

## Review: CLO's *The Sound of Music* is something for all

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Alice T. Carter, Pittsburgh Tribune-Review

If you like "The Sound of Music," you're going to love the Pittsburgh Civic Light Opera production.

Even if you loath the musical for its syrupy tale of the power of music and love to overcome loss, restore families and help people escape the Nazis, you still can admire this production's many redeeming qualities.

Director James Brennan has cast accomplished performers who not only sing exceptionally well, but create characters with depth and complexity that you care about.

Most notable is Robert Cuccioli's Capt. von Trapp who evolves from the emotionally dead and distant widower to a father capable of expressing his love for Maria and his seven children.

Jennifer Hope Wills gives us a young Maria, fierce enough to stand up to the stern captain, yet naïve enough to be confused by the emotions that overtake her.

Together, they combine their voices to make the minor song "Something Good" into a tuneful and touching celebration of their shared love. Cuccioli also does an impressive rendition of "Edelweiss."

Christine Brown, James Paul Coletta, Madeline Dick, Kirsten Hoover, Victoria Huston, Hanna Kwiecinski and Joseph Serafini, all of whom have previous Pittsburgh Civic Light Opera credits and/or are students at the CLO Academy, portray the seven von Trapp children. They are likeable and believably childlike without becoming cloyingly cute and do nice work on "My Favorite Things" and "So Long, Farewell."

As the Captain's Nazi-accommodating friend Max Detweiler, Jim Brochu is unapologetically amoral and practical as he bows to the inevitable. Donna English supplies the Captain's love interest with intelligence, independence and even garners audience sympathy. Brochu and English lighten the proceedings with "No Way to Stop It" and "How Can Love Survive?".

As The Mother Abbess, Lisa Howard sends the audience off to intermission marveling at her soaring rendition of "Climb Every Mountain."

Kenneth Foy creates attractive, elegant set designs, though the Abbey where Maria is a postulant resembles a penitentiary.

Coming in just short of three hours, "The Sound of Music" spends too much time developing storylines and characters in the first act, then, stuffs the dramatic plot points into the shorter second act.

But there's still much here to please the ardent fan and the reluctant attendee.

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