

Surrey Mirror

The Sound of Music on the Surrey Hills

The Surrey hills were literally alive with the Sound of Music when the East Surrey Operatic Society put on their polished production of Rodgers and Hammerstein's every popular musical at Polesden Lacey Open Air Theatre from June 28 to 1 July 1.

Director Gillian Jarvis made full use of the theatre's scenic setting when she had Maria, excellently played by Susan Hazell, walk in singing from across the adjoining hilly gardens. This lent great space and made imagining the Austrian mountain setting of the piece very easy. Susan Hazell went from strength to strength as Maria. She played the part with conviction and sang quite beautifully. She was well supported by John Rapley who gave a very straight Captain Von Trapp.

The surroundings were used to great effect throughout the show and notably at the end in the search scene when the Von Trapps were being sought by the Nazis. In the fading light the search lights among the shrubbery were most effective with the dialogue coming from the unseen fugitives.

The whole cast was well rehearsed in the music by musical director Angela Barker and the nun's chorus sang particularly well. The children, led by Melissa Terribile as Liesl, were very entertaining and performed their routines with charm. Michelle Luck was commanding as Elsa Schraeder but regrettably was unable to sing on Wednesday evening because of a cold. Gillian Jarvis sang admirably for her from the orchestra but, unfortunately could not be heard properly because of short comings with the sound system. Dennis Shearman was an engaging Max Detweiler and Andre Glass a very military Admiral Von Schriber. The Reigate Concert Orchestra under Angela Barke's able baton la and Judy Burchells' leadership topped off the evening's enjoyment with a strong true delivery.

True to mountain form, the weather was changeable and threatening but on the opening night the rain held off. The stage thunder and lightning was made more realistic by the lowering clouds. The whole production battled valiantly with the very cool evening and gave us an entertaining and heartwarming show.

Reigate Post and Independent

Weather plays its part on a classic night

The perverse British weather played its part on the first night of East Surrey Operatic Society's production of *The Sound of Music* in the open air at Polesden Lacey. When rain was scripted, a few drops fell; thundery grey clouds presaged the ominous shadows of Nazi domination; and when Maria left the family without saying goodbye, the realistic "iron" gates blew sadly to behind her. The show was a delight, designed to make the best of the rising ground and pastoral setting (including bleating sheep). The costumes enchanted a devoted, shivering audience - in the wedding and ballroom scenes, the attire was sumptuous - while both acting and singing were first class.

This was truly a society performance, in which everyone had a chance to shine, but Susan Hazell was a highly accomplished Maria, whose voice was both strong and warm; while Melissa Terribile gave a poignant portrayal of the emotional turmoil of Liesl, 16-year-old in love in wartime. All the children were show-stoppers. Applause greeted the change of scene from exterior to interior by means of a revolving platform and, as night closed in and the stage was floodlit, Nazi storm troopers appearing from within the audience produced an ominous effect. Audience participation - as the audience at the final concert of the Von Trapp Singers - was the perfect finale.