**QUADRANGLE PLAYERS**

**Sunday 10 January 2016**

In Flanders fields the poppies blow

Between the crosses, row on row,

That mark our place; and in the sky

The larks, still bravely singing, fly

Scarce heard among the guns below.

*John McCrae*

Ruth asked me to do a play about the First World War, but I couldn’t cut a cast down to size – so she agreed I could choose some readings. I have included two extracts from plays, some letters – including two, early in the war, from Violet Asquith, 27, daughter of the prime minister, which gives the almost lighthearted attitude at the beginning, combined with shock. I also included Violet because I knew her well – from 1962 until her death in 1969 (I stayed with her grandson in London last November) which makes it all very real. And we have a letter from her brother Raymond, who was killed. I have also included some references to my own college, Somerville: two of our soldier poets were hospitalized there, and the war was transformative for women – as those who have read or seen Vera Brittain’s *Testament of Youth* will know.

The Battle of the Somme 1 July –Sept 1916 was incomprehensible: 400,000 British and Dominion casualties; 60,000 on the first day alone. It could be heard and felt in London – 300 miles away!

We open with poems by Carl Sandburg, who had experienced war - in Puerto Rico in 1898 – though not in France; but he captures the battlefield there brilliantly.

Bibliography:

Robert Graves, *Goodbye to All That* (1929)

*The Poems of the Great War* (Penguin 1998)

Carl Sandburg, *Chicago Poems* (1916)

Pat Barker, *Regeneration*, adapted for the stage by Nicholas Wright (2014)

R.C.Sherriff, *Journey’s End* (1928). Laurence Olivier played Stanhope.

Ernest Langer, *Letters from Two World Wars* (1993)

Jon Stallworthy, *Anthem for Doomed Youth: Twelve Soldier Poets of the First World War* (2002)

Jon Stallworthy, *Wilfred Owen* (1974)

Ed. Mark Pottle, *Champion Redoubtable: The Diaries & Letters of Violet Bonham-Carter 1914-45* (1998)

Benjamin Britten, *War Requiem* [1961] CD

Casting: <http://www.quadrangleplayers.com/wp-content/uploads/2016/02/JAN-2016-Production-Casting.docx>