

## Michael Gray's Blogspot

THE SOUND OF MUSIC

WAOS at the Public Hall, Witham

27.10.2014

The Sound of Music is one of the last great book musicals, and one of the best known, largely due to those post-turkey screenings of Christmases past. Good to see the show live on stage again in the Public Hall in Witham.

Among the strengths of Eric Smart's production for WAOS are impressive choral singing [the MD is Susannah Edom] both from the nuns of Nonnberg, and from the Von Trapp family, and an excellent group of children, from Faith Rogers' lovely Liesl to Ella Bradley's tiny Gretl. The demanding role of Maria is taken by Corrina Wilson, in a spirited, extrovert performance, with huge stage presence. Perhaps a little too knowing, a little too pert at times, but every familiar number is wonderfully sung.

A perfect performance, too, from Julie Codling as Elsa – stylish and shallow, making the most of the catchy How Can Love Survive trio with the upright Naval Captain Georg [Niels Bradley] and the amoral Max [Tom Whelan] And Janet Moore makes a marvellous Abbess, singing Climb Every Mountain with superb phrasing and real emotion.

Do-Re-Mi is imaginatively staged and energetically realised, and there's inventive choreography for Liesl and her beau Rolf [a personable Edward Tunningley] in Sixteen Going On Seventeen. We are treated to a big Viennese wedding, and an elegant soirée for Elsa.

Elsewhere, it's a swings and roundabouts show. A great stage picture for the moving final number, but a very cramped corner for the Abbess's Office. Stunning swastikas and storm-troopers for the Festival Concert scene, but the key moment where Georg's hard heart is melted by music goes for almost nothing. There's a sadly un-Alpine lakeside not only for Georg's villa, but also for Maria's beloved hillside. And those unmistakably English church bells ...