



Teacher Resource Guide

THE SOUND OF MUSIC

Music by Richard Rodgers

Lyrics by Oscar Hammerstein II

Book by Howard Lindsay and Russel Crouse

Suggested by "The Trapp Family Singers" by Maria Augusta Trapp



2022.2023 Season

Stanley Industrial Alliance Stage

November 10, 2022 - December 24, 2022

The show is generously sponsored by:



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Welcome

This guide was created for teachers and students. It contains an overview of the play's story as well as informative resources and activities for teachers and students.

The guide aims to provide background knowledge and critical perspectives on the play that will yield fruitful discussion and foster an understanding and appreciation of theatre arts.

If you have any questions, comments, or suggestions for the guide, please contact our Education & Community Engagement Manager Hila Graf at hgraf@artsclub.com.

This study guide was written by Sophie McBean and Hila Graf with contributions and design from Natalie Davidson.

ABOUT THE ARTS CLUB THEATRE COMPANY

The Arts Club of Vancouver was founded in 1958 as a private club for artists, musicians, and actors. It became the Arts Club Theatre in 1964 when the company opened its first stage in a converted gospel hall at Seymour and Davie Streets.

Now in its 59th season of producing professional live theatre in Vancouver, the Arts Club Theatre Company is a non-profit charitable organization that operates three theatres: the Granville Island Stage, the Stanley Industrial Alliance Stage, and the Newmont Stage at the BMO Theatre Centre. It's popular productions range from musicals and contemporary comedies to new works and classics.

Learn more about the Arts Club Theatre Company at artsclub.com

GRANVILLE
ISLAND
STAGE

ARTS CLUB
THEATRE

The
Backstage
Lounge

CLUB



Learning Objectives

After viewing *The Sound of Music* and working through the following activities, students will identify how real-world topics and conflicts can drive story and be able to engage critically with the process of theatrical adaptation for historic events.

BC Curriculum Connections

Drama /Arts Education (6-12)

- Art as a means of developing empathy for others' perspectives and experiences. Drama provides opportunities to gain insight into the perspectives and experiences of people from a variety of times, places, and cultures.
- Theatre offers an aesthetic experience with the power to communicate ideas through movement, sound, imagery, and language. Musical theatre is informed by history, culture, and community. Drama offers dynamic ways to express our identity and sense of belonging.
- Explore the influence of social, cultural, historical, political, and personal context on dramatic work.
- Explore the use of characterization to reflect personal voice, story, and values in connection with a specific place, time, and context. Explore the intersection of genre, storytelling and moral dilemmas.

Social Studies (6-12)

- Disparities in power alter the balance of relationships between individuals and between societies.
- Nationalist movements can lead to intense conflict between different groups.
- The intentional destruction of peoples and their cultures is not inevitable, and such attempts can be disrupted and resisted.
- Infer and explain different perspectives on people, places, events, phenomena, ideas, or developments (perspective).
- Assess the short- and long-term causes and expected and unexpected consequences of people's actions, events, phenomena, ideas, or developments (cause and consequence).
- Enrich emotional connection to stories of immigration and displacement.



Synopsis: The Sound of Music



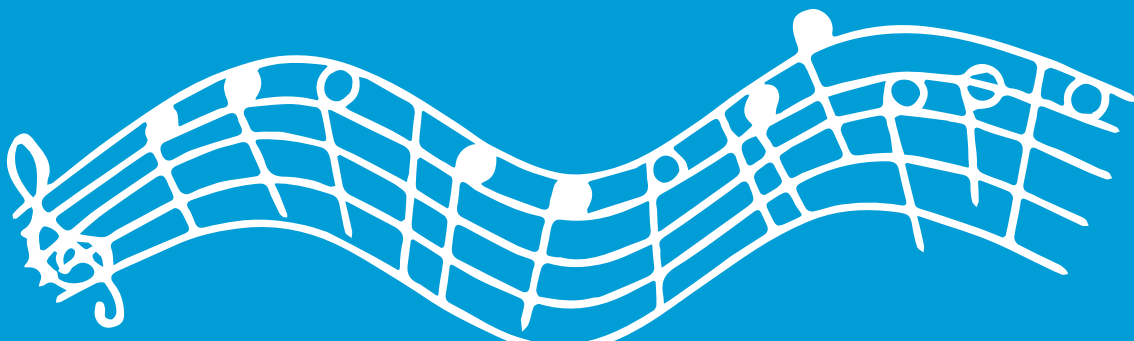
ACT ONE

On the eve of World War II at an abbey in the Austrian Alps, a free-spirited young novice (novice in a religious order), Maria, is assigned by her abbess to temporarily serve as governess to the seven children of a decorated naval officer, Captain Georg von Trapp. Maria is reluctant to leave the abbey, but the abbess, who is fond of Maria and shares her love of music, reassures her that this experience will help her to better decide whether she truly wants to commit herself to life as a nun. Upon arriving at the impressive von Trapp villa, Maria meets Capt. von Trapp, a stern and stoic man who blows a whistle to direct his children and domestic servants. Maria is then introduced to the children, ranging from five-year-old Gretl to 16-year-old Liesl. Shortly after these introductions, Maria begins teaching the children how to sing—an activity they very much enjoy. As time passes, the children grow increasingly enamoured of the vivacious Maria—as does Capt. von Trapp, despite his steely façade and initial opposition to them singing and learning music. Meanwhile, Capt. von Trapp courts Elsa Schraeder, a wealthy businesswoman with an aristocratic background. As Capt. von Trapp entertains Elsa and Max Detweiler, a prominent local music promoter, at the villa, the current political situation comes up in the course of their conversation. Elsa and Max seem resigned to complying with the directives of the threatening German National Socialist government, so as not to jeopardize their personal fortunes; but Capt. von Trapp, an Austrian patriot, expresses his strong opposition to the Nazis. Later, he throws a grand party for his guests. The children dance and soak in the romantic atmosphere. They sing charmingly for the attendees, and Max suggests that they perform at the upcoming musical festival that he is organizing. Maria tries to instruct Kurt, one of the older children, on how to waltz, when Capt. von Trapp steps in to demonstrate the dance. There are palpable romantic feelings between them, as evinced by Maria's blushing. Later, when Maria tells the children that they ought to be kind to Elsa because she may soon be their “new mother,” young Brigitta interjects, insisting that Capt. von Trapp and Maria are in love with one another. Embarrassed, Maria denies this and returns to the abbey, ostensibly to pledge her commitment to the religious life. The abbess sees through this, however, bringing Maria to admit that she indeed feels strongly for Capt. von Trapp, and urging her to return to him and his children.

Synopsis: The Sound of Music

ACT TWO

As the children practice for the musical festival, they complain that they miss Maria and that singing together just isn't the same without her there. They do not understand her sudden absence, and they are decidedly unenthusiastic when Capt. von Trapp informs them of his engagement to Elsa. As they sing, Maria returns, joining their song; she then apologizes to Capt. von Trapp and his children for leaving. Capt. von Trapp and Elsa have a tense disagreement regarding the Nazis and his absolute unwillingness to comply with their orders. At an irresolvable impasse, she leaves for Vienna, breaking off the engagement. When Capt. von Trapp informs Maria of this news, they both confess their feelings, kiss, and plan to marry. Later, after Capt. von Trapp returns from his honeymoon with Maria, he is visited by Nazi officers who order him to report at once to a German naval base. Maria tells them that Capt. von Trapp will be performing with her and his children in Max's musical festival, coming up in two days. The Nazi officers reluctantly allow Capt. von Trapp to perform, but firmly insist that he report for military service after the festival. This buys the family a bit of time to devise a way out of Nazi-occupied Austria. They perform at the festival, winning first prize in the judged competition, but then sneak out immediately after their performance, sending the Nazis in pursuit of Capt. von Trapp. The family hides at the abbey. The abbey's grounds are searched by a menacing crew of Nazi stormtroopers, but the von Trapps narrowly elude their grasp and leave on foot to walk the short distance into Switzerland.



Characters

Maria Rainer – A novitiate at the Nonnberg Abbey, sent to serve as governess to the von Trapp family. Maria is a free-spirited young woman who loves singing and music, and although sincere in her religious commitment, does not always follow the strict rules of conduct expected of nuns.

Capt. Georg von Trapp – A decorated Austrian naval officer and father of seven children. Capt. Von Trapp is serious and stern in his demeanor, but is gradually softened by Maria's charm.

Liesl von Trapp – The oldest of the von Trapp children, age 16.

Friedrich von Trapp – One of the von Trapp children, age 14.

Louisa von Trapp – One of the von Trapp children, age 13.

Kurt von Trapp – One of the von Trapp children, age 10.

Brigitta von Trapp – One of the von Trapp children, age 9.

Marta von Trapp – One of the von Trapp children, age 7.

Gretl von Trapp – The youngest of the von Trapp children, age 5.

Mother Abbess – The abbess of Nonnberg Abbey; a moderate and well-meaning authority figure who is fond of Maria.

Max Detweiler – A prominent local music promotor and government officer; a close friend of Capt. von Trapp.

Baroness Elsa Schröder – A wealthy Viennese businesswoman who intends to marry Capt. von Trapp.

Rolf Gruber – A telegram delivery boy who is infatuated with Liesl, but becomes increasingly swayed by the Nazis.

Sister Bertha – A nun at the Nonnberg Abbey.

Sister Margareta – A nun at the Nonnberg Abbey.

Sister Sophia – A nun at the Nonnberg Abbey.

Frau Schmidt – Capt. von Trapp's housekeeper.

Franz – Captain von Trapp's butler.

Herr Zeller – The Gauleiter: regional leader of the Nazi party in Austria.



About The Sound of Music

The Sound of Music, the successful musical and film, followed a number of works that were inspired by the true story of Maria von Trapp. As the von Trapp family were performing their concerts across the United States, Maria was persuaded (after some hesitation) to write her memoirs. The Story of the Trapp Family Singers was published in 1949 in America and was followed by a German version. Due to the books' success, the von Trapps started getting greater attention from the general public as well as from the film industry. A German film company then produced two films; *The Trapp Family* (1956) and *The Trapp Family in America* (1958). The two films gained financial success in Germany and Austria, and are considered as part of the "Heimatifilm" (Fatherland film) genre that was popular among post-war German speaking audiences. In 1958, as musicals such as *My Fair Lady* and *Guys and Dolls* were thriving in the USA, Rodgers and Hammerstein were asked by actress Mary Martin to write one song for a new project she was working on — a stage adaptation based on The Trapp Family film. Rodgers and Hammerstein offered to write a full score to the stage adaptation, which turned into a musical: The Sound of Music. The show opened on Broadway on 1959 and ran 1,443 times. It won 7 Tony Awards (including Best Musical), a Grammy Award and earned a Gold Record for the cast album. In 1965, the film The Sound of Music was released, starring Julie Andrews. The film won 5 Academy Awards including Best Picture, and became one of the most popular musicals and house-hold names across the world.



About Rodgers and Hammerstein

Richard Rodgers (1902-1979) and Oscar Hammerstein II (1895-1960), a composer and a librettist/lyricist, started joining forces after having long independent careers in which they collaborated with other artists. Together, they gained outstanding success in the American musical theatre world. Oscar Hammerstein is known for reviving the operetta. After working with composers such as Rudolf Friml and Sigmund Romberg he wrote *Show Boat* with Jerome Kern in 1927, which became an operetta. A new form of musical theatre was born. Before working with Hammerstein, Richard Rodgers collaborated with lyricist Lorenz Hart on a series of musical comedies. From the 1920s to the 1940s, Rodgers & Hart wrote over 40 shows and film scores, which included *The Boys from Syracuse* and *Pal Joey*. In 1942, Hart's alcoholism reached a turning point and he was not able to work. He passed away in 1943. Rodgers knew Hammerstein for years, and as Hart's condition was getting worse, he approached Hammerstein to step into a new project - *Oklahoma! Oklahoma!* was the first R&H musical. It became an important milestone in the development of American musicals as it brought to life a new genre — the Musical Play, which was a fusion of Rodgers' musical comedy and Hammerstein's operetta. This was the beginning of the most successful partnership in Broadway musical history. Among the musicals Rodgers and Hammerstein wrote together are: *Carousel*, *Allegro*, *South Pacific*, *The King and I*, *Me and Juliet*, *Pipe Dream*, *Flower Drum Song*, and *The Sound of Music*.

The Real von Trapp Family

- Maria came to the von Trapp family in 1926 as a tutor for one of the children, Maria, who was recovering from scarlet fever, not as governess to all the children.
- Maria and Georg married in 1927, 11 years before the family left Austria, not right before the Nazi takeover of Austria.
- Maria did not marry Georg von Trapp because she was in love with him. As she said in her autobiography, she fell in love with the children at first sight, not their father. She is quoted as saying "I really and truly was not in love. I liked him but didn't love him. However, I loved the children, so in a way I really married the children. . . . By and by I learned to love him more than I have ever loved before or after."
- The number of children and their names, ages, sexes were changed. The family was also musical before Maria arrived, but she did teach them to sing madrigals.
- Georg, far from being the detached, cold-blooded patriarch of the family who disapproved of music, was a warm and loving if somewhat overwhelmed father. Author Tom Santopietro writes, "It was actually Maria herself, with her emotionally stunted upbringing, who needed thawing", as Maria had grown up in an abusive home. While this change in Georg's character might have made for a better story in emphasizing Maria's healing effect on the von Trapps, it distressed his family greatly.
- The family did not secretly escape over the Alps to freedom in Switzerland. As daughter Maria said in a 2003, "We did tell people that we were going to America to sing. And we did not climb over mountains with all our heavy suitcases and instruments. We left by train, pretending nothing."
- The von Trapps traveled to Italy, not Switzerland, in broad daylight under the guise of a family vacation, the day before the borders to Austria were closed. They then travelled to America to tour as a family band and eventually settled there.
- Instead of the fictional Max Detweiler, pushy music promoter, the von Trapps' priest, the Reverend Franz Wasner, acted as their musical director for over 20 years.

Maria and George with The von Trapp Family Singers



Historical Context & The Anschluss

On March 11–13, 1938, Nazi Germany annexed the neighboring country of Austria. This event is known as the "Anschluss", which is a German word that means "connection" or "joining". By forcing the Austrian government to concede power through the threat of a military invasion, Hitler effectively violated both the Treaty of Saint Germain and the Treaty of Versailles that were signed after WWI. These treaties forbade Germany and Austria from uniting because they had been closely allied in WWI. However, Hitler's aggressive foreign policy reflected his desire to unite all ethnic Germans under one "Reich", or rule, and to go to war once again in Europe to claim further territory for Germany. The Anschluss is referenced in the 2nd Act of the play when Captain von Trapp and his family decide that they must flee Austria. The Captain is portrayed in the play as a proud Austrian nationalist, as evidenced by his sentimental connection to the song "Edelweiss", Austria's national flower, and his refusal to fly a Swastika flag. The creation of Austria as a nation-state had only just occurred in 1918, in the wake of WWI, after the collapse of the Austro-Hungarian Empire. That is the empire that Captain von Trapp served under, so it can be understood that he does not want his new country to lose its independence.

Although not mentioned in the play, after the Anschluss, Austrian Nazis had license to attack their political opponents and specifically Jewish people without fear of repercussions. They seized power in government buildings and dominated the streets with torchlight parades, chants, and salutes to Hitler. Beginning on the night of March 11 and in the weeks that followed, there was violence across the country. Austrian Nazis and others beat up, attacked, and humiliated the Jewish population. Soon, Austria's Jews were subjected to laws and restrictions that discriminated against Jews in Nazi Germany and then to the violent atrocities of the Holocaust that followed. While the von Trapps also faced religious pressure from being Roman Catholic in the face of a hostile and largely secular Nazi regime, they were not in immediate danger until Captain von Trapp made the decision to decline his military post in the Third Reich. It is very important to be aware that their story is quite different from the persecution that Jewish people faced during this time.

Discussion Questions

These questions can be used as writing prompts, as well as prompts for group discussions.

Pre-show discussion questions:

The following questions have been included to spark discussions and to get students thinking about what they might experience prior to viewing the production.

- Have you seen any live performances on stage before? What are your expectations about what you will see on stage in this production?
- What do you already know about the play, including the plot, production elements (such as lighting, sound, costumes, and sets) and the characters? How do you anticipate that these elements will come together in the play?
- What technical elements do you anticipate seeing in the production? How do you think these elements will affect the audience's experience of the play?
- Look at the poster for this production (you can find the image on the title page of this document). Based on what you see, what do you anticipate about the production? Think about the images and graphics that are on the poster. What can we infer about the characters featured on the poster?
- Have you seen the movie version of The Sound of Music? What do you think would be similar on stage? What would be different?

Post-show discussion questions:

The following questions are ideal for engaging students in reflection and exploration of the major themes, characters, and other elements of the production.

- What ideas or themes did the play make you think about?
- What moral dilemmas were the characters dealing with? What affected their decision-making process while facing these dilemmas?
- What was the role of the songs in the show?
- Think about an interesting character/relationship you've seen in the show. What was unique about them/it?
- What did you notice about the ways in which each character communicated with one other?
- What did you notice about the ways in which the characters displayed their emotions?
- Imagine that you could meet with members of the cast, crew, artistic team, or production team. What questions would you ask them about the elements of the production?

Activity One: Fish out of Water

Recommended for Grades 8-12

Key Concepts: Displacement, Mentorship, Resilience, Alienation

Rationale: The Sound of Music is primarily a story of identity. Maria goes through a process of transformation by embracing her own personality, values, and way of being (rather than rejecting or hiding them) despite being considered “different” than the other nuns at the Abbey. She also finds her way thanks to the Mother Abbess’ support. This exercise asks students to think about the experience of otherness and how the support/neglect of one person can have a ripple effect that changes the lives of many.

Step One: Explanation

Look through Maria’s hero journey with students. Maria begins the story as a fish out of water. She then finds herself in a new environment and uses her unique skills and worldview to better the situation. When she is scared or doesn’t trust the new journey, she finds support in her mentor, the Mother Abbess. The last time we see Maria she is confidently guiding her new family to safety. Ask students to brainstorm other fish out of water stories from fiction or history. They can then discuss or research the turning point where that person nearly gave up but was encouraged to continue by a mentor or a support system. Encourage students to discuss how variation of identity and unique perspectives can be beneficial to a community. Option: To make this a personal reflection exercise, students can journal their process and examine people from their own lives.

Step Two: Execution

In groups, students create a story with three scenes. The first scene introduces a unique character that doesn’t immediately match their environment. The second scene shows them receiving advice or support from someone. The third scene shows them using that advice to be a leader themselves.

Option: Use a character already discussed and recreate the history/story.

Step Three: Analysis

Activity Debrief—Explore the idea of resilience and alienation

- What are the challenges of trying to find the right environment for you?
- What are the compromises that characters had to make in The Sound of Music?
- How can we negotiate the fact that people that are close to us can make choices that are different from ours?
- Could you mentor someone who had different values than yours?

Activity Two: Learning Do-Re-Mi

Recommended for Grades 1-7

Key Concepts: Solfège, “Do-Re-Mi”, Conducting, Music

Rationale: The Sound of Music speaks of music as an instrument of education, empowerment and community building. In this exercise, students will learn the theoretical practice behind the popular song “Do-Re-Mi”, and experiment with conducting vocals.

Step one: Warm Up

Ask the students to stand in a circle. Demonstrate stretching and relaxing of the arms, chest, legs, feet and facial muscles. Tap the chest and make a sound. Massage face. Warm up lips by puckering up and smiling. Start a count-down; ask the students to breathe in on 4 and let out on 6 (then 8, then 10).

Warm up the diaphragm by ‘singing’ “Jingle Bells” without using voice, but rather by exhaling with the sound “S” (“F” and “SH” could work as well). Practice scale warm-ups if you can.

Step two: Learn the “Do-Re-Mi”

Listen to the song “Do-Re-Mi” from The Sound of Music. Explain the basics of Solfège; Solfège (SOLfehj) is a musical language that is used to sing melodies. The seven Solfège syllables in a major scale are

Do, Re, Mi, Fa, Sol, La, Ti. They sign the pitch of the note. Do is the lowest note and Ti is the highest.

Teach the students how to sing the “Do-Re-Mi”. You can also teach them the Solfège hand signs.

Practice the notes with the students until they are confident using them.

Step three: Conduct

Then, assign each student one syllable/note. Have the students stand in a line or in groups (based on

the size of the class) in the order of the scale. Invite one student to become the “conductor”. When

the conductor points out to a student/group, they must sing their note (they could also sign it). Invite

the conductor to “play” a song they know, or create new music as they are conducting the group. Get

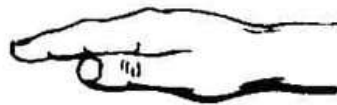
as many students as possible to take turns and conduct.



do



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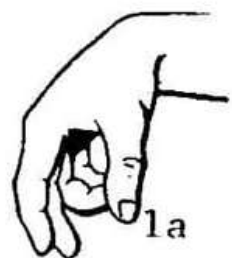
mi



fa



so



la



ti



do



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BC Drama Curriculum documents (6–12)

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About The Sound of Music

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Historical Context & The Anschluss

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Solfège

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