

NEARER MY GOD TO THEE

The musicians and music of the Titanic.

An illustrated lecture presented by Dulais Rhys, Ph.D

Sadly, this dreadful maritime accident of April 15, 1912 is forever and indelibly embedded in humankind's psyche. After hitting an iceberg in mid-Atlantic, the 'unsinkable' almost 900 foot long vessel took an agonizing three hours to sink, killing around 1,500 of the 2,225 passengers and crew onboard.

During the following decades, though the tragedy was never far from the world's thoughts, two events of almost a century later resurrected the world's memory of the accident: renowned director James Cameron's 1997 epic movie 'Titanic' (which has an indirect connection to this presenter!) and marine explorer Robert Ballard's 1985 discovery of the shipwreck on the ocean floor.

These events – especially the movie - also reinforced the plethora of myths and legends that had emanated from the original accident. In particular that the orchestra played the hymn 'Nearer My God To Thee' as the boat sank. Although the White Star Line employed dozens of musicians on its trans-Atlantic fleet of liners, the Titanic 'orchestra' was in fact an octet (eight instrumentalists) who had a repertoire of over 300 pieces of music, which included many hymns such as 'Nearer My God To Thee', but there is almost no evidence of what music was actually played as that ship sank.

This presentation focuses on the curtailed lives and careers of the musicians that allegedly played to calm the passengers for as long as they possibly could: their international backgrounds, qualifications, experience, how they were booked to play on this fateful voyage and what happened to their families following their deaths at sea. A month following the tragedy, a large-scale Memorial Concert was held in London as a tribute to all who had lost their lives.

The members of the 'Titanic orchestra' were not the only musicians on board, but all played from a bespoke booklet of music - copies of which survived - including the famous 'Nearer My God To Thee', the history and composition of which will also form part of this talk.

To this day, the sinking of the Titanic had such a profound effect on the human psyche - its brave musicians, associated hymn and resulting myths - remain in the public consciousness.

DURATION: c1 hour

FEE: \$300.00

EXPENSES: a contribution toward travel costs is appreciated.

Thank you for considering my proposal and please contact me for more information.

Sincerely,
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REFERENCES, RECOMMENDATIONS & REVIEWS

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