

- [About »](#)
- [Contact Us](#)
- [Privacy Policy](#)

Enter search...

GO

Broadway Direct™



- [Home](#)
- [Broadway Features](#)
- [Around The Country](#)
- [Watch](#)
- [Win](#)
-

→N← A Nederlander Presentation

On Broadway

LANDMARK *EVITA* RETURNS TO BROADWAY WITH TONY AWARD-WINNING DIRECTOR

21 October 2011

7

Send

38 people



Chances are the name *Evita* will conjure up for you an image of a charismatic woman, clad in a glittering white gown, singing “Don’t Cry For Me Argentina” from a balcony — even if you never had the opportunity to see the original, landmark stage production of the hit musical by Tim Rice and Andrew Lloyd Webber. It’s an iconic moment in musical theater history, created for the 1978 London production, which transferred the following year to Broadway, where it ran for nearly four-years. It’s so potent an image that audiences will see it once again when *Evita* returns this spring to Broadway’s Marquis Theatre.

The musical charts the extraordinary rise to fame of a poor Argentinean girl from the provinces who, at age 15, heads to the big city, Buenos Aires, to make it as an actress. Instead, she finds herself at the center of Argentinean politics through a marriage to Juan Perón, who, shortly thereafter, in 1946, is elected President of the country. Eva Perón, known affectionately as “Evita,” served as First Lady of Argentina until her untimely death from cancer at age 33 in 1952. The best remembered moment of the Rice and Lloyd Webber musical comes at the top of the second act when Eva, standing on the balcony of the Casa Rosada, Argentina’s pink-hued Presidential Palace, declares her commitment to serve her people.

“Eva did wear that white Dior dress, no question, but she never appeared on the balcony of the Casa Rosada in it,” notes Michael Grandage, the Tony Award winner who is directing the first major revival of the work in over three decades. “That was entirely in the imagination of the original production by Hal Prince,” he explains. “It was a brilliant combination of a photograph that exists of Eva Perón in the dress, put together with her coming out to sing one of the great

songs. Things like that we are never going to mess with," he says. "She will appear on the balcony in the white Dior dress like she has always done and like everybody wants her to in their imagination." But while paying tribute to the seven-time Tony Award-winning original, the British director is also taking a completely fresh approach to the now classic musical.

Grandage, currently artistic director of London's prestigious Donmar Warehouse, is known on this side of the Atlantic for his award-winning Broadway productions of new work (*Frost/Nixon* and *Red*) as well as for *Hamlet* starring Jude Law. He says his production of *Evita*, which was first mounted in London in 2006, came about at the request of the composer Lloyd Webber himself. "Andrew said that he thought the time was right and that there were possibly two generations of people who have never seen *Evita* on the stage," Grandage reports. "He was very clear that he wanted us to come up with a vision for the piece that allowed a new audience an opportunity to see it in a new way. So we invited both the writers to join us in finding a way to do it, that had an authenticity that would speak to people watching it in the 21st century."

BUY PRE-SALE TICKETS!

Rice and Lloyd Webber, who had previously collaborated on the 1970 megahit *Jesus Christ Superstar*, started work on *Evita* at a time when access to Argentina, its history and politics, was limited, and the popular explosion of Latin music was still decades into the future. Grandage says the new revival reflects some of the knowledge that has been acquired in the intervening years since *Evita* first saw the light of day, as a 1976 concept album released two years prior to the first stage production. The score has been completely re-orchestrated to incorporate a strong Latin influence and now includes the Academy Award-winning song "You Must Love Me," which the composer and lyricist specifically wrote for the 1996 movie version starring Madonna. The new production, he adds, also strives to capture the unique European-style architecture and vibrant culture of Buenos Aires.

Grandage says the creative team also went beyond the look and sound of the piece in their quest for authenticity. They hoped to find it in performance as well. With the London production they scored a coup by casting native Buenos Aires musical star Elena Roger to play Eva. Roger will reprise the role in 2012, making her Broadway debut. In the American production, she will be joined by another Latin performer, Puerto Rican superstar Ricky Martin, who plays Che, the Argentinean everyman who narrates Eva's story. Grandage notes that Roger also brings a very real and personal connection to the production. Her own family, going back to her grandparents, were beneficiaries of the Eva Perón Foundation, he reports. As a result, she is able to bring a more nuanced interpretation to a musical that offers a cynical take on *Evita*'s charity work, in the catchy song "And The Money Kept Rolling In."

Of course, people in Argentina don't necessarily share the same perspective about Eva Perón today as the musical depicted when it debuted in the late 1970s. Cristina Fernández de Kirchner, the current and first female President of Argentina, has herself acknowledged that women of her generation still owe a debt to *Evita*. "In performance *Evita* has been portrayed, in short-hand, almost like a super villain," Grandage notes. "What's amazing now is having an actress who absolutely understands that *Evita* was a flawed human being, with some well documented problems, but who is also able to give the role a sympathetic quality in certain places where the music and script allow her to do so. So we've got a much more multi-layered opportunity to reveal this woman in a way that hasn't been done before."

By Gerard Raymond

Gerard Raymond writes on theater and film and lives in New York City.



[Click here to read more about *Evita*.](#)