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'Evita' comes to Huntington

Marshall Artists Series welcomes Broadway tour to start 2019

By DAVE LAVENDER
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Playing Eva Peron on her national tour is Yael Reich, a 25-year-old University of Florida graduate who has already been on two national tours with "Rent" and "Mamma Mia."
Courtesy of Broadway World

HUNTINGTON — In the world of music, few rags-to-riches-to-excess tales have captured people's imagination like the meteor-like cautionary tale of Elvis Presley, who died at age 42.

In the world of politics, few rags-to-riches-to-excess tales have captured people's imagination like the timeless story of Argentinean First Lady Eva Peron, who died at the age of 33 in 1952.

As if on cue in 2019, which is being called The Year of The Woman thanks to a record-breaking 103 women being elected to U.S. Congress, the Marshall Artists Series kicks off the spring semester portion of its 2018-19 season with the national tour of the ground-breaking musical "Evita" that tells the roller-coaster story of one of Latin America's most famous female political icons.

Tickets are \$98, \$81, \$71 and \$64 to see the Tim Rice and Andrew Lloyd Webber musical that won seven Tony Awards and was the first British musical to receive the Tony Award for Best Music.

Get tickets by calling the Marshall Artists Series Box Office at 304-696-6656, online at [Ticketmaster.com](https://www.ticketmaster.com) or at the box office from noon to 4 p.m. Monday through Friday in the Joan C. Edwards Playhouse on the Marshall University campus.

Set in Argentina between 1934-52, "Evita," follows Eva Duarte on her journey from poor illegitimate child to ambitious actress to, as wife of military leader-turned-president Juan Peron, the most powerful woman in Latin America. Adored by her people as a champion for the poor, she became one of the most powerful women in the world — while her greed, out-sized ambition and fragile health made her one of the most tragic.

Playing Eva Peron on his national tour is Yael Reich, a 25-year-old University of Florida graduate who has already been on two national tours with "Rent" and "Mamma Mia."

Reich said the timing of being able to portray such a pioneering political figure in a tour across the U.S., which is having a wave of women entering the political arena, is incredible.

"If there was any time I would want to play a role like this it would be now because of the advancement in women's leadership and abilities to make change and to have their voices heard and to really become the leaders of the people," Reich said. "It is inspiring to see women and especially women of color and minority women rising up. It is just a testament to all of the knowledge and power and work that lies in all of these women across the United States and across the world. I think it is going to be really special to bring that message of empowerment to women with this show."

Propelling this incredible story is the timeless songs of one of musical theater's greatest teams — Tim Rice and Andrew Lloyd Webber — who composed musical classics such as "The Phantom of the Opera," "Cats," and "Jesus Christ Superstar."

Like "Jesus Christ Superstar" in 1970, Webber and Rice wrote "Evita" first as a rock opera concept album in 1976, then took the wildly diverse show, with songs that blended everything from Latin, pop jazz and musical theater styles, to stage.

They went first to London's West End in 1978 where it was a smash hit and then onto Broadway in 1979, after which it was nominated for 10 Tonys and won seven, including becoming the first British musical to win the Tony for Best Musical.

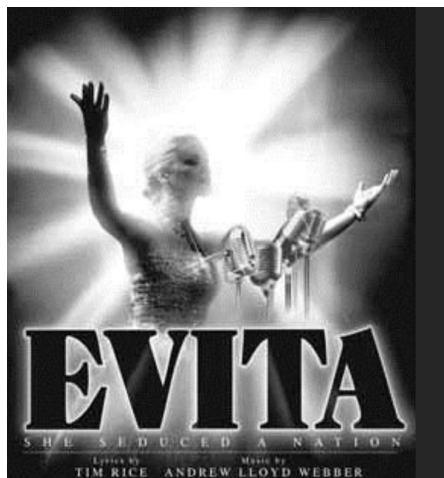
With such songs as "Oh What a Circus," "Buenos Aires" and, of course, "Don't Cry for Me Argentina," and a timeless story-line, "Evita" continues to captivate audiences globally.

Evita's Broadway success included more than 1,500 performances and inspired several professional tours and worldwide productions as well as a feature film starring Madonna and Antonio Banderas in 1996.

It was revived on Broadway in 2012 with Elena Rogers as Eva, pop star Ricky Martin as Che, and Huntington native Michael Cerveris as Peron.

Reich said it is both inspiring and humbling to bring Eva to life every night on this three-month-long national tour.

"It's been a really profound journey so far," Reich said. "This is one of the most challenging roles in musical theater. She never leaves the stage and she sings the entire score — that has been a huge learning experience and it is a humbling one. The way that the music has been written is so expansive and overwhelming. It is a rock opera that is so powerful your blood is just infused with this energy when you hear it so it's been amazing to be able to work within these songs. We were working on a song with our guitarist and he was like, 'Tell me if I am overpowering' and I said 'Go for it and I will sing with you. I want to hear that guitar line and I will rise to it.'"



While Reich has traveled with two national tours, she said that spending summers in college doing repertory theater at the Big Fork Summer Playhouse in Montana helped her hit the stage running after graduation.

"That experience was really unforgettable and priceless," Reich said. "At the repertory theater we did four shows in the main season and a preshow and a post show, so we were rehearsing multiple shows at once while doing a different show every night. You learn how to keep your mind fresh and how to work on different parts in your mind and body constantly. I think making it through those two summers laid the groundwork for what I have done on tour, which before was ensemble and multiple roles and keeping all of the roles straight.

"Touring, now with just one role, there is so much to think about: how to keep well, and how to travel the best on the bus and how to see yourself up for success."

Reich, who performed in Huntington during the national tour of "Mamma Mia," said it is incredible at the age of 25 to get to share this role of Eva Peron, whose heyday was in her 20s.

"In musical theater, playing Eva is one of the most challenging honors bestowed upon you ever," Reich said. "And to achieve it so young is really kind of incredible for me, I am 25, but it is smack dab in the middle of her age that the show covers, which is actually cool. She is such an iconic woman who is revered to this day in Argentina. She was kind of a huge pioneer and kind of laid the foundation for women in power and having a voice."

IF YOU GO

WHAT: Tim Rice and Andrew Lloyd Webber's Tony Award-winning musical "Evita"

WHERE: Keith-Albee Performing Arts Center, 925 4th Ave., Huntington

WHEN: 7:30 p.m. Monday, Jan. 28

HOW MUCH: Tickets are \$98, \$81, \$71, \$64 GET TIX: The Marshall Artists Series box office in the Joan C. Edwards Playhouse on 5th Avenue across from Marshall University's Student Center noon to 4 p.m. weekdays. Tickets may be ordered via telephone by calling the box office at 304-696-6656. The Marshall Artists Series accepts all major credit cards. Tickets can also be ordered using [Ticketmaster.com](https://www.ticketmaster.com).

SPONSORS: "Evita" is sponsored by Farrell White & Legg, Dr. David & Mrs. Sharon Denning, Dr. Mark Studeney and Dr. Melissa Lester, and Kendall York Dentistry, I Heart Radio, WSAZ, The Herald-Dispatch and Marshall University.