

VON TRAPP FAMILY

Werner von Trapp (1915 to 2007)

The von Trapps

‘Sound of Music’ descendents sing, too, and are ready to release album

NEW YORK — The von Trapp family singers — the real-life inspiration for “The Sound of Music” — stopped touring more than 50 years ago. Now, their descendants are carrying on the tradition with a new album.

The siblings — Sofia, 16, Melanie, 14, Amanda, 13, and Justin, 9 — are the sugary embodiment of their famous family. They sing in sweet harmony, perform in costumes worn by the original group and even sing songs from the film.

The von Trapps escaped the Nazis and performed across the United States, eventually settling in Vermont. They stopped touring in the 1950s.

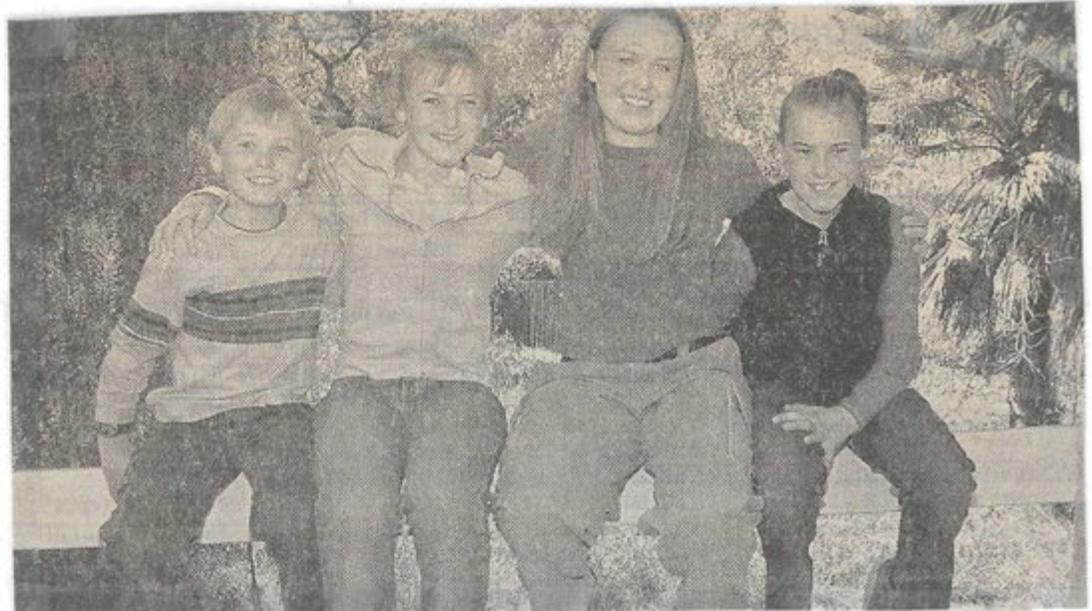
Maria — played by Julie Andrews in the 1965 movie — wrote “The Story of the Trapp Family Singers,” on which the film was based, though she had no say in the screenplay and wasn’t even invited to the film’s premiere.

The members of the new group are branching out to include spirituals (“Swing Low, Sweet Chariot”) and more contemporary music (“When You Believe”) in their performances. They have toured around the United States and are headed overseas in support of their new album “The von Trapp Children, Vol. 2,” due out next month.

Sofia, who did all the talking for her siblings, says the family is just lucky to be blessed with some good singing genes. Their music may not be Top 40, but it has a certain nostalgia that rock groups can’t compete with.

Q. So how are you related to the von Trapp family from “The Sound of Music?” Are you sick of that movie?

A. Our grandfather is portrayed as Curt in the movie. He’s still alive; he lives in Vermont. I’ve just sort of grown up with it. It’s neat to know the people in the movie are related to you.



The von Trapp children, from left, Justin, Melanie, Sofia and Amanda, are ready to tour.

Q. How did you guys start performing?

A. Our mom took us to music lessons as a hobby and stuff. ... Grandpa got sick and we decided to do a recording for him. It ended up being a bigger project than expected, and it turned into our first CD. We just have so much support from all of them. But this was never planned; no one said: “They are the next generation. They must sing.”

Q. Do you ever wish you were doing something considered more cool than folk singing? Like being in a rock band or something?

A. Ha, the von Trapp children singing rock. It’s never really been my pace. I like all genres of music, but we’re more into the classical folk songs and easy listening. At this point, it’s what we like to do right now. Our audience

is older people, and moms with little kids. It’s not much of a teenage crowd. That’s OK, though; I get nervous performing in front of people my age.

Q. Do you write your own songs or perform instruments?

A. I do a little bit, but we don’t sing them. Mainly, we just take old folk songs and make our own arrangements of them. I play piano and Melly does guitar, but we don’t do it in the show. We do a capella.

Q. Do you ever get sick of spending all this time with your siblings?

A. Nah, when you’re around each other so much you just kind of get used to it. You have to make the best of things. We get along great, and we have a lot of jokes, which makes it fun.

Q. How do you tour and go to school?

A. We’re home-schooled; we’ve always been home-schooled, so our mom just teaches us.

Q. How do your friends treat you now? Like a celebrity?

A. They are proud of me, but they treat me normal. I don’t get to see them often; when we get to come back home we go bowling or go to a drive-in, just what normal kids do.

Q. Have you ever met Julie Andrews?

A. No, we never have. But we are supposedly going to soon. We’ll see.

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