

***Maria: A Novel of Maria von Trapp* by Michelle Moran**

The first time I saw *The Sound of Music* as a grade schooler stands out in my memory, and I've enjoyed seeing it in several stage productions since. I've even visited Trapp Family Lodge in Vermont, so I thought I knew all about the backstory of the family. Turns out I was wrong! This book taught me so much, and it's not all that long, either.

Besides getting a much more nuanced view of Maria and her relationships with her students who became her own children, as well as with her employer who became her husband. The true story of the von Trapps had plenty of narrow escapes and unbelievable turns, but not the kind that would have made for a good musical, at least at the time Rogers and Hammerstein's classic was produced. It's interesting to see that it took some time, even for Americans after the war, to be ready for the story of a singing family that had to flee for their lives because the Fuhrer invited them to sing for his birthday.

The story is realistic, and it's difficult to read about some of the errors we may feel Maria made in raising her children, which led to estrangement after her husband's tragic death from cancer. Yet Hammerstein's own role in bringing the family back together gives a satisfying end to the book, even if it may not end as happily as the movie did. One of my favorite scenes was when Maria first sang the lyricist's masterpiece, "Edelweiss."