of G & S joined our own lives here and now in the intricacies of human nature that never seem to change.

Constance Atherton sang "A Garden Full of Posies", and made the plight of the aging maiden come alive - a little funny, a little sad - as she wondered at the twists in the path to true love. "Fools and Lovers" - "a somewhat frivolous evening" - somehow seemed summarized by that song.

The foolishness of humankind, and especially of infatuated humankind, is what it was all about. And nobody could show people themselves in quite the way that Gilbert & Sullivan do.