ertainment

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Florence Lacey has become familiar with the life and character of Evita Peron, from playing the charismatic First Lady of Argentina in many productions and from reading books about Evita's rise from poverty to politics as the wife of Juan Peron. This is Lacey's third visit to the metropolitan area in the musical "Evita." Previously, she appeared in two touring companies that played Detroit's

show runs through Sunday, April 12, at the Birmingham Theatro. STEPHEN CANTRELL/

Masonic Temple. The

'Evita' deserves your rapt attention

Barbara

Michals

Performances of the Birming-ham Theatre production of the musical "Evita" continue through Sunday, April 12. For ticket infor-mation call the box office at 644-3533.

By Barbara Michale special writer

py sear actions appeals writer and file of most proceed writer.

Featuring Webber and file of most medicality, humable songs, "Evitia" at the Birmingham Theatre remains a dynamic musical well worth a first visit or a repeat viewing, It's serious show, far different from the coluposers' other hits.

"Eylia" chronicles the rise and fall of Eva Perco, wife of Argentina dictator Juan Peron, from an impoverished teenager to the most power-industry. The play's dramatic strength is that it manages to humanize Eva Peron without ever glorifying or even whitewashing her.

Fiference Laccy in the title role and the control of the property of the county in chronic, deliver strong, passionate performances. They are backed by a polished company under the direction of John H. Lowe III and horcographer Kenneth W. Urmston.

While Laccy's voice is not as

While Lacey's voice is not as operatic as that of cariler Evitas, sate has great emotional range and brings a high degree of credibility to the role. As Ewa's health declines, Lacey does a remarkable job of visibly shrinking and withering.

OPTEN DESCRIBED as a woman who seduced an entire nation, Eva hypnotized the improvershed masses into venerating her as a near-staint while she lived like royally and cooked away public funds in private Swiss bank accounts.

Having alept her way to the top, she never undershood why the upper classes rejected her. Nor could she understand why her body falled her when she was so near the peak of her political ambition.

As Che, the rebellious voice of reason, Hernander's expressive faces serves him coughly well whether fift is doing some engaging clowning or denouncing the Perous with flery rhetoric.

"She didn't say much, but she said it loud," sings Che, summing up Eva as a consummate actress merging politics and show business (and long-lefore such a merger was fashion-bible).

Similarly, Peron understainds and

slich a merger was landar-able). Similarly, Feron understands and capitalizes on Eva's appeal to the poor. "She is a diamond in their dull, gray lives," he sings, and her glamor "takes us away from the squalor of the real world."

JOHN LESTJE Wolfe is a smooth, self-possessed Peron. In the rhythmic duet "Td Be Surprisingly Good for You," Juan and Eva seize upon the potential use each can make of the other.

Kenneth McMullen as Magdid has a pleasing voice is "Oh This Night of



EETING FLORENCE Lacey for the first time, backstage at the Blimingham Theatre, you notice there's not much resemblance to the dynamic character she plays costage — Evita Peron, Perhaps the only thing they have in common is the planinum-bloode hair.

A pretty, composed actress, with alender face, Lacey has starred as Evita on Broadway and in three national companies of the international musical hit. She went from red hair which as the tucked under a blondwig in the second act during an earlier tour visiting Detroit — to her present, flowing blonde tresses. "I got time of wearing the second act with a second act during an earlier tour visiting Detroit — to her present, flowing blonde tresses." I'm the second act with t EETING FLORENCE La-

band liked it."
Lacey is married to Timothy Stella, whom she met on tour when they first did the show in Detroit. That's one reason she has fond memories of the city where "Evita" played the Massonic Temple twice, in 1982 and 1984.

"WE GOT wonderful reviews,"

'She was hard because she was a vulnerable girl trying to compete in this man's society. She felt she was the only one speaking out for the

Florence Lacey plays stellar role

— Florence Lacey

she said. "We were very full of ourselves. We had champagne parties in my dressing room for three months. I don't think we missed a night."

Lacey is relaxed and carnest. Instead of being tired of talking about Argentina's famous, controversial First Lady, who was the wide of dictator Juan Peron, sho's full of information regarding Evita.

The Broadway musical star has read seven biographies about Evita, seen two documentaries and carries Evita's autobiography on the road with her, constantly rereading it.

Lacey is strongly sympathetic to the character of Evita. She tries on-stage to let the naivete and vulnerability show, along with the powerful drive that propelled Evita from the stums of Argentina to the "Big Ap-

ple," Buenos Aires, where she met Peron and rose with him to dominate the country.

ASKED WHAT she thought of Faye Dunaway's interpretation of Evita (as a cruel and vengeful leader) in the 1981 television movio "Evita Peron," she hesitated before replying. "I think that was pretty one-dimensional. I don't think this was a need-dimensional warmer."

But she doesn't believe her por-trait of Evita overemphasizes good

qualities.

"You see a great deal of her hard and cold, calculating edge. She was hard because she was a vulnerable girl trying to compete in this man's

society. She fell she was the only one speaking out for the poor."

In the play, Phillip Hernander as Che Guevera, the narrator, is the voice with a touch of irony that tells the opposite side of the story. Said Lacey, "There is always the pro and con, which is what makes this such an interesting play whether you want to be seduced by her. Was she good or evil!"

Although always happy to answer questious about Evita, Lacey doesn't remember all the details about the actress-mistress turned First Lady. "I just remember the emotions of her a lot," she said.

AMONG THE details she does re-member is that Evita, who broad-cast over the radlo, began speaking about Peron before they ever met. "One account said he used to listen

to these radio reports and cry."

Peron lost his first wife to cancer, then Evita developed leukemia. After her death, Peron gave her jewel-

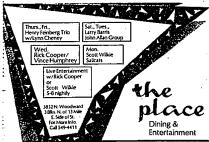
rer dead, From gave ner jewei-ry to young girls.

"Her body was perfectly pre-served. The new president had it ahipped out of the country and bur-ied. After he was assassinated, the

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"Pd Be Surprisingly Good for You" Evita (Fiorence Lecey) and Peron (John Leslie Wolfe) sing when they first meet at a chari-ty concert.





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