

NEW MEXICO YOUNG ACTORS

Present

The Sound of Music: Youth Edition

Book by Howard Lindsay and Russel Crouse
Music by Richard Rodgers
Lyrics by Oscar Hammerstein II
Based on “The Trapp Family Singers” by Maria Augusta Trapp

TEACHER STUDY GUIDE

Dear Teachers,
Welcome to New Mexico Young Actors' production of *The Sound of Music: Youth Edition*! We are offering this study guide to help you prepare your classes for our upcoming production and your experience at the theater. Included in this guide are a historical note about the story, a synopsis of the musical, a list of characters, a vocabulary list and curriculum ideas, and some audience protocol reminders.

We always enjoy hearing from you and your students and look forward to receiving any pictures, stories, or comments about the production after your field trip. Thank you for your support of New Mexico Young Actors. We look forward to seeing you at the KiMo Theatre!

HISTORICAL NOTE

The origins of *The Sound of Music* start where the musical does – at Nonnberg Abbey in Salzburg, Austria. There, a headstrong young woman named Maria Kutschera was in the process of becoming a nun when she was sent to become a governess for the sick child of a local widowed navy Captain, the Baron Georg von Trapp. Maria grew to love the Captain and his seven children, and they all became a family, soon adding three more children.

During a deep economic depression that hit Europe after World War I, Baron von Trapp lost most of his fortune. The von Trapp family took in lodgers, including a priest, Father Wassner. A musician and choral director, Father Wassner recognized the rare sound that come from seven voices in the same family. He began to teach the von Trapp family how to sing as a group. Eventually Maria came up with the idea of becoming a family singing group, and they grew to be very successful, touring all around Europe.

When Nazi Germany annexed Austria in 1938, the family refused to cooperate with the German regime and escaped via train (not climbing over the mountains, as they do in the musical), and eventually arrived in the USA. Here they toured as a music group and became famous. They eventually settled at a farm near Stowe, Vermont, that transformed over the decades and is today the world-famous Trapp Family Lodge, a year-round resort. In 1948, Maria von Trapp wrote a book about her family's travels and history, and *The Story of the Trapp Family Singers* became a bestseller, and the source of two popular movies in German-speaking Europe. Today, some members of the von Trapp family still sing and perform.

SYNOPSIS

1938. In the hills above Nonnberg Abbey, outside of Salzburg, Austria, a young postulant named **Maria** is late for prayers after enjoying the day outside. The next day, the **nuns** discuss Maria. While she is beloved by all, she has trouble following the Abbey rules. The **Mother Abbess** considers Maria's spirit and decides to send her to the home of a widowed Navy Captain, **Georg Von Trapp**, to be the governess of his seven children: **Liesl, Friedrich, Louisa, Kurt, Brigitta, Marta,** and **Gretl**.

Maria arrives at the Von Trapp home to find a stern Captain, who treats his children like members of his Navy regiment. The Captain leaves on business, and Maria begins to get to know the children and teaches them how to sing. The eldest Von Trapp daughter, Liesl, meets with the local telegram boy, **Rolf**, in the garden. When she tries to sneak into the house through Maria's bedroom window, Maria catches her. A gathering thunderstorm prompts all of the children to run into Maria's room and she comforts them by teaching them a song they can sing together to drown out the storm.

A few weeks later, the Captain returns home with a friend, **Max Detweiler**, who is arranging the upcoming Salzburg Music Festival. The Captain is horrified to see the children in their new playclothes, made by Maria out of old curtains, and dismisses Maria when she tells him he must get to know his own children better. However, when he hears the children singing for Max, he is deeply moved and sings with them, then thanks Maria for what she has done for his family.

A week later, the Captain hosts a big party at the house. When Kurt attempts the traditional Austrian dance with Maria, the Captain cuts in and dances with her. Afterwards, Brigitta tells Maria that the Captain and Maria are in love with each other. Scared of this truth, Maria retreats to the Abbey as the children are sent to bed.

Maria tells the Mother Abbess of her confusion, and says she will commit herself to her prior path as a nun. The Mother Abbess tells her that love can be holy, too, and that Maria must live the life she was born to live.

Back at the Von Trapp house, the children rehearse with Max, who secretly plans to enter them in the Festival. However, they miss Maria terribly, and sing a song that she taught them to cheer themselves up. Suddenly, Maria joins in! She has returned. When alone with the Captain, they share their feelings with each other and agree to marry.

Several weeks later, Max prepares the children for their singing debut at the Salzburg Festival. While away on their honeymoon, we learn that Nazi Germany has invaded

Austria and taken control of the country. Upon their return home, the Captain refuses to let his children sing in the concert. But when a **German official** arrives and tells the Captain that he must leave immediately to take his post in the Nazi-controlled German navy (which the Captain is opposed to), the family buys time by claiming they are all performing in the concert, including the Captain, and he must wait until it is over to begin his new post.

At the Salzburg Festival, the family sings a traditional Austrian song, *Edelweiss.* When Max announces the winners, the family flees to the Abbey to hide. With the roads cut off by German military, and with nothing but each other, the family escapes over the Alps to safety.

CAST OF CHARACTERS

Maria Rainer – a postulant at Nonnberg Abbey
Sister Berthe – Mistress of Novices at Nonnberg Abbey
Sister Margaretta – Mistress of the Postulants at Nonnberg Abbey
The Mother Abbess – In charge of the Abbey
Sister Sophia – an assistant to Mother Abbess
Captain Georg von Trapp – a renowned naval officer, a widower
Franziska – the maid at the von Trapp villa
Fräu Schmidt – the von Trapp's housekeeper
The Children of Captain von Trapp:

- **Liesl,** 16 years old
- **Friedrich**, 14 years old
- **Louisa**, 13 years old
- **Kurt**, 10 years old
- **Brigitta**, 9 years old
- **Marta**, 7 years old
- **Gretl**, 6 years old

Rolf Gruber – a 17-year-old telegram delivery boy
Max Detweiler – a friend of the von Trapps, organizer of the Salzburg Music Festival
The Lonely Goatherd Ensemble – figments of Maria's imagination, characters in a story about a goatherd, his mother, and the girl who loves to hear him yodel
Fräu Zeller – a neighbor to the von Trapps, and a Nazi supporter
Baron Elberfeld – another neighbor, he is opposed to the Nazi regime
Admiral Von Schreiber – an officer in the Nazi Navy
Festival Concert Contestants:

- **The Trio of the Saengerbund of Herwegen**
- **Fraulein Schweiger**

CONTENT VOCABULARY

Abbey – a place where women who have committed their lives to the Roman Catholic church (nuns) live, study, and work together.

Adieu – a French word meaning goodbye.

Auf wiedersehen – sounds like “ah-vee-der-zen”. A German word meaning goodbye.

Edelweiss – sounds like “ay-dull-vise”. A small, white flower, found in mountainous regions.

Fräu – a German word, similar to “Mrs.” in English. Refers to a married woman.

Fräulein – a German word, similar to “Miss” in English. Refers to an unmarried woman.

Goatherd – a caretaker of goats, like a shepherd.

Governess – a caretaker of children who typically lives in the home of the family.

Heil – A salute spoken by members of the German Nazi party to show their loyalty to Nazi Germany or Adolf Hitler.

Herr – a German word, similar to “Mr.” in English. Refers to a married man.

Nazi – a supporter of Adolf Hitler’s political beliefs, or a member of the Nazi party and regime, which held power in Germany from 1933 (when Hitler was named Chancellor of Germany) to 1945 (end of World War II).

Nazism – a form of fascism that emphasizes racial purity, based on the belief that ethnic Germans are racially superior. In particular, Nazism advocates dictatorship and antisemitism (hatred of Jewish people).

Postulant – a young woman who has been admitted to become a nun, in a probationary period.

Salzburg – a mid-sized city in Austria, where the Abbey is located and the where the music festival takes place.

Stormtrooper – a soldier in the Nazi military.

Telegram – a message sent using electric transmission over wire, often coded, used before the invention of and widespread adoption of the telephone.

Third Reich – The name used by the German Nazi party to refer to Germany during the time of Adolf Hitler's leadership. Translated from German as "Third Realm," it refers to the Nazi claim that Nazi Germany was the successor to the Holy Roman Empire (800-1806) and the German Empire (1871-1918).

Vienna – the capital city of Austria.

SHOW DISCUSSION IDEAS

(Pre- or Post-Performance)

1. Have you ever been in a situation where your courage was tested? Have you been the only one to do the right thing, when others around you were choosing differently? How did you handle it?
2. What do you (we) know about World War II, Nazi Germany, the annexation of Austria, or the Holocaust? *Teachers, this is a good opportunity to have students share their prior knowledge. Use class discussion to extend students' collective prior knowledge about the time period*.
3. Have any of you seen the movie *The Sound of Music*? What do you think will be different between the movie and the musical? *Or*, What was different between the movie and the musical?
4. Music is very important to this storyline. Do you remember the first time you listened to music, or when you were introduced to music? Was music always a part of your life? What effect does listening to or playing music have on you?

THEATER VOCABULARY

Actor- A person who performs as a character in a play or musical.

Acts- A main section of a play, which is broken down further into scenes. Some shows have two or more acts that are divided by an intermission.

Balcony- The third level of seating in the house; the first level is the orchestra and the second level is the mezzanine. Some theaters only have an orchestra.

Box Office- The place where tickets to a performance are sold.

Costumes- Clothes worn by actors during a play.

Curtain Call- The entrance of the cast at the end of the show to bow and acknowledge the audience's applause.

Director- A person who provides the artistic vision, coordinates the creative elements, and stages the play.

Ensemble- The members of the cast other than the principals.

Ingenue- a character archetype in theatre, typically a young and innocent woman, often serving as the lead or love interest

Lobby- the large public entryway and gathering space where audiences enter, wait before shows and during intermissions, buy merchandise, and mingle.

Musical- A play with songs that are used to tell a story.

Orchestra- The musicians who accompany the cast during songs and play underscoring during scenes and set changes.

Pit- A sunken area under or slightly in front of the stage where the orchestra sits.

Overture- A piece of music that may be played at the very beginning of the show before the play begins to set the tone.

Play- A type of dramatic writing meant to be performed live on a stage. A musical is one
kind of play.

Playwright- A person who writes plays

Principal Role- a main character in a play.

Producer- The person in charge of a production who oversees budget, calendar, marketing and the hiring of the creative team, cast and crew.

Program- A booklet that lists the entire company of a production and may include other
information about the play.

Props- Anything an actor holds or carries during a performance.

Scene- A section of a play in one particular location and time.

Scenery/Set- The entire physical environment onstage, which may include backdrops, flats, furniture, props, and projections.

Stage- The area where the actors perform in a theater.

Stagehand- a person who moves scenery or props before or during the performance of a play.

Usher- Shows the audience to their seats and hands out programs.

LESSON IDEAS

(Pre-Performance)

1. How many of you have experienced a live dramatic performance? What did you see?
2. What are some of the differences between seeing a live performance and watching television or going to a movie?
    - Theater features live actors onstage. They have spent many weeks rehearsing for the performance.
    - The audience is a very important part of the performance. Appreciation and enthusiasm for the performers is shown by close attention and participation and applause at the proper times. The success of the play often depends on the audience.
    - The atmosphere of a live performance is entirely different from your home, where the television is always available.
    - It is easy to identify with live actors. You can see how they use their bodies and voices to convey different emotions.
    - Actors wear costumes and make-up to help create the impression of the characters they play.
    - There is much more to most live performances than actors. Special sets, effects, lighting, music, costumes, and of course, the audience add to the total experience.

THEATER ETIQUETTE

Discuss the role of the audience and proper theater etiquette.
Arrive on time so that you do not miss anything and so that you will not disturb the rest of the audience. Lights may go out before the performance begins and seating is very difficult after that time.

The KiMo Theatre is a historic building. Please respect and preserve the beauty of the KiMo by not bringing food and beverages (including gum and candy) into the theater. These items are permitted in the lobby only.

It is easier for you (and the rest of the audience) to see and hear the performance if you stay in your seat and listen very carefully. Try your best to remain in your seat once the performance has begun.

There is no intermission during the performance of The Sound of Music: Youth Edition, which is

Although you may wish to say something to the actors, you need to hold your thoughts, as you will disturb their concentration. Sing or participate if and only if you are invited to do so. Your participation is often very important.

Listen to how the music sets the mood and affects your own feelings. Show the cast and crew your appreciation for their hard work with applause. Do this when you like a song, dance, or joke.

Be sure to turn off all electronic devices and cell phones. Do not text during the performance. This is very inconsiderate to the performers and distracting to your fellow audience members.

KIMO HISTORICAL BACKGROUND

The KiMo is a historical theater in Albuquerque which was built in 1927. Its name means ‘King of its kind’ in Tiwa. It was originally used as a movie theater alongside live performances. It was very popular up until the 1960s, after which it fell into disrepair. In 1977 the City of Albuquerque purchased the Kimo and renovated it back to what it is today.

Some believe that the KiMo is haunted by the ghost of a young boy. Bobby Darnell was killed by a water heater exploding in the KiMo lobby in 1951 at only 6 years old. Many performers claim he haunts the theater to this very day. Legend goes that performers must bring him a gift before their show in order to appease him. If Bobby doesn’t receive an offering, he will disrupt your show in a variety of ways. People have claimed that Bobby made them forget their lines, caused costume malfunctions, injured them, and created many more disasters for their shows.

The KiMo Theatre features many symbols that line its stage. Some have changed meaning since their being etched into the KiMo. Most notable among them is the swastika. Despite the German Nazi party adopting it as a symbol of racial prejudice and hatred during the 1930s, when the KiMo was built it had a different meaning. The swastika was a widely used Native American symbol. To the Navajo it represented a whirling log (*tsil no'oli'*), a sacred image representing a legend that was used in healing rituals. Suns and birds accompany it, giving the stage an overall theme of light, freedom, and health. On the walls you can find Navajo Yei, deities who act as healers to the people.

KIMO SCAVENGER HUNT

Can you find:

1. A Face?
2. A Sun?
3. A Buffalo Skull?
4. A Bird?
5. A Canoe Chandelier?
6. A Neon Sign?

CLASSROOM EXTENSION ACTIVITIES

(Post Performance)

- Make a playbill for the show. Draw a cover design and list as many characters as you can remember.
- Write an epilogue for the show. What do you think happens to the von Trapp family after they escape through the mountains?
- Discuss your favorite characters. Choose one character to draw. Add a dialogue bubble with words they might have spoken. Add a thought bubble with words they might have thought, but not spoken aloud.
- Choose a favorite scene. In small groups, assign roles, and re-enact it.
- Write a letter from one character to another. In it, imagine what the character would have liked to say, that s/he might not have been able to say in the show.

OTHER RESOURCES

Videos

Note to teachers: Please review the videos before showing them to your students to determine if they are age-appropriate for your specific cohort.

https://youtu.be/C8iujof6IL8?si=LPxEkNFQOlNTORND
History/meaning of the heil salute

https://youtube.com/shorts/JjHfrw9-MLM?si=BoL6YswviVO0fzbN
First-person testimony of Austrian Jewish survivor

https://youtu.be/fNKy8z32jro?si=VmD9BaZjFS6TlTmp
Explanation of Austria's annexation by Germany (the Anschluss)

https://youtu.be/ClUmcpWDJ-U?si=sO4jYX8-BxnOB7nC
True story of pen pals during the 1930s; an American girl who helps her Austrian friend flee the Nazis

https://youtu.be/hRSwWuVtHF4?si=qEs7cx-Ng6RbX3Kj
Archival footage of Hitler being welcomed in Vienna, Austria, 1938

https://youtu.be/2wWEEVAvDI8?si=KmFDXxENOBXxEzHF
Archival American newsreel from 1938 depicting the Anschluss

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