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The Sound of Music

A Dusie Chapbook Kollektiv 8 Production

The Sound of Music

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The Sound of Music

After the Do-re-mi sequence, Brigitta, the fifth von Trapp child, who is often depicted as reading, has trouble sleeping. She dreams she is surrounded by armies, the war approaches, but a blue god appears, and he calmly turns the soldiers into gentlemen and pilgrims, their weapons into flowers and musical instruments. “Will you be my bride?” he asks Brigitta. He is so enormous and gentle; she says yes, she sees blue everywhere and is consumed with love.

The next morning at breakfast she approaches Maria and says, “now that I know the notes with which to sing, I have decided to renounce this household and its false gods of discipline and Christianity; from this point forward I will love only Krishna, and I will sing my love for him for as long as I draw breath.”

Louisa, feeling betrayed, fills her sister’s bed with spiders but when Brigitta turns back the covers they have all turned into rose petals.

Her sisters and brothers then take all the hundreds of Sanskrit translations from their father’s library out into the field to burn. They force the serene Brigitta to watch, but when the fire is lit her siblings are transformed into cattle. While transformed the children experience inexplicable bliss. Brigitta takes her time returning the cattle to the house, where they turn back into boys and girls.

Years later Kurt sighs, “if only once more I could be a cow,” and so he devotes himself to the smoking of opium.

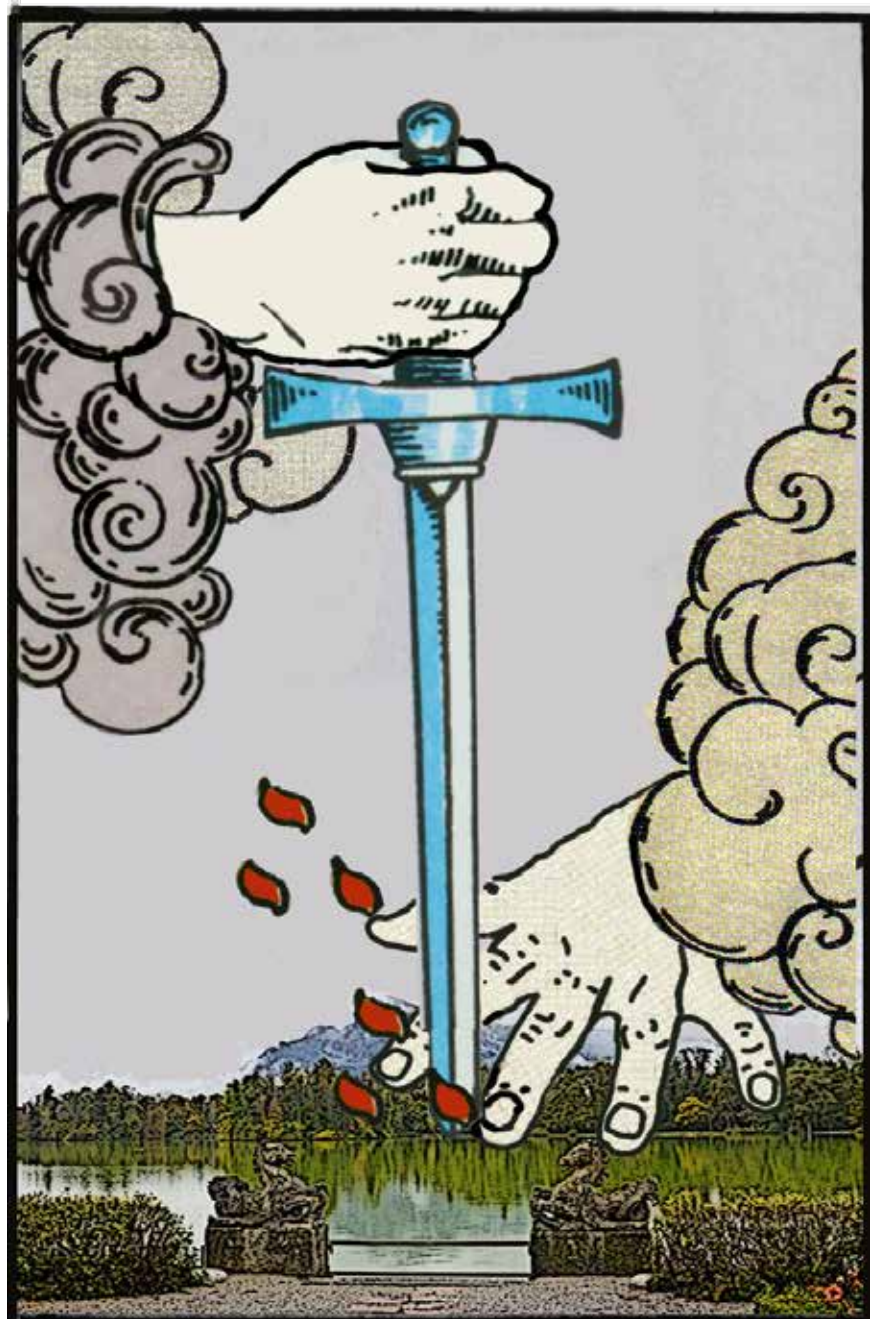
When her family flees towards Switzerland, she travels east. She is never cold, she is never hungry, if there are mountains they are lifted to let her through.

In the theater during the premiere, Debbie Turner turns to Julie Andrews and asks her why so many songs in the movie had to be played twice. “It’s called a reprise,” Julie tells her. “When something happens, you don’t want to remember it just once and forget it, you want to keep thinking about it. Each time you keep thinking about it, your memory becomes softer and sweeter until all you have in your head is happiness. When you hear a song the second time, it’s telling you it’s time to be happy.”

Debbie says, “but we had to sing those songs over and over and over. None of us were happy. We just tried to sing and act well enough so that they’d stop yelling at us all the time.”

Julie grabbed her arm. “Don’t you dare tell anyone that. No one likes to know how things really happened, they’d never be happy if they did.”

“Just think about the reprise,” she says. “The reprise that never ends until you’re finally happy,” she says.



ACE of SWORDS.

What goes unquestioned is not how Maria, with little formal training, could in a matter of weeks transform the seven von Trapp children into virtuoso vocalists, but whether she was unique. She was not.

She was but one of many postulants, each with a different passion, sent forth from the abbey to work as governesses to large families, the children of which would suddenly become brilliant practitioners in such skills as mechanical engineering, industrial design, mumblety-peg, sumo wrestling, plein-air painting, ninjitsu, hairdressing, lion taming, atomic physics, etc. All the same pattern: the introduction, the curtains as clothes, the delight, the easy mastery of a skill under the guise of play, the estrangement from the world, the flight across the mountains.

At times the children of the different families would battle. Buildings would fall and be rebuilt overnight, the sound of elephants commingling with heartbreaking birdcalls. The moon shines with city lights, and all clocks everywhere increasingly become more accurate. The Swiss prosper; the war never ends.

One day the Pope sends his emissary to Salzburg to find out what is the cause of these disturbances. But he can never find the abbey. It's right there the neighbors tell him, but all he sees is a blank stone wall.

He cries out, but no one hears him. So he hires the most innocent of children to bring the abbess to his room. When she arrives, he only sees the child, and thinks this must be a trick, that the Austrians are wolves, Salzburg is mostly fictional, town records show Nonnberg Abbey has been closed for decades.

The abbess stands in front of him, knowing the monsignor cannot see her, or hear anything of what she has to tell him. She tries to explain, but it is like she is in heaven already, and can only communicate in miracles.

After the war, Rolfe, like everyone he knows, never mentions what he did during the war. What happened with the von Trapps was but the first, and smallest, of many terrible things.

But when he hears the family is back in Salzburg on tour, he sends a note backstage and meets with Liesl at a café. Over tiny glasses of champagne she studies his face, and cannot find any guilt or remorse, which bothers her because it is exactly the same with everyone she meets in Austria. “You hide well,” she tells him, and he smiles a little, only as far as he’d permit himself. “I’m 31, going on 32,” he says, “I’m a landscape architect now with my own firm.”

“Landscape architect?” Liesl laughs. “I thought you’d be a postal worker or a spy, what with your love of delivering messages.”

“In a way it’s the same,” Rolfe says. “The land wants gardens, it tells me what to do and I pass along the secrets it wants me to convey. If I’m lucky it also wants a gazebo.”

“A gazebo?” Liesl asks.

“I’m renowned for my gazebos,” Rolfe says. “The last time I ever experienced joy was when I danced with you in your father’s, all those years ago.”

Any time my teachers were bored, or there was a substitute teacher, or whatever, they'd whip out *The Sound of Music*. I saw the film in English classes, and biology too. By the time I was a teenager, I must have seen it a dozen times or more. I'd put my head down on the desk and hate everything about that movie with all my heart.

Its pretty mountains, its impossible cheeriness, the idea that if you knew the notes you'd know how to sing, that there exist parents who care for you so much they'd hire a nun just to watch over you. Worse than anything, the way the songs crept into me, beckoning me to sing along, that I could be happy if I just got with the von Trapps and sang along. If you just gave up who you are, then you'd be happy.

After Maria finishes singing “My Favorite Things,” the children pause. “I like this song very much,” Louisa says, “but I think it would sound a lot better if it were more loosely rhythmic, in waltz time.”

“With modal patterns,” Friedrich adds excitedly, “we could stretch it out and really improvise!”

“Let’s stay up all night and jam,” shouts Brigitta.

Captain von Trapp stands in the doorway. “Bedtime is to be strictly observed.”

“I don’t want to live in Austria in the 1930’s singing show tunes anymore!” Marta cries. “I want to be John Coltrane!”

“I’m tired of being afraid of thunderstorms! I want to be John Coltrane,” Kurt shouts. “Me too!” “Me too!” The children are jumping up and down on the bed. “John Coltrane!” “John Coltrane!” “John Coltrane!” “John Coltrane!” “John Coltrane!” “John Coltrane!”

“The first rule of this house is discipline,” von Trapp warns, but Gretl grabs her father’s sleeve: “no, Papa, the first rule of music is that we must give everything we have, and even if we do you will never know what will happen.”

“I want to be McCoy Tyner,” Gretl says. “I’m going to stay up as late as I can.”



TWO & SWORDS!

The Baroness Elsa von Schraeder, after breaking off her engagement to Georg, used her title, money and connections to raise award winning vampire bats and to help Jews in their escape from Austria. Dying of boredom, in the winter of 1945 she meets the noted Gotham City industrialist Thomas Wayne on the slopes of St. Moritz. “Do you like music?” Wayne asks her, and she replies, “I despise it!”

“Well, do you like bats?” Wayne asks, and she says, “oh honey, let me take you to my underground lair.”

Cut out of *The Sound of Music* was the story of the eighth von Trapp child, Otto, age 15.

Deaf since the age of two, out of ignorance Maria shunned Otto, who in turn was puzzled by everyone dressing up in curtains and dancing all the time. “Why do you keep doing what she tells you to do,” he would ask Liesl. “I don’t know,” Liesl said, “it’s fun, and we’re getting good, she says we’re going to run away and become famous in America.” No one told Otto about the plan, or that he had no part in it.

Still, the Nazis were coming, and the von Trapps had to flee over the mountains. At the abbey, Otto volunteers to delay the SS, sacrificing himself if necessary. When the soldiers appear, they yell at Otto, over and over, where is your family? And Otto signs, over and over, “I don’t know, they wouldn’t tell me, they were too busy singing.”

In the sequel to the pornographic version of *The Sound of Music*, Maria never leaves the convent. It takes a very long time figuring out how to solve a problem like Maria.

When Julie Andrews climbs the hilltop and spins, she is depicted as happiness, she is actually happy. In the movie you can see her hair whip and the grass ripple from the helicopter filming her. She's happy because after so many takes the director gives up, and assumes we won't care about the helicopter blowing her around, and that shot is the last shot of the day.

And when we first see her, Maria is happy, she has never seen a helicopter before, she's so happy, she could be Julie Andrews, playing a woman who lives in a convent, finally released so she can just go outside and sing.

When we see the movie, we think it's just the wind, the wind is happy because Maria is singing and it gets to carry her voice.

All these different emotions look the same in *The Sound of Music*, like the middle von Trapp children blending together. Understanding therefore as the seeking out of happiness: it's a long movie; it's ok to feel the way you feel.



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THE FOOL

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Once it becomes clear the von Trapps' had left and will never return, and that their wages would go unpaid, the workers begin to systematically loot the household, going room to room, grabbing whatever they can carry: the liquor, the exquisite evening gowns and formal dinner wear, the jewel encrusted whistles, the ornate French furniture, the antique musical instruments, the buckets of gold teeth. Remembering the countless hours scrubbing the tubs in the master bathroom, the hidden blood soaked shrine where Georg did his worshipping, the laboratories and playrooms where the children conducted their foul experiments, feelings of shame and liberation whip back and forth in every maid and manservant.

Later they set the villa on fire, and when anyone asks what happened, where everything went, they blame the Jews.

With one of the bestselling albums of all time, there is immense pressure to produce a follow-up. Rather than trying to recreate an imaginary pre-war Austria, it gets decided that a concept album is needed to truly capture *The Sound of Music*. The new album will incorporate a vast range of musical styles including psychedelic, doo-wop, barbershop singing, ragtime, yodeling, early American folk, classical music, and avant-garde explorations into noise and musical acoustics. But there is immense internal resistance; legal battles with RCA Victor; technical difficulties with recording; Kurt and Friedrich's anti-war stances and subsequent draft battles; mental health issues, and creative dissatisfaction.

The recording sessions are relentless and exhausting, the children make do the best they can on a diet of amphetamines and cough syrup. Maria overhears one of the producers worrying how much the children have come to resemble the Wilson brothers, and she says "what's wrong with that? After all, how many records did the Beach Boys sell?"

What is puzzling in *The Sound of Music* is why the Nazis would be interested in Captain von Trapp in the first place, a retired submarine officer who hasn't commanded a ship in twenty years. Left unsaid was Georg von Trapp's real position: eldritch lord of Atlantis and witness to the dwellers of this miserable surface world. As bound by secret treaties that brought the sacrifices of the Great War to an end, von Trapp swore to remain away from all bodies of water.

A faction of the Catholic Church sent the postulant Maria to test him with music and seduction, to see if the rivers of blood could be made to flow once more. "High on the hill was a lonely goatherd," Maria sang, "Lay ee odl lay ee odl lay hee hoo. What shall he do about the Third Reich? Lay ee odl lay ee odl-oo."

Meanwhile, more than anything the Nazis desired an alliance with the darkling kingdom of the bitter ocean, and if necessary, they were willing to use force to make their desires clear.

In bed with Maria, von Trapp sees that choice is an illusion, and that he must shed this costume of humanity. "Take the children," he commands, "and sing of me wherever you go."

Fleeing across the mountains, chased by the Nazis, Georg von Trapp pauses before a frozen alpine lake. Shouting at Maria and the children to run and never look back, he tears a hole in the ice with his axe and wades into the terrible cold water. Surrendering to the all-consuming horror that is his true manifestation, he watches his family climb a mountain, pleased in how they resemble, against the snow, pawns, or notes on a musical scale.



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THE GOAT-HERD

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Upon its release, *The Sound of Music* proved to be so popular that movie theaters began showing the film nonstop. One theater owner in South Korea attempted to double his profits by screening a version with all the musical numbers edited out. Angry mobs pulled the cinema apart board by board. Demand was so insatiable factories switched from the production of war material to the manufacture of film projectors and speakers just to keep up. Any empty room could be an instant cinema, any blank wall a site for *The Sound of Music*. You could see it anywhere, you could see it all the time, it was never enough. Tens of thousands would crowd into fields, everyone deathly quiet and shrunken upon themselves so they could see and hear and be happy. Electrical grids crackled, economies expanded. Salzburg had to be cordoned off by oceans of barbed wire just to save it from all the children who wanted to play with Gretl. By 1967, all other films were ignored, all other songs forgotten. The separation between theater and state crumbled. Vietnam was at peace.

One day Max Detweiler, world famous impresario of genuine Austrian music, notices Friedrich, ordinarily an impossibly somber child, smiling to himself.

“Friedrich,” he says, “what’s on your mind?”

And Friedrich says, “I have decided that suffering comes from our devotion to groups at the expense of our innermost desires. And yet if we only focus upon our own desires at the expense of others, surely we’re no better than the darkness surrounding us.”

Max says, “but Friedrich, surely when you’re singing with your family you make everyone around you happy. Does that not also make you happy?”

“I will only be happy if I strike out on my own for a solo career, devoting myself to aiding the most defenseless among us,” Friedrich replies.

“So Max, as soon as I can, I’m moving to America, I’m going to defend the rights of animals and change my name to Doris Day.”

Shortly after the war, the many von Trapp governesses gather. Discussing the various machinations of their black market rings, how much you could water down the penicillin and not get caught, how none of them would feel pity if any of those dots around them stopped moving forever. On the radio the von Trapps sing their simpering madrigals until one of the governesses shows the café owner the gun in her holster and suggests American jazz would make everyone in the café much happier.

“I had them so well trained,” one of them sighs. “I had them marching in formations that defied nature itself! And you know how I did it? Fear, with a little random terror sprinkled in. I don’t care if the gullible bourgeoisie loves them. The Soviets and the Americans *respect* us. We *earned* that.”

“Then it’s decided,” the oldest governess nods. “All thirty-seven of the von Trapp children that we gave birth to ourselves and raised on our own when Georg abandoned us shall become arms dealers and bankers. Let Maria play with her cuckoo clock.”



10 WHEEL OF FORTUNE 5

In the grove Maria sings “Do, a deer, a female deer; Re, a deer, a female deer.”

“That doesn’t sound right,” Kurt says. “What about the sun, a drop of golden sun?”

“Just sing after me,” Maria sings. “Mi, a deer, a female deer; Fa, a deer, female deer.”

Each time she sings, another deer shows up, shyly at first, but with more confidence as their numbers increase. The deer envelope them as the children nervously sing the song with the wrong-sounding lyrics.

“So, a deer, a female deer; La, a deer, a female deer...”

They feel their necks lengthening, their ears becoming pointed, their eyesight dimming, their sense of smell becoming acute, and their voices silent. They are in a field of amaranth. The deer are grazing.

“Let me make it easy for you,” Maria says. “I never liked singing. It was just something I did to hide how much I loved deer.”

“What about mi, the name I call myself?” asks Marta, before she changes unrecognizably into a fawn.

“Only for a while,” Maria says, “while we’re on this wheel.” She puts down her guitar and picks up her bow. “I will kill your father before I let him touch me,” she says.

The moon rises. The children run like they have never run before.

Every thunderstorm, the children are visited by ghosts. They think, if we just keep singing, they'll tell us how to be everywhere. That's when they notice how often their father hums to himself, when he thinks no one is listening. It feels exciting, there's so much time and it goes by so quickly, all the children undergo puberty at the exact same moment. Maria says just keep thinking about your favorite things, but Frau Schmidt sits them down and recites the poems of her long dead lover, Georg Trakl, and silently above the place of skulls God's golden eyes open.

During the seventies, when this country was so much less hierarchical, the inmates at the California Institute for Women in Frontera continuously staged *The Sound of Music*. When asked why hardened criminals would want to sing and dance, the warden replied “even in the least progressive of prisons there must be moments of happiness.”

Every performance ended, not with an escape into the mountains, but with the warden escorting the inmate playing Maria and her children outside through the gates of the penitentiary. The air smelled of dairy cattle, and a bus sat with the engine idling, to deliver them into the arms of their parole officers.

The reviews were terrible, nonetheless the warden would return after each show, and another inmate was cast to play Maria. Performances continued until every inmate had played her part, and the prison stood empty.

It never matters how good the show is. The show is always good.

Everyone has the right to sing.



How **do** you solve a problem like *Maria*?



Directed by: rob mclennan; Executive Producer: Susanna Gardner; Associate Producer: Chris Turnbull; Director of Photography: Gary Barwin; Film Editor: Elisabeth Workman; Production Design: Joe Blades; Set Decoration: annie won; Costume Design: Elizabeth Bryant; Hair Stylist: Rob Budde; Makeup Artist: Stalina Villarreal; Unit Production Manager: Zoe Tuck; Assistant Director: Amanda Chiado; Sound Recording Supervisor: Jessica Smith; Dialect Coach: Jason Christie; Sound Director: Meredith Clark; Boom Operator: Michael Sikkema; Special Photographic Effects: Jen Hofer and franciszka voeltz; Additional Photography: Michelle Detorie; Gaffer: Kate Schapira; Best Boy Electric: Amanda Earl; Key Grip: Sarah Sarai; Camera Operator: kevin mcpherson eckhoff; Conductor: Michalle Gould; Music Editor: Michael Ruby; Vocal Supervisor: K. Lorraine Graham; Scoring Mixer: Elizabeth Robinson; Music Producer: Jon Henson; Music Recordist: Marthe Reed; Puppeteers: Megan Kaminski and Anne Yoder; Choreographer: Hailey Higdon; Second Unit Supervisor: Larkin Higgins; Production Assitant: Marci Nelligan; Helicopter Pilot: Ken Hunt; Publicity Assistant: Carrie Hunter; Unit Publicist: Nicole Mauro; Location Teacher: Mark Lamoureux; Production Accountant: Bob Marcacci; Rehearsal Accompanist: Jim Maughn.