



Review: The Sound of Music

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REVIEW: The Sound of Music

Music by Richard Rodgers, lyrics by Oscar Hammerstein II and book by Howard Lindsay and Russel Crouse

St James Theatre, until September 28

Reviewed by Ewen Coleman

When one of the best known and most loved, musicals of all time, The Sound of Music, hits town, an air of excited anticipation abounds.

Not only from those who grew up with the songs but those who have heard it talked about and may have only ever seen the film with Julie Andrews.

Yet how is a musical that began life 55 years ago going to stack up with a modern-day audience?

In this production absolutely amazingly and of all the musicals in town this year, this is the one to see.

Created in London in 2006, this version by Andrew Lloyd Webber, David Ian and The Really Useful Group has incorporated a couple of the songs from the movie and added in some film-like qualities while retaining the essential elements of the original.

How a fun-loving singing nun Maria Rainer (Bethany Dickson) becomes governess to the seven von Trapp children, falls in love with their authoritarian father Captain Georg von Trapp (Mark Rayment) who all then escape from the invading Nazis is known to everyone. And while often seen as saccharine and superficial with nothing to commend it except for the music, this production brings depth and humanity to the characters, creates believable tension between the internal emotional turmoil of Maria and Georg and the foreboding from the outside world.

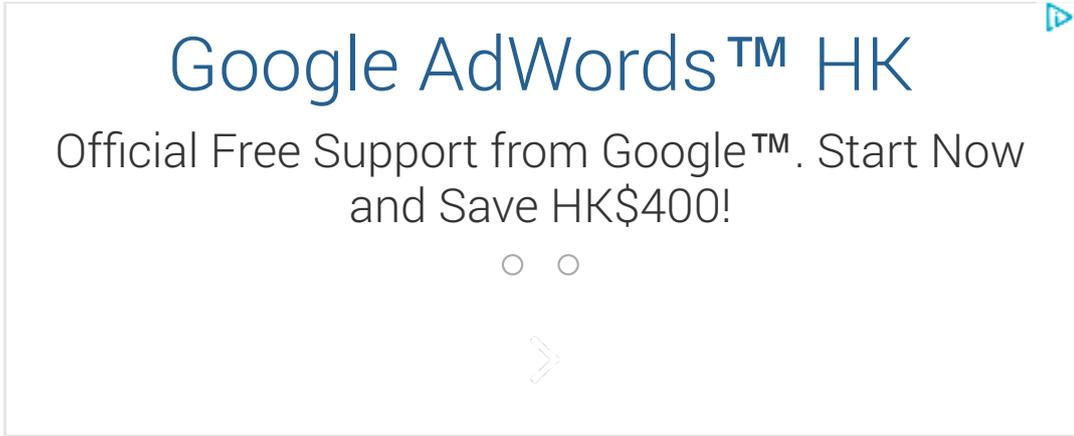
And the children pluck the heartstrings in their plight of being caught up in the world of the adults.

Musically the production is spot on, with the cast not only being excellent actors but giving depth and vitality to the songs too.

Lesley Garrett is superb as The Mother Abbess. As well as a being great actor her singing is sublime - rarely has a first act ended so spectacularly at the St James Theatre as it does with Garrett's Climb Ev'ry Mountain.

And the amazing sets, lighting, costumes and brilliant orchestra all add to this rare gem.

- The Dominion Post



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