

## **THE SOUND OF MUSIC:ROTHERFIELD PLAYERS 11 MAY 2012**

As Sister Sophia's hauntingly melodic alto led the very well collected nun's choir into the Latin overture, it was clear the audience sensed that this production might just be a little bit special. SoM. is a big challenge to any amateur group and Director Kate Organ with Musical Director Sue Burnett conquered this like Hillary and Tenzing. The logistics must have been similar to an Everest expedition – with two groups of younger actors covering four performances there were around 45 stage players, a band of 14 musicians and a dozen or so more in the backstage production team to organise - it speaks volumes for their directing talent and experience, and the efforts of Producer Andrea Butler.

The pace of the performance accelerates as Maria returns to the Abbey from a day in the hills, Alexandra Bond lights up the role of Maria with a beautiful singing voice and enchants both audience and the Von Trapp children with genuine warmth. Space does not allow us to mention all the young actors by name but the impossibly pretty Amelia Gabriel as Liesl- with a voice like a silver bell shone out, whilst both tiny Gretls stole audience hearts. It was no hardship to see the first Act twice to see the joy, enthusiasm and talent of both groups of younger actors bringing the show together, the long Do-Re-Mi piece working particularly well.

Senior Nuns Gussie Penny, Grainne Cotter and Mary-Anne Mellor harmonised beautifully, supporting Mary Howells playing Mother Superior with real wit and compassion – and whilst Climb Every Mountain can be deceptively difficult to get right, she certainly nailed it on the night. Talking of difficult, Chris Walton- Turner had to learn a dozen different bosun's whistle calls as well as his warm tenor libretto, which he managed with aplomb whilst also dancing and touchingly falling in love with Maria. Louise Coe warmly captured the 1930's groomed allure of politically doomed love interest Elsa and interacted well with the selfish but charming Max, well drawn by the ebullient Adam Hardy.

A performance like this only really hangs together if the supporting players are committed and generous with their talents, David Close and Patrick Cotter portrayed the butler and lovelorn telegram boy with confidence, whilst Frau Deidre Cornford's quick dead pan adlib cleverly turned a minor set malfunction into unscripted audience giggles. The other members of the ensemble too numerous to mention all played their parts with gusto and contributed with deft bits of stage business. Set design and construction was of course up to the usual high standard. We must not forget the part played by the band who hit the cues every time and underpinned all the vocals with style, nor the Nun's chorus whose mellifluous Latin lines flavoured the whole performance.

With spontaneous audience applause breaking out throughout there was no doubting the enjoyment this production has brought to the village, and all credit to the visionaries who made it happen for us.

Peter Thompson