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## Review: The Sound of Music

### Musical, Performance, Reviews

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As the beloved story of Maria and the Trapp family arrives in Singapore, **Gwen Pew** finds this charming production – which stars six locally-selected children alongside a largely South African cast – an absolute delight.



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There's an unofficial rule in theatre that one should never work with children, because it's difficult to get things right when there are children involved. *The Sound of Music* breaks that rule six times over, as they brought in a bunch of locally-based kids – all aged between seven and 14 and who won their roles from an open audition held here a few months ago – to star alongside the seasoned, largely South African cast. They are an absolute joy to watch: not only did they never miss a cue or a line, they ooze charm and cuteness while they're at it, too.

Most of us are familiar with the story of Maria, a mischievous nun who becomes the governess, and later stepmother, to the seven children of the widowed Captain von Trapp against the backdrop of the Nazis' advances. Comparisons to the 1965 movie starring Julie Andrews as Maria are inevitable. Indeed, some have noted that there are a few minor discrepancies here and there, though it should be remembered that the original Rodgers and Hammerstein musical preceeded the film adaptation by a good six years (and both of them were based on the 1956 German film, *Die Trapp-Familie* and the real Maria's own memoir). But just because all the action is restricted to the stage, it does not mean that the quality is compromised. In this Lunchbox Productions performance, the set is as elaborate as can be. From the grassy hills to Captain von Trapp's lavishly furnished mansion, they magically transport us through time and place to the mountains of Austria in the 1930s. Meanwhile, the crew also shows careful attention to detail, to the point where the sky in the background actually gradually dims into a gorgeous sunset as a conversation goes on.

Bethany Dickson captures the spirit of Maria nicely despite a couple of cracked notes at the start, enunciating every word with beautiful clarity and melody, while Andre Schwartz's portrayal of the Captain is that of a warm and

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gentle man whose strictness soon gives way to love and patriotism (culminating in a heartwrenching rendition of 'Edelweiss'). James Borthwick and Taryn Sudding also depict the characters of the Captain's friend Max Detweiler and Baroness Schraeder well and, blessed with by far the biggest voice, Janelle Visagie's performance as the Mother Abbess stands out powerfully, filling the theatre with her kindness, wisdom and vibrato.

Overall, *The Sound of Music* is an absolute delight; its pacing is right and it strikes a good pace and balance between being fun and dealing with the serious implications of the Second World War. Whether it's the sweet children, classic tunes like 'Do Re Me' and 'My Favourite Things' accompanied by wonderfully played live music, or simply to relive your childhood, there are plenty of reasons to catch the show. As long as it keeps up this level of professionalism consistently for the rest of its run here, there's no doubt that it will be a success.

*The Sound of Music* is at the MasterCard Theatres until 10 Aug.

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By **Gwen Pew**

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