

The New Zealand Herald

Musical review: The Sound of Music, The Civic

By [Paul Simei-Barton](#)

Slick and flawless British production keeps the much-loved 1959 musical fresh.

The hills are alive for Bethany Dickson as Maria in The Sound of Music.



The hills are alive for Bethany Dickson as Maria in The Sound of Music.

Right now *The Sound of Music* seems even more in tune with the times than when it premiered in 1959 and anticipated all the major themes of the 60s.

A young musician with an old guitar abandons the security of her cloistered home to embrace risk and adventure.

Her spontaneity challenges the rigid authoritarianism of an uptight establishment and in the authenticity of the folk song she finds a potent protest against the repressive power of militarism.

The soaring optimism of *Climb Any Mountain* is a match for any 60s pop anthem and the genius of the show lies in the affirmation that it is possible to have youthful exuberance, idealism and love without the sex and drugs and rock'n'roll.

The flawless British production plays it straight without a trace of irony or any clever conceptualisation. Instead we get charming performances, crystal-clear singing and detailed attention to stagecraft.

The lavish set changes are executed with amazing fluidity as alpine ridges rise and fall, a staircase swings into place and the towering trunks of slender beech trees ascend and descend against luminous skies.

From her first appearance as an irrepressible flibbertigibbet, Bethany Dickson brings an infectious lust for life to Maria's innocent purity.

The romance is enchanting both in the restless energy of Carmen Pretorius' *Sixteen Going On Seventeen* and the refined elegance of Mark Rayment's seduction of Maria culminating in spectacular nuptials and a rapturous *Alleluia* chorus.

The young von Trapps keep the audience mesmerised, whether they are yodelling away the terrors of a thunderstorm or miming the actions of a cuckoo-clock.

James Borthwick brings an endearing charm to an entrepreneur who instantly recognises the commercial potential of youthful talent.

Lesley Garrett is a wisely indulgent abbess and her commanding voice sweeps us up in a thrilling finale in which the mountains represent freedom, solidarity and spiritual transcendence.

Musical review

What: *The Sound of Music*

Where: The Civic until October 26.

- [NZ Herald](#)

© Copyright 2014, APN New Zealand Limited