

Sunday, June 2, 2002

## 'Evita' comes to Cranbrook's Greek Theatre

BY STACY JENKINS  
STAFF WRITER

She was loved by the masses and despised by the elite. The essence of Eva Peron remains a mystery and the story of the legendary first lady of Argentina is timeless.

For Troy actress Nicole Stacey, playing the role of Eva Peron in the St. Dunstan's Theatre Guild of Cranbrook's production of "Evita" is especially rewarding.

"This is the role for me, playing

the title role in an opera," said Stacey, 32. "I would qualify this as the role of my lifetime."

Stacey can identify with the life of Eva Peron, who rose from poverty to infamy.

"The role means a lot to me, personally," Stacey said. "She had nothing and worked her way up. I came from a very simple, single-parent home and I worked hard to become successful. I can relate to her, she's a very passionate woman. I enjoy the range of emo-

tions she goes through. It's very fulfilling."

A member of St. Dunstan's Theatre Guild of Cranbrook for eight years, Stacey's previous roles include Sister Annesia in "Nunsense," and the baker's wife in "Into the Woods." She is married, has two children and is a professional social worker for Cranbrook schools. Cast just four weeks prior to the May 31 premier, Stacey said it was a scramble to learn the show.

"I already knew all of the music," she said.

"But, I had to dive in and learn all of the choreography. It's been quite an adventure."

With 60 cast members, "Evita" is perhaps the largest-cast production to be held at Cranbrook's outdoor Greek Theatre. Nestled in a wooded area, the 1916 stone and concrete amphitheater is a dramatic setting for the production.

"It's a wonderful show," said Southfield resident Roberta Campion, choreographer. "Just being outdoors in that Greek Theatre is just stupendous."

Campion, who has a master's degree in dance, said the production spans an array of dance styles, including Spanish dancing, jazz, various sambas, tangos and an authentic Argentinian tango. The marriage of beautiful dancing, strong vocals and acting creates an unforgettable performance. Music director Matt Horn, of Lathrup Village, leads an 11-piece orchestra through this Andrew Lloyd Webber and Tim Rice classic.

"We have a great local cast," said Jamie Richards, of Birmingham, who plays the role of Che. "It's all music, there's no talking.

It sounds amazing."

Richards, 31, has performed in 45 productions over the past 10 years. A few of Richards' previous roles include Alban in "La Cage Aux Folles," Tony in "West Side Story" and the baker in "Into the Woods."

"This show is interesting to me," he said. "I gravitate toward roles that are going to be challenging for me." Che is a young Argentinean student who is driven, defiant and angry. This character is used as a narrator and observer and provides a voice for the anti-Peronist regime.

Directed by Mark Nathanson, of Royal Oak, the production at Cranbrook is

close to the original, but the outdoor setting forced some minor changes. Movie clips, for example, that are used in other productions of "Evita" cannot be used at the Greek Theatre, because it's not dark outside during that portion of the performance, noted Nathanson. That's the only variation from the original musical, he added.

A member of St. Dunstan's Theatre Guild of Cranbrook for 10 years, Nathanson studied theater at the University of Michigan. This production is his first outdoor musical and the fourth show he's directed for St. Dunstan's.

"Evita" made its American premier on May 8, 1979 at the Dorothy Chandler Pavilion in Los Angeles and moved to Broadway shortly thereafter. The musical saw instant success, taking almost every major award on Broadway and kept packed house at the theater for years.

Since that time, many touring companies have performed "Evita" all over the world.

### Evita

What: St. Dunstan's Theatre Guild of Cranbrook presents the Andrew Lloyd Webber and Tim Rice musical, "Evita." The compelling story of Argentina's infamous first lady Eva Peron is told with stunning theatrical flair and features a cast of 60 local actors.

When: 8:30 p.m. Thursday-Saturday, June 6-8.

Where: The outdoor Cranbrook Greek Theatre, 400 Lone Pine Road, one block west of Cranbrook Road, in Bloomfield Hills.

Tickets: \$15 and \$12 for seniors and students. Call (248) 644-0527 or visit online at [www.stdunstanstheatre.com](http://www.stdunstanstheatre.com) to reserve tickets. Some material may not be suitable for children.



Contrast: Eva Peron, center, played by Troy resident Nicole Stacey, is flanked by Che, left, played by Birmingham actor Jamie Richards, an anti-Peronist and her husband, Peron, on right, played by Rick Bodick, of Royal Oak in the St. Dunstan's Theatre Guild of Cranbrook's performance of "Evita."

Legend: Nicole Stacey, of Troy, plays Eva Peron, the infamous first lady of Argentina, in the Andrew Lloyd Webber and Tim Rice musical, "Evita," playing at Cranbrook's Greek Theatre June 6-8.

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