

Past comes alive in 'Evita'

by Gary Barker
Battalion Staff

"High flying, adored, what happens now, where do you go from here?" Che Guevara asks Eva Peron at the height of her popularity. Indeed, after watching a delicious, professional Broadway treat like "Evita," the usual local fare will seem mundane.

The award-winning musical, which was performed Monday night for a full Rudder Auditorium, is based on the rise to power of Eva Duarte Peron, the Argentine farmer's daughter who became that country's first lady.

The story, which is told almost totally by song, shows Eva becoming a popular actress, climbing up the social ladder — as the play suggests, anyway — by sleeping with a few of Argentina's more influential men.

At the age of 27, she marries Juan Peron shortly before he is elected president in 1946. Peron's victory was largely due to Eva, who gathered tremendous support among Argentina's working classes with her I-am-one-of-you routine.

The play deals mainly with Eva's love affair with power, glory and Argentina's working classes — who refer to her affectionately as Evita, or little Eva.

Narrating the story is Che Guevara, the leftist Argentine revolutionary.

Although Guevara never actually had any contact with the Perons, he was a student when they rose to power and serves as the perfect critic for their totalitarian leadership.

In traditional play form, the

story could become bogged down in the historical details of the era. But as a musical, the show — written by Tim Rice and Andrew Lloyd Webber of "Jesus

cer, Peron comforts her as she sees her past, evoking her oft-repeated anthem, "Don't Cry for Me Argentina... I am underserving of such attention unless we all are — I think we all are."

The play's only major flaw is its ending — it fizzles. The play lacks ending punctuation; there

is no finale or funeral dirge, just a passing comment from Guevara. As the curtain drops,

the audience is left wanting one more chorus of "Don't Cry for Me," and is left pondering the significance — the enigma — of Eva Peron.

Review

Christ Superstar" fame — soars, yet remains relatively faithful to history.

The show's wide range of musical styles — from flamenco rhythms to gently flowing ballads to symphony — deliver the drama of Evita's story.

The superbly choreographed dancing also adds to the drama. The play makes brilliant use of crowd scenes, empty space and frozen action to heighten the impact of the story. The play's stylistic sets and special effects, including slides and film, also serve to keep the audience's eyes busy while the ears are entertained.

The acting and singing are equally inspiring. James Sbanou, who plays Guevara, is wonderful as he mocks Evita and her lack of immortality; he is always watching her, sarcastically reminding her of her vices.

Florence Lacey, as Evita, provides a wide range of vocal ability and emotions. John Leslie Wolfe, is equally superb as Juan Peron. With his corrupt grin and animated face, he efficiently characterizes Peron.

In the most dramatic scene of the play, Evita confronts the fact that she will die soon from can-



Florence Lacey stars as Eva Peron in the Broadway musical "Evita" which continues tonight and Wednesday at 8 p.m.

OPAS and Town Hall are co-sponsoring the show. Some tickets are still available.

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