Dueling von Trapps

Two different troupes are putting on 'The Sound of Music' at the same time

By BRETT OPPENGAARD
for The Columbian

It's not often that two different troupes put on the same show at the same time. But that's exactly what's happening in Clark County.

The two troupes are the Christian Youth Theatre and the Fort Vancouver High School. Both are producing 'The Sound of Music' at the same time, starting next week.

The Christian Youth Theatre is one of the largest theater groups in the area, with over 100 members. They have been producing musicals and plays for over 20 years.

The Fort Vancouver High School is also a well-known theater group, with a long history of producing high-quality productions. They have been producing 'The Sound of Music' for several years.

The shows will run from Thursday, March 3, through Sunday, March 27, at the Christian Youth Theatre and Fort Vancouver High School.

Both troupes have been working hard to prepare for the performance. The Christian Youth Theatre has been rehearsing for several weeks, while the Fort Vancouver High School has been working on the production for months.

The shows will be held at the Christian Youth Theatre and Fort Vancouver High School, with tickets available online and at the door.

Both troupes are excited to be putting on this classic musical and hope to see many people come out to enjoy the show.

For more information, visit the website for each troupe: www.christianyouththeatre.com and www.footsock.com.

If you go - 'The Sound of Music'

- **What:** Christian Youth Theatre in Woodland presents 'The Sound of Music', which includes a talented cast of young performers.
- **Where:** Fort Vancouver High School, 3700 E. 138th St., Vancouver
- **When:** March 3 through March 27, with performances at 7 p.m. Fridays and 2 p.m. Saturdays.
- **Cost:** $15 for adults, $10 for students and seniors. Call 360-792-9370 for reservations.

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If you go - 'The Music Man'

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this show since he arrived in Vancouver decades ago, but, again, strange luck, this was the year he decided to push the idea. Anderson said theater companies in this county used to share plans and actively try to avoid such conflicts, but that practice faded away after Vancouver’s sale of the Columbia Arts Center in 2000 eliminated the city’s central artistic hub.

To decide its season, Christian Youth Theater took a vote among its staff, students, and supporters, and they collectively, and coincidentally, chose the 1959 Tony Award winner by a large margin over every other piece on the group’s list.

Had we known (about Clark’s intentions), I don’t think we would have chosen it. Or at least not done it at the same time,” acknowledged Bethany Larson, Christian Youth Theater Vancouver’s area coordinator. “By the time we learned that they were, though, we were too far into the process to stop.”

Which means both troupes are resigned to just let this play out and see what happens. Clark hasn’t been hurt in the past by these sorts of conflicts, Anderson noted, although the potential audiences have never been so intertwined, and the competition hasn’t come from Christian Youth Theater.

Since forming in 2002, that Vancouver-based company has become a theatrical force in Clark County’s history. Within just a few years, Christian Youth Theater’s budgets were rivaling the other top arts organizations primarily performing in this county.

Stronger scene

In the past two years, Christian Youth Theater and Vancouver Symphony have grown significantly larger than other arts groups in the county. This season, for example, Larson reports the group has increased its funds another 40 percent, to $700,000. Vancouver Symphony meanwhile is spending $776,000 on its season this year.

Christian Youth Theater has expanded from a single entity to a company with separate arms reaching into east Vancouver and Gresham, Ore. Next season it will add an offshoot in Beaverton, Ore. The east Vancouver part of the organization will open its own large show, “The Music Man,” just one weekend after the central company’s rendition of “The Sound of Music” closes.

About 40 kids attended classes at Christian Youth Theater this past term, Larson said. More than 140 of those auditioned for its version of “The Sound of Music,” with just about half getting parts. More than 20 actresses were called back just to compete for the roles of the smaller von Trapp girls, Louisa and Brigitta.

Starting next fall, among its four divisions, Christian Youth Theater will present a dozen large-scale musicals throughout the metropolitan area. Competition among theater companies, at least in theory, makes the overall market stronger, by building wider audiences and greater interest in the form.

“I don’t think this is going to hurt our attendance,” Larson said. “Clark has a pretty consistent patronage, and so do we. But it might be hard for some people to choose. I think it would have been better for the community if this wouldn’t have happened.”