

RODGERS & HAMMERSTEIN'S

# The SOUND of MUSIC

BOOK BY  
**LINDSAY & CROUSE**

DIRECTED BY **JACK O'BRIEN**

*The Sound of Music* tells the story of Maria, a high-spirited postulant (nun-in-training) who becomes a governess for the seven children of a widowed naval captain. Her kindness and sense of play capture the hearts of the children and eventually their grieving father. This story of a family rediscovering happiness is set against a serious backdrop; it takes place in Salzburg, Austria, in 1938, as the Nazi party is coming into power.

Before we tell you more, take a moment and think about the title: *The Sound of Music*. Music is central to this story. Told as a musical, it is also about the power of music to bring people together, to heal, to fill us with joy. What role does music play in your own life? Do you sing, play an instrument, love to listen? Do you share music with your family or friends? What type of music moves your heart?

While filled with music and laughter, *The Sound of Music* also explores serious subjects, including standing up for your beliefs and being courageous enough to find your dreams. As we watch this brave family, we are reminded that we, too, have the strength to face our own challenges.

Theatre raises questions and challenges audience members to discover their own answers. See what questions this information raises for you and what discoveries the performance provides. Thank you so much for joining us for *The Sound of Music*. We look forward to seeing you at the theatre!

The **HILLS** are **ALIVE** with the sound of **MUSIC**

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# Let's **START** at the very **BEGINNING...**

— Maria Rainer in *The Sound of Music*

**IT IS 1938 IN SALZBURG, AUSTRIA**, where the nuns of Nonnberg Abbey sing prayers as they go about their daily activities. Their songs quickly turn into questions about the location of a young postulant (nun-in-training) named Maria. Little do they know, Maria is enjoying a walk in the hills above the Abbey. She loses track of time and arrives home late. This isn't the first time Maria has done this. The nuns wonder if Maria truly belongs in their community, because she has a hard time following the rules.

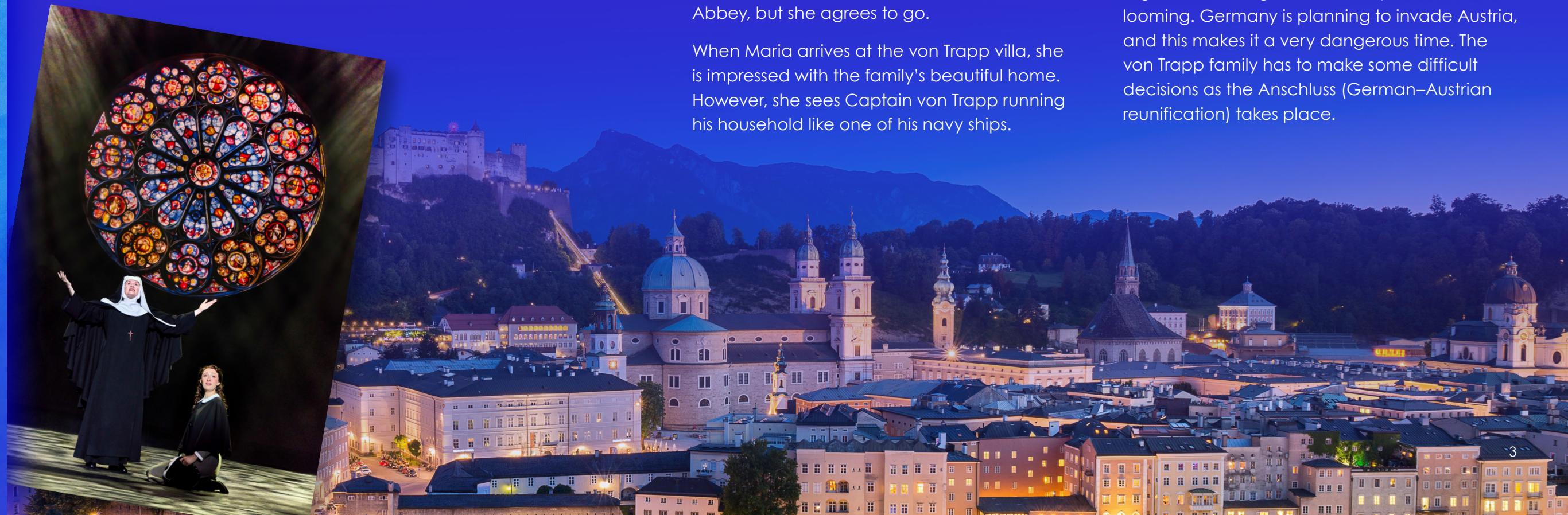
The nun in charge of Nonnberg Abbey is the Mother Abbess. She loves Maria very much and wants her to make the right decision about becoming a nun. She arranges for Maria to spend some time away from the Abbey before dedicating her entire life to the church. Maria is to take a temporary job as governess (a woman who is paid to teach and care for a child at home) for the von Trapp family. Captain Georg von Trapp is a widower with seven children. Maria has never been a governess and is nervous about leaving the Abbey, but she agrees to go.

When Maria arrives at the von Trapp villa, she is impressed with the family's beautiful home. However, she sees Captain von Trapp running his household like one of his navy ships.

The children live a strict life of orderly marching and whistles to signal them. There is no time for play, and music is strictly forbidden.

Because of Maria's patient and loving nature, the children eventually warm up to her. Through music, she brings joy and healing to the von Trapp household. She teaches the children songs, and their singing reconnects them with their father.

Although the family discovers happiness together once again, a serious problem is looming. Germany is planning to invade Austria, and this makes it a very dangerous time. The von Trapp family has to make some difficult decisions as the Anschluss (German–Austrian reunification) takes place.



# INSPIRED BY A TRUE STORY

The Sound of Music was inspired by a true story. In the 1920s, the real Maria Augusta Kutschera lived as a young postulant (nun-in-training) at Nonnberg Abbey in Salzburg, Austria. She was sent to be a governess to Captain Georg von Trapp, a widower with seven children. She married the Captain, and the family performed as a singing group at the Salzburg Festival in Austria. The Trapp Family Singers became a popular musical act all over Europe. The von Trapps had to escape from Austria after the Germans invaded, because they would not participate in the Nazi agenda. Maria eventually wrote a book about their lives called *The Story of the Trapp Family Singers*, published in 1949.

The story of the von Trapp family has been told in many different forms. It was a book, then two German movies, then the stage musical, then the movie musical. There have been thousands of stage productions of the musical all over the world. It is one of the most popular American musicals of all time.

*"A DREAM that will need all the LOVE  
Every day of your LIFE for as long as you LIVE."*  
— The Mother Abbess in *The Sound of Music*

## FIND YOUR DREAM

At the heart of *The Sound of Music* is the idea of discovering your mission in life. It is not always easy to know what your mission is. And you may have more than one dream that you want to achieve.

In the story, Maria leaves the von Trapp family and returns to Nonnberg Abbey, seeking shelter from her problems. The Mother Abbess advises her not to use the Abbey to hide. She tells Maria to go back to the von Trapp villa and find the life she was "born to live."

Making our dreams a reality can present challenges for us to face, mountains for us to climb. And we need to love and nourish our dreams, so that they can thrive and move us forward.

*"While writing down the memories of a family, it astonished, amazed, almost overwhelmed me to see how much love — genuine, real love — was stored up in one short lifetime."*

— Cor Unum from the forward to *"The Story of the Trapp Family Singers"*

*Why do you think this story is told over and over again? Why does it matter so much to people?*

*If your family story were to go onstage, what would it be? Would it be a musical? A drama? A comedy?*

*Have you ever thought about your mission or purpose in life? If you had to define it right now, what would it be?*

*Do you have dreams in your life that you'd like to make come true? How would you go about nourishing, or feeding, your dreams?*

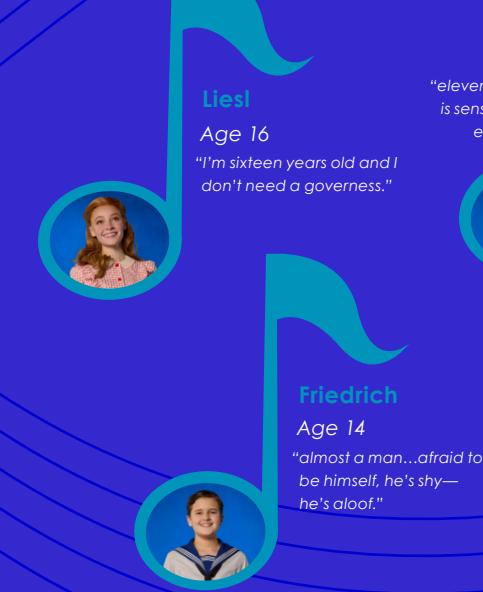
*What "mountains" have you had to climb? Who has supported you during those difficult times?*

***These walls were not made to shut out problems. You have to face them. You have to find the life you were born to live.***

— The Mother Abbess in *The Sound of Music*

*"And now, ladies and gentlemen,  
THE FAMILY VON TRAPP..."*  
— Max Detweiler in *The Sound of Music*

## The Von Trapp Children



**The Mother Abbess**

The nun in charge of Nonnberg Abbey.  
"I think I should talk to Maria instead of about her."



**Rolf Gruber**

A messenger boy who is interested in Liesl, the oldest von Trapp girl.  
"I am seventeen going on eighteen, I'll take care of you."



**Elsa Schraeder**

A friend of the Captain, "cosmopolitan, alert and attractive."  
"Can't you see things my way?"



**Max Detweiler**

A charming family friend.  
"The thing to do today is to get along with everybody."

## How do you solve a problem like Maria?

Many of the nuns in Nonnberg Abbey see Maria as a problem because she does not follow the rules. However, the person in charge of the Abbey, the Mother Abbess, sees Maria's restless nature and lovingly accepts it. She wants Maria to find her true calling in life. Sometimes, when we are seen as a "problem," it means we have not yet discovered where we truly belong. If another person "sees" who we really are, they can help us to find our place in the world. When we are in the environment that is right for us, doing the things we were meant to do, suddenly our "problem" becomes the gift that it truly is.

*Do you have any "problems" that are actually gifts? Have you found the right place or way to use them? What other gifts do you have?*

*What does it feel like to be fully seen, or understood, by another? Do you feel "seen" by important people in your life? What happens when we do not feel seen?*

*Empathy is the ability to put yourself in another's shoes, to see things from another person's point of view. Do you think you "see" or understand others? Why is it important to be able to do this?*

# The **HILLS**

**“THE HILLS” mentioned in *The Sound of Music* are a part of a large mountain system in south-central Europe called The Alps. The Eastern Alps make up much of the landscape in Austria.**

In *The Sound of Music*, the hills have great meaning for many of the characters. They symbolize home, safety and inspiration. Maria and the Mother Abbess grew up in the hills. Maria loves to hike in them because they make her heart sing. For the Captain, they represent protection.

- ♪ Do you have a place that has great meaning for you? A place of familiarity, safety, escape or healing?
- ♪ Is there a place that makes your heart sing?
- ♪ Where do you come from? The hills, the city, the forest, the desert, etc.? How do you feel about where you come from?

*“Bless my HOMELAND FOREVER.”*  
— Captain Georg von Trapp in *The Sound of Music*

“When you are a child of the mountains yourself, you really belong to them. You need them. They become the **faithful guardians of your life.**”

— Maria Augusta von Trapp

*The Sound of Music* takes place in Salzburg, a city in western Austria. Nonnberg Abbey is located here.

Vienna is the capital and largest city in Austria. It was the home of the classical music composers Beethoven, Brahms, Hayden, Mozart, Schubert and Strauss.

A mountainous country of central Europe.

Official Language: German

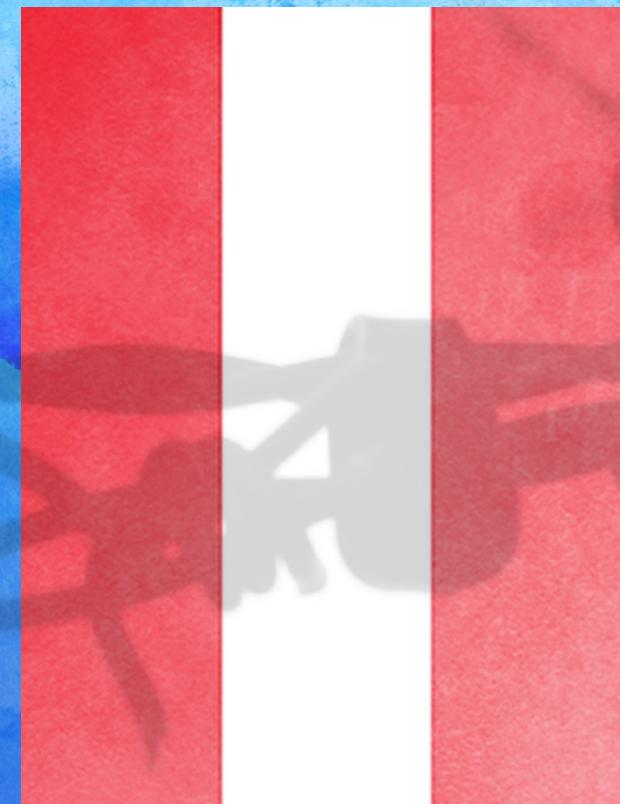
AUSTRIA

Salzburg was referred to as “the Rome of the North” because of its Catholic population.

# BE WISE

**"You can't save yourself by giving up, and you don't outwit a lion by putting your head in the lion's mouth."**

— Captain Georg von Trapp  
in *The Sound of Music*



## Anschluss: The Reunification of Germany and Austria

In 1870, before World War I, Germany and Austria-Hungary made an alliance. Italy joined them in 1882, and this was called the Triple Alliance. In 1918, they were defeated in World War I by England, France, the United States and other allied countries. After the war, Germany and Austria were divided into two separate countries, even though they shared a common language. Under the terms of the Treaty of Versailles, they were forbidden to reunite.

However, the idea of Germany and Austria coming back together appealed to many citizens of both countries. Adolf Hitler became the Führer (leader) of Germany in 1934. He was born in Austria and was determined to make it a part of his German empire. This plan for reunification was called Anschluss, which means "union." Eventually, Germany did invade Austria in March of 1938.

## "I am an **AUSTRIAN**— I will not be heiled!"

— Captain Georg von Trapp in *The Sound of Music*

In *The Sound of Music*, a young Austrian messenger, Rolf Gruber, visits the von Trapp villa. He greets the Captain by saying, "Heil" and offering the Nazi salute. The Captain becomes very upset by this gesture. After Rolf exits, the Captain says to his friend, Max Detweiler, "I am an Austrian—I will not be heiled!"

"Heil" is a German word that means "hail." "Sieg Heil" means "Hail Victory." This was a salute that was used to call German Nazi soldiers to attention, and to honor their leader, Adolf Hitler. Today, it is illegal to use the heil salute in Germany.

• **The Captain strongly identifies with being an Austrian citizen. Do you identify with a certain nationality, country or culture? Do you identify with more than one?**

## Adolf Hitler and the Nazi Party

At the end of World War I, in 1918, Germany was defeated by the Allied Powers, which included England, France, Russia and the United States. This made life in Germany very difficult. The government was weakened and the economy suffered. By the early 1930s, these problems paved the way for a new leader to rise to power.

Adolf Hitler attracted a large following by making promises of a better life and a more powerful Germany. Hitler was appointed chancellor of Germany in January of 1933. His political party was the National Socialist German Workers' Party, or Nazi party for short. The term "Third Reich" was often used to describe the Nazi state in Germany from January 30, 1933, to May 8, 1945.

Hitler and the Nazis were eager to invade other countries to expand their empire. They quickly took away basic rights from German citizens to more quickly achieve their goals. They also took control of culture, the economy, education and the law.

Hitler and the Nazis held the belief that the German population was racially superior. One strategy that Hitler and the Nazis used to gain power was to eliminate "racially inferior" peoples. Jewish people were thought to be their main "racial" enemy. Before, and during, World War II, the Nazis planned, and put into action, mass murder of the Jewish population, called The Holocaust. This resulted in the deaths of six million Jewish people, plus millions of others, during the reign of Hitler and the Nazis.

The Captain doesn't know what is going to happen, but the political situation in Austria doesn't feel right to him. His friends, Max and Elsa, want to make sure they are on good terms with the Germans if they invade Austria. They advise the Captain to "be wise, compromise!" In spite of the risks, the Captain stands up for what he believes in.

♪ **What would you be willing to stand up for?**

♪ **When is it courageous to stand up in the face of danger, and when is it smarter to compromise?**

♪ **Just like the characters in *The Sound of Music*, we, too, are living in the middle of history. What current events are happening right now? What do you think about these situations? How do you think people in the future will view them?**

# RODGERS &

*"After the Rodgers & Hammerstein revolution, songs became part of the story, as opposed to just entertainments in between comedy scenes."*

— Stephen Sondheim

Richard Rodgers and Oscar Hammerstein II were one of the most successful and influential musical theatre writing teams in the history of the American stage. Rodgers wrote the music and Hammerstein wrote the lyrics for *The Sound of Music*. Their other Broadway hits include *Oklahoma!*, *Carousel*, *Cinderella*, *South Pacific* and *The King and I*. The work of Rodgers & Hammerstein revolutionized musical theatre in the United States. They made a show's story its most important element, instead of its stars, songs or dance numbers.

*"I think it is just as important to sing about beautiful mornings as it is to talk about slums. I just couldn't write anything without hope in it."*

— Oscar Hammerstein II

*"The hills are ALIVE with the SOUND of MUSIC"*

— Maria Rainer in *The Sound of Music*



# HAMMERSTEIN

## The POWER of MUSIC

### MUSIC THERAPY

Today, scientists are studying how music affects the brain and how it can play a role in physical healing. They can see how active the brain becomes when listening to, or making, music. Scientists are asking questions about how music can be used to help people suffering from diseases associated with the brain. These include traumatic brain injury, stroke, depression and Alzheimer's disease.

**There is something magical about the sound of music.** It can soothe, uplift and heal. Whether we are listening to music, or making music, to experience it is one of life's greatest pleasures.

Throughout the story, we see characters experience the power of music. Through teaching the von Trapp children to sing, Maria brings joy back into their lives after the loss of their mother. And when we see the Captain join his children in song, we understand that he is beginning to heal from the loss of his wife. Singing together even keeps the family safe from danger.

What do you think makes music powerful?

What is your relationship to music? Do you like to listen to music, make music or both?

Have you ever sung in a group? What is fun about singing with others? How is it different from singing alone?

How can music heal someone? What special qualities does it have that makes this possible?

Has music ever helped you to feel better? If so, how?

*"My heart will be blessed With the sound of music  
And I'll sing once more."*

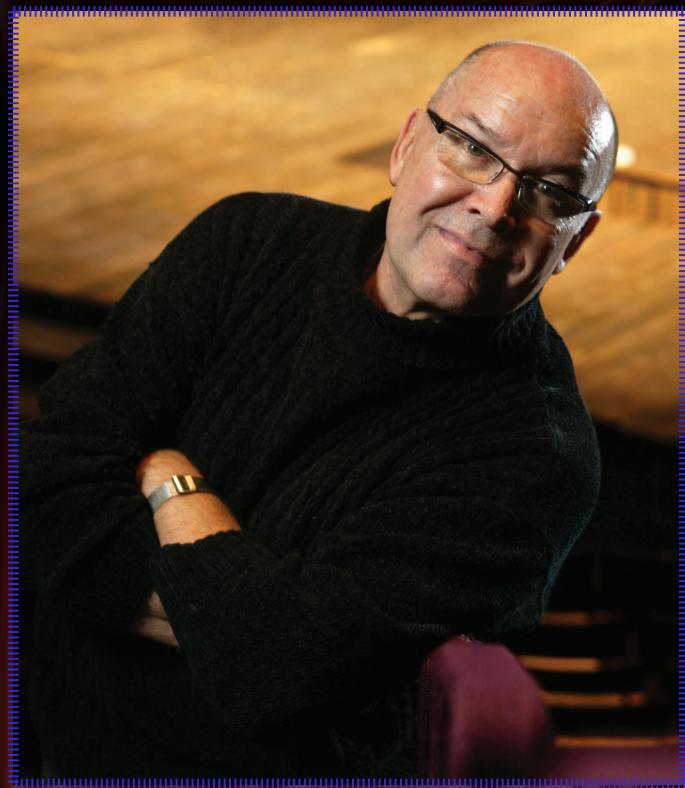
— Maria Rainer in *The Sound of Music*

*"Music acts like a MAGIC KEY to which the most tightly CLOSED HEART OPENS."*

— Maria Augusta von Trapp



1960 Stage Production of  
*The Sound of Music*



## A conversation with The Sound of Music Director

# JACK O'BRIEN

and Center Theatre Group  
Teaching Artist Marcos Nájera

MARCOS NÁJERA: If you don't mind indulging me the pun, "Let's start at the very beginning." How would you describe what your job is as a theatre director and how you learned the craft?

JACK O'BRIEN: I'm every show's first audience. I'm every actor's first audience. I'm every writer's first audience, everybody. Whether it's a classic or a brand-new piece, I look at it as if no one has ever seen it before. And I ask of it all the questions that you want to know: Why is this happening? Who are these people?

We are in a situation where even though we know it's fake, we want to believe it. When you like a show, you are swept up in it. And when it's disappointing, you're never engaged—you don't care. So, you go away saying, "That wasn't very good." But when it is good, it's incredibly moving. It's an act of faith really, which is interesting that *The Sound of Music* has so much to do with faith. I try to make sure that everybody on stage is saying or thinking the same story at the same time. And if we are all really clear, and we believe it, you believe it too.

To put it simplistically, I'm a storyteller who uses people as his medium.

You really have to marshal all the forces of the written text, the people moving on stage, and the lights, costumes and sounds to tell the story and make it happen. Can you describe the nitty gritty of a director's day and job?

It's almost as if there's a movie playing in my own head. And I read the material. I listen to the music. And in my own imagination once I've talked to my designers [lights, sound, set, costume artists] and everybody, I try to gently explain what I think I see. And they take off from that. They give me their version of it. And I think, "Yeah, that's good—but shouldn't she be in yellow? Or shouldn't she be in dark blue?" And little by little, we get together and decide together how we want it to be. And then what emerges on stage is not ever what I really wanted, but it's some amalgam [a combination or mixture of different things] of belief that we've all agreed upon.

So you are crafting a working document with your team?

A choreographer works by saying, "I want you to do exactly what I'm doing. Your leg goes this way. Your arm goes that way. No, your finger should be up. See this finger? It's up! Please do exactly as I do."

A director has to somehow convince everyone involved that what is happening is their idea, not his.

You can only do one of two things. You can replicate. Or you can create. If you replicate, you're doing what you are told to do. If you create, you are putting something of yourself into it. You are making it yours. I think a good director always tries to get the actor or the designer to do their best work—as if it is their work. And if you are really clever, you get what you want that way. But! It's through the filter of somebody else's creativity. Sometimes they can't do it. But sometimes, it is better than you dreamed.

I'm going to try to put a real story on stage. Not one that just goes along with plot. For instance, I want the early [musical] numbers, say "Do-Re-Mi," to look like Maria staged them. They shouldn't look like they've been done by a Broadway choreographer. So Danny Mefford, my choreographer, and I are going to play games with the children because I don't think they should be all that good the first time they do it. These are kids who haven't been singing and dancing. And so a couple of them are going to waddle off into the corner and bump into walls and stuff!

"I'm a **STORYTELLER**  
who uses **PEOPLE** as his medium."

(Laughs) After all these years of being a *Sound of Music* fan, it never quite struck me that the children in the film were instantly able to keep time with the steps, commit the choreography to memory with no rehearsal and then sing and harmonize in perfect pitch!

They don't know anything about that! And since we do the number half a dozen times in the show—every time we do it, it gets better doesn't it? And so by the time they are actually The von Trapp Singers, they are pretty damn good. But they can't be like that in the first act or we don't have a show.

So, in essence, the children finally get a real rehearsal process in this story starting at the top of the show to the end?

For months! And obviously, they've gotten better. Maria has never staged a number in her life. She's a [religious] officiate in the mountains! So what I'm

trying to do and what I think the really fun number is "The Lonely Goatherd." Because I think she is the greatest babysitter that ever was!

She's got a bunch of kids who are terrified of thunder and lightning, and she plays a game with them that is so outrageous and funny and adorable that we forget to be afraid. It's a babysitter's game. I think it's an improv. They are making that song up as they go along. And I think it's: how many things rhyme with goat? Coat, moat, wrote. I think that's the game she is playing. So there isn't an aspect of the show that I'm not studying, that I'm not asking questions about.

Well, what do you think the value is of creating, replicating and experiencing this story now, all these years later?

We tell this story to each other over and over again because our world will always be in peril. And we take courage from the success of others and learn how to behave in difficult circumstances. Its great value is that it happened. It's not fiction. This actually happened. It's a version of what happened. We know that this young woman showed up.

"I'm a **STORYTELLER**  
who uses **PEOPLE** as his medium."

She fell in love with the father and they fled just before the Nazis took over Austria. These are real people. Any time you see people stand up for their own rights and make a moral decision, it's riveting. We know, looking over our shoulder how that came about, and how it turned out. And some people got through, and some people didn't.

So, there's not just one reason why this has become one of the most beloved shows in American history. It's because it literally touches everybody. From children who've never seen a stage show before, they see kids their own age making discoveries and responding. And parents see what it is like to lose somebody. Teachers see what it's like to instruct. And everybody sees not only how important it is to love and to be loved, but to have something worth loving. And that is really ultimately, your country.

This story has almost all the bases covered, and our job is to uncover them.



**These are a few of my**

# FAVORITE THINGS

*The*  
**SOOND  
of MUSIC**

**"My Favorite Things" is one of the most beloved songs from The Sound of Music. It brings comfort to the characters and helps them get through difficult times by remembering things they love.**

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"And **LOVE** in your heart  
wasn't put there to **STAY**-  
Love isn't **LOVE**  
till you **GIVE** it away.."

— Maria Rainer in *The Sound of Music*