

How do You Solve a Problem Like Maria?

GENEVA BRINGS THE SOUND OF MUSIC TO THE STAGE

Words | Charlotte Walker



HILLS ARE ALIVE | Charlotte Walker plays Maria in this year's musical.

The hills are alive with the sound of music. Do-re-mi-fa-so-la-ti-do. Do, a deer a female deer, re, a drop of golden sun. Raindrops on roses and whiskers on kittens, bright copper kettles and warm woolen mittens.

On the heels of last year's musical "Thoroughly Modern Millie," drama and choir have moved on to solving the problem of Maria. The sound of music will literally be filling the MPB on November 2nd and 3rd. Choir director and musical producer, Mr. Ben Vis, said he wanted a big, special show for the school's anniversary. Specifically,

he wanted one that celebrates and displays the diverse talents of Geneva students and faculty, and he believes this musical fits the bill in various aspects.

Following our theme for the year, love is evident throughout the musical. A strong love for country, family and romance ... there might even be a first kiss involved, you'll just have to come see the show to find out.

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As a senior, I am especially excited to have a lead role in this production since I have been singing these songs ever since I can remember. My theatrical career began as the littlest member of the Von Trapp family: Gretl. I have now come full circle and will be closing out my career at Geneva as Maria. With my mother and sister in my very first cast to friends who I have come to love like family in my last, I can’t think of any other cast with whom I’d rather share this senior finale.

We hit the ground running with auditions on the first day of school. Over 60 people tried out, from both logic and rhetoric choir and drama. Auditions were also open to 4th and 5th graders, as well, for the von Trapp children. While it’s easy to calculate the hours spent practicing for the musical in class and at after school rehearsals, the number of hours each individual pours into the preparation for their part, set, costume, music, etc. is significant beyond scheduled practices.

In comparison to “Willy Wonka,” incorporating grammar and logic schoolers proves slightly more difficult this year, due to everyone’s varying schedules. While the oompa loompas in Wonka were all in choir and able to use their class time to work on choreography, the different ages of the von Trapp children means all

the real work has to be done in after school rehearsals. Despite the difficulty, Vis is thrilled for the authentic characters that will emerge from having all different ages in the musical.

This is only the second year to have a musical in the fall and play in the spring. Changing the musical to the

fall allowed choir the opportunity to focus our efforts on TAPPS solo and ensemble in the spring. Choir reaped the benefits of the calendar change, walking away with the 2019 4A State Championship title.

Freshman Mattie Sue Arnold, who will be playing Liesl, said, “I grew up watching the show a lot when I was younger, so it’s kind of fun getting to watch it when I was young and sing it now.” Although Arnold is only a freshman, she will be taking the stage for a second time, as she made her Geneva debut as “Charlie” in Wonka, as a 7th grader.



RETRO | Charlotte playing Gretl aged five giving flowers to her mother, Janna Walker who played the Baroness.

The Geneva adaptation of the story will incorporate elements of the movie into the theatrical score to satisfy audience expectations set by the beloved movie. So, the song “Confidence” will make an appearance, as well as the songs sung by Max Detweiler and Elsa Schraeder. I’m personally happy to say that “A Few of My Favorite Things” will be used during the thunderstorm scene because it seems more comforting than a yodeling goatherd.

I actually had the privilege of visiting Salzburg and attending “The Sound of Music” tour on my sophomore year abroad. We gazed at the von Trapp mansion and detached garden, as well as the frozen lake that formed in front of the

home. But of course, the tour wasn't complete until my mother and sister forced me to sing a portion of "16 Going on 17" in front of the classic gazebo in which it was sung in the movie.

Like so many enthralling stories passed down through generations and nations, "The Sound of Music" has been embellished throughout the years, resulting in the Disney adaptation we have today. In only two short years after its release in 1965, the movie became the highest grossing movie of all time. The movie was born from the Rodgers and Hammerstein stage musical of 1959, which was produced from the 1949 book, "The Story of the Trapp Family Singers" written by Maria von Trapp.

Since then, various revivals of the story have been produced, each with their own modifications. For instance, Baroness Elsa Schraeder and Max Detweiler sing two songs in the musical,

while solely acting in the movie. Additionally, the movie has different song placement from the musical. For instance, Hollywood added the song "Confidence" to the story, before Maria arrives at the von Trapp residence and also replaced the song sung between Maria and Georg von Trapp. In fact, the musical has no "Lonely Goatherd" puppet scene because Maria actually sings that song to the children when she is trying to comfort them from the thunderstorm.

Vis has difficulty containing his excitement when discussing the collaborative efforts of so many theatre, band, voice, sound and tech students brought together in "The Sound of Music." "Everyone is being able to do a part of something that's much larger than themselves. In that, we have a picture of something that can be magnificent," he said. In that, we have a picture of Geneva.

So long, farewell, auf Wiedersehen, goodbye...

Fun Facts for "The Sound of Music":

Although the story began as a book by Maria von Trapp, it has evolved into a timeless film full of rich history, romance and most importantly, music. However, did you know that Captain von Trapp wasn't actually as cold and stern as he was portrayed in both the Broadway musical and Hollywood movie? Johannes von Trapp actually said his father was "a very charming man, generous, open and not the martinet he was made out to be" (history.com). Or perhaps you didn't know that if the real von Trapp family had traversed the Alps as portrayed in the movie, they would have ended up in Nazi Germany, rather than Switzerland. Instead, the real von Trapps made their escape by slipping out the back door of their residence and catching a train to Italy for "family vacation" only one day before the borders of Austria were closed.



THE FAMILY HOME | Walker traveled to Austria in 2017, and took this of the original von Trapp home used in the film.