

'Sound of Music' to fill park

By **JOE HENDERSON**
Special to The Olathe News

After a 15-year absence, Don Miller is returning to The Theatre in the Park as Capt. George Von Trapp in the 2011 season opener, "The Sound of Music."

The season starts at 8:30 p.m. Friday in Shawnee Mission Park with the classic musical, which runs through the weekend and June 16-19.

"Von Trapp is a character I've always wanted to play, the top of my list," Miller, who lives in Overland Park, said of his decision to audition for the role.

"Before, I wasn't the right age or didn't have the right voice for Von Trapp. But this time everything fell in place. I'm the right age and I have the time, so I went for it. Being on stage is all coming back to me after some voice refreshers," he added with a chuckle. "I feel like I'm going back in time."

Miller last appeared at The Theatre in the Park in the 1990s, soon after moving here from Tulsa, as a knight in "Camelot" and the lead role of Curly in "Oklahoma."

"I was trying to get my business started and I didn't have time for acting. I may do more now if the right role for me comes along."

"The Sound of Music" was the final musical written by Richard Rodgers and Oscar Hammerstein II. Hammerstein died from cancer nine months after the Broadway premiere.

Jackie Floyd, a Kirksville, Mo., native who is working on a master's degree in theater at the University of Missouri-Kansas City, makes her debut at the Theatre in the Park as Maria, the former postulant turned governess who captures Von Trapp's heart. She lives in Kansas City. It's the second time she's had a role in "The Sound of Music."

"I played a nun when I was a freshman in high school," Floyd said. "Now I'm playing Maria — what a change."

"It's exciting to have an opportunity to play one of my favorite characters, one I've always loved and wanted to do," she said. "I think Maria and I, in my real life, are a little bit alike. We're both free spirits who love singing and working with children."

Showtime

"The Sound of Music" plays at 8:30 p.m. Friday through Sunday and June 16-19. Tickets are \$8 for adults and \$6 for children 3-12.

The Theatre in the Park is at 7710 Renner Road in Shawnee Mission Park. Renner Road north of 87th Street will be closed until late summer. A detour is on Lackman Road between 79th and 87th Streets.

After "The Sound of Music," The Theatre in the Park will present the school version of "Les Miserables," on June 24-26 and June 30-July 3; "Aida" July 8-10 and July 14-17; and "Seussical," July 22-24 and July 28-31.

For more information call 913-236-1237 or go to www.theatreinthepark.org.

Floyd has been involved in theater since she was 13 years old. She appeared frequently in community theater in Kirksville and productions at Truman State University. "I hope to do more shows in the Kansas City area. I've been so busy with school since I moved here I haven't had much time," she said. "I certainly want to keep the Theatre in the Park on my radar. My goal is directing, but I want to continue performing, too."

Sisters Mattie and Millie Bell of Olathe are again playing two of Von Trapp's children seven children. They had similar roles in "The Sound of Music" at the New Theatre in 2009. Mattie, 13, is Louisa this time (she was Brigitta at the New Theatre) and Millie, 7, is again portraying Gretel.

"I like being Louisa, but I enjoyed doing Brigitta, too," Mattie said. "I like the big stage at the Theatre in the Park and I love the big sets. There isn't

any air conditioning so it can be a little hot when you're in costume."

Both girls have been busy. Mattie, an eighth-grader at California Trail Middle School, has played Laura in "Little House on the Prairie" at the Coterie and young Jackie Bouvier in "Grey Gardens" at the Unicorn. She also was in "Annie" at The Theatre in the Park and the ensemble of "A Christmas Carol" at the Kansas City Repertory Theatre.

Millie, a third-grader at Heatherstone Elementary, has performed at the Trilogy Culture Arts Centre in Olathe. She was a mouse in "Cinderella," Molly in "Annie" and an enchanted spoon in "Beauty and the Beast."

"It's fun being Gretel again," Millie said. "It was easier learning the lines this time. And I like being in a show with my sister again."

Don Leonard, also of Olathe, is in his second show at Theatre in the Park as Max, a friend of the Von Trapp family.

"The role is different from the movie. In the stage play I'm kind of a funny guy. The kids are adorable. They call me Uncle Max," he said, "and I get to sing a couple of songs, 'No Way to Stop It' and 'How Can Love Survive.'"

"Sound of Music" is directed by Nathan Norcross, who returned to Kansas City in 2006 after several years in New York City. He directed "Beauty and the Beast" at the Theatre in the Park in 2008.



Jackie Floyd portrays Maria in "The Sound of Music."

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