



The Sound of Music

The 'Sound of Music' cast: left, Held Smithwaite, Nehole Smigaglia, Betsy Andruska, Sara Schwarz, David White, Karl Frey.

The 'Sound of Music' comes to life

By Jill Maxwell
Special to The Dispatch

Everytime David Andrade, 7, and his brother, Anthony Jr., 5, see *The Sound of Music*, they turn to their mother and query, "Mommy, is that you?"

Betsy Andrade's invariable reply is "I wish!"

Unconvinced, Anthony once asked her while viewing the show, "Mommy, when was your hair yellow?"

While she may not be the blond-haired Julie Andrews, brown-haired Andrade does from time to time personify Maria von Trapp, the musical's singing nanny.

Local theatergoers will see Andrade play Maria in the South Valley Civic Theater's August production of *The Sound of Music*. Some may have also seen her in the same role 10 years ago, in the Gilroy Community Theater's 1978 production of the play. It's a role she enjoys, and one that is very important to her. In a sense, it's also the story of her life.

In the play, Maria, leaves the convent where she has been preparing to be a nun, to serve as governess for the seven children of Baron Georg von Trapp, who is a widower. She wins the children's love,

and, finally, the love of the Baron whom she marries.

Paralleling Maria's life, Andrade went to Catholic schools, from kindergarten through high school. She met her current husband, Tony — a widower with five children — on the opening night of *The Sound of Music* 10 years ago.

It was 1978 when Andrade first appeared in *The Sound of Music*. She was working as a teacher at Valley Preparatory School, in Gilroy. A widow, whose husband had died six years earlier, she'd moved to Gilroy a year earlier with her daughter, Jennie.

She remembers being excited when she learned that the Gilroy Community Theater was going to produce *The Sound of Music*. It's a play she'd always loved. "I kind of grew up in it," the slim, lightly made-up woman recalls. As a child she saw the Broadway production with Mary Martin as Maria. "It's a real natural role for me," she continues, hands gliding expressively through the air. "As far as energy goes, I'm a lot like that."

"I thought, what the heck," Andrade recalls, blue-eyes smiling. "I decided to try out for it. My kids, my students, encouraged me."

Andrade got the part — in a

sense she's been playing it ever since. "I was playing it on stage, then I was living it," she says.

Opening night, 1978: Betsy and Tony Andrade, a tall, burly, dark-haired widower meet at the curtain call. Tony had brought his son Mark, and his other four children, to see the play for Mark's 10th birthday. "By the end of the show, at the cast party," Andrade remembers, "the big news was that we were talking to each other — seeing each other."

One year later they were married. Andrade's sister, Mary Jane, sang the musical's *Climb every mountain* at their wedding.

"It just kind of happened, just went right into it" says Andrade, "After my (first) husband died I was single for six years. I wanted my daughter to have brothers and sisters, but that was ridiculous."

Now, 10 years later, Andrade finds herself playing the same role, and enjoying it "even more than the last time." When she heard SVCT was doing the play again, she thought, "They can't do that, that's my show."

"I had mixed emotions, but finally I had to do it," says Andrade, who passed up a chance to go to Europe to play Maria. She says as

soon as the rehearsals started she was right back into the role. "When I do it on stage, I can go back to when I was doing it all for the first time."

"I just enjoy her, just as much as I did before — even more now, after being so involved with the kids like Maria always is ... I wish I could be more like her — so I learn from playing her. It helps you lighten up."

Currently Andrade is pursuing a career in film and commercial work in San Francisco. She has landed roles as a telephone operator in a Niagara Beds commercial, and in industrial and educational films. The whole Andrade family has appeared in a commercial for U.S. Air.

Exercising the prerogative of actors and actresses worldwide, Andrade refuses to reveal her age 'for professional reasons.' Her son David, however, will testify that she's 21 — and has been for a few years anyway. All Andrade will say is, "I'm not too old to play Maria."

Performances will be at 8 p.m. Thursdays - Saturdays, August 17-26, in the Gavilan College Theater. Tickets will be \$8 for adults, and \$5.50 for students and seniors. Reservations are available by calling 842-SHOW.