

OCTOBER 19, 2013

"You'll Get Used To It! – The WAR SHOW" Reply

Play, Theatre



Review by **Danny Gaisin**

<http://ontarioartsreview.files.wordpress.com/2013/08/reviewerd.jpg>

Caveat:- Anyone born in the 'dirty Thirties' will have memories of World War Two. Whether melancholic or of just an historical interest; WWII affected all of us of that generation and **The War Show** will disturb. Long sublimated concepts will rise like oil on water. In this writer's case, it was the sirens; seeing ration books displayed in the lobby, and the songs whose lyrics still are engraved in this aging mind. On Sept. 1st of 1939, as a result of Nazi Germany's invasion of Poland; Britain declared war...Canada followed suit nine days later.



<http://ontarioartsreview.files.wordpress.com/2013/10/the-war-show.jpg>

the cast of 'THE WAR SHOW'

By V-E day in 1945, over a million Canadian men & women had worn uniforms. Our family was still feeling the financial pangs of the depression, but like most of that generation, support was given by overcoming deprivations; saving grease & fat leftovers, buying Bonds and knitting socks were de

rigever. Most families had a loved one who was fighting overseas, was wounded or even had a window sticker venerating a KIA.

Music Theatre Mississauga's decision to stage *The War Show*; shows some brass. Colley's play has been done in Brampton, Hamilton, Toronto and Drayton, plus many western venues. But given the importance of the subject, and the style in which we can theatrically travel back over eight decades, revivals are more than necessary- they should be required. Colley has us see the conflict through the eyes of an aging veteran from the comedy of recruitment and early training to the actual horrors of battle. The back-home social evolutions are acknowledged and the stupidity of some commissioned 90-day wonders is exposed.

Director *Alexander Galant* pulls no punches especially in the 2nd act where our stalwart squad members take and suffer blood. Utilizing two distinct rear projections, eliminates the need for sets or props; a few stencilled boxes & crates are all that's required to portray battlegrounds, beds, or dining tables. The overhead newsreels are visceral reminders of what we saw with every movie feature. (I grew up in Quebec- so until age 16, never entered a theatre). Sound and lighting is utilized to great impact and focal emphasis. Galant also has kept the pace & tempo effectively progressing.

This is not a star/support theatre format. There are some solo moments such as the songs or soliloquys but the majority of the play is group-oriented. The Act I droll one-liners by *Don Berns*; the Francophone psyche by *Jeremy Scinocca* and especially the old-vet/novice soldier played by *Kirk DePalma* are all stand-out moments, but even these rely on team cues & feeds.

During intermission, conversations seemed to be unanimously iterations of those impressions that were brought to the surface. Meat rations; air-raid shelters; hooded headlights; the CPC officers checking for still-open black-out curtains and the making-do culture were all recalled. Some of us also admitted to quietly singing along to such ancient hits as 'Bugle Boy of Co. B'; "Bless 'em All"; 'Wish me luck' and undoubtedly the melody of 'Lili Marlene' resonated all the way home. It's still bouncing around inside my head.

The play is certainly worth an evening's holiday from TV. It may disturb some of us Grey Power types but it is a catharsis and a reminder of why we should buy & wear our poppies next month. The spelling error of CFB Borden is certainly NOT an excuse to miss *The War Show* before it leaves Meadowvale on Oct. 27th.

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