

WWI remembered

By HOWARD KAMAN

Marching to Armageddon: Canadians and The Great War: 1914-1919
by J.L. Granatstein and Desmond Morton
Lester & Orpen Dennys

People seem to have forgotten about the First World War.

At the time it was "The Great War," the war to end all wars. Then, less than 20 years after it ended, it was surpassed by another, even greater conflict, World War II. So, why remember it?

Because it forged a nation called Canada, according to a new book by J.L. Granatstein and Desmond Morton, *Marching to Armageddon*. Granatstein, a York history professor, and the University of Toronto's Morton have created a fascinating document.

The book is interesting in both its narrative and illustrations. It's so scattered with dozens of photographs and — even more interestingly — colour reproductions of period artwork, that the war comes to life even for the most remote reader. In other words, this is a World War One book with a difference — experience in the war is not necessary to understand it.

This seems to be very important to both Granatstein and Morton. As university professors, they both know the difficulty in making old history accessible to today's students. In this book, they have succeeded beautifully.

The book's narrative is written to be both engaging and educational. The authors take you right into the trenches for a blow by blow description of the events as they unfolded.

At the same time, the war is

looked at from a modern perspective. Granatstein and Morton describe, in a way that is both entertaining and thought-provoking, the effects that the war had on Canada as a country; how it both helped our nation form, and how it hindered it. For instance, although Canada largely consisted of the British and the French in 1914 (and still does), its third largest ethnic community was German. Considering Canada's stance in the war against the Germans, this caused quite a bit of tension.

It is this dual purpose of the narrative — as fascinating as a novel, but as informative as a reference work — that makes the book such a compelling read.

Marching to Armageddon covers both the positive and negative aspects of the First World War, and helps the reader realize that it was only the first chapter of a two-act play. At the end of the book, the authors describe the unveiling of the Vimy Ridge Monument, celebrating one of Canada's greatest military victories while, at the same time, remembering its losses. The authors recall how military jets flew over the monument in tribute, when it was unveiled in 1936, "unwitting precursors to another war."

That other war is the subject of *A Nation Forged In Fire*, this book's companion volume, to be published next September. These two books, as a set, are Lester & Orpen Dennys' featured release this year. They make a fine follow-up to last year's *Illustrated History of Canada*, a comprehensive masterpiece by six well-known professors that was an instant bestseller. If we take pride in our heritage, this book will be a best-seller too.

Les Miz

cont'd from p. 18

suits his character as the narrow-minded, nasty police inspector, and Janelle Hutchison and Graeme Campbell turn up in the most unexpected places to add a healthy dose of comic relief when the play reaches its darkest moments.

All of this talent, however, cannot save a production whose music is simplistic and boring. While there is rarely a spoken word during the three-hour ordeal, the show sounds like it only has three simple songs: One, the "Reaching the Depths of Despair" song, two, the "Revolution to Build a Brave New World" song, and three, the "Looks Like It's Time

for Comic Relief" song. The slightly pop beat — combined with lyrics that sound as though they were inspired by Tiffany — create some incredibly forgettable tunes. This weakness results in two-dimensional characters.

So, we arrive at the question of whether spending \$50 or even \$25 is worth it to see the latest "talk of the town." I think \$50 is a little steep just to say you saw *Les Miz*, but if you can stand the cramped quarters of the upper balcony for three hours, \$25 isn't an exorbitant amount to pay for an evening of visual spectacle.

Les Miserables will play at the Royal Alexandra Theatre probably until the new subscription season begins in September.

ARTS CALENDAR

Compiled By HOWARD KAMAN

GALLERIES

The Art Gallery of York University presents *From Concept to Context*, featuring the works of Robert Barry, Stanley Broun, Daniel Buren and Lawrence Weiner, until April 16. FREE.

Bethune College Gallery presents an Exhibition of Students Work from March 28-31. An opening reception will be held in the Gallery on Mon March 27. FREE

LECTURES/SEMINARS

The English Students Association presents *Science Fiction: A Symposium* from March 22-29. The speakers include U of T professor Peter Fitting, March 22; author Phyllis Gotlieb, March 23; author Steve Stirling, March 28 and author Judith Merrill, March 29. FREE. For more information, please call Paul at 222-9640.

THEATRE

York University's Department of Theatre presents Caryl Churchill's *Cloud Nine*, April 4-8 at 7 pm, in the Atkinson Theatre. Admission is \$7, \$5 for students. Call the box office at 736-5157.

LITERARY EVENTS

The Creative Writing Students Collective is launching its first literary review, *Poetic Justice*. Today, March 23, at 5 pm in 029 Vanier College. Refreshments will be served.

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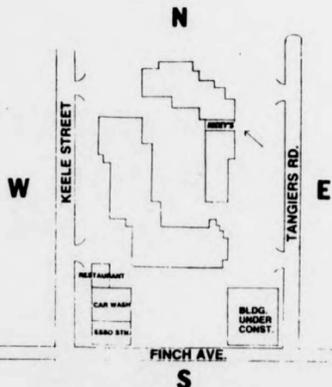
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