



Pictured from left to right: Elizabeth A. Bouton (*Molly Brown*), and (*Saloon Girls*) Sarah Faith D'Agostino, Sarah Mahoney, and Amy Coles.

Kentwood Players' "Molly Brown" is Unsinkable

by Conrad Hurtt

"Heroine of Sea Disaster. The occupants of Lifeboat Number Six sang the praises of Denver's own Mrs. J.J. Brown. They credited her with keeping their lifeboat afloat. They said 'Mrs. Brown rowed steadily for seven and one half hours'"—Denver Record, 1912.

You may remember Molly Brown as Kathy Bates in the 1997 "Titanic," Debbie Reynolds in the 1964 "Unsinkable Molly Brown," or even Tucker McGuire in the 1958 "A Night to Remember." With lyrics and lively live music by "Music Man" Meredith Willson,

now you can see the former Broadway musical at the Westchester Playhouse with twenty three scenes, a cast of twenty, eighteen songs, and eight different sets.

Director Victoria Miller keeps the scenes moving, and red curtains are featured prominently in the burlesque sets by producer Ben Lupejkis. The slapstick characters need no excuse to dance, stunt fight, or suddenly break into song—and usually liquor is involved. You'll love Rocky Miller "with a heart and a half" as Leadville Johnny Brown, "built

like a pine tree, part a' the gol-darn landscape;" the lucky prospector with an operatic voice.

Elizabeth A. Bouton as Molly Brown loves everybody and everything, in a performance that ranges from uneducated rag-a-muffin to international stateswoman. "That's the girl I'm going to marry," declares Johnny when he sees Molly in a dance hall saloon. "I got Brown luck, and gold and silver just holler out to me." He becomes a multi-millionaire overnight in what was called at the time the world's richest gold strike.

One of the best voices belongs to Stephen Hulsey as broke and love-struck Prince DeLong, in a dynamic performance that arcs from comedic to tragic. Other bright spots in the cast are humorous Michael Murphy as Monsignor Ryan, and Saloon Girls Sarah Mahoney and Amy Coles providing bursts of energy in the right places. This two hour and forty five minute show is a real workout for these enthusiastic actors; Lupejkis is in nearly every scene, and when Molly is in a Titanic lifeboat with women and children I expected him to float by as a dead body.

In the Vaudeville tradition we travel from the silver mines of Colorado to the crème of fin-de-siècle Monte Carlo society, with a trip aboard the Titanic along the way. "It's not the money I love, it's the not having it I hate," declares Molly to Paul Mazerov as her devout father Shamus, and she

sets her sights on her first stop: Denver's second-generation, nouveau-riche, high-society snobs. Molly's second stop is to meet "a kissy buncha bananas," the crowned heads of Europe, and sip a Nebuchadnezzar of champagne. She becomes a "citizen of the world," learns to say "hello" and "how much" in ten different languages, and "paint a bowl of fruit that'll draw flies." She eventually leaves her husband but the play ends with their joyful reconciliation.

According to "Molly Brown, Unraveling the Myth" with a foreword by her great granddaughter Muffet Brown, the real Margaret Brown was called Maggie and never Molly. She had a son Lawrence and a daughter Catherine, never went back to her husband after their divorce, and ran for the U.S. Senate three times. She began one of the first juvenile courts, and met Mark Twain and

Jesse James in addition to the sister-in-law of the czar of Russia.

You can't fit everything into a play, and so what if the script by Richard Morris isn't exactly like Margaret Brown's real life? A little broad physical comedy never hurt anyone. So plant your rusty dusties in front of the Kentwood Players for a raucous good time. The rousing and rustic songs will stay in your head for days.

THE UNSINKABLE MOLLY BROWN, Costumes: Maria Cohen, Lights: Richard Potthoff, Sound: Richard Potthoff and Rocky Miller, Musical Director: Brian Murphy. 8301 Hindry Avenue, (310) 645-5156, 11/4/05-12/17/05, 8:00-10:45 pm, \$17.00, or \$15.00 students/seniors.

Conrad Hurtt is getting a Master's in Theatre from Cal State L.A., and has appeared in 35 plays. He currently teaches acting for the Recreation and Parks Department.