

# Theater review: ‘Sound of Music’ marks rousing return for Maine State Music Theatre

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By Steve Feeney

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Gregory J Trapp Jr. (Kurt), Taylor Quick (Liesl), Lily Philbrook (Marta), Josie Marzilli (Gretl), Sophia Scott (Louisa), Hanley Smith (Maria) and Will Ray (Captain Von Trapp) in “The Sound of Music” at Maine State Music Theatre in Brunswick. *Photos by Jared Morneau Photography*

A favorite thing for summer is to take a trip to see a show by the Maine State Music Theatre.

## CONCERT REVIEW

**WHAT:** “The Sound of Music” at Maine State Music Theatre

**WHERE:** Pickard Theatre, Bowdoin College, 1 Bath Road, Brunswick

**REVIEWED:** June 10 (matinee); continues through June 25

**TICKETS:** \$67-\$100

**CONTACT:** 207-725-8769; [msmt.org](https://msmt.org)

Coming home to the Pickard Theater on the campus of Bowdoin College in Brunswick after a couple of COVID-limited years, Maine State is marking the start of its season with a thoroughly enjoyable production of a classic musical.

Considered one of the best shows to come from the golden age of American musical theater, “The Sound of Music” combines absolutely great music by legends Richard Rodgers and Oscar Hammerstein II with a solid book, based in actual events, by Howard Lindsay and Russel Crouse.

The story of an irrepressibly musical postulant who is gently expelled from a convent in the hope that she will find her true place in the world is realized through a rich variety of individual and group numbers performed by a large cast of seasoned professional and up-and-coming theater artists.

Hanley Smith takes the top role as Maria, a young woman who exchanges life under a motherly Mother Abbess for one as a governess for the seven children of the wealthy disciplinarian Captain von Trapp in pre-World War II Austria.

At the performance under review, Smith brought a sweet likability to balance her character’s nearly unrelenting perkiness. Her soaring opening solo on “The Sound of Music” and following playful duet with the Mother Abbess (Beth Kirkpatrick) on the forever delightful “My Favorite Things” set early high marks for the rest of the roughly 2.5-hour show that included an intermission.

Kirkpatrick later easily filled the air above the audience with the powerfully inspirational “Climb Every Mountain.”

Smith’s work with the children sparkled on the eminently catchy “Do-Re-Mi,” drawing them into Maria’s whirl of positive thinking. “I Have Confidence” was also a standout for the youthful star.

As the young woman’s relationship with her employer (rather quickly) evolves, Smith, along with Will Ray as the Captain, sweetly confirmed that their characters are nothing more or less than “An Ordinary Couple” in love. Ray’s strong tenor later anchored the more fraught second act with a compelling take on “Edelweiss,” as the Nazis begin to take over.

Among the abundance of highlights in this Marc Robin-directed and -choreographed show was a duet between Taylor Quick, as the von Trapp child Liesl, and her suitor Rolf, played by Austin Phillips. Their song and dance on “Sixteen Going on Seventeen” perfectly combined adolescent awkwardness with balletic grace.



Beth Kirkpatrick (Mother Abbess) and Hanley Smith (Maria).

Blake Hammond, Katie Sina and others added some eccentric laughs while a large chorus of nuns intoned resonant solemnity. The children added individual touches of cute (Josie Marzilli) and canny (Kate Walters) amid colorful indoor and outdoor sets designed by Michael Schweikardt. Costumes by Anthony Lascoskie, Jr., set the period and locale as did the live instrumental accompaniment directed by Ben McNaboe.

This show long ago set the standard for classic musicals and Maine State Music Theatre has impressively revived it in all its heartwarming magic.

*Steve Feeney is a freelance writer who lives in Portland.*

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