

Title: Singing for the time of their lives 12 Lankan Children in Andrew Lloyd Webber's production of The Sound of Music

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The stiff young children, cowed by the discipline of a military upbringing, brought to life under the free and joyful spirit of Maria, and how she uses music to get through to them is one the most endearing themes of this magical production. The excitement was literally palpable as the children eagerly awaited their turns. If selected they would have the unforgettable experience of being part of a world-class musical that has made its mark on some of the most famed stages in the world, including West End and Broadway. To be trained under Johnny Bowles, Associate Choreographer / Children's Director of The Sound of Music, to practice and perform with International Artistes who have taken the Theatre World by storm, will be an unforgettable and inspiring experience for the young local artists chosen to play the parts of Freidrich, Louisa, Kurt, Brigitta, Marta, and Gretl. The children were judged Johnny Bowles, with the assistance of theatre professionals : Founder and creative director of Mesh Dance Academy, Umeshi Rajeendra; Music Director, Soundarie David Rodrigo, one of Sri Lanka's well known musicians and founder of Sri Lanka's premiere female ensemble Soul Sounds; Natasha Senanayake, Sri Lanka's first Commonwealth Music Ambassador and one of Sri Lanka's most successful female composers; Anushka Senanayake, the founding artistic director of Theatre Junction, a theatre company based in Colombo; **all of whom remarked on the impressive display of young talent.**

Round one of the preliminary sessions of judging involved the contestants being taught 'Somewhere over the rainbow', to test their vocal strength and ability to learn and pick up the words and melody; the latter being critical as the selected participants would have only 30 days to make their parts their own. Round two was equally stringent and demanding. The children learnt the track "The Hills are Alive" to test their vocal ability and choreographic capability. The judges were not only interested in their dancing capabilities but their expressions and stage presence. Lastly their acting ability was tested with the performance of a few selected scenes. The preliminary session being completed, the same rounds of judging was followed before the finalists were selected. After a hard day's judging, and some tough deliberation sessions, the results were announced.

Playing Freidrich will be Leeth Meth Singhage and Niven Nanaykara (St Josphe's College). Louisa will be played by Amaya Perera (Lyceum International School) Nesandi Wickramanayke (Bishop's College, Colombo). Bringing the funny and entertaining Kurt to life will be Lohan Tharinda Perrea (Lyceum International School) and Venuka Rison Joseph (St. Joseph's College). The sweet and shy Brigitta will be played by Evni Sapugoda (Lyceum International School) and Tashiyana Devarajan (Asian international school). Little Marta will be played by Kimaya Wijesuriya (Colombo International School) and Ayra Wadood (Bishop's College, Colombo). Selected to play the lovable Gretl, the youngest role in the production, are Senushki De Silva (St Bridgets Convent) and Naadya Tranchell (Ladies College)

Gill Caldicott, *Country Director British Council Sri Lanka*, commenting on the days display of talent and the training the children received noted *"I am so pleased and proud that the British Council is Skills Development Partner for this wonderful initiative. We want to promote more creative connections between the UK and Sri Lanka and support the development of skills and opportunities for young people. I can't think of a better example than this world class production of The Sound of Music by Andrew Lloyd Webber and David Ian. Congratulations to all the young Sri Lankan cast who have secured a role. Well done and very best wishes for a fabulous show!"*

Dileep Mudadeniya, Head of Brand Marketing – Cinnamon Hotels & Resorts, shares his sentiments casting Lankan children *'It would've been an easy option to get kids who were already trained. However, as a responsible brand we were looking at how The Sound of Music production can have a positive impact on the development of local theatre. Despite logistics and organizational challenges, we decide to go ahead with the decision of selecting kids from Sri Lanka.'*

In a few short weeks, you will see these young local artists take the stage as the original Broadway production of the Sound of Music is performed live in Sri Lanka at the Nelum Pokuna Theatre in Colombo. The sets, production equipment as well as cast and crew members will be flown in especially for this performance of par excellence. Fans of this timeless musical are promised a magical live experience of this well loved classic as Cinnamon Life partners with Broadway Asia International, one of the world's leading entertainment and live touring bodies.

This family themed classic will be staged from the 14th to the 18th of February at the Nelum Pokuna. Tickets for the show can already be booked on 011 2161161 or through

www.cinnamonboxoffice.com and are fast selling out. Fans are cautioned to book their seats early so as to not miss out on this once in a life time experience.

Cinnamon Life presents Andrew Lloyd Webber and David Ian, the Really Useful Group production of The Sound of Music - In Association with Sri Lanka Tourism Promotion Bureau, powered by Nations Trust Bank American Express and Mercedes Benz from DIMO, Airline partner SriLankan Airlines, Skills Development Partner British Council. Banking Partner Nations Trust Bank Private Banking, Inbound Travel partner Walkers Tours, Print Media and Web partners Sunday Times ,Daily Mirror, Daily FT, Life online, Daily Mirror.lk, Hi Magazine and HI TV, Radio Partner YES FM and Legends 96.6, Creative partner JWT, Print partner Anim8 , Outdoor Media partner Emerging Media Tea Partner Dilmah Tea, Telecommunication Partner Dialog Pay TV partner Dialog TV, Cinema Partner Scope Cinema and Official Photographer Sagara Lakmal Photography.