

TITANIC

Music and lyrics by Maury Yeston

Story and Book by Peter Stone Virginia Musical Theatre

8:00 p.m. Mar.28; 2 and 8:00 p.m Mar. 29: 2:00 Mar. 30

For tickets:(888) 326-9849 or 340-5446

Hello, I'm Edgar Loessin with Loessin at Large.

To be redundant, TITANIC is a really big Broadway musical that cost over ten million dollars when it was produced on Broadway in 1995. One might question the wisdom of a regional company taking on such a vast undertaking with a vastly smaller budget. The show doesn't lend itself to small.

However, thanks to the always imaginative George Hillow, many of the problems have been solved in an effective theatrical and economical manner. He has come up with an all white skeletal structure that has selected elements of an ocean liner. It never really looks like a ship but merely suggests the components of one. He has also designed the lighting using watery colors for the most part. The result is a sort of ghostly atmosphere that ever so subtly suggests an ever present impending doom.

TITANIC is in no way your standard Broadway musical. It has operatic overtones. It's music is majestic, made up of exceptionally beautiful paeans lauding the great ship, defining the characters of its assorted passengers and a few songs for comic relief. A uniformly fine, large cast of 31 singer/actors under the musical director of Frederick Williams, bring them to life and make them soar with elegance. Unfortunately, the musical numbers are not helped by Brian Marshall's flat,static staging lacking in composition,

There are standout performances that I want to mention. John Payonk as the Captain, Adam Armstrong as the madly in love Frederick Barrett and John Irby and Ilona Dulaskl as Ida and Isidor Straus bring joyous and painful life to their roles and sing them with touching beauty and strength.. Julia Cardia and Brad Nacht lend delightful humor and poignant concern for their less than perfect marriage.AND, as is true with the Captain, one can understand every word they sing or speak. Not so with the rest of the company including the three Kates played by fetching lasses Brianna McClellan, Elizabeth Cherry and Melissa Brobeck. They are touching nonetheless.

Which brings us to the sound. It's a wee bet better than heretofore but for some reason one simply can't understand or hear the words. Is it the hall that has faulty acoustics? I do know that Mathew Stairs who is credited with designing the sound only makes matters worse when he cranks the volume up to rock concert levels. The result is a sound soup of mushy words and distorted notes. Ideally in the theatre one should not be aware of amplification. It should sound natural.

One does miss the various scenic effects at the ending of this production that the ten million bucks made possible on Broadway. They were not ends unto themselves, but they made the ending clearer and more decisive, In this version, one keeps thinking the show is over then another scene appears.I think director Marshall might have helped as well.

The sinking of the Titanic is tale of "what ifs" and hubris. It's a tale of woe that never fails to move one with mixed emotions over a tragedy that could have been prevented. It was indeed sad when that great ship went down.

This is Edgar Loessin with Loessin at Large and I'll see you at the next opening.