

Evita debuts to big crowds

BY NANCY MILES

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Evita, the classic opera from London, made its stage debut at the Rio Hondo theatre this summer. Two thousand tickets were sold for this spectacular event. Evita is about Argentina's half forgotten first lady, Maria Eva Duarte. The illegitimate daughter of a poor farmer, Evita (the diminutive of Eva) scrambled for power and wealth. Evita was an entertainer who slept her way to stardom; a mistress to a man twice her age, Juan Peron, a mastermind of his military coup. As the wife of President Peron from 1946 to 1952, the public Evita lavished money on the needy - while the private Evita amassed a personal fortune for herself and her expensive lifestyle. After Eva's tragic death of cancer at the age of 33, many people considered her a saint for what she had given them, while others thought of her as a "demon in

sheep's clothing."

Evita is the work of what may be the most impressive duo in musical history: Tim Rice (lyrist) and Andrew Lloyd Webber (composer.) Evita's music is a mixture of contemporary pop and rock with the more traditional idioms of Broadway showtunes, jazz and Latin American rhythm.

Al Jessup (Rio Hondo's vocal and choir director) said, "Rio Hondo's Evita cast was splendid and the leading people were very qualified singers." By-the-way, this was also Rio Hondo's most expensive theatre show (\$6 - \$9 per ticket) because of the fabulous costume designs, enhancing light techniques and professional actors from all over L.A. giving their finest performance for a live audience.

The main lead (Evita) was played by the youngest of the cast, Melissa Marie

Wray. Wray had just graduated from Arroyo High in El Monte at the age of 17. Her goal in life is to pursue a career in musical theatre.

Che, (a narrator in the play) was played by Daniel Bolero, who works full time for First City Credit Union as a personnel assistant. He plans to continue his career in both acting and singing in theatre and films. Next is Juan Peron, (male lead) by David Harryman. Harryman is vice president of a family business. He would like to make his living in musical theatre and would like to work in television and film. Harryman recently won the Kennedy Center's Bronze Award of excellence for his title role portrayal of "Sweeney Todd."

Vince DeCenzo played the part of Agustin Magaldi (Evita's old friend.) DeCenzo desires to perform in professional theatre, and is now making a

full time living as a waiter at Larry Parker's Beverly Hills Diner while waiting for that "big break" in show business to come his way. Last but not least is Denise Alarcon who played Peron's mistress. Alarcon graduated from El Rancho High and from Occidental College where she majored in theatre arts. She is a full time administrative assistant for Processors Unlimited.

Special thanks go to the staff, orchestra and production crew, (costume designers, background people, and make-up) who worked on the sets for Evita. Because of them the production was a great success.

The casts ages ranged from 17 to 36, while the children in Evita were from 6 to 12. It is not uncommon to have children under the age of 12 working in the theatre, especially in today's society. We all have to agree that whether you're young or old, Evita is pure entertainment.