

# Dueling von Trapps

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

By **BRETT OPPEGAARD**  
for *The Columbian*

Is this county capable of supporting competing versions of "The Sound of Music" by the area's two largest theater companies?

The unwitting showdown between

Christian Youth Theater and Clark College Theatre starts Feb. 20, when Clark opens the first of the grand Rodgers-and-Hammerstein presentations. Christian Youth Theater starts its run of the classic musical a week later, on Feb. 27. They then overlap performances, just a few miles apart, through March 7, with Christian Youth Theater closing its run a day later.

Both shows are loosely based on the real life von Trapp family, who escaped from the Germans before World War II by (according to the musical's version of history) climbing over the mountains that separated Austria from Switzerland. Both troupes have huge casts and investments in this production.

More potential competition — and confusion — also will come from Portland's Jesuit High School, with its version of "The Sound of Music" scheduled from Feb. 26 through March 8.

Theater companies here have mistakenly had similar conflicts before, but not on this scale and not with so much at stake, said Dan Anderson, who has been direc-

tor of Clark College's theater department and involved in the local arts community since 1978.

Last season, Clark's slate of "The Underpants," "Jesus Christ Superstar" and "A Streetcar Named Desire" all coincided with professional productions in Portland, a statistical improbability that Anderson attributed to extremely strange luck. In 2006, both the college and a community theater company produced the play "Proof" at the same time and in close proximity. But "The Sound of Music" is a major undertaking by the department, accompanied by a catered dinner. This is the spring slot each year that brings in most of the department's \$133,000 in revenue.

Anderson said he was so shocked and upset about the timing that he called the licensing company and demanded to know how this could have happened. As with many popular pieces, Anderson learned, "The Sound of Music" is one of those shows that only extends exclusive licenses to professional groups, not amateurs, which means there is no limit to which community theater companies can do it, when and where.

## Strange luck

Anderson had been wanting to produce

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## Did You Know?

■ Christian Youth Theater's 3 p.m. March 7 performance of "The Sound of Music" will be presented sing-along style, in which the audience is encouraged to participate.

■ The Wilson family of Vancouver has a child in each of the two local versions of "The Sound of Music." Hannah Wilson is in the Clark College cast, and her sister, Paige Wilson, is performing with Christian Youth Theater.



Janet Lindsley, as Maria, and Wes Harris, as Captain von Trapp, will be part of Clark College's production of "The Sound of Music."



Krista Chase, as Maria, and Jeffrey Shaffer, as Captain von Trapp, will perform in Christian Youth Theater's production of "The Sound of Music."

Photos by ZACH-ARY KAUFMAN/The Columbian

## If you go — 'The Sound of Music'

■ **What:** Clark College Theatre's rendition of "The Sound of Music," which includes a catered dinner by Applewood Northwest before some performances.

■ **When:** Friday through March 7, with performances at 7:30 p.m. Fridays and Saturdays as well as Feb. 26 and March 5. Dinner is offered beforehand on this Friday and Saturday and Feb. 27-28.

■ **Where:** Clark College's Gaiser Hall, 1933 Fort Vancouver Way, Vancouver.

■ **Cost:** \$30 for dinner shows, \$14 for performance only.

■ **Information:** 360-992-2815 or www.clark.edu.

■ **What:** Christian Youth Theater Vancouver's rendition of "The Sound of Music."

■ **When:** Feb. 27 through March 8, with performances at 7 p.m. Fridays, 3 p.m. and 7 p.m. Saturdays and 2 p.m. Sundays during the run.

■ **Where:** Fort Vancouver High School, 5700 E. 18th St., Vancouver.

■ **Cost:** \$12 for 16 and older, \$9 for senior citizens and children.

■ **Information:** 360-750-8550 or www.cytvancouver.com.

## If you go — 'The Music Man'

■ **What:** Christian Youth Theater Vancouver East presents "The Music Man."

■ **When:** March 13 through March 22, with performances at 7 p.m. Fridays, 3 p.m. and 7 p.m. Saturdays and 2 p.m. Sundays during the run.

■ **Where:** The Washburn Performing Arts Center at Washougal High School, 1201 39th St., Washougal.

■ **Cost:** \$12 for 16 and older, \$9 for senior citizens and children.

■ **Information:** 360-750-8550 or www.cytvancouver.com.

# Musicals:

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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 interwoven, and the competition hasn't come from Christian Youth Theater.

Since forming in 2002, that Vancouver-based company rapidly 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



Photos by ZACHARY KAUFMAN/The Columbian

(From left back row) Jason Hamann, as Friedrich, Kacy Cross, as Liesl, Wes Harris, as Captain von Trapp, (from left front row) Allie O'Neil, as Marta, Aidan Ryan, as Kurt, Shannon Jung, as Louisa, Kelly Jung, as Gretl, Janet Lindsley, as Maria, and Hannah Wilson, as Brigitta, from Clark College's production of "The Sound of Music."



(From left back row) Josh Warren, as Kurt, Camille Lowman, as Liesl, Collin Carver, as Friedrich, Jeffrey Shaffer, as Captain von Trapp, (from left front row) Amiee Martin, as Marta, Alyssa Rice, as Louisa, Krista Chase, as Maria, Rebecca Weinberg, as Gretl, and Lindsey Koehler, as Brigitta from the Christian Youth Theater production of "The Sound of Music."

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 400 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."