



Name of Society:	Trowbridge Musical Theatre
Name of Production:	‘The Sound of Music’
Date:	12th November 2022
Venue:	The Civic, Trowbridge
Adjudicator:	Clare Toghill

Here we have the first production for Trowbridge Musical Theatre in three years. It is wonderful that, ‘The Sound of Music’ is still as popular as ever and now new generations of performers are able to bring the wonderful words and music of Rodgers and Hammerstein to life again. It is as if this particular musical is made from a list of extra-special ingredients which makes its magic never-ending. The music is delightful, the lyrics are clever, it touches on historical events, includes geographical references, it includes allusions to faith and culture and of course there is a developing romance at its core – what’s not to love?!

PRESENTATION/ SETTING – DESIGN AND DÉCOR: Phil Courage and team:

‘The Civic’ is a new location for this theatre company and although it has its limitations regarding lack of changing room facilities/backstage space, the acting space itself is broad and this enabled Phil and his team to create and construct a multi-location set for this production. We were never in doubt as to where each scene was taking place. The stage was split into three clear sections. DSR was the office for the Mother Abbess, shelves were lined with important-looking books. The colours; dark browns and reds; a red, velvet chair and a desk completed this locale. DSL was the patio/outside area of Captain Von-Trapp’s estate. Attractive, lattice-worked, garden furniture was placed here. Central stage served as the interior of the Von-Trapp’s home; three large window/door arches stood facing downstage and with various dressings these arches could become windows during a storm, portals looking onto the elaborate house parties

held within, and even the outer walls of the Abbey with railings in front. A chaise longue and guilt-edged chair were used whenever we were inside the Captains' expansive house. Upstage, centrally there was a large, white cyclorama, upon which projected images of various locations and significant pools of coloured light from the various lanterns on the rig were featured.

The interior of the Abbey was created by a stained-glass window projected onto the cyclorama and a wooden crucifix atop a basic, wooden table, centre stage. Maria's bedroom included a single bed propped-up through the central archway, raked to face the audience. Hanging from the other two archways were floor-length curtains, which were drawn to keep out the stormy night. For the party scene, multi-coloured light bulbs adorned the rear of the space. Two large trees in terracotta pots framed the action in Act 2.

Phil and his team had their work cut-out here; working in a space new to them and with a big show on their hands, featuring multiple locations. They made the distinctions between these settings very clear and accessible. Well done.

LIGHTING: The Civic Hall, Mark Tucker, Tony Giddings, Harry King: The cyclorama was used to good effect, with both lighting and projected images. Initially, as the front curtains opened, the large, wooden cross on the table centre stage was lit so that it cast a striking silhouette onto the white background upstage. The nuns each held battery-operated candles, which gave off a warm, orange glow and added to the overall ambience of the scene. As Maria and the Captain danced at the party, the rear of the stage was lit with a beautiful pink wash, which heightened the romantic atmosphere. An image of cloisters was projected throughout the wedding scene. The Abbey gardens were lit with a powerful midnight blue, which cast an eerie hue of colour across this haunting scene. The projection of mountain peaks was perfect at the end of the production and brought home just how difficult the Von-Trapp's journey ahead would be through the mountains. A pleasing input from this department.

SOUND AND EFFECTS: (As for Lighting): The sound quality was superb throughout. At moments of importance, or great sentiment, a gentle reverb echo was added to the soloists' voices adding to the overall effect. The Thunder effects were very realistic and played at a good level, which intensified the sense of drama in the scene. The balance between the orchestra and the performers on stage was set at a good level and neither encumbered the other. The sound quality enhanced our viewing experience overall – well done.

COSTUME: Sandra Tucker, Karen Grant, Audrey Phillips, Beryl Baggs, Stella Greaves, Bath Theatrical Costume Hire: This was a traditionally-dressed show and the costumes did not disappoint. The attention to detail was superb. Maria looked suitably pure in her grey day dress, white apron and her hair up in plaits atop her head. The Nuns each wore the traditional, Benedictine black and white habits. Each Nun wore a wooden crucifix around her neck – these were all at varying lengths, and it would have looked neater to have had them all the same, but this is a minor quibble. Captain Von-Trapp looked smart with his shiny, dress shoes and suits. His wig wasn't hugely flattering, but it is very difficult to obtain a realistic wig without blowing the entire Wardrobe budget! The house servants were spotless in their black and whites. Rolf's uniform was perfect. All of the children were immaculate in sailor suits and white shoes, party outfits with satin slippers, or traditional lederhosen/dresses. The curtain play- clothes were delightful. The rain-wet

patches on Liesl's dress were a good touch. Elsa looked very smart and sophisticated in high-waist trousers in a delicate and lightweight taupe-coloured fabric, with a white, frilled blouse and neat, beige New Yorker shoes. Elsa wore her hair in a sophisticated, neat chignon. Max was flamboyant in his greys and burgundies complete with a claret-coloured cravat. The appearance of the children back in their sailor uniforms after having had so much fun in their curtain play-clothes was striking. The boys wore Lederhosen and looked every inch the Austrian young men of the mountains. At the party, the Ladies wore ball gowns in turquoise, royal blue, rose pink, navy and emerald green and this was very attractive. Elsa looked stunning in a dove-grey dress, with a small cape in the same, light fabric lightly draped over her shoulders. Max's overcoat was brought to life with a white dress scarf. In Act 2, Elsa continued to look divine in a black and gold dress, with a draped fox fur. Maria's black dress was as plain as can be and this was perfect for the role and by contrast her white, satin wedding dress was pretty, yet simple with an added veil and garland. Captain Von-Trapp looked smart in his uniform for the wedding. The children were dressed head-to-toe in white and looked adorable. Maria's outfit as she returned from the Honeymoon was a smart yet understated navy, shift dress and cropped jacket; now she looked more mature and settled into yet her new role as a wife and mother. The Austrian costumes the children wore for the Festival were beautiful, traditional and colourful. The children wore black robes when they were hiding in the Abbey gardens. This department must be congratulated for their superb and detailed work.

MAKE UP: Gracie Groves: Elsa was very attractive with red lips and plentiful rouge. The children appeared natural, yet bright-of-face. Maria seemed to mature in front of our eyes as she ought to do in this show. The guests were well-presented and attractive and the nuns appeared natural and under-stated.

STAGE MANAGEMENT: Connor Runyard-Hunt: The cues were extremely timely and professional throughout. This was a smoothly-run show and there was a large cast to keep safe on and off-stage. With limited backstage space, this cannot have been an easy job to achieve!

MUSIC/ORCHESTRA/MUSICAL DIRECTION: Kate Courage.

Musicians:MSD/Piano: Kate Courage, Violin 1: Carmen Tunney, Violin 2: Eric Hanson, Cello: David Garcia, Double Bass: Nigel Shires, Percussion/Kit: Tony Stockley, Trumpet: Gavin Wells, Horn: Mervyn Stephens, Woodwind: Emma Rochambeau, Woodwind: Berry Diver, Flute, Piccolo: Ed Blackwall:

Kate knows exactly what she is doing and this production was no exception! The orchestra created the most beautiful sound, and often there were moments where we could hear individual instruments play and this was also really effective. The violin's 'rain drops' were super. The percussion in 'Lonely Goatherd' was delightful. The Double Bass was a super addition to the orchestra. The trumpet and horn added a good deal during Max and Elsa's song, 'How Can Love Survive?' The flute was very pleasing in, 'The Sound of Music'. The cello brought-out the melancholia beautifully in some of the numbers, as did the woodwind. It was an absolute joy to sit and listen to this musical score come to life with such expertise and flair. Fabulous work!

DIRECTION: Phil Courage: As Phil mentions in the programme, this is community theatre at its best. Here, I will mention just some of the many noteworthy moments:

Let me start with the Children: they were delightful! The puppet-show during, ‘Lonely Goatherd’ was quite simple in staging terms, but very sweet nonetheless, with little Gretl watching on the floor with her back to the audience, facing the makeshift stage and puppets. The children looked bored without Maria at the start of Act 2, which then deepened into a profound sadness at the news that they’d have a new Mother. Maria’s singing off-stage near the start of Act 2, enabled the children to react with beaming smiles and there was a tangible sense of happiness all round! The ending of the relationship between Von-Trapp and Elsa was sensitively and gently handled, as it occurred in real-time in front of Maria. The following dialogue was trickier and as Von-Trapp asked Maria if a little boy had kissed her when young – it was a little awkward, in fact at this moment, an audience member emitted a loud, “Whoop!” which broke the tension here. The fast and shocking marched entrance of the Nazi soldiers through the auditorium was fabulous and made an impact upon an unsuspecting audience. It was an uncomfortable feeling; being watched by these angry eyes all around us – we were then transported to the Festival concert itself. The music was rousing, the front stage curtains were only partially closed, and the concert began. We were nervous for the family and this is exactly how we should be feeling at this point in the production. The use of the retro microphone for the Festival concert was a great idea, as was the echo reverb employed here; it was all hugely theatrical and we were completely absorbed. Chaos ensued when the Nazi soldiers realised that the Von-Trapps were not still at the Festival. In the Abbey garden later, the soldiers searched the graveyard from behind the railings – this was a stand-out scene, with the Von-Trapp family hiding behind tombstones DSR and DSL. We were immediately occupying the same space as them and watching the soldiers shine their torchlights in our direction. Just prior to, ‘Climb Every Mountain’ the youngest children had assistance doing their coats up and preparing to go on the run; this was incredibly moving and our hearts went out to them and their innocence during this very dark and frightening time. As the Von-Trapp family gathered themselves together and prepared to flee to the mountains, the Captain held little Gretl in his arms and Maria gathered the rest of the children closer to them and this formed a small huddle; a gorgeous, family unit. It was clear to see just what a wonderful Mother Maria was to all of these children. The music was especially rousing at this point as the show came to a close.

SINGING: What a good deal of highly-polished work we witnessed here! The nuns sang the ‘Preludium’: there were two bars of singing off-stage, before they entered singing. The lower notes were stunning; the harmonies were gorgeous, with crisp diction. ‘Hallelujah’ was joyous, yet gentle and quite subtle. When the children sang off-stage, their voices could be heard very clearly and it was extremely effective in continuing the mood and tone of the scene. The Children coped admirably with the higher notes and the more complex harmonies in, ‘The Sound of Music’. Kate Courage had worked her magic again here; she really does know how to get the best from young voices and older voices alike and the results are always impressive. The nuns sang beautifully throughout the wedding scene, creating a wonderfully poignant atmosphere. Maria and Liesl’s duet was gorgeous; the music was light yet layered and each part could be heard. ‘Edelweiss’ was absolutely superb, first as a solo for the Captain, then with his family joining him and finally with the audience, (at Maria’s encouragement and request). This was all incredibly moving. The children did their best to appear bright-eyed throughout the reprise of, ‘So Long, Farewell’. The duet, “Something Good” was an absolute delight, and the end harmonies were stunning. There was genuine warmth between the two characters here. The singing was

absolutely stunning; particularly the Ensemble of Nuns; exquisite harmonies blended and merged as they prayed and gave praise in song. The children's songs were neat, well-paced and beautifully articulated, (not an easy task). The principals had been well-guided with their musical numbers and the meaning behind the lyrics was always first and foremost what we noticed. Superb work!

PROPS: Bernice Hudson, Phil Courage: There were several props in this production, ranging from military items and flags through to the personal properties of the characters. It was lovely that the children all held teddies, when they entered Maria's room at night, during the storm. The cloth puppets were slightly oversized and very characterful and colourful. The wedding presents were wrapped in brown paper and tied with coloured ribbons; perfect for this setting. The designs of the era was fully adhered to throughout the production; well done.

MOVEMENT AND DANCE: Georgiana Snelling: There are a few scenes that lend themselves to dancing in this well-known show. The children provide a clear opportunity for dancing and movement and Georgiana ensured that they were marching for their entrances and exits. They each stepped forward briskly on their whistle-calls. There were several missed opportunities, however ('So Long, Farewell' and others). The children coped well with, 'So Long, Farewell' but their movements could have been much bigger and more complex; the mechanics of a clock, with a pendulum swinging each other along the line, for example. These children were capable performers and could have coped with more here.

Do ensure that the children are always facing front and not standing with their arms or ankles crossed. The line-up for, 'Doh, Re, Me' was very good. There was a little dancing for Rolf and Liesl in, 'Sixteen Going On Seventeen' – perhaps these performers could have coped with a little more challenge? Don't be afraid to push the performers – they can take it! They sat on the patio chairs and span a little. There were waltz steps and curtsies, bows and side hop-steps. They mimed a little game of hide and seek behind the patio chairs, which was a lovely idea, but there wasn't much room in which to hide, (not the fault of the choreographer though!) The children swayed, created fun gestures and danced in circles throughout the, 'Goatherd' song, which was lovely to watch. Later, the children waltzed together, before the tabs opened to reveal elegant couples waltzing together. Maria and Captain Von-Trapp danced a traditional, Austrian waltz and it was very effective. Overall, the movement was pleasant and entertaining; the whole cast were on-board with the choreography and it was well-rehearsed.

HAIR: Peggy Snook: Each character was immaculately presented and the hair design played a huge part in this. The female children wore their hair in neat plaits atop their heads and the boys' hair was side-parted and tidy. Maria's hair was always off her face in the same, traditional plaited style. Elsa's hair was tied back in a neat chignon, which was classy and very much the look of a lady of her social standing. The guests were immaculate with various, 'up-do's' for the Ladies and the men with well-groomed styles too.

PRODUCTION: Christina Barnes: This was a very slick and professional production, and no doubt Christina had her work cut-out for her with the addition of two sets of children and their chaperones to consider too. All cues were well-timed

and executed; the stage was safe and well-designed. The front-of-house material and programme were both of a very high standard. I am sure that there were several months of rehearsals for a production of this size, and it all came together splendidly!

THE CAST:

Maria Rainer: Daisy Woodruffe: We first meet Maria when she is sitting on a grassy hillock, out in the mountains, (a projected image of mountain tops and wild flowers in pastures). Daisy sang with ease and her vocal tone was rich and warm. Her diction was very clear and crisp and she sustained the longer notes with confidence, whilst looking up and out to the audience – there was a definite connection being made here and one which would see us grow to really care for this character. Daisy gesticulated as she sang, layering more meaning to the lyrics and she used some simple dance movements, (... “Like a brook that trips and falls over stones...”) and these were well-placed. When she first exited the stage, she did so with her arms extended, imitating an aircraft and this demonstrated her childish innocence in this moment, (this effectively contrasted with her later movements and gestures as Maria’s emotional maturity and experience developed and this was superbly characterised and captured by Daisy.). When we next saw her, she was teaching the Mother Abbess her favourite song and her face was earnest and utterly believable as she explained how she found it so very hard not to sing at all times, even when she ought to remain quiet. She embodied all of the paradoxical elements that the Nuns had previously been singing about and her inner-thoughts were etched across her face as she valiantly muddled to make sense of the world around her. Daisy was a very engaging performer. Her grimace at the news of the seven children she was required to look after was amusing. “What will this day be like, I wonder?” Daisy captured the excitement and trepidation that Maria would have undoubtedly felt at the moment in her life. She changed into her, ‘outside clothes’ behind a screen on stage, then acted each word as she sang; her eyes told a tale with each line. Daisy was adept at creating sight-lines and she looked up and out at the whole auditorium, (which was large and wide), creating a rousing version of, “I have Confidence”. Her, “Oh help!” as the song came to end was most endearing. Maria was innocent and wide-eyed when she said that the poor didn’t want the dress she was wearing; this shut down Von-Trapp’s insulting remark about her ugly clothing. Her honesty always managed to break down his walls; if a little slowly to start with. Maria brought the song, ‘Doh, Re, Me’ to life as she taught the children how to sing. Whenever she prayed it felt sincere. Maria became extremely agitated and animated when describing the children’s attributes and interests to their Father; “I haven’t finished yet”, this was a fantastic moment and Daisy encapsulated the passion that Maria might have felt at this moment; stuck between two very different parties and caring so much for the children, but trying her best not to go too overboard with her employer. These complex feelings were expressed in all that Daisy did in these moments on stage and as an audience, we were all right there spurring her on. When Von Trapp conceded and gave up his whistle to her, she looked up into his face with much depth of feeling. She was ebullient following this, singing to herself. Her focus on the Captain became more intense, as her suppressed feelings grew; the confusion and hurt that this caused her was evident as she gathered her belongings and ran away. Maria’s focus on Captain Von-Trapp was absolute and there was a genuine feeling of hope and honesty about them when they sang, ‘Something Good’ together. Maria then suggested that they ask the children for their permission/blessing to be married; this was a very truthful moment of acting.

When the family prepared to escape their homeland, Maria stood with the children and we got a sense as to how much the children needed and loved her.

Congratulations on creating such a superb and truthful characterisation and for performing it to such a high standard, Daisy.

The Mother Abbess: Sarah Easterbrook: She was focussed when she wrote down the lyrics to, 'My Favourite Things' and there was a lovely moment between The Mother Abbess and Maria, regardless of their individual status within the monastery. Sarah played this moment with a measured serenity. She took her time with Maria when she returned to the Abbey, Sarah spoke in soft tones with a knowledgeable air about her, "These walls were not made to shut out problems". This prefaced her wonderful and compassionate version of, 'Climb Every Mountain'. Sarah's vocals were powerful yet graceful. She prepared for the wedding of Maria and Von-Trapp under a single, yellow spotlight and she took her time; her pacing was wonderful actually. Calmly she turned to Maria in her wedding dress and said, "You are beautiful, my dear." This sentence meant so much more than the face value of Maria's attractiveness and referred more to Maria's calling to be a wife to a man and not to God; here she was giving her a beautiful blessing and acknowledgement. Sarah gave us a kindly, compassionate and gentle Mother Abbess and this complimented Daisy's very natural Maria just perfectly.

Sister Berthe: Naomi Ibbetson: She agreed emphatically with Sister Sophia, that Maria was indeed, 'Trouble'. Berthe added a comical moment during the wedding scene, when she took out a less-than opaque negligée from Maria's honeymoon suitcase; her face was a picture as she considered aloud if Maria had forgotten to add the linings into the garment! Naomi's physical work was really pleasing; her facial expressions and use of gesture made Sister Berthe a Nun worth watching! This was a lovely characterisation.

Sister Margaretta: Frankie Simpkins: Frankie has a superb vocal clarity and she sang her solo lines with ease. She made many wonderful facial expressions when referring to how exasperating Maria could be, but it was all done with an over-arching feeling of kindness. She said with considerable consideration once Maria had abruptly returned to the Abbey, "It's strange. She's happy to be here, but she's unhappy too." Margaretta tried to soothe and encourage the Von-Trapp family as they hid in the Abbey gardens. Frankie made this role her own and proved that she is more than simply a fabulous singing voice.

Sister Sophia: Sarah Davies: Sarah created a lovely role here and Sister Sophia was also extremely bemused by Maria's behaviour, "I love her very dearly, but she always seems to be in trouble, doesn't she?" Like Margaretta, she wasn't at all unkind, but she definitely saw the funnier side to things! She was an endearing character, and Sarah brought bags of personality to this role.

Captain von Trapp: Iorwerth Mitchell: Iorwerth gave us a softly-spoken Von-Trapp, although he was able to appear stern when necessary. His disdain at Maria's appearance at the start of the show was well-handled and he refused to shake her hand upon her arrival. The Captain kept his head held high and looked down upon Maria. The status of both characters was easy to read as the production continued and things changed. Iorwerth and Daisy worked well together to achieve the ever-changing dynamic between these central characters. This Captain somehow felt a little more modern than traditional and this was no bad thing. His flare of anger at Rolf for using the Nazi salute upon entering his house was heartfelt and very clear. He took a step backwards in shock when he learned that his children were wearing curtains as play - clothes. He calmly told Maria to pack her things and leave. It was therefore very

moving when Von-Trapp joined-in and started singing with Maria and his children in, ‘The Sound of Music’. Iorwerth gave us more gentle moments as he told Maria she’d brought music back into his home, and the low notes he sang as the song reprised were full-bodied and most effective. The Captain and Maria were most absorbed in each other as they danced at the party; this was a very believable moment indeed. His sadness was well-portrayed at the start of Act 2, as he deeply missed Maria. When she returned, his voice was flooded with a new softness, which surprised even him. The Captain was steadfast in his political convictions, yet remained stoical and poised; there was a permanently gentle air about him until later when his anger and frustration became much more apparent. Iorwerth raised his voice accordingly and it was pleasing to see the adaptation of his characterisation at this point. It was incredibly moving when the Captain became overwhelmed with sadness at having to secretly depart his homeland and with fear at having to lead his family to safety; he faltered mid-way through singing, ‘Edelweiss’ in the concert. His new wife and children came to his side and encouraged him. This is always going to be a challenging role to play and Iorwerth gave us a very believable Captain Von-Trapp – well done.

Liesl: Carisma Dolphin: Carisma gave us a beautifully poised and innocent Liesl; in fact she was utterly charming! Her singing voice was pure and accomplished, so she really treated us when she sang. She felt each note and the meaning behind each lyric and sentiment. When Rolf kissed her, she was elated. She told him that he was wonderful and we truly believed in her. Her duet with Rolf was engaging and her face lit-up with excitement when she realised that he was interested in her. Her sheepish return to the house via Maria’s window showed us that her childlike fears hadn’t quite escaped her yet and that she really did need some reassurance. She was open and honest and Carisma expressed all her feelings with a sense of authenticity. She looked to Maria for encouragement during the reprise of, ‘So Long’ during the Festival concert, with arched eyebrows and a sincere expression on her face and she understandably couldn’t believe it when it appeared that Rolf might betray her Father. Carisma treated this precious, ‘coming-of-age’ role with great respect and as a result, she gave us a truthful and engaging Liesl. Well done!

Rolf: Noah Heard: Noah gave us a most sincere Rolf. His concern for Liesl, (to start) was genuine and heartfelt. He was light on his feet as he danced with her on the patio, swaying and gesticulating the meaning behind the lyrics, in addition to holding her hands. His vocals were well-pitched and articulated. He was very serious-minded when he thought he should ‘Heil’ upon entering the Von-Trapp household. He was a rule-abiding young man, with his whole life ahead of him and yet his later appearance saw him much-changed and Noah gave this characterisation a good deal of anger mixed with fear, as he visibly started supporting the opposition. He was cold and frosty toward Liesl and Maria, “Cry all you want, but just remember what I said before it’s too late”. His warnings were cold and factual. The moment when he shone his torch into the Captain’s face in the Abbey garden was pivotal and all-encompassing. Well done.

Elsa Schraeder: Natalia Wiczorek: She was elegant and extremely poised. Natalia lit-up the stage spaces she inhabited and her Elsa had a warmth to her that this particular role is not always afforded; which was a lovely touch. There were several compelling and believable moments between Elsa and the Captain and it was easy to see why these two might have been a good match – on the surface, at least. This enabled the plot to seem more lifelike and believable. Elsa attempted to smooth Von-Trapp’s nerves when he shouted at Rolf, saying, “He’s just a boy”. This was done with compassion and care and wasn’t simply placatory. Elsa was always composed;

she was often to be found in the patio area of the stage. Her facial expressions told a thousand stories and Natalia gave this character a good deal of depth. The relief on her face, when she learned that Maria was to become a Nun, was tangible and then her doubts crept back at the party. In Act 2, Elsa dragged Max off-stage with urgency, and then later confided in him that she'd hate to win without a fight. When Elsa sang to her friend Max about becoming a Realist, she was bright, composed and elegant; Natalia is very comfortable on stage; she created a well-rounded characterisation here and we could catch glimpses of Elsa's true feelings beneath her brightness. She reached all of the superb higher notes in her songs and made it all appear effortless. Elsa was truly sorry for the ending of her relationship with the Captain. Pleasing work.

Max Detweiler: Robin Jukes: Max was larger than life and flamboyant; not only in his dress sense, but with his expansive arm and hand gestures. His facial expressions were equally animated. His heart-to-heart with Elsa about her relationship with The Captain was played at a pleasing pace, before he started to sing about planes and diesel yachts with Elsa, "How Can Love Survive?" His blindfolded playing with Gretl and Marta was full of fun and he tried desperately to enthuse the children at the start of Act 2, then later he confided his inner-most fears to his friend, Elsa, "If they invade, what would happen to me?" This being a loaded question, she was able still to calm him with, "Wait for it to blow over." Max sustained his excitement over the 1938 Festival Programme. He often threw his head back and used his shoulders and hands to express himself; there is a good deal of vulnerability beneath Max's outgoing gestures. Robin stood still and gave Max a good deal of strength whilst standing and supposedly waiting for the Von-Trapp family to return to take their first prize and applause. Good work.

Franz, the Butler: Edward Beazley: He was a softly-spoken aid to the Captain. Franz fully understood the use of the whistle, having served in the Navy himself, so he was unruffled by this. He clearly respected his Employer, but we could also see the inner-workings of his mind as the tensions mounted in Act 2 and he had to introduce more and more unwanted door callers; there were a few, "Phone call from Berlin, Sir" introductions to be announced and it was evident that this caused Franz some unwanted stress. He was happier when bringing on his Employers' suitcases from their Honeymoon. Later, Franz added that should the Germans take over Austria, at least they'd have efficiency. Edward had to speak up, because his character didn't have the benefit of a radio mic but he coped with this.

Frau Schmidt: Lorraine Ferguson: She hated being whistled for and made this very clear to Franz; with rolling eyes and a permanent frown, "He didn't whistle for us when his wife was alive." She was firm when speaking with Maria in her bedroom, as she carried a bolt of hot-pink fabric. This was a woman who knew her place, knew how much there was to get done and simply wanted to get on and do it! We must remember that she would have seen several Governesses before Maria's arrival and Lorraine absolutely conveyed this worn-out attitude from the get-go! She did a great job of appearing flustered in Act 2 muttering to herself, "Everybody's cross nowadays".

Admiral von Schreiber: Andrew Curtis: His impatience with the Captain was thinly-disguised as he repeatedly referred to practicalities, "A telegram was sent to you three days ago". He plainly told him that they all admired the Captain's work and that he ought to comply immediately. His accent was effective, as was his clipped articulation. Andrew stood with authority as he quizzed Von-Trapp in his own home.

Herr Zeller: Tim Knott: He was pristinely smart in his full uniform and Tim made an incredibly self-assured and commanding Herr Zeller. He spoke with a hint of a German accent and this was good – too much might have made this small, but important role more of a caricature. He repeated orders often, “We are here on business” and “Let’s get to the point”. His suspicion that the children couldn’t actually sing was well-played.

Baron & Baroness Elberfeld: Pete & Karen Grant: This was a most dignified and stylish couple; they held their heads high and their elegance indicated the authority and high status that they enjoyed amongst their people.

New Postulant, soloist: Connie Knight: She appeared young, innocent and wide-eyed when she was being fitted for her robes on her first day. She was full of innocent determination as she stood there whilst the Nuns talked over her head.

Children, (The RED team, for the performance I watched):

Friedrich: Elijah Brewer: He was a gentle soul, who really wanted his Father to notice and possibly admire him. Elijah spoke clearly and was fully-focussed on the action at all times. His singing was good and his facial expressions clearly showed how he was feeling. He looked proud when Maria told him at fourteen, he was practically a man. A comical piece of physical acting occurred when he ran during the storm with his brother and then proceeded to slowly stride into the room; smoothing-down his hair and then sauntering a little, once seen by his Sisters and Maria! This was super. Elijah worked extremely well with his siblings on stage and he was focussed and in-role throughout. He assisted some of the younger performers and was confident about his placings on stage. Pleasing work.

Kurt: Rhys Armstrong: Rhys spoke clearly and with meaning when he said that they, (the children) didn’t know any songs. The sadness he felt at this statement could be seen in his forlorn and frowning face. His ambition to be a grown-up was evident when in Maria’s bedroom he hid his fear of the storm outside with, “We just wanted to make sure that you weren’t, (scared).” Rhys achieved this with the most sincere expression and slight head-tilt, to portray his feigned confident attitude and this was lovely. Kurt was very smiley throughout the puppet-show and ‘Goatherd’ song and he was obviously enjoying it very much. This enthusiasm is infectious and translates directly to any audience. Rhys’s singing in, ‘The Sound of Music’ was used to create a gorgeous echo using the higher notes and this was stunning. What a pure and pitch-perfect singing voice! Kurt made a hash of his dance steps with Maria, (which Rhys did a great job of, as I’m sure he is more able than this and so he had to act getting the steps wrong!) He had to make his dancing so terrible that his Father would intercept – which he did! Kurt was very thoughtful at the start of Act 2, whilst pondering the notion of having a new Mother, (that wouldn’t be Maria). His input at the Festival was entertaining. Well done, Rhys on a super characterisation.

Louisa: Darcey Oswin: This is another colourful character role to play; Louisa is at once grumpy, playful, controversial and lonely. Darcey was adept at creating an initial loftiness and coolness towards Maria, and she achieved this effectively with eye-rolling and shoulder-shrugging. Louisa loved to trick any new female adults who entered their lives, particularly by pretending she was Marta! During, ‘Doh, Re, Me’ she sat on the chaise longue with her arms crossed defiantly across her chest. Louisa couldn’t keep it up for long, though and she soon joined in, even to her own annoyance! During the storm, she told Maria that they wouldn’t see the ‘brave’ boys, just before they rushed in – Louisa often set-up lines of dialogue for other characters

on stage and Darcey was adept at this. She established Louisa's sadness well at the start of Act 2. Louisa mimed the head-nods in time to the music in the reprise of, 'So Long', all the while looking at Max out the corner of her eye in the hope of receiving some reassurance. She added a resolute strength to her group of siblings and didn't suffer fools gladly. Darcey sang very well in all of her musical numbers. Well done.

Brigitta: Greta Rawson-Courage: Greta established this character from the get-go with zest and sincerity; she was a joy to watch as her Brigitta flourished before our eyes. Brigitta is a wonderful role to play and Greta did so with a refreshing truthfulness; it felt as if each line of dialogue were new to her and that she was having all of these thoughts in real-time before our eyes. She was earnest when she asked if, 'Doh, Re, Me' was an actual song, with her eyes wide. Brigitta watched the couples dancing at the party with her Father as they hid behind an archway – this was a lovely, shared moment between Father and Daughter; it was clear that Von Trapp felt enjoyment and exasperation in equal measure when with his deep-thinking middle daughter. The bond between them was clear. She wasted no time in telling Maria that her face was red, following her dance with the Captain – Greta clearly relished this moment as she made this role so delightfully perceptive! Greta was superbly articulate when she noted that Maria and her Father were indeed in love. Brigitta held her head in her hands at the start of Act 2, so despondent was she at the absence of their beloved Maria. In Act 2, Brigitta was ecstatic upon Maria's return and Greta's face lit-up with excitement at this point; conveying just how happy Brigitta was feeling at this moment. Greta made this role her own, her singing was delightful and she must be congratulated on the creation of such a mature and well-rounded characterisation at such a young age!

Marta: Lily Kelly: Lily spoke with superb diction and conveyed her feelings with clarity, yet with sensitivity. When she introduced herself to Maria, "I'm going to be seven and I'd like a pink parasol", she spoke beautifully; with expression and confidence. Her line, "She was the best Governess we ever had," once Maria had fled, was delivered with a downturned mouth and the saddest eyes, as was her line, "We don't sing". Marta was a lovable child, whose ability to tug at the heartstrings was truly captured by Lily. She sang beautifully with her siblings and we felt that we really wanted Maria to protect this little girl at all costs. Well done.

Gretl: Sophie Davies: Sophie did a fabulous job throughout. She was incredibly sweet. She did a really great job when sitting still with her back to the audience to watch the puppet-show and her gorgeous smile was utterly charming throughout. It was charming when she earnestly handed a small posy of flowers to Elsa. She entered later, with Frau Schmidt and practised her curtsy-skills with her; this was cute. Her very endearing 'Goodnight' solo was gorgeous; what a brave, little girl! Gretl's frown was fabulous at the start of Act 2. Her question, "Why don't I feel better?" was heartfelt and had an obvious impact on the audience. She sang in perfect unison with her Brothers and Sisters and remembered the numerous stage directions. Well done, Sophie, I look forward to seeing your theatrical career develop!

Nuns, Guests and others: Kirstie Blackwall, Claire Borovac, Wilhelmina Burden, Helen Cosslett, Marie George, Emma Hogg, Abigail Ibbetson, Rachael Ibbetson, Chloe Johnson, Kira Jukes, Valerie Jukes, Maria Matthews, Anna Mazan, Samii Purves, Janet Thompson, and Wendy Wenham: The guests at the party harmonised beautifully in unison, danced together and created a wonderful atmosphere. The Nuns were a superb element of the show in their own right. They worked as a very tight Ensemble and the vocals they produced were stunning. The

front-of-tabs scene where some the Nuns dressed the Mother Abbess in white robes, under a yellow spotlight, was atmospheric and solemn. They walked carefully around the small stage space with ceremony and great care and were then joined by the rest of the Sisters as the tabs opened to reveal them placed upon steps, singing. It was a very poignant scene and very moving too. The three traditionally-dressed, Austrian ladies who were awarded third place in the Festival concert were bouncy and jolly, yet very humble as they came through the curtains to receive their applause and recognition. In second place, the lady in red bowed copious times and wore a huge grin on her face – this was most amusing.

Soldiers, guest and others: Tom Bullock, Andrew Foot, Wayne Kelly, Pete Tapp, Bruce Thompson: The soldiers were terrifying and maintained their roles throughout the festival scene, whilst scattered about the auditorium. They created an atmosphere of fear with their brisk marching and flashing, accusatory eyes! The male guests at the party were smart and well-rehearsed.

EFFORT, ORIGINALITY AND ATTAINMENT: This was a most sincere and moving production. There was a huge buzz in the auditorium for the Saturday matinee and the audience members were not disappointed. It is a long show when unabridged, so Trowbridge Musical Theatre did well to grab hold of everyone's attention and keep a-hold of it throughout. We were transported back-in-time to a pre-war Austria and with the combination of high-energy performing, delightful live music and powerful story-telling; we were immersed in, 'The Sound of Music' for a magical few hours at, 'The Civic' in Trowbridge. Really well done!

Thank you for your most kind hospitality, (I was very well looked after) and I wish you every success with your next production,

CLARE TOGHILL