Evita

Music by Andrew Lloyd Webber
Lyrics by Tim Rice

Study Guide

University Players
Studio Theatre
March 19-March 27, 2010
“From every period of my life, I retain the memory of some injustice tormenting me and tearing me apart.”

- Eva Perón, *La Razón de mi Vida* (an autobiography)

### Table of Contents

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Section</th>
<th>Page</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>The Woman</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The Musical</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The Director</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The Designers</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The Words</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The Internet</td>
<td>7</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

### The Woman

**Eva Peron: A Brief Biography**

A lively, intelligent girl, in love with American films and yearning for a life beyond the endless expanse of grassland, seventeen-year-old Eva left her home for the bright lights of Buenos Aires. Within three years of her arrival, Eva had carved out a career as a radio and film actress, and the press linked her to a number of powerful suitors.

In January 1944, Eva encountered a fast-rising and immensely popular politician named Juan Perón at a fund-raising concert, organized to help earthquake victims. Within weeks, she was sharing his apartment. Perón went on to become Minister of War and Vice President of the Republic, but political unrest at the end of World War II eventually led to his arrest and imprisonment. Freed in a populist revolt, Perón subsequently married Eva and was elected President of Argentina with a huge popular mandate.

With a blend of democratic principle and despotism dubbed "Peronism," Juan Perón became one of the most admired and maligned leaders of the modern era. Yet even as she shared her husband's vision of Argentina's manifest destiny, Eva herself became the object of intense, almost mystical adoration by the country's common people. She gained international attention during her Rainbow Tour of Europe to promote Argentinean interests, and at home she was instrumental in the formation of the Perónist Women's Party, as well as The Eva Perón Foundation for charitable works among the nation's poor.

The poor clamored for Eva to assume political office beside her husband and despite growing dissent from military and political opponents, she was put forward as the vice-presidential candidate.

It was, however, a goal Eva would never realize; she was subsequently diagnosed with terminal cancer. Renouncing her political aspirations, Eva Perón fell into a steep and sudden decline, and on July 26, 1952, she died at the age of 33.

A measure of her enormous appeal among her fellow citizens could be seen in the outpouring of grief that followed her death. Close to a million Argentineans crowded the streets of Buenos Aires for her funeral procession, and an estimated three million filed past her casket to pay their
last respects. The myth of "Saint Eva" was kept alive by frequent requests to the Vatican for her canonization. Forty thousand such appeals were received in the two years following her death.

Here the story of Eva Perón may well have come to an end for much of the world—an intriguing, enigmatic figure tragically cut down in her prime. But 21 years after her death, her myth was revived when Tim Rice happened to hear a documentary about Perón on his car radio and, on the spot, spawned the notion of Evita, a musical treatment of her life.

Biography and additional information can be found at [http://movies.universal-pictures-international-germany.de/evita/eva/EvaBio.html](http://movies.universal-pictures-international-germany.de/evita/eva/EvaBio.html)

The Musical

Interview with Composer Andrew Lloyd Webber

Can you tell us how you were attracted to this South American lady from the 1950s?

Well, it was Tim Rice's idea. He was very intrigued by the fact that she was mentioned in the context of a whole load of fifties figures who were very successful, including people like James Dean, and I think he was curious to find out why she became this kind of cult figure, this huge figure in Argentina. And I think he became very attracted to the story.

Did you fall in love with the woman or were you terrifically attracted to the personality of the woman?

The biggest problem for me as the composer of it is that of course I could have let the whole thing go as a high romance. I could make everybody cry their eyes out at the end of all this, but that was not the point of the piece. In a way, the piece had to keep this slightly Brechtian approach to the whole thing, where you have the Ché character able to commentate on the quite grisly things that she did. And to turn her into some sort of great romantic figure would have been really quite easy. But no, I never fell in love with the woman—very much the reverse.

When you were writing "Don't Cry for Me, Argentina," which probably is one of the most famous anthems in musical theater, did it come to you and you said, "God, that's it, that's the big thing in the show," or not?

When Tim talked to me about the idea of doing the piece, I thought that if I could crack the moment where she did some piece which indeed did turn into an anthem, then I would have done it. This is a very interesting dramatic thing, because here you have a song that represents Eva Perón at her very height and at her most manipulative—when she's speaking on the Casa Rosada balcony—and yet the song eventually turns on her. When she does the final broadcast, it becomes something which is really pathetic. And I thought, if I could crack that, then I've got a dramatic line through the piece from which most other things would follow. And so, in fact, "Don't Cry for Me" was the first thing I wrote. And if that hadn't happened, I don't think we would have gone on to do Evita.

Did you know then that this was going to be the great song of the musical—which I think everybody would say it is, isn't it?
It's very hard, because I just know that we had to have one central thing like that. It was the gangplank of the whole thing. But, in fact, the song that would carry the show or would carry the person playing Eva Perón in the theater was "Rainbow High." If the artist cracked that, then the show was theirs.

Full transcript of the interview and additional information can be found at http://movies.universal-pictures-international-germany.de/evita/interviews/WebberInt.html

The Director
Interview with Director Joanne Gordon

What central theme in Evita appeals to a modern audience?
It may not appeal to a modern audience, but the notion that we desperately seek for political saviors is a modern dilemma. Our contemporary society venerates political figures in a way that we previously dedicated to religious faith. The transfer of this fanaticism inevitably leads to disappointment and regret.

How do the characters Evita and Ché interact in the University Players production of Evita?
They are each other's internal voice, so they are part of a whole. They reflect camaraderie, envy, criticism, satire, censure. At times their relationship breaks through almost as if they were in dialogue with each other, but it is really a dialogue with themselves, their conscience.

How does working with students change the production artistically and contextually?
The fact that the actors playing Eva and Ché are the right age. It gives a bit of authenticity, they may not be as polished as a professional cast, but the youthful fervor, belief and dedication is more effective in their portrayal.

In your opinion, what is different about audiences’ relationship with a musical versus other types of live performance?
I think the impact, emotional and intellectual, is immediate. With a musical, feeling is not mediated through the intellect and this is because music goes straight into your gut.

Is there anything you would like an audience to consider coming out of the piece?
A musical can convey a profound meaning, because you can express that which cannot be expressed in words. You get far deeper into a conflict’s non linear meaning with the complexities of music. The musical can be used in a very contemporary way. It doesn't have to be old fashioned. By strict definition, Evita is in the form of opera. It is operatic style that uses pop music to create a modern sound, 'Popera.' I think that unless they have hundreds of dollars to spend, our students are unable to experience the sound of 40 live voices and a band; it’s emotional, spiritual and intense. I hope they go out feeling that thrill that cannot be achieved any other way.

As an educator what is the most exciting thing about continually being able to work with students to bring work to their peers?
I'm an idealist, so I hope for a better world. A time when I get to experience that better world is when I am in rehearsal with students. It is a place where everyone works together, the hierarchy
disappears. The goal is to make the best possible art, and we all share this drive. It's the best thing ever. It's not about money and it's not about fame, it's about joy.

The Designers
Interview with Designers Rachel Engstrom (Costume), Ronan Kilkelly (Lighting), and Naomi Kashara (Scenic)

*How is designing a musical different than a straight play?*

**Naomi:** The biggest difference between a musical and a straight play is that a musical has music. To me, the only difference in the design process is that I listen to music and try to understand what the musical is about, whereas if I just have a script, I only have the words to find meaning.

**Rachel:** I approach musicals similarly; instead of just reading the play, you get to listen to it. The ensemble is an interesting musical convention because they usually play multiple characters, with little time to change. The dancing and singing are very important factors.

**Naomi:** I consider the number of actors on stage, also, when I design a musical, especially when they have dance in the production.

**Ronan:** Musicals are just wild. They are so fast paced, between the beats, measures, singing, and dancing. The flow of a musical is like a regular play put on fast forward. Relatively similar conventions are used, as the girls have said, but the music adds a dynamic that demands your respect as a designer.

*What aspects of Evita inspired your design?*

**Rachel:** The embodiment of hope in a single person, Evita represented the possibility of change for the nation.

**Ronan:** My inspiration was drawn by the changes she inspired in the political structure of Argentina. I was inspired by the volume of her life in her few short years.

**Rachel:** She was able to gain power in a man's world and the nation rallied behind her.

**Naomi:** Power! Her power. These enormous forces, military, social class, women's rights, gave me the idea of massiveness, strength, and movement.

**Rachel:** The people saw her as their savior, a major force in their nation. Ultimately her mortality reminds us that although we may put people on a pedestal, they are only human.

*How important are each design elements to a production like Evita?*

**Ronan:** I like to think that all design is created equal. In a show like this, all designers are so important.

**Rachel:** The costumes, along with the other design aspects help to create a complete world in which the audience can immerse itself. The costumes help the actors in fully embodying their character. It not only affects the way that their body moves, but also helps to mentally transform them into their character.

**Ronan:** Well I guess with lights it is important to see the actor, but I hope that my design supports the mood and follows the music.

**Naomi:** For me, the set creates the possibility of being transported to a place, it creates environment. So as part of a whole, it initiates the story.

*As a student designer, what has been your greatest challenge?*
Ronan: Keeping organized.
Rachel: Yeah, but more balancing being a student and a designer at the same time. When I'm actively working (like fittings, shopping, sketching, rehearsals, paperwork, etc.) on a show, it's like I have to switch off the part of my brain that deals with classes.
Naomi: I find the biggest challenge in the process itself. I try to learn from the design process as well as from my production team.
Ronan: I can relate to that. I also find it difficult to stay on top of my design and remember that I am still a student. I'm still learning.
Rachel: All of it gets harder when you consider that life doesn't stop happening around you.

The Words

PERÓN
There again we could be foolish
Not to quit while we're ahead
I can see me many miles away
Inactive
Sipping cocktails on a terrace
Taking breakfast in bed
Sleeping easy, doing crosswords
It's attractive

EVA
Don't think I don't think like you, I often get those nightmares too
They always take some swallowing
Sometimes it's very difficult to keep momentum if
It's you that you are following
Don't close doors
Keep an escape clause
Because we might lose
The Big Apple
But, would I have done what I did
If I hadn't thought, if I hadn't known
We would take the country

ALL
A new Argentina
The chains of the masses untied
A new Argentina
The voice of the people cannot be, and will not be,
and must not be denied!

Is Eva a manipulative female or does her life reveal something significant about a woman’s power?
Does Eva care about the poor?
What does it mean to be a revolutionary? Then and today?
EVA

It won't be easy, you'll think it strange
When I try to explain how I feel
That I still need your love after all that I've done
You won't believe me
All you will see is a girl you once knew
Although she's dressed up to the nines
At sixes and sevens with you
I had to let it happen, I had to change
Couldn't stay all my life down at heel
Looking out of the window, staying out of the sun
So I chose freedom
Running around trying everything new
But nothing impressed me at all
I never expected it to
Don't cry for me Argentina
The truth is I never left you
All through my wild days
My mad existence
I kept my promise
Don't keep your distance
And as for fortune, and as for fame
I never invited them in
Though it seemed to the world they were all I desired
They are illusions
They are not the solutions they promised to be
The answer was here all the time
I love you and hope you love me
Don't cry for me Argentina

Do you think Eva has any regrets?
How does the melodic quality of the song affect its meaning?
What answer does Eva refer to at the end of the song?

CHE

High flying, adored, so young, the instant queen, a
Rich beautiful thing of all the talents, a cross between a
Fantasy of the bedroom and a saint
And you were just a backstreet girl
Hustling and fighting
Scratching and biting
High flying, adored, did you believe in your wildest moments
All this would be yours, that you'd become the lady of them all?
Were there stars in your eyes when you crawled in
at night
From the bars, from the sidewalks
From the gutter theatrical?
Don't look down, it's a long long way to fall
High flying, adored, what happens now, where do you
go from here?
For someone on top of the world, the view's not exactly
clear
A shame you did it all at twenty-six
There are no mysteries now
Nothing can thrill you
No-one fulfill you
High flying, adored, I hope you come to terms with
boredom
So famous, so easily, so soon, is not the wisest thing
to be
You won't care if they love you, it's been done before
You'll despair if they hate you
You'll be drained of all energy
All the young who've made it would agree

Is Eva a saint or savior?
What makes someone a savior? Do we have any modern saviors?
Relate Eva's rise to fame to contemporary politics. Why does the play need Che's
commentary?

The Internet
Eva Peron
http://www.evitaperon.org/
http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=hSkkgVX7kpk&feature=related (interview, in Spanish)
http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=cNs2zVCmhRA&feature=related (speech)
http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=AWVXTN66yHY&feature=related
http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=K1mhigmwQ0Q&feature=related
http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=VG4CTHKiZQU (funeral procession)
Andrew Lloyd Weber
http://www.andrewlloydwebber.com/
Tim Rice
http://www.timrice.co.uk/evita.html
Evita (musical)
http://www.reallyuseful.com/shows/evita/about-evita-1