

EVITA by Tim Rice & Andrew Lloyd Webber
Performed by Viva (Youth)
Directed by Daniel Schumann
Musical Director: Stephen Kenna
Associate Musical Director & Conductor: Richard Hayward
Choreographer: Louise Plummer

Evita features music by Andrew Lloyd Webber and lyrics by Tim Rice and is one of their most successful musicals. The show is based on the life of Argentine political leader Eva Peron who became the spiritual leader of the nation rising from nothing to become one of the most famous political figures in the country's history. The show tells her rise to fame through the eyes of the people, using an omniscient narrator to chart her journey.

Tackling this challenging show is no mean feat and well done to director Daniel Schumann and his production support team for bringing the show to The Brook in Soham which, through a deal of effort by what I suspect is a huge number of people was transformed into a theatre auditorium.

Evita is a role most female actors would give their eye teeth to play but I just wonder how many of them actually know what this part entails and what is needed to be able to bring it to life.

Well, **Becky Bush** certainly answered those questions and she definitely brought the part to life, her acting and dancing were first class and I doubt few in the audience (despite the very clear announcement) would have realised that the lovely voice they heard was that of **Katie Shearman** and not Becky who had unfortunately developed laryngitis the day before opening night and had totally lost her voice. However, Becky was able to bring every bit of drama, humour and pathos out of it. She convincingly captured the emotional highs and lows of the role superbly and mimed (or do I have to say lip synced these days?) to Katie's singing to perfection. Despite the problems this was a marvellous performance from them both.

Anyone who has seen the show knows it starts with the young Eva who is an actress and does not really care who she steps on to get where she wants to be. Narrating the story of Eva's rise is Che and we were treated to a powerful performance by **Ben Clark** whose has an excellent voice as evidenced in 'Oh What a Circus' and 'High Flying Adored'. He prowled the stage with commanding presence whilst providing narration and observations.

The first love interest of Eva was Magaldi a Tango Singer played (*Wednesday, Friday and Saturday matinee*) by **Joseph Beach**. I have seen Joseph in a number of parts and from the first time I saw him I felt this young man would go far. Once again he gave a great performance both as an actor and a singer.

Another role in this show is that of Peron who becomes the President of Argentina, again this requires a good actor to get the most from this part and **Lee Sherwood** did an excellent job of this role again getting the most out it.

Effective support came from the actions of the Ensemble players in various roles also from their first-rate singing and dancing. There were no weak links in this show, in fact everyone appeared to be supremely confident in what they were doing. I have said there were no weak links and it is not possible to name everyone on stage but mention must go to **Kerry Hibbert** (*Wednesday, Friday and Saturday matinee*), she was the mistress of Juan Peron who Eva threw out of the bedroom when she became his lover. Kerry sang "Another Suitcase in another Hall" and sang it with conviction.

The simple scenery with well used levels was enhanced with vintage newsreel footage and an lighting design of a very high standard although unfortunately there were a few cuing problems one of which meant we didn't see the final moments of the wedding scene at the end of Act 1 which was a shame.

NODA REVIEW

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Congratulations to **Brenda Rose** and her costume team on the stunning costumes and wigs created for Eva and for providing costumes for even the smallest and slenderest of cast members which all fitted as though tailor-made.

Producing any show is a great team effort but for this show in particular, the role of the Musical Director is paramount and well deserved praise must indeed go to MD **Stephen Kenna** who unfortunately had to withdraw from the production but **Richard Hayward** stepped in as Associate Musical Director and Conductor.

Praise too for Director **Daniel Schumann**, along with **Louise Plummer**, Choreographer. This first-class show was obviously not without its problems running up to performance - none of which appeared, on the surface anyway, to have phased anyone at all.

Many congratulations to everyone involved in this show, all the hard work you put into it over the past weeks and months certainly paid off.

Julie Petrucci
Regional Representative NODA East District Four South