



The Fountain Hills Community Chorus and guests gathered for a group photo in front of St. Michael's Basilica in Mondsee, the film location for the wedding of Maria and Captain von Trapp. Earlier the chorus joined other touring choral members to sing "Maria" inside the cathedral. More than 200,000 people visit the church annually because of the film's notoriety.

Austrian hills come alive for vocalists

Unique anniversary celebrated by chorus

By Barb Charzuk
Times Reporter

Salzburg, Austria, a baroque jewel on the edge of the Tyrolean Alps, oozes music.

The birthplace of 18th century composer Wolfgang Amadeus Mozart attracts students and enthusiasts of classical music, advent singing and jazz during more than 4,000 annual musical events.

The city also is known for another famous family, the singing von Trapps, featured in "The Sound of Music" musical and film.

The popular story of the singing nun Maria, who becomes a governess to the children of Capt. Georg von Trapp, attracts approximately 300,000 annual visitors, mostly from North America, Great Britain and Japan, to view the movie locations and the places where the family lived before escaping the Nazis.

The film, based on a true story with some Hollywood liberties, was adapted from a musical. Richard Rodgers wrote the lyrics and composer Oscar Hammerstein was responsible for the music.

Maria von Trapp herself published a collection of stories in 1948 as "The Trapp Family Singers." The film starring Julie Andrews and Christopher Plummer premiered in March 1965 in New York City after a successful earlier run on Broadway.

For the film version,

events were compacted into the year 1938 in Salzburg. After their escape to Italy, the von Trapps eventually moved to Stowe, Vermont, where they built and operated a guest lodge.

The Fountain Hills Community Chorus and San Tan Chorale, under the direction of Matthew Frable, commemorated the 50th anniversary of "The Sound of Music" June 21-27 by participating in a choral tour of Salzburg.

The local travelers became part of a 150-voice chorus that included the Alexandria Sings of Alexandria, Va.; Chaparral Choirs of Parker, Colo.; Eugene Gleemen of Eugene, Ore.; RB Chorale of San Diego, CA. and Ridgefield Chorale of Ridgefield, Conn.

Judith Clurman, an Emmy and Grammy-award nominee, was the conductor and choral specialist. Vocalists devoted 16 hours of rehearsal in preparation for the performance in the Great Hall of the Mozarteum.

The 42-member local group flew from Phoenix to Houston where they experienced a three-hour delay in their scheduled departure.

The overnight flight from Houston to Munich, Germany was followed by a two-hour motor coach ride on a congested autobahn to Salzburg.

Once they arrived, there was barely time to unpack the suitcase before they headed to a welcoming

dinner and program for all choir participants at Stiegkeller, the oldest restaurant in Salzburg.

A surprise guest was Elizabeth von Trapp, granddaughter, who sang and talked about the resilience of her ancestors and Austria.

The picture-postcard city on the Salzach River glitters with architectural gems from the medieval, renaissance and baroque eras.

Although Salzburg was damaged in World War II, it was meticulously restored in the post-war years. High above the city is the Hohensalzburg fortress where a funicular railway whisks visitors to the medieval castle for spectacular panoramic views.

The "new" town, on the southwest side of the river, is about 400 years old. The old town, on the northeast side, dates back 1,300 years. Autos are forbidden in most of old town so visitors wander the pedestrian-only narrow, cobblestone streets.

On the second day of the trip, a cable-car ride up Untersberg Mountain where the von Trapps were filmed fleeing at the end of the film, took place in thick fog.

In reality, the von Trapps' real-life exit from Austria was less dramatic. Untersberg borders Germany. The family actually boarded a train to Italy.

Sleet prevented the vocalists from singing "Climb Every Mountain" and "The Sound of Music" on the 6,473-foot summit. Instead, the gondola terminal became their make-do stage.

Weather conditions improved significantly the following day for them to sing at the gazebo at Hellbrunn Palace where Liesl von Trapp sang and danced to "Sixteen Going on Seventeen."

Nearby on the grounds, the Trick Fountains amused the visitors.

Earlier in the day, they visited Felsenreitschule, a performance theater carved into the side of a quarry and the backdrop for the von Trapps' parting song before their planned escape from Austria. It was here, too, that the captain sang "Edelweiss."

An excursion to the nearby quaint town of Mondsee provided the backdrop for the ornate St. Michael's Cathedral, the wedding film location for Maria and Captain von Trapp. The group joined other singers in the basilica to sing "Maria."

A group visit to the Mirabell Gardens, location where the von Trapp children were filmed singing "Do-Re-Mi," on steps was cancelled because of time restrictions. Most tour participants wandered



Times photos by Barb Charzuk

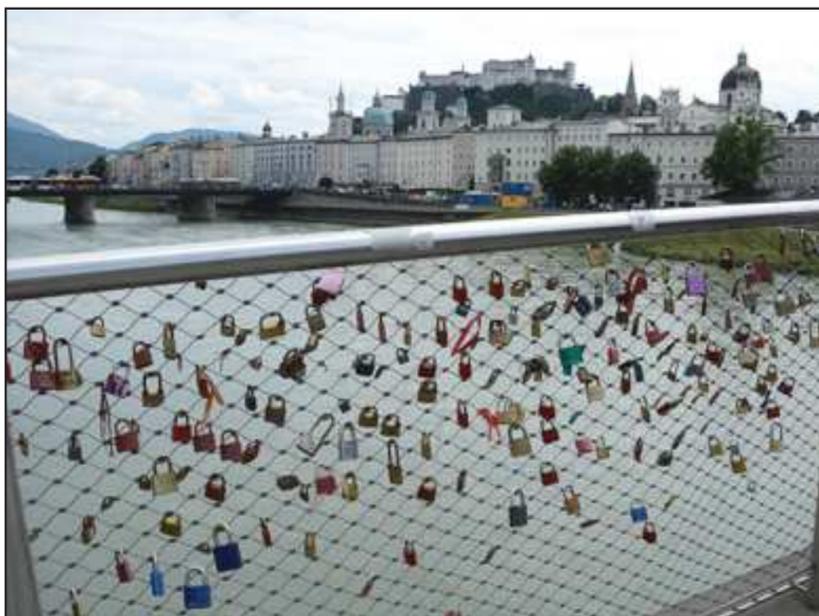
Chorus members walking to dinner to an old town restaurant admired a "cow". Artists created the "cows" as advertising and art forums. Why cows? To show the importance of the local milk industry in Salzburg's agriculture and overall economy. Inspecting the cow were, from left, Tamara DuBois, Jane Ferring, Susan Dover, GayLynne and Brad Roon.



Inclement weather forced the chorus to sing "The Sound of Music" and "Climb Every Mountain" in the gondola terminal atop Untersberg Mountain. Singers included front to rear, Estelle Mazzotta, Ann Montoya and Tina Polich.



Toasting their arrival in Salzburg with mugs of beer were Fountain Hills Community Chorus members, from left, Brad Roon, Toni Winckler and Betty Frable. A welcoming program was held in the oldest Munich-style beer hall in Salzburg.



A sea of love locks hang on the pedestrian bridge spanning the old and new sections of Salzburg over the Salzach (Salt) River. Love locks are the latest craze when it comes to couples declaring their eternal devotion. Salzburg shops sell the locks and offer free engraving of the couple's name.



Mirabell Gardens spotlights a dominating view of Hohensalzburg Fortress. In the movie, the von Trapp children sang "Do-Re-Mi" at this location.

(cont. on Page 4B)