

Gigantic 'Titanic' an early Valentine

BY JOANNE G. ROCHMAN | REPUBLICAN-AMERICAN

With 77 cast members climbing aboard the Warner Theatre's production of "Titanic," directing such a show would be a herculean task for any director.

However, Rick Doyle, who has directed many shows throughout the region, has accomplished more than just directing a good show. This "Titanic" is Doyle's masterpiece. Unlike the sad story of the "ship of dreams" that became a living nightmare, Doyle's creation is a "dream come true" that has sailed into a smash hit. Here's a show that cast members, production teams and audiences will be talking about for years to come.



Dan Porri stars as Thomas Andrews, the ship's architect 'Titanic' at the Warner Theatre. Credit: Erin Drew

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Community theater at its absolutely best, there isn't a weak voice in the cast. One soloist after another makes you wonder how it is possible to have so many richly talented performers in one region, let alone one show. Damon Branco, as Barrett the stoker, has a phenomenal voice as does Richard Damaso, the radioman.

When these two powerhouses sing a duet, shivers and goose bumps suddenly

appear. And then there's Meric Martin who can bring tears to your eyes. These are amazing vocals, but the list goes on. Just when you think that it can't get better, Michael Santoro and Lucia M. Dressel sing a love song that only cupid could have inspired, just near the end of the show. This means from start to finish there's one great number after the next. In between you get outstanding performances by Priscilla Squiers, Tyson Chamberlain, Janette Ireland and many others.

In addition to the cast, T.J. Thompson must be commended as musical director. Not only were the voices superb, but the orchestra never hit an off note. Ronald K. Alexander also did a fine job with the choreography. In one particular number Jeff Savage looks dashing dancing in sync with his partner and the others on the dance floor. The set, designed by Doyle and Keith Winegar with Doyle's scenic painting is pure genius. "Titanic" is not only painted on the back drop in such a way as to look as though passengers are climbing on board, but when the drop is lifted, the three-dimensional reincarnation of the ship is something to behold.

Considering that it holds 77 cast members, you can imagine how large it is. There are so many clever details, including the way the captain's bridge rolls out downstage, the tilt of the ship in the second act and the service table that rolls across the floor of the ship, which were conceived and executed smoothly.

And then there are the period costumes, designed by Matthew Dettmer. The first-class guests on the Titanic are most properly outfitted in the styles of the era. Second-class working people were decked out in such a way as to clearly differentiate them from the first-class and then there were the poor, third-class guests, who were never allowed access to the life boats. The costumes added color and definition to the characters who were so honestly portrayed. Kevin Hales is the master carpenter and once you witness the width and breadth of this set, you want to offer kudos to him and his crew.

The same goes for the sound and light crews who really made this production sing and shine.

The Titanic sank in 1912, but its legacy lives on in the many stories, movies, and productions like the one currently on the boards at the Warner.

Theatre Review:

What: "Titanic" Non-Equity

Where: Warner Theatre, Torrington

When: Through Feb. 11

How Good: 5 Scale 1 5 with 5 a rave

Tickets: \$19 - \$25

Box office: (860) 489-7180

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