



# Review: The Sound of Music

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FAN FAVOURITES: The Sound of Music cast was incredible.

## The Sound of Music

### The Civic Theatre, Auckland

The songs of Richard Rodgers and Oscar Hammerstein II from The Sound of Music have become entrenched in popular culture.

In the 55 years since songs like Edelweiss, My Favourite Things and Do-Re-Mi debuted on Broadway they have become standards divorced from the musical. They have even become somewhat mixed up in the 1965 film starring Julie Andrews and Christopher Plummer which showed on British television many Christmas in the 1970s and 1980s.

It was good, then, to see the musical as Rodgers and Hammerstein intended at The Civic Theatre in a production transplanted from the London Palladium.

"It is funny?", my eight year old son Thomas asked ahead of curtain up. "Things are always much better if there's a little bit of humour in them." I told him it was a serious story set against the backdrop of Nazi Germany declaring war on the world . . . and was then pleasantly surprised to see how much humour Rodgers and Hammerstein had sprinkled through their songs.

There may not be any household names in the cast as there was with The Civic's last big hurrah, Annie, but that allows the production to stand on its own two feet and speak, or rather sing, for itself.

From my front row seat in The Circle overlooking the stage Bethany Dickson, as Maria Rainer, looked and felt like Julie Andrews. I couldn't help but think the film's director, the late Robert Wise, would have approved of Rainer who was up against his indelible casting choice.

Mark Rayment, as the austere Captain Von Trapp, was less of a Christopher Plummer clone. Rayment's portrayal was more prickly than Plummer's, making his softening by Maria more dramatic than his big screen equivalent. This may have been more about the difference between mediums than directors and actors different takes on the character. On stage there can be little or no subtleties in character, especially in productions as big as this, on film subtleties are easier to portray with close ups.

Every member of the cast was pitch perfect, special mention should go to the actors playing Von Trapp children: Liesl (Carmen Pretorius), Friedrich (Matthew Turner), Louisa (Sophie Parkinson), Kurt (Jaxson Cook), Brigitta (Tara Canton), Marta (Melody Lui-Webster) and Gretl (Ella Robertson) who also had impeccable timing.

The other star turn came from Lesley Garrett who played the Mother Abbess and led the convent in hauntingly beautiful sacred song.

No review of this production would be complete without mention of the spellbinding sets. Whether it's the hills mentioned in the title song at sunrise or sunset, the cloisters of the abbey Marie is sent out from, or the house and environs of the Von Trapp family estate, there's plenty of treats for those with an eye for detail.

My children are now fans of the show, and begged for the CD to be played.

- The Sound of Music, which opened on Saturday night, runs until October 26 at The Civic Theatre, Auckland.

- **Waikato Times**

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