

British Theatre Guide

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Titanic

Story and book by Peter Stone, music and lyrics by Maury Yeston

Danielle Tarento, Stephen M Levy, Sean Sweeney and Vaughan Williams

Charing Cross Theatre

8 June–6 August 2016

Whilst not a score you are likely to leave the theatre humming, *Titanic* is both bold and beautiful in scope and staging.

Spanning the whole ill-fated journey, from wonderment to despair, the musical presents the intertwining stories of first, second and third class passengers along with the dedicated crew. Thanks to highly effective doubling, the sense of a bustling metropolis is captured perfectly, lending the piece a sense of scale hard to achieve on such a small stage.

Thom Sutherland's economical staging allows the audience to shift attention to each subplot with ease and gives the company numbers a greater strength and depth as a result.

Numbers such as "Godspeed Titanic" and "Doing the latest Rag" reflect the decadence and optimism on board the ship setting up lightness to contrast with the later dramatic and more maudlin pieces.

Although overused, the term ensemble is a compliment to this cast who share the stage with great commitment. Each enjoy a moment in the spotlight however, and more than relish the chance with heartfelt performances ranging from the romantic "I give you my hand" (Helena Blackman and Douglas Hansell) to the wistful "Autumn" (Luke George).

The class system is also pulled into sharp focus through the hopes of the third class passengers in "Lady's Maid" and "I have danced", which reveals the bittersweet ambition of the second class.

The sense of inevitability hangs heavy over this musical and the slow build to the fatal crash allows time to invest in the characters before they reach crisis point. The eerie "No moon" is suitably unsettling and gives way to the much darker second half.

Sutherland is not afraid of stillness and the moments of calm amongst the overarching drama juxtapose perfectly. The final scenes, which could so easily become melodramatic, are handled with care and quiet resolution, bringing home just how terrifying it must have been.

With a moving score, strong characterisation and flexible staging, *Titanic* once again demonstrates that, whilst special effects can add to a production, the story should stand on its own two feet.

Titanic is a voyage of emotions and a stark reminder that there is often a heavy cost to human endeavour.

Reviewer: [Amy Yorston](#)