

Sound of Music Salzburg

Museum for *The Sound of Music* and the Von Trapp family

September 17th, 2026, 10 a.m.

Orangery at Hellbrunn Palace

Fürstenweg 37

Speakers:

Martin Hochleitner, Head of Salzburg Museum

Peter Husty, Chiefcurator

Matthias Bergsmann, Co-Curator

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Sound of Music Salzburg— A Global Phenomenon Comes Home

Few movies have shaped the worldwide image of Salzburg as powerfully as *The Sound of Music*. Since its premiere on March 2, 1965, it has been one of the most successful musical films of all time: a worldwide hit with over 1 billion viewers, five Oscars—including Best Picture—and an unbroken run of success on television, streaming platforms, and musical theater stages.

Yet while songs such as “Do-Re-Mi,” “Edelweiss,” and “My Favorite Things” have long been part of the cultural fabric of the United States, Asia, and Australia, the movie itself remained surprisingly absent from Salzburg for decades. Although hundreds of thousands of visitors from around the world visit the film locations every year—most notably the famous gazebo in the park of Hellbrunn Palace—there was no museum that brought together the movie, the musical, and the history of the von Trapp family.

Until now: With **Sound of Music Salzburg**, a museum unlike any other in the world is being created on the historic grounds of Hellbrunn Palace. For the first time, the phenomenon of *The Sound of Music* will be explored in its entirety—from the real-life story of the von Trapp family and the Broadway and Hollywood productions to the movie’s global impact.

Spanning a total area of 668 m² in the Hunting Lodge, Zookeeper’s Lodge, and Coach House, the exhibition features a total of 477 artifacts—including props from the film, movie posters, and stage productions by the State Theatre and the Marionette Theatre. Original recordings of the musical from 1959, film footage and audio recordings from the 1964 production, footage featuring Maria von Trapp, and excerpts from the Hollywood movie offer insights into the making of a global cultural phenomenon.

A Museum Between Myth and Reality

At the heart of Sound of Music Salzburg are two stories that are inextricably linked yet not identical: the global myth of *The Sound of Music* and the real-life story of the von Trapp family.

The museum traces the journey from Maria von Trapp’s memoirs through the German films that preceded the musical and the 1959 Broadway premiere to the 1965 Hollywood movie.

At the same time, it tells the story of a Salzburg family whose actual life story differs in significant ways from the version of their story known to millions of people through the movie.

Martin Hochleitner, Head of Salzburg Museum:

“Orangery Salzburg, Sound of Music Salzburg, Salzburg Museum NEU & Belvedere Salzburg: what was still a vision for Salzburg’s museum landscape in March 2021 is now becoming a reality, project by project! Following the opening of the Orangery Salzburg in June of this year, Sound of Music Salzburg at Hellbrunn will now open its doors. We at Salzburg Museum are grateful that the City and State of Salzburg supported this vision and that, with Sound of Music Salzburg, we have succeeded in actually bringing to life an idea that had been discussed for decades: a Sound of Music museum in Salzburg. It has been a long road for us as a team, one fraught with many challenges due to the complexity of the subject matter. Ultimately, with the tremendous support of many partners, we’ve succeeded in creating a wonderful museum in a fantastic location. And we hope that our museum concept will inspire many people from near and far!”

Stefan Schnöll, Deputy Governor of the Province of Salzburg

“No film has shaped the international perception of our province as profoundly and enduringly as ‘The Sound of Music’. To this day, the city and province of Salzburg remain inextricably linked in the minds of millions of people around the world with the music and stories of the film. With ‘Sound of Music Salzburg,’ this special connection now has a dedicated home at Hellbrunn. Here, the story of the von Trapp family is brought together with the musical and the film, making it accessible to visitors from around the world as well as to the people of Salzburg. Hellbrunn is thus set to become a place of encounter, where visitors and locals can come together and explore, from different perspectives, the connection between Salzburg and ‘The Sound of Music’.”

Bernhard Auinger, Mayor of the City of Salzburg

“Salzburg is delighted to welcome the launch of Sound of Music Salzburg at Hellbrunn! With this project, we are implementing a key initiative for the development of tourism in Salzburg – one that is also explicitly identified as such in the current tourism strategy, *Vision Salzburg 2040*. At the same time, it makes perfect use of the city’s existing buildings, which have now been renovated, in one of the most beautiful locations in Salzburg. Beyond its tourism appeal, the new museum is also highly relevant to the people of Salzburg. Its concept offers an engaging opportunity to explore the story of the von Trapp family, so closely connected with Salzburg, and to better understand the global phenomenon that emerged from this story through the film’s success. I wish our new museum a successful start and an enthusiastic audience from near and far!”

Salzburg and *The Sound of Music*

The success of *The Sound of Music* is inextricably linked to Salzburg. The Baroque streets of the Old Town, Hohensalzburg Fortress, and the parks of Hellbrunn and Leopoldskron have become places of longing for millions of people thanks to the movie.

Visitors from overseas come to Salzburg primarily because of the movie. For many, visiting the filming locations is a key part of their itinerary. Over the past decades, this has developed into a thriving tourism sector, with bus tours, cycling routes, and guided tours.

With Sound of Music Salzburg, this international audience now has an authentic and professional venue where the movie, musical, and family history are brought together for the first time. At the same time, the project strengthens Salzburg's international standing as a cultural hub and adds a new attraction to the city's tourism offering.

The Location: Hellbrunn Palace and the Gazebo

Hellbrunn Palace, built between 1613 and 1615 under Prince-Archbishop Markus Sittikus as a pleasure palace with its famous water features, is itself a Mannerist *Gesamtkunstwerk*—a total work of art. Its gate buildings—the Hunting Lodge with its Coach House and the Zookeeper's Lodge (with a total floor area of 668 m²)—provide the ideal setting for the new museum, which displays a total of 477 artifacts.

At its center is the **gazebo**, presented in the movie as a romantic pavilion. It was the setting for two of the movie's best-known scenes: Captain von Trapp's declaration of love to Maria and the duet "Sixteen Going on Seventeen" between Liesl and Rolf.

After filming, it was initially set up at Leopoldskron Pond, before being relocated to Hellbrunn in 1991 due to the crowds of visitors. Since then, it has become an international place of pilgrimage for fans. Its integration into the museum tour now lends the project a special touch of authenticity.

Peter Husty, Head Curator:

"After many years, Salzburg Museum has finally succeeded in creating a museum dedicated to the movie *The Sound of Music* and the story of the von Trapp family. In doing so, we have created a unique place, devoted to a Hollywood phenomenon that, even 60 years after its cinema premiere, continues to captivate people around the globe—and will, we hope, continue to attract visitors for many years to come.

At the same time, this new branch of Salzburg Museum tells the story of a Salzburg family whose life served as the inspiration for this legend.”

Matthias Bergsmann, Co-Curator:

“It is a great pleasure to be part of this museum project. The biggest challenge over the past few months has been to select, from the wealth of information, media, and objects, a collection that does justice to both the legend of ‘The Sound of Music’ and the history of the von Trapp family. It has been an exciting journey, with many remarkable discoveries—from original recordings of the 1959 musical and audio-visual recordings from the 1964 film shoot to footage of Maria von Trapp speaking about her life. At the same time, we show clips from the Hollywood movie and offer numerous insights into the making of the movie, the family’s real-life history, and the collection of Dutch collector Roger Pluijm. We’re now presenting all of this and more to the public at the ‘Sound of Music Salzburg’ museum.”

The True Story of the von Trapp Family

Georg von Trapp (1880–1947), a submarine commander in the Austro-Hungarian navy, married Agathe Whitehead in 1911. They had seven children together. Unlike his portrayal in the movie, Georg von Trapp was not a strict paternalist but rather a considerate, albeit much-burdened, father.

The former naval officer witnessed the fall of the Austro-Hungarian Empire, the loss of his livelihood, and the challenges of an era marked by turmoil, wars, and profound change. After his wife’s death, Maria Augusta Kutschera came to the Villa Trapp as a governess in 1925. Their marriage in 1927 is likely to have been due in part to practical considerations.

After losing their fortune, the family rented out rooms and, with the help of the family chaplain Franz Wasner, set themselves up as a choir. Their emigration in 1938 did not take the form of a dramatic escape over the mountains, but rather a legal journey by train through South Tyrol. Their rejection of National Socialism played as much of a role in this as economic considerations.

In 1949, two years after the death of her husband Georg, Maria von Trapp published her memoirs under the title *The Story of the Trapp Family Singers* (J. B. Lippincott, Philadelphia). The German edition appeared in 1952. The book is less a sober account of facts than a literary family narrative shaped by her personal perspective. In the postwar years, it captured the spirit of the times and offered readers a hopeful story about the power of music and love.

From German Film to Broadway

The German film *The Trapp Family* (1956, directed by Wolfgang Liebeneiner) is based on Maria von Trapp's memoirs. Besides the love story, the singing children, and the dramatic escape, it was above all the Salzburg landscape that contributed to the film's success.

Between 1920 and 1965, Salzburg served as a filming location for more than 150 productions. During this period, the province was home to three film studios, including the Dürer-Film-Atelierbetriebe in Parsch, where scenes for *The Sound of Music* were filmed in 1964.

The stage adaptation premiered on November 16, 1959 at the Lunt-Fontanne Theatre on Broadway in New York. The book and lyrics were written by Howard Lindsay and Russel Crouse, who had already won the Pulitzer Prize in the 1940s for *State of the Union*.

The music was composed by Richard Rodgers and Oscar Hammerstein II, who had helped shape modern Broadway with works such as *Oklahoma!*, *Carousel*, and *South Pacific*.

The Sound of Music was also Hammerstein's final work—he died in 1960, just a few months after the premiere. The musical received eight Tony Awards, including "Best Musical," and went on to become one of the most successful stage productions of its time.

For American audiences, the musical reduced the historical events to a clear contrast between National Socialism and humanist values. Its worldwide success can be attributed to the extraordinary story of the von Trapp family, as well as to the need felt by many postwar societies for guidance, reconciliation, and hope.

Hollywood Makes Salzburg a Place of Longing

The movie was directed by Robert Wise, who had already created a landmark musical film with *West Side Story* (1961). The screenplay was written by Ernest Lehman, while Ted D. McCord was responsible for the cinematography. His CinemaScope shots turned Salzburg into a visual place of longing for people around the world.

For financial reasons, Robert Wise chose to film in Salzburg and the surrounding area rather than in studios in Los Angeles. The leading roles were played by Julie Andrews as Maria and Christopher Plummer as Captain Georg von Trapp.

The movie premiered in New York on March 2, 1965, and quickly became a worldwide box-office success. With five Oscars—including "Best Picture" and "Best Director"—as well as two Golden Globes, it ranks among the most successful musical films in cinema history.

The combination of Rodgers and Hammerstein's melodies, Lindsay and Crouse's narrative arc, and Wise's lavish cinematic style created a work that has continued to resonate far beyond the era in which it was made. Songs such as "Do-Re-Mi," "Edelweiss," and "My Favorite Things" became enduring classics and have found their way into pop culture, advertising, and everyday language to this day.

Nicholas Hammond, actor:

"'The Sound of Music' will always be a treasured experience for those of us fortunate enough to play the Von Trapp family on screen. We will always be grateful for the privilege. The fact that the film is so loved by millions of people around the world makes this museum an important addition to Salzburg, and a way to share the experience we had in this wonderful place."

The Exhibition: From the Gazebo to the Family History

Sound of Music Salzburg takes visitors on a carefully curated journey through the movie, the musical, and the history of the von Trapp family.

In the **Coach House**, the story of the film classic as a global phenomenon is presented: from Maria von Trapp's autobiography and the German-language films that preceded it, through the 1959 Broadway premiere and the 1964 filming in Salzburg and Hollywood, to the movie's 1965 cinema premiere, the 1966 Academy Awards, and its subsequent presence on television.

The starting point is the original gazebo in the park at Hellbrunn. Inside the Coach House, visitors discover a replica of the gazebo designed as an immersive projection space.

Two iconic scenes—"Sixteen Going on Seventeen" and the interactive "Do-Re-Mi" sing-along—are brought to life through 360° projection, surround sound, and atmospheric effects.

In the **Hunting Lodge**, the ground floor is devoted to the stage career of *The Sound of Music*—from Broadway to Salzburg to international performances. The ground floor also presents, under the title "My Favorite Things," the collection of Dutch fan and collector Roger Pluijm, which documents a central aspect of the movie's reception. In 2024, Salzburg Museum acquired more than 2,500 objects from his extensive collection. The upper floor focuses on the real history of the von Trapp family: their biographies, their music, their emigration, their new beginning in the United States, and their cultural legacy.

The **Zookeeper's Lodge**, with the entrance, information desk, ticket counter, and museum shop, serves as the museum's visitor-services area.

Historic Buildings for a Modern Museum

The renovation and redesign of the historic buildings was carried out by the Salzburg-based firm EIDOS.HARO Architekten. The challenge was to combine heritage preservation, conservation standards, and state-of-the-art museum technology. Accessibility, climate control, and security requirements were taken into account alongside the careful preservation of the original structure.

Construction work began in June 2025 and was completed in June 2026. The exhibition was installed between July and September.

A Museum for Salzburg and the World

The Sound of Music is firmly embedded in the cultural memory of audiences, particularly in the United States, the United Kingdom, Asia, and Australia. Many international visitors travel to Salzburg solely because of the movie.

Sound of Music Salzburg appeals to fans from around the world as well as visitors who want to experience the city's culture, music, and history. For the people of Salzburg, the museum offers a new perspective on their own cultural history; for researchers and students, the exhibition and archive provide valuable resources.

With Sound of Music Salzburg, a global cultural phenomenon now has a new home—in the very place where a significant part of its story began.