

A VIEW FROM THE STALLS –AUGUST 07, 2008

Oh! What A Lovely War - August 2008

Proving that theatre continues outside of Edinburgh during August, Scottish Youth Theatre's Summer Festival is staging "Oh! What A Lovely War" at the Tron. It's a provocative production that mixes song, dance, comedy and spoken word pieces to highlight the futility of war - in this case WWI

The staging is fantastically stylish including some stunning costumes. All of the cast impress with their performances - although some of the voices would have benefited from mics. The show is at its best in the big musical numbers as, while well performed, the spoken pieces have a tendency to feel overlong. It's good to see that 'Black Watch' seems to be having an impact, inspiring a lot of strong male physical and dance performances here. This is very much an ensemble piece and the cast list in the programme doesn't link actors with their (many) characters, so I think we'll respect that by not highlighting individual performances.

The use of the LED scroll to provide progress on the war was very effective but at times I think I was missing text by watching the action on stage (or vice versa), and it may have been better had the action 'frozen' while the scroll was running.

The cast deserve huge credit for the professional way they were unperturbed by an audience that seemed insistent on talking throughout. I'm not talking about an individual whispering, but 4 or 5 pockets around the theatre of people chatting away, others with picnics and one or two at the back who thought it fun to stand up and wave to their friend on stage. It made me long for the days of a single idiot with a mobile phone. Seriously - worst audience ever.

Okay, back to the show... Despite its bleak tone it remains very much a striking piece of theatre, and the SYT have done it justice.