

# Entertainment

## Sound of Music on key

By Jim Irving

In an old Bogart-Bacall movie of some years back, the then youthful Lauren announces to Bogie in one scene that, "If you want anything, just whistle."

If memory serves correctly, Bogie started to pucker up at about that point.

In The Sound of Music, Theatre Aurora's current production at Factory Theatre, Captain Von Trapp, ex-naval hero, widower and father of a lively family of seven, when he's his home — like a ship, tries to instill something the same sort of philosophy in his new governess of the moment, one Maria Rainer, a postulant from the nearby Nonnberg Abbey.

His bosun's whistle is used to summon everyone from the servants to the seven children.

However, luckily for him and everyone else concerned, Maria is not only the breath of fresh, mountain air the captain's gloomy domain needs, but is also a woman with a mind of her own, and quite unequivocally decides that whistles are for dogs.

From that point on, love is the key summons, and like any love freely given, brings its own return in full, with all that that implies.

Love is a universal theme and, while we can all pretend it if we wish, living it to the full takes a different set of circumstances. In fact, it takes the real thing.

And the real thing is just what Maria and her crew brought to Theatre Aurora's production in sufficient enough doses to keep a sparse opening night crowd enthralled a somewhat noisy backstage crew and the occasional fluffed line.

Mind you, the odd lapse is understandable, because it is a huge production, with a gigantic cast and crew needed to bring it all to the fore.

To do so without having to use the CNE Stadium is a feat in itself, to say nothing of a tribute to director Susan Brown, her musical director, Mary Jeanne Oliver and, of course, all the others in between.

Good ones, too. If the bad moments then were rare, the good ones were many. Somehow or other, they brought to that small stage in Aurora, those

far-off mountains of Austria, some of her people, the tensions of the times, and most of all the everlasting lesson of what happens when people who care show it, be they lovers, children at play, or youngsters attempting to make the difficult transition from childhood to adulthood.

That was the sort of thing Liesl (Lezlie Bessy), and Rolf (Bob Henocher), did so well in their brief moments together. And which not only helped provide highlights, but strong support for the principals.

For, although it was a musical and featured a great score by Rogers and Hammerstein, its members weren't mainly singers. And while they carried off their songs well, it was through their dramatic efforts that the majority hit house and home.

For example, all the children were delightful; the nuns in the abbey convincing in every way — it didn't take long to see that, no matter how warm and wonderful their retreat, it wasn't for Maria — the Nazi SS men just as convincing in their portrayal.

Even after all these years, their symbol of well being, the "crooked snake," as one of the children described it, still looms a scar.

Other strong supporting players, such as the Mother Abbess (Diana Wilton), warm, responsive, wise and of

good voice; the hired help, (Cy Buck and Joan Paul) unobtrusive and efficient; the new mother-to-be (Norma Dover) audacious, beautiful and aware; the good friend Max, (Frank Buck) always the opportunist.

### Deft touch

As the foppish promoter, he provided a deft, comic touch — perhaps a bit too deft at times. A relaxed eyebrow would have been welcomed now and then. But that's not to take away from Buck's performance, he was, as always, equal to the occasion and occasionally the equalist.

The two leads, Julie Wood and Norman Furness, were in control all the way.

Miss Wood has a fine singing voice and did full justice to her several numbers.

She also was a convincing Maria, much too full of life for the restriction of a convent, but still able to retain and practice the latter's high standards in the outside world, without losing any of her zest for life in the process.

All in all, an excellent performance.

Mr. Furness, as the austere captain who made it necessary for Maria to face the world, just as she brought him back into touch with it, was also perfectly cut for

his captain's cloth. No Pinza in the singing department, he did, however, have a pleasant voice; in fact, the kind of voice, one felt Captain Von Trapp might well have possessed.

Many of the performers also doubled backstage — Cy Buck, for example, was in production and construction — and are to be commended in every way.

They showed that The Sound of Music carries every bit as well across a small stage, as it does a wide screen.

And that's whether it's done with a local or outside crew, and whether its leading lady Julie, is named Wood or Andrews.

## Calendar

The Curtain Club — "Butley" a day in the life of a man you'll find hard to forget. To April 10. Call 884-2638 for tickets.

York Symphony Orchestra — Marylake Shrine, one mile north of King City, April 9; Call 833-5942, 895-8713, 884-3336.

## Run, don't walk to this one

By Tom Davey

One really should learn not to prejudge theatrical productions. Butley, the Curtain Club's current production, for instance, ostensibly would appear to offer little by way of palatable entertainment.

Set in a dingy university basement office, the narrative is a progression of despair as an English professor sees his marriage, career and personal friendship with a homosexual colleague, crumble about him. Hardly the sort of play hedonists happily line up for, and theatre-goers, who like cute endings and golden sunsets, should avoid this play like the plague.

### Run, run

But those seeking a genuine theatrical experience should run, not walk, to the Curtain Club before the production ends this weekend. Butley is magnificent theatre and Keith Melville gives a superlative performance in the title role. Excellent though the supportive cast is, the playwright relegates them to mere satellites revolving around Butley, who, like a dying planet, gives off spectacular verbal pyrotechnics as his world collapses.

Somehow, there is almost an Albee-like quality about Butley's despairing monologue, which Melville handles with great skill, as he switches accents and metres with biting torrents of literary erudition.

Butley instinctively has

the inventive, or poem, to answer the most complex situation, but lacks the ability to solve even the simplest human problems.

Like a Midas in reverse, everything he touches turns to ashes. While desperately seeking friends, he repeatedly repels them with savagely effective verbal thrusts. At the same time, he is a man so



Jonathan Stanley ...directs winner

ability — as he repeatedly withholds it from them.

Top performances are given by David Smith as the diffident homosexual colleague, and Brian Moore, also of the same genre, but with a dominant streak, which allows him to stand up to and finally humiliate, Butley. But even when grovelling on the floor in defeat, Butley's repartee can wring spontaneous humour from the oc-

casian.

Plays about homosexuals give few opportunities for actresses to shine, but Carol Moore as Butley's wife; which was ably, and Pera Miller as his university colleague; and Vaida Jay as his student, give sound supportive performances.

Adrian Truss landed the unsympathetic role of the hippie Mr. Gardner, but I felt his interpretation further diminished what was already a minor part.

But Keith Melville's brilliant performance permitted few opportunities for others to shine in this production which was ably, and professionally directed by Jonathan Stanley.

Worthwhile Mr. Stanley's services were made available from funds provided by the Ontario Arts Council. His work is tangible evidence that at least some of our taxes end up as worthy cultural endeavours.

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