

***Titanic: The Musical* will be an October, 2024 LVCA dvd donation to the Hugh Stoupe Library of the Heritage Methodist Church of Ligonier, Pennsylvania. Below is Kino Ken's review of that dvd film.**

15 of a possible 20 points *1/2 = outstanding film**

**United Kingdom 2023 color 136 minutes (nine minutes less than its theatrical runtime) stage2view / Broadway HD White Star Pictures Limited
Producers: Austin Shaw; Danielle Tarento; Mayflower Theatre, Southampton;
Harmonia / McLean Mills / Wally Sedgewick**

Key: *designates outstanding performance or technical achievement

Points:

2 Film Direction: Austin Shaw Stage Direction: Thom Southerland*

1 Editing: Egli Keli

1 Photography: Gareth Beeson, Romek Sudak, Nicola Gill

2 Lighting Design: Howard Hudson*

2 Book: Peter Stone*

Musical Staging (Choreography): Cressida Carré*

New Musical Arrangements: Ian Weinberger*

Musical Direction: Ben Papworth*

2 Music and Lyrics: Maury Yeston*

1 Set Design: David Woodhead

Costume Design: David Woodhead

1 Sound Design: Andrew Johnson

Sound Editing Supervision: Tim Clark

2 Acting / Singing

1 Creativity

15 total points

**Cast: Martin Allanson* (J. Bruce Ismay, director of the White Star Line),
Valda Aviks (Ida Straus), Graham Bickley* (Captain Smith), Sam Brown
(Frederick Fleet, lookout), James Darch (Edgar Beane, hardware store owner),
David Delve (Isidor Straus), Adam Filipe* (stoker Frederick Barrett),
Alastair Hill (Harold Bride, wireless operator), Barnaby Hughes***

(third officer Herbert Pitman / first class steward Henry Etches),
Niamh Long (Kate Mullins), Ian McLarnon*
(Thomas Andrews, *Titanic's* designer),
Chris Nevin (Jim Farrell, steerage passenger from Ireland), Jack North
(second officer Lightoller), Billy Roberts (first officer William Murdoch),
Bree Smith* (Alice Beane), Lucie-Mae Sumner*
(Kate McGowan, steerage passenger from Ireland), Joseph Peacock, others

Titanic: The Musical is a filmed documentation of the stage musical shot at a theater in Woking, England largely during a live performance. Its stage director was Thom Southerland, while Austin Shaw directed the camera positions for the film version. Both are based on Peter Stone's book and utilize Maury Yeston's music as newly arranged for this production by Ian Weinberger. Cressida Carré designed choreography for "The Latest Rag" and "I Have Danced."

On the whole an inspired production, this 2023 twenty-fifth anniversary rendering of Maury Yeston's most critically acclaimed musical is a sobering treatment of the most memorable maritime disaster ever, one that continues to fascinate and appall. Making no attempt to resolve ongoing debate about responsibility or negligence of officials and crew, Peter Stone's dialogue focuses instead on what would likely have been daily topics of conversation between and among officers, crew members, and passengers. A tragic tale of hubris humbled is here told primarily in through-sung narration. Both singing and acting talent are called upon. So dual expertise is required from performers.

The main plot recapitulates actual events of the *Titanic's* maiden voyage, only liberating itself from them for a ghostly lamentation number titled "The Foundering" in Act Two.

Subplots involve a shipboard courtship between Jim Farrell (played and sung by Chris Nevin) and not-so-independent as she boasts Kate McGowan (brassily portrayed as a free spirit by Lucie-Mae Sumner). Their third-class Irish romance contrasts with bickering couple Edgar and Alice Beane (James Darch and Bree Smith) who are torn between keeping faithfully to companions of their own second-class stratum and worshipping first-class fellow travelers in hopes of eventual acceptance into their social sphere. Edgar adopts the humbler course, Alice a more democratic one.

A third pairing, that of longtime lovebirds Ida and Isidor Straus, portrays a marriage so fully realized through mutual devotedness even imminent death cannot separate its two halves. Bankrolled by profits from Macy's stores, the Strauses (Valda Aviks and David Delve) have total financial security, making them less vulnerable to frustration and disappointment when doom unexpectedly visits their floating palace.

Though passengers are blissfully unaware of it until an iceberg strikes their vessel, conflict continuously brews among leadership elite. White Star Line director J. Bruce Ismay is a speed fanatic, relentlessly pushing Captain Edward Smith to increase speed and ignore weather alerts. This fanaticism about setting a new record for Atlantic crossing time rubs stoker Frederick Barrett and junior officers Murdoch and Lightoller the wrong way. All objections by them are ultimately overruled by Smith and Ismay, despite reservations expressed by ship designer Thomas Andrews.

Meanwhile, wireless radio operator and zealous technology buff Harold Bride, though overwhelmed by the crushing volume of messages sent off to New York by first-class business magnates aboard, somehow finds time to squeeze in between them a love note to his beloved from stoker Frederick Barrett.

All these relationships, highlighted to fix audience attention on class differences, are soon thrown into confusion and put to an acid test as a drifting iceberg smashes into the side of Titanic. Who will be saved and who will perish? The bold and brazen soon rise to the occasion, while those mired in timidity and cowardice either act shamefully like Ismay or resign themselves to death by drowning. Even, in Officer Murdoch's case, choosing self-destruction rather than potential lifelong recrimination.

Most engaging of the cast are Lucie-Mae Sumner, a blatantly pregnant Kate McGowan desperate to find a substitute father for her imminent firstborn; Martin Allanson as reprehensibly irresponsible J. Bruce Ismay; Ian McLarnon as feckless ship designer Thomas Andrews; Bree Smith in the role of status-worshipping, starstruck Alice Beane; and Adam Filipe, whose critical questionings and labor grievances are dismissed as mere whinings by superiors.

Lighting contrasts reinforce mood changes admirably. For these Howard Hudson must be duly credited.

Sound recording is generally adequate. But all too often distinction of words is lost in ensemble singing, making subtitles an essential option.

Among the songs, settings of "The Blame," "Godspeed Titanic," and a foreboding duo of "No Moon" and "Autumn" merit special citation as emotional standouts.

Because of its tragic climax and several socially censorable interpersonal relationships, *Titanic: The Musical* is only satisfactory for viewing and auditing by those who have reached adulthood. Lyrics include considerable profanity. And Henry Etches's thinly-disguised lecherous interest in a presumably married female passenger is no model for impressionable teens.

However, this is a stirring and rewarding voyage for individuals who have already navigated through a plethora of life's challenging tempests and can relate well to characters in similar straits.