



Review: The Sound of Music

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The Sound of Music (supplied)

The Sound of Music is a timeless classic, known to most through the 1965 film starring Julie Andrews. It's wonderful to now have the chance to become acquainted with the story in its original form – the stage musical, first performed in 1959 and still as delightful today.

This production is notable for its outstanding vocal performances. Bethany Dickson brings clarity and brightness to Maria Rainer, the spirited nun who leaves her abbey to bring music and love to the von Trapp children.

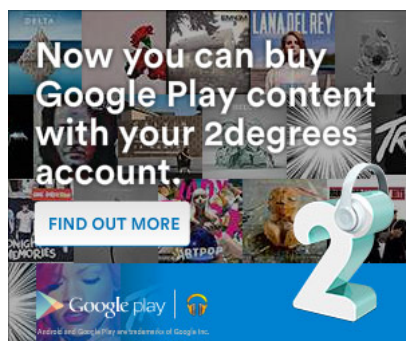
Mark Rayment's Captain von Trapp has a classic Rodgers and Hammerstein voice – strong, but with just enough warmth to remind you he is not just a military man but also a father who just needs a bit of love himself.

Lesley Garrett is outstanding as Mother Abbess, her soaring soprano reverberating through the theatre and making 'Climb Every Mountain' an unexpected highlight.

The production has been brought to New Zealand by Lunchbox Productions, the same company responsible for delighting us with *Annie* earlier this year. The children's roles have once again been cast from Kiwi kids, who once again prove they are consummate professionals on the stage.

Although the show provides few opportunities for individual children to shine, as a troupe they are well attuned, choreographed, and full of the big-hearted enthusiasm the von Trapps have always been loved for.

The stage show provides a greater understanding of the historical context underpinning the story of Cpt von Trapp's fierce nationalism in the face of Nazi Germany's invasion of Austria in the lead-up to World War II.



A song omitted from the film, 'No Way to Stop It', shows the real reason Cpt von Trapp's engagement to Baroness Schrader was so short-lived, with the two unable to reconcile their political views about the Nazi annexation.

The story clips along with pace, covering the comings and goings of various characters in much less time than the film but rightly giving the songs the space they

deserve.

A few numbers are in different places to where devotees of the film will be expecting. As surprising as it is to hear Mother Abbess sing 'My Favourite Things', it does add a new dimension to her character.

The production, which mirrors the West End show, is as lavish as befits the von Trapp family. The tall set pieces seem to dance around the stage, although it's a slightly disappointing necessity of theatre that sees the family's enormous house dwarf the vast expanse of the Swiss Alps in scale.

The Civic itself is used to great effect during the festival climax, with Nazi guards positioned in the royal boxes, ominously surveying the crowd and drawing the audience even closer to the story.

The theatre desperately needs to streamline its admission practices though. This is not the first event I have been to there this year where patrons have faced long queues waiting to get their tickets scanned. As the hills came alive, dozens of people were still trying to find their seats in the darkness. It's deeply disruptive and either people need to be admitted more quickly, or a lockout period should be more strictly enforced.

So make sure you arrive early - you do not want to miss a minute of this exquisite production.

The Sound of Music is on at Auckland's Civic Theatre until October 26.

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