

BROS Theatre Company

EVITA • MAY 2009 • MINACK THEATRE

Licensee Feedback

Many many congratulations on your very fine production of EVITA at the Minack. I shall certainly be very happy to tell my colleagues of the success of your production.

The whole cast, orchestra and backroom team really excelled themselves. There were great performances all round. Well done.

We'd love to see any reviews you may have and any photos. It would be great to have these for our website if possible.

Thank you for your kindness and hospitality. We will long remember your production. Many thanks again. With best wishes.

David Robinson (Head of Music Licensing)
The Really Useful Group Ltd.

Review

Oh, what a circus; oh, what a show – and what an epic way to start the Minack's 2009 summer season. Before a bumper bank holiday audience, the opening night of the London-based BROS Theatre Company's Evita could not have been more impressive. From its king-size programme to its huge cast, we are unlikely to see anything bigger or better throughout the season.

It takes no more than a moment or two of its first number, a black but beautiful, simply stunning Requiem to know that this 2006 revival of the hit sung-through show – music Andrew Lloyd Webber, lyrics, Tim Rice – is something special.

Just as it takes two to tango, so the success of such an ambitious, large scale production demands close co-operation between its directors and every member of its cast and production team.

Happily, Melanie Edwards, whose choreography is as inventive as Wesley Henderson Roe's direction is impeccable, have that and come up with a rhythmic and rewarding, spectacular show in which no one, whether aristocrat or 'descamisado' (a shirtless one), puts a foot or finger wrong. Their timing is immaculate.

A rare and refreshing musical, hardly romantic in that it involves politics and the ability of power to corrupt – it is challenging.

But, without exception, everyone in the company, not forgetting the admirable 18 piece orchestra under musical director Shaun Critten, to the small army behind the scenes, rise heroically to the occasion.

Whatever they may be wearing, the stars of the show sparkle. Nikki Gerrard, who sings like an angel, gets everyone, even the most hard-hearted, crying for Argentina, and gives us an enigmatic Evita who arrives and leaves with an air of ambiguity loaded with unanswered questions: Is she a whore or a wonder woman?

Does she love the poor or power? and Mark Fallon who as the cynical Che is a versatile, but bitter, narrator with the bite of a rabid dog. They are splendidly supported by Nigel Cole as the infatuated Juan Peron, Paul Turnbull as the tango singer Magaldi, Claire Smith who, as the president's discarded mistress makes the very most of the almost unbearably sad Another Suitcase in Another Hall; and James Simpson as the child soloist. A word, too, for the very young singers he leads in his moving, but ironic plea, for making Argentina's first lady, who has slept her way from rags to riches, "Santa Evita".

Guaranteed to send everyone home from the Minack this week with the words and music ringing in their ears, this is the last major collaboration between Lloyd Webber and Rice and possibly their best. Certainly The Best Show in Town.

It has been acclaimed as "a masterpiece of British 20th century musical theatre" – it is no exaggeration to say that BROS Theatre Company's Evita is also not only a masterpiece but marvellous.

Frank Ruhrmund
The Cornishman

Review

BROS may be 101 years old but its spirit of adventure has not diminished one jot.

Some might think it incredible, even foolhardy, to attempt to recreate the heat and dust of Argentina and the sleazy bars of Buenos Aires on a rocky cliff on the westernmost edge of the Cornish coast. Not a bit of it. In his programme note Stage Director, Wesley Henderson Roe, asks the audience to "let the Players and the Playing transcend the elements and transport you to another Place and Time". Note the capital letters! The Players and playing certainly succeeded one hundred percent in transporting this humble reviewer.

Wes Henderson Roe obviously knew every nook and cranny of the irregularly shaped acting and auditorium spaces and used every one to full advantage. The opening sequence when the black-clad large cast of over 50 poured onto the stage to attend the funeral of their idol, Eva Peron, set the scene for the quality production that was to follow. Accompanied by an 18 piece orchestra tightly controlled by musical director, Shaun Critten, both the singing and dancing were of an exceptionally high quality. Melanie Edwards' choreography was subtle and thrilling and she and the stage director are to be congratulated on moving their large cast seamlessly around the stage.

The chorus of dancers and singers were not just that: they portrayed many different character groups, from the militaristic colonels and snobbish tea and cocktail-drinking ladies, to the poor and desperate of Argentina. .

Of the principals obviously the role of Evita herself is pivotal. Nikki Gerrard grasped her chance to portray this iconic heroine with both hands, hauling herself up from poverty to gracing - and twisting - the arm of the most powerful leader in the land. She is a graceful

dancer and, in the words of The Cornishman reviewer, "sang like an angel". Her rendition of Don't Cry for Me, Argentina had the opposite effect, moistening every eye in the house. Absolutely lovely.

She was partnered by Nigel Cole whose stature enhanced his performance as the most successful player in the machinations of the military junta. I particularly liked the musical chairs sequence in which he maneuvered himself to be the final winner. His performance as the totally infatuated dictator, pointed up by his change of costume from military to civilian at Eva's request, was sincere and especially moving when he tries to reassure Evita in her dying moments.

Mark Fallon gave full voice in an energetic yet subtle performance of the enigmatic Che, popping up here, there and everywhere giving his sardonic commentary on the rise and rise of the poor girl who makes good and then disappearing into the crowd to continue his observations.

In smaller but equally well-judged performances Paul Turnbull and Claire Smith treated their solos with due reverence. Paul amused as the sleazy night-club singer, Magaldi, with his limited repertoire, On this Night of a Thousand Stars in which he was accompanied by the dancers in a stunning, sinuous tango (eat your heart out Strictly Come Dancing wannabes). Claire, as Peron's deposed mistress, pulled at our heartstrings standing isolated on the wide stage to sing Another Suitcase in Another Hall. A further treat was to follow in the final funeral scene when young James Simpson prayed for the popular heroine in Santa Evita and was joined by even younger choristers.

Congratulations, too, to those often overlooked contributors, wardrobe mistresses and dressers - not a detail was missed - and to the sound and lighting engineers. Every word was heard, despite the sound of the crashing waves, the calls of the gulls and the gusting breeze! The stage management was impeccable. It cannot have been an easy task to get such a large cast up and down that rocky venue.

What a shame Sir Tim Rice was prevented from attending the final performance by the sad death of his mother. He and Lord Andrew Lloyd Webber would have been proud of this production of their 2006 revival and happy to have given their permission for its production. What a shame too that this production will not be performed in the borough, thus qualifying it for entry in the local Swan Awards scheme.

Heather Morgan
ArtsRichmond

Public Testimonials

May I offer you, Melanie, Shaun, the whole production team and fantastic cast of Evita, Evan and my heartiest congratulations on a superb show at the Minack. We loved it and were so impressed with BROS once again - I felt so proud as a past President to be still associated with such a talented company.

I was particularly impressed with Mark and Nikki and, of course, the wonderful ensemble singing.

Well done everyone and thank you!

Regards and love,

Helen (Jenkins)

My name is James Webb and last night I went to see Evita with a group of friends down at the Minack Theatre. We go down the Minack a good few times a year but I wanted to say that I think Evita is probably the best performance I have ever seen down there. Among my friends this did seem to be the general consensus too!

Basically, you made a bunch of 24 year olds have a really good time and we are very grateful.

Thanks very much! Hope the rest of the week goes just as well.

James Webb

Congratulations for a truly wonderful performance - I especially enjoyed the transformation from Sunday evening to Wednesday when I saw what could be done when you got down to it.

I've since spoken to some of the band who really enjoyed not only playing for you but also of having the opportunity to play something that they probably won't get the chance to play again.

For my small part, I felt very privileged to have been involved with a company with such a professional out look and I shall be more than happy to assist in any way that I can when you come down again - you only have to ask.

I've been to London just twice in my life but am hoping to come up just before Christmas so I'll check out your website to see what you're up to and hopefully look you up.

Regards

Timothy Hosken

CONGRATULATIONS

BRITAIN HAS GOT TALENT!

Have just seen and thoroughly enjoyed your production of EVITA

My Congratulations to All

Mike Stanger

Just a quick note to tell you how much my wife and I enjoyed the production of Evita at the Minack yesterday evening. (Friday)

An excellent all-round production – very strong performances by the leads – well choreographed – top orchestra – very professional.

The young lady who sang “Another Suitcase” has a lovely voice, Evita and Che were very, very good

Thanks again

Rodney Fine

A crowd of us travel to the Minack every year on the same weekend from Bishopsteignton in Devon, taking pot luck on what is showing. This year there were 31 of us and as we sat on the clifftop on a chilly windy night we were absolutely blown away with your performance of Evita it was fantastic. In previous years some of our group have preferred to be entertained by basking sharks performing behind the actors at this magnificent venue, but this year we were all riveted to the stage. The singing and acting was wonderful and all 31 came away discussing how great it had been.

Come back the same weekend next year!!! Please.

Sue Bowden