

## **Evita Review**

**Tuesday 24 September 2019**

Evita started its life in 1976 as a Rock Opera Concept Album by a young Andrew Lloyd-Weber and Tim Rice. In 1978 it opened in the West End starring Elaine Page and David Essex and a year later transferred to Broadway.

The story portrays the life and rise to fame of Eva Peron, second wife to political leader Juan Peron. It tells of her early life, rise to power, charity work, and eventual death. It went on to become a major musical film in 1996 starring Madonna and Antonio Banderas.

So with such an iconic storyline and score, this was a big challenge for CAODS. The set was fantastic giving a strong backdrop to the staging and with slick and well managed set changes was a great addition to the overall show.

Opening with the death of Eva, before returning to her youth, the chorus work was very strong with lots of great imagery and some fantastic choreography performed by a strong team of dancers.

Taking the lead role of Eva Peron was Sammy-Jo Evans. As a sung-thru musical (meaning there is no dialogue - instead everything is sung) it is imperative that the audience can hear the words to understand the storyline. In places her diction was poor, which meant it was difficult to hear the sung thru sections in particular and the over gesticulation was extremely distracting and meant when a move should have had purpose it was lost among so many other hand movements. It is a case where less means more.

However, Sammy-Jo has truly amazing vocals which were particularly obvious in the ballad numbers and in 'Don't Cry for me Argentina' where her vocals were as absolutely splendid and she delivered everything you could want, meaning it was as good if not better than many professional recordings of this number that I have heard.

The star of the evening, however was David Everest-Ring as Che. David had an ease of performance which was a joy to watch and with just the right vocal tone and quality. This was not a copy of David Essex but an original and strong performance which was completely consistent throughout the show. I could watch it again just to watch David on stage in this part.

There were a few other strong performances notably Michael Bardo as Augustin Magaldi, who sang 'Night of a Thousand Stars' with confidence and aplomb and Natasha Lesley who was captivating as The Mistress with one of the other hugely famous songs from the score – "Another Suitcase, Another Hall".

As with all CAODS shows, the costumes were all excellent with some impressive costume changes and the orchestra under the baton of James Harragan as Musical Director gave a superb base to this vocal tour de force. With such a complex show with unusual and challenging cadences in many of the songs, there were some pitchy moments but this was opening night and I am confident this will improve with the run, as the company gain more confidence singing with the band.

This is such a complex show and CAODs gave it everything both in biographical content and their stage performance especially with such an emotional ending. Huge congratulations to the cast and company in pulling off such a challenging production.

**Theatrelife**