

DEUTSCHER LEBENSTIL UND DEUTSCHE KULTUR
(Austrian Lifestyle and Culture)

“The Sound of Music” celebrates 50 years

you might stick around for “Sixteen Going on Seventeen” or “Edelweiss.”

It has everything from a basis in fact and a fairy-tale romance to soaring Rodgers & Hammerstein music, spectacular scenery, thrills, love, the chance for seven children to have a mother and their father a mate again, terror and, ultimately, triumph over the Nazis.

Timing is everything — Mr. Wise speculated that volatile 1965 provided the perfect launching pad.

“Newspapers carried headlines of the war in Vietnam, a cultural revolution was beginning to spread throughout the country, and people needed old-fashioned ideals to hold on to. The movie-going public was ready, possibly even eager, for a film like this,” the director wrote in a foreword to “The Sound of Music — The Making of America’s Favorite Movie” by Julia Antopol Hirsch.

“Besides an outstanding score and an excellent cast, it had a heartwarming story, good humor, someone to love and someone to hate, and seven adorable children,” he added.

A familiar title and Tony winner — Before the movie, “The Sound of Music” was a Broadway musical. It opened in November 1959, earned star Mary Martin a Tony over Ethel Merman in “Gypsy” (“How do you buck a nun?” the also-ran asked) and played for 1,443 performances.

The president of Twentieth Century Fox had seen the musical on opening night and reportedly was moved to tears. In June 1960, the studio bought the film rights for \$1.25 million, against 10 percent of the gross.

Some movies are critic-proof — One reviewer suggested “Sound of Music” would restore filmgoers’ faith in movies and even humanity, but many blasted it as saccharine, corny and old

hat. The New York Times suggested most of the adult performances, including Mr. Plummer, were “fairly horrendous.”

Nearly three decades ago, George Anderson, the Post-Gazette’s Magazine editor, summarized it this way: “‘The Sound of Music’ is, ah, you know. The movie intellectuals love to hate, that the innocent love too much. Still, there is something there to make it endure like this. Watching it, you never quite believe it. But you watch it.”

An angelic voice — No one dubbed Ms. Andrews’ musical numbers. Her voice was glorious.

In 1997, she had noncancerous nodules removed from her throat that unexpectedly cost the singer her four-octave range, making the movie and its soundtrack all the sweeter and more prized.

An irresistible and true story — There really was a Maria von Trapp, a onetime postulant who was sent to the home of retired naval captain Georg von Trapp and his brood.

She and the widower were married in 1927, their three children joined the seven from his first marriage, and they escaped from the Nazis. The stage musical and then film arrived long before the Internet turned critics and patrons into truth squads ferreting out differences between fact and fiction.

The real Maria von Trapp said she had been a wild creature. “Julie Andrews and Mary Martin were too gentle — like girls out of Bryn Mawr.”

Oscar love — Nominated for 10 Academy Awards, it won five, for best picture, director, film editing, music and sound. The nominations also included Ms. Andrews for best actress and Peggy Wood, as Mother Abbess, for supporting actress.



Julie Andrews, Christopher Plummer and Eleanor Parker (as the Baroness).

Repeat customers — A woman in Wales, Myra Franklin, earned a spot in the Guinness Book of World Records for watching the movie on the big screen 940 times. Ms. Hirsch’s book reported that a Denver truck driver saw the film from the

same seat in the same theater every Sunday for three years and then, when the theater closed down, bought the seat.

An evergreen favorite — Re-releases, special TV airings, videocassettes, DVDs and singalongs in which audience members dressed up like the characters and crooned along fed the appetite.

Fox’s new five-disc ultimate collector’s edition will have more than 13 hours of bonus content and the new documentary in which Ms. Andrews returns to the Nonnberg Abbey, Church of Mondsee where the screen wedding was staged, and the “Do-Re-Mi” steps of Mirabell Gardens.

It also will feature a 50th anniversary soundtrack from Legacy Recordings/Sony Music with eight bonus tracks never released in the States. Also due is a special anniversary soundtrack featuring the full film score.

A partnership with Princess Cruises will mean the movie will screen during multiple sailings throughout the year. In addition to Mr. Monush’s book, three others are due: “The Sound of Music Companion — 50th Anniversary Edition” by Laurence Maslon; “The Sound of Music Story” by Tom Santopietro; and “The Sound of Music: BFI Film Classics.”

And “The Hills Are Alive,” a new stage production of “The Sound of Music” directed by three-time Tony winner Jack O’Brien, is coming to the Benedum Center March 22-27, 2016.