



The Sound of Music Story: How A Beguiling Young Novice, A Handsome Austrian Captain, and Ten Singing von Trapp Children Inspired the Most Beloved Film of All Time

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On March 2, 1965, "The Sound of Music" was released in the United States and the love affair between moviegoers and the classic Rodgers and Hammerstein musical was on. Rarely has a film captured the love and imagination of the moviegoing public in the way that "The Sound of Music" did as it blended history, music, Austrian location filming, heartfelt emotion and the yodeling of Julie Andrews into a monster hit. Now, Tom Santopietro has written the ultimate "Sound of Music" fan book with all the inside dope from behind the scenes stories of the filming in Austria and Hollywood to new interviews with Johannes von Trapp and others. Santopietro looks back at the real life story of Maria von Trapp, goes on to chronicle the sensational success of the Broadway musical, and recounts the story of the near cancellation of the film when the "Cleopatra" bankrupted 20th Century Fox. We all know that Julie Andrews and Christopher Plummer played Maria and Captain Von Trapp, but who else had been considered? Tom Santopietro knows and will tell all while providing a historian's critical analysis of the careers of director Robert Wise and screenwriter Ernest Lehman, a look at the critical controversy which greeted the movie, the film's relationship to the turbulent 1960s and the super stardom which engulfed Julie Andrews. Tom Santopietro's "The Story of 'The Sound of Music'" is book for everyone who cherishes this American classic.

The Sound of Music Story: How A Beguiling Young Novice, A Handsome Austrian Captain, and Ten Singing von Trapp Children Inspired the Most Beloved Film of All Time Details

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From Reader Review The Sound of Music Story: How A Beguiling Young Novice, A Handsome Austrian Captain, and Ten Singing von Trapp Children Inspired the Most Beloved Film of All Time for online ebook

Kathleen says

This book clearly would appeal to superfans of The Sound of Music, and I definitely lean in that direction. Tom Santopietro (I just love his name) has basically compiled tidbits from interviews he did as well as all the material ever published on the 1965 movie loosely about the Von Trapp Family Singers. The writing/editing is not spectacular, and there's little information I found new, but the work is notable mostly for the sheer amount of information all in one place.

Donna Davis says

Since the enormously popular movie based on the story of the Von Trapp family was released 50 years ago, numerous books have been published about the family, the movie, or both. This reviewer tried reading Mrs. Von Trapp's memoir many years ago and found it surprisingly dry. Not so with this humdinger by Tom Santopietro. When it comes out in February, you may want to read it even if entertainment history is not usually of interest to you. Because after all, The Sound of Music is not just any movie! Thank you, thank you to Net Galley and St. Martin's Press for providing the ARC so that I could check it out and report back prior to the release date.

That said, if your entire life has been spent sad and deprived, or with your nose to a video game or hiding under a rock and so, somehow, you have never seen this movie, watch the movie first. It is a full three hours long, and not a single moment is wasted. In the tradition of Rogers and Hammerstein, the music forms a part of the narrative, rather than something inserted in between lines of a story which slow it down. Painstaking care was leant to avoid having a moment when the audience would collectively think, "Ho hum, I can see we're about to burst into song here." In fact, musicals were not much in fashion anymore, and religious films, which had enjoyed popularity just prior to this one, were now considered old and outdated. Extraordinary effort was taken to engage the audience, and it shows.

One reason it was even considered, odds being what they were, was that the stage version of The Sound of Music, which starred Mary Martin as Maria, had sold tickets like hotcakes. The possibility of a successful motion picture was intriguing. There was no way to use Martin for the film, though; she would have been past the age of fifty years when filming began, and things that can be obscured or disguised on stage tend to show up on camera. There could be no painted backgrounds for film—how cheesy! An entirely new script, with two additional songs added by the original composers, made it much more appealing than the stage version. A lot of money went into making this show work, and it was money well spent.

How the deal was struck to make the movie is explained thoroughly without trying the reader's patience with a lot of extraneous or uninteresting detail. Each time I thought perhaps I was getting too much information—such as back-stories on the behind-the-scenes specialists—the narrative would lead from there into the aspects of the film that were their particular contributions, and then I would understand why I needed to know about that person. The creator of that gob-smackingly gorgeous wedding dress? Oh, hell yes! The choreographers who put together the whole nine-minute Do-Re-Mi music video...oh, yes I guess that was

pretty amazing, so yes! And behind all of it was the genius of Robert Wise, a producer and director I had never even especially noticed before, but now will never forget.

I loved walking through the casting roster. Hmm, who should play Maria? How about Angie Dickinson? (If you are old enough to remember her, you've got to find this pretty amusing.) Mia Farrow? She would've had the job if she could've sung better. Doris Day had a red-hot career going, but she turned this one down cold, accurately pointing out that her resume had been built by being the quintessential all-American girl, and just how was anyone suddenly going to think she was an Austrian nun? Point well taken.

Some of the others were fun, too. How about Yul Brynner as the captain? He really wanted that job. NO. And so it goes.

Interwoven throughout are the real family Von Trapp. Once she had accepted the deal and signed on the dotted line, the real "Sister Maria" was every bit as outspoken in real life as her fictional counterpart. In fact, she was so outspoken in her limitless suggestions as to how the film could be kept more in keeping with events as they unfolded that finally, a letter was sent off to her explaining, for once and all, that the movie was based "loosely" on her own story and was not intended to be a documentary. Stay out of the way; we're making a movie here!

Which scenes were shot on a Paramount stage, and which were on location? Sometimes the difference is a matter of angle, with scenes being freely mixed. (The Von Trapp manse had several different locations, according to whether one was out front, out back, indoors, or in the gazebo.)

Imagine Maria skipping down that lane singing "I Have Confidence"...with fifty or so cameramen and other personnel following closely. And didn't she make it all look easy? A clue: it wasn't. That woman had an unstoppable work ethic!

And what of the Von Trapps now? Once they emigrated (not really through the Swiss Alps, silly; for one thing, to get there from Austria, you have to go through Germany!), they came to the United States, flat broke after a life of great comfort, albeit not as much luxury as depicted on film. They sang and toured till some of the "children" were sick to death of it and vowed to sink deep roots and stay put ASAP. Eventually they founded a ski lodge in Vermont, where the grand-Von-Trapps, at least some of them, still live and work.

Was Julie Andrews really that nice, or was she different off-camera? You have to read the book, and then you'll know. Who else is remembered fondly by the cast, and who not-so-much? It's all here.

Even less central aspects of the story, such as the campy sing along tradition that draws thousands annually, many in full costume (even dressed up as carburetors!) and likened to a nerdy version of the Rocky Horror Picture Show, are interesting and amusing.

What's more, after you read the book, if it affects you as it did me, then no matter how many times you have watched the movie, you will need to see it again in order to appreciate everything you just read. Happily, we had the DVD ready to hand, and my daughter, who has also watched a number of times before, and I nestled next to the Christmas tree and re-watched it, with me pointing things out to her as we went along.

If you don't have a date for New Year's or prefer a less boisterous evening in the privacy of your own home, this movie just could be a great plan for you! Then you'll be properly ready to read the book once it comes out around Valentine's Day.

Mark your calendar. This story-behind-the-story is worth the anticipation.

Naomi says

Synopsis: In 1965, *The Sound of Music* hit the big screens. What is the back story to this long held, classic family favorite that remains popular to this day?

My rating: 5 Stars

My opinion: OK, first a disclosure: I am a HUGE *Sound of Music* fan. When I say huge, I mean behemoth huge. I have seen this movie well over 200 times in my 47 years on this earth. I own three copies of the DVD. I have scenes from this movie memorized. I have read almost every book put out on this movie and, I believe, all of the von Trapp family books and it is on my bucket list to visit the Trapp Family Lodge in Stowe, Vermont.

I found Mr. Santopietro's book to be incredibly well researched and beyond detailed oriented. I find it easy to say that of all the books on this subject I have read, Santopietro's is easily the best. The book did have periods of dryness or that seemed to drag in over describing occurrences, but those were few and far between and I found that I was able to overlook them with some new things that I had learned.

This book would have been 10/5 stars if photos were included. Especially with this book, couldn't figure out why photos weren't included. I will say that a member of Goodreads did comment on my preliminary review that she had purchased a copy and that there were pictures included in her version.

Wendy-Lynn says

When I saw this on the USA Today website, I knew I had to read it. *The Sound of Music* is one of my all time favorite movies so I splurged and spent the \$14+ for the Kindle version. After reading, I want my money back. This was nothing but filler material to make the book longer. The only parts I enjoyed was how they found the cast, and how certain parts were filmed. This made up about 25%. Very disappointing. :(

Dana says

This is an interesting read, but I found there to be simply too much information in this. It's great if you are a super fan and want to know every little detail about every little thing, but to be honest I found it to get a little tiresome.

I love The Sound of Music, but I am not so obsessed that I feel the need to know what Julie Andrews eats for lunch everyday....(I'm exaggerating but you get the point). I would recommend this book to diehard Sound of Music fans only.

Buy, Borrow or Bin Verdict: Borrow

Note: I received this book for free in exchange for an honest review.

Magdalena aka A Bookaholic Swede says

Do you like "The Sound of Music"? Do you really, really want to know **EVERYTHING** about the movie, about the family von Trapp, about the filming of the movie, about the premier, the life of the actors and the people that made the movie? Do you feel the need to know about all the problems with the filming, the problems before the filming and stuff like that? Then, this is the book for you!

Personally, I found that the book contained way too much information that I just felt wasn't really that interesting to know or that I already knew from watching a documentary about the movie that I have on my DVD version. I mean, the von Trapp family history is interesting and of course, the filming of the movie is always nice to read about, but much of the information after the premier wasn't really that interesting to read about. You get the van Trapp family's history, what happened to all the children. You get to know how the life turned out for the actors that played in the movie. You get statistic about the movie.

But in the end, I would watch the documentary again instead of reading this book, I get the information I want/need and I get to watch the actors instead of reading about what they think about the movie. It's just so much cozier and there are no dry parts. The book felt sometimes a bit too heavy to read, too much information that just didn't interest me so much and also sometimes I felt that it lost the thread when it discussed other movies than "The Sound of Music".

And, I wished that had been photos with the book. This is an ARC so I hope the complete book will have photos.

I received this copy from the publisher through NetGalley in return for an honest review! Thank you!

Online Eccentric Librarian says

More reviews (and no fluff) on the blog <http://surrealtalvi.wordpress.com/>

Typically, I really enjoy a 'behind the scenes' look at the icons such as The Sound of Music. Yet while this book is full of information about the movie, nothing felt new, interesting, or what I couldn't have found either on IMDB or having watched the several anniversary appearances of the cast on Oprah or Good Morning America. A lot of the book is just putting facts into perspective (e.g., telling about the accomplishments of every single cast member, from editor to star) rather than riveting perspectives from 'insider' knowledge. It amounts to a lot of congratulatory statements about how amazing and perfect each person was who worked on the movie and how the movie is so incredibly perfect as to be canon. The last 25% of the book is pretty much the author's opinion on the movie's impact and how well it has held up over

time. So, again, although not a terrible book, I really didn't feel I finished it knowing that much more about the subject than if I had watched a few Youtube clips or looked on IMDB.

The book takes a chronological approach, starting with the Broadway play and the decisions on whether a movie would be made from what was considered at the time a dying breed: the saccharine musicals. With the exception of Andrews and the child actors, few people wanted to do the movie and the studio was hurting for cash after big name flops (read: Cleopatra). There was a bit of information about the Von Trapp family, changes for dramatic purposes from the real story, and a little known German film telling their story.

The book then delves into the filming - talking mostly about the musical numbers and the daunting task of filming them. Of course, the serendipitous moments that improved them and the obstacles (constant Austrian rain) come up a lot. Plummer's reluctance to do the movie and his recalcitrance on the set to interact with the other actors are dismissed as almost method acting to play the uptight Captain. And there are a lot of pages dedicated to talking about how the actors, children and adults alike, were the most amazing ever put on film.

More plaudits follow as the film is released and starts to do very well. There isn't a lot discussed about any negative impacts on the actors following the success of the movie - the book really does focus nearly exclusively on the positives. E.g., discussions about rain causing massive delays during filming turns into a "but we all got to know each other better in the tent at those times" or "Andrews never once complained and was always smiling and pleasant to everyone even after sitting in a tent outside of the rain for all day."

Ironically, for me this book echoed the film in that it is a very pleasant and sweet dissembling that, while at heart a true story, somehow feels like a very slick big studio production. If Rogers and Hammerstein were still alive, passages in the book could be put to music and it would be as applicable to the reality of making Sound of Music as the movie was to the Von Trapp family's actual lives. Definitely not a terrible book but I was hoping/expecting more depth. Reviewed from an advance readers copy provided by the publisher.

Andreina Garban says

The Sound of Music is the most beloved musical film ever. And no wonder, the enormous talent put together created a timeless classic. Director Bob Wise was truly an artist and a great gentleman, Julie Andrews was simply adorable, and Chris Plummer a bad boy. The real Maria was more complicated and complex than the movie character. Enjoyable reading for sure!

aPriL does feral sometimes says

Confession: I hated the Hollywood movie "The Sound of Music." It seemed like a cleaned-up falsified version of a family. I thought so because, hello, in the real world there was the Great Depression, World War II, scary killer Nazis, murder of 6 million Jews and at least 3 million Poles, gypsies, Russians, all of the mentally retarded, homosexuals, university professors, and anybody else not considered White Aryan (whatever that was). Somehow this huge blended family of children of all ages with their real mom having died and stepmom being a religious disciplinarian, with the loss of home, stuff, land, and all of their money, came out of it all as happy and blissed out as larks. The movie also bored me to death. I even saw it in a movie theater, on a Wide Screen and a super sound system and everything. Helmet hair, polished shoes, waxed floors, perfect color-coordinated flower arrangements and whitened teeth - all aspirational for middle-class American fans, of course, articles in Home Beautiful, Housekeeping and Redbook Magazines with tips on how to achieve that famous von Trapp family look.

I thought it all saccharine sentimental 1950's bullsh*t, a movie produced as a designed last gasp reboot attempt to force a Hays/Production-Catholic-Church-Code happy-face wallpaper over real-life horrors. I was correct it seems.

'The Sound of Music Story' is almost light-hearted, but the author Tom Santopietro, to his credit, mentions the bad stuff on everyone, even if in as kind of a light as possible, never using more-loaded words if soft-soap ones fit the mood that fans expect. There is a biography of everybody involved (producers, other actors including the movie von Trapp children, directors, writers, costume designers, music writers, etc.) in the fictionalization (my words) of the von Trapp family. There were different pseudo-biographical versions made up by different movie and stage producers of how the von Trapp family choir (oops, do not call it a choir! - bad vibe, according to their American PR expert) supposedly came into existence. There were also several Broadway stage shows and revivals, many screenplays written, two German-language movies, etc. But the Hollywood movie version was loved by most of the 1960's American public and won awards.

The movie WAS a cleaned-up version of the von Trapp family. According to the brief biography in 'The Sound of Music Story', a third of the 'kids' were adults by the time the Nazis invaded Austria. There were three more kids after Marie married von Trapp, who were disappeared from the movie. Marie was a ball-busting stage mother, and also a force of nature, a strong-willed personality. The kids disliked touring. Mr. von Trapp was a sweet-natured unassuming fella who actually nurtured and comforted the kids, unlike Marie. The marriage was not a love match, it was a business proposal (like, I need a nanny, you need a home) and the proposal was asked through one of the children while Marie was on a ladder changing a light bulb or cleaning or something. Marie did not teach the children how to sing. The children were already musical and singing before Marie was hired. Marie had an awful childhood - she was abused, neglected and abandoned. She did try to be a nun and she became a missionary who went all over the world on missions after the von Trapp family refused to tour anymore and the hired fake von Trapp children didn't work out after asking Marie to be paid for their singing.

A breath of honesty. At least the book is that.

P.s. The von Trapps never sang the music in the movie throughout their professional careers.

Patricia says

I liked this book - especially the earlier parts that talked about how the film came together and the parts that the director, cast and crew played. The behind the scenes anecdotes were great. But the overall tone is hagiographic and by the end I was a little weary of the tone and the laundry list of Sound of Music related trivia.

Kerri says

I really do love all things Julie Andrews and The Sound of Music is high on that list. This book, however, is not. For every page it spends telling you who was in the movie, who made the movie, who hated the movie, or who regretted the movie- it spends three pages telling you who wasn't, didn't, loved, or relished the movie. I am clearly not enough of a super fan to appreciate this tome.

Julie says

It was fun to think about what a huge part of culture this movie has become, and inspiring to know that its goodness never went out of style. I've read Maria's and Agathe's memoirs and maybe some others (Richard Rodgers' wife), and have seen the movie countless times, just like everyone my age, I guess. Its appeal never fades.

First of all I enjoyed thinking about how much the tweaks to the movie script improved upon the stage production. This book explains each production decision in a way that makes a fun read. I've seen a couple of recent performances of the stage musical, with the additional songs by the Baroness and without "I Have Confidence," and in the stage version you feel the shadow of Nazi collaboration much more strongly. It's in the movie, too, but it's subtle. I was a grownup before I realized the butler was a Nazi in the movie.

Since we've all seen the movie and its credits umpteen times, we're going, "Robert Wise turned it down and they signed William Wyler to direct? No!" And then it is interesting to see how this bit of history played out.

It's also enjoyable to think about the mid-60s as a time of radical change and how SM was so solidly old-fashioned in the era of Bonnie and Clyde or Hair. Mad Men fans will appreciate this examination of 60s pop culture. I hadn't realized how snide the New York critics were in almost universally loathing this movie. It made me realize that I never liked or trusted Pauline Kael's reviews anyway.

But when the movie first came out, I was 6 years old and my brother 4 and we were completely captivated. As the book points out, it had a limited engagement in only a few theaters, and we went all the way to Memphis to see it at a beautiful, modern single-screen theater in Eastgate that was roughly where the Fresh Market is today. We were scrubbed and dressed as if for church, and were cautioned to be on our best behavior, as there was some question in my dad's mind as to whether we were old enough to sit through a 3-hour movie. No worries there. We left the theater enchanted, twirling and singing.

I saw it again in the theater when I was at the dreadful age of about 14 when I was too cool for dumb musicals, or so I thought. But even at the nadir of my teenage surliness, the movie got to me and I loved it. Years later my kids watched it on VHS endlessly, mostly rewinding the "Lonely Goatherd" puppet sequence over and over.

Now the movie will celebrate its 50th anniversary in 2015. This is a good time to take a look at the movie and tell its story (and keep an eye out for an anniversary Blu Ray edition). What I took away from the book is the sense of goodness and family that developed during production. The movie, a huge gamble, almost single-handedly saved Fox Studios from bankruptcy. The actors who played the children in the movie became lifelong friends. Julie Andrews and Christopher Plummer have earned the artistic recognition they deserve. So have most all the crew. The Von Trapp family have learned to live with their legacy. The movie, still breathtaking in 70mm, has become a singalong favorite to this day. "Do Re Mi" started the flashmob phenomenon.

Santopietro does a good job of placing the musical in the context of 20th- and 21st century culture, omitting little, with one exception. In the chapter "Six Characters in Search of a Director" he quotes legendary director Billy Wilder as having said, "No musical with swastikas in it will ever be a success." Santopietro goes on to point out that not only was SM hugely successful, but so was Cabaret, both on stage and film. I would also have mentioned *The Producers*, which, interestingly, was made in 1967, while SM was still running in theaters, and remained nothing more than a quirky little cult film for decades until Mel Brooks upcycled it into a hit musical for another generation. I mean, when you hear the words "musical with swastikas," who doesn't think of "Springtime for Hitler" and Brooks's declaration that the way to defeat the Nazis once and for all was to make fun of them?

Anyway, the author doesn't go there, and he could have. But he goes into much enjoyable territory, and I am sure that the film's legions of fans will want to read this uplifting tribute to a great, great film. I am thankful to have received an advance copy of the book from Netgalley. I would recommend this book to-- well, pretty much anyone.

Courtney says

3.5, and I love *The Sound of Music*. I felt the author was a little condescending to his own subject.

The story of the making-of was fun and fascinating, and the cultural impact noted. But I never got the sense the author actually liked the movie for its own sake. He kept calling it "too sweet" in different adjectives and basically said people like it as wish fulfillment--disregarding their own know-better views on real life to willingly enter into this happy, historical Austrian fairytale. Not that he's *judging* them for it, of course. Of course.

Gail says

For sure, I thought that when I finished this book, I was going to give it five stars. Unfortunately, I almost didn't finish it, because it goes on and on interminably. Much of it is quite deadening. I think there's way too much information that's not needed and is just filler. The best part is when the author writes about the cast making the movie.

Kristin Strong says

One star, and I'll be happy to tell you why.

This book is HORRIBLY edited. HORRIBLY. There are too many examples of inconsistent spelling of proper names; misspellings of words that may or may not be typos; repetition of words in the same paragraph or even the same sentence (okay, this one is so..what? funny? I don't know...that I have to mention it -- shadowboxing the shadow of something? PLEASE MAKE IT STOP), repetition of facts in consecutive sentences or in the same sentence (here we go again: Born in Moscow, he studied painting in his native Moscow...); misplaced commas; and other offenses against accurate grammar, syntax, and good writing to go into in great detail here.

I'm not being a pedantic, hyper-aware, eye-rolling, haughty grammar/syntax/writing cop. I swear I'm not (though I am capable, and guilty, of it from time to time). What I'm being is a reader who expects AND DESERVES better than she got from this publisher. And it's St. Martin's Press, for God's sake; this isn't some vanity-published piece. This is downright insulting -- somebody was careless or arrogant enough to unleash this on an unsuspecting public and should be held accountable for the misdeed. It's as if the manuscript was just typeset, or whatever they do these days, and out it went into the bookstores.

As for the content, yawn -- I read an interview with Julie Andrews and Christopher Plummer in "Vanity

Fair" a while back that was much more engaging and personal than this thing was.

DON'T BOTHER.
