The set comprises a number of different pillars with arches joining them at a high level, two sets of stairs which curve as they reach the ground and which lead up to one or several balconies. The balconies and sets slide forward at different times, sometimes, to the same distance from the audience and other times so that one half is further in front than the other. These features enable the stage to take on the appearance of a cathedral, with all seven pillars and the high arches in evidence, a cafe, a ballroom, the exterior of apartment houses, the interior of Perron’s mansion and the exterior of the same. The lights create patterns on the floor of high, decorative church windows, or of slatted venetian blinds either enhancing the effect of the cathedral or creating a businesslike atmosphere. Sometimes there is an altar, centre stage, in the cathedral sometimes a large painting of the Madonna and Child hangs above the altar and sometimes it is a huge, far larger than life, portrait of Eva Peron. When some of the ten pillars are removed from the front of the stage, leaving only 6 at the rear, a cafe atmosphere is created by the addition of small round tables and utilitarian wooden chairs while there is a rough hewn wooden bar at right rear. Later with the tables removed it becomes a dance hall. Behind the back row of pillars is a walkway which can be an aisle in the Cathedral for processing along or a covered street arcade. When the stairs arrive they lead up on both sides to a balcony which crosses the stage from one side to the other. Both stairs and balcony are enclosed by wrought iron railings and strings of lights give a festive air. Later both sets of stairs come forward with the one on the left coming closer to the audience. At the same time the balcony separates to become two balconies, leading into what might be apartments. Sometimes this set is suggestive of the interior of a house when a chaise longue or office equipment arrives and sometimes, when the single balcony is restored and the middle square piece of balcony comes forward giving an extra extension at the centre, it becomes the presidential balcony from which to address the masses. Chairs represent Perron’s cabinet office.

A couch, a printing press and a desk and chair feature as props and at one time a space beneath the central balcony could be a prison cell. Towards the end of the play the stage becomes bare, with only a hospital bed and several screens and a wheelchair in evidence.

When we are first in the Cathedral a high black catafalque and shiny black coffin dominate the centre of the stage. The coffin is open at the top, revealing a padded interior. It is designed for lying-in-state. Hanging up high above the coffin is the huge portrait of Evita’s classically beautiful face. The same set is replicated in the final scene.

Cast and Costumes

The costumes for Evita are from the 1930s and 40s period.

Eva, at the start of the play, is young and pretty, slender, with wavy dark hair worn loose. She has even features, large dark eyes and fine brows, a well-shaped nose and ox bow lips. She first wears a white frock patterned with red flowers. It has a low sweet-heart neckline, cap sleeves, tight fitting waist and full skirt and her court shoes have high heels. Later she wears a white full-length negligee over a satin nightdress. Later still she is seductive in a long red evening dress patterned with gold, with plunging neckline, cap sleeves and fur stole over it. Her hair has become much lighter in colour and is worn in a more formal forties style, rolled in and fastened around her head. At Peron’s apartment she wears a two-piece skirt suit with a modest knee length skirt and round neckline. When wearing a pink flounced dress with shoe string straps and a two tiered hem, she wears a smart little hat and her blond hair is rolled. Later she appears in a pale blue suit, with a jacket fitted into the waist and a straight skirt which ends just below the knee. When she stands on the presidential balcony, with hair by now a true blonde colour, she is magnificent is a glittering formal white satin dress which reveals her shoulders and a glittering necklace to match sparkling dangling earrings. She changes out of this dress during the song High Flying Adored and wears a white boned corset with suspenders and a long blue silk dressing gown. Another of her outfits is a white jacket with black flared skirt, accessorised with flat white round hat, with black bow and white court shoes, a black stole and black gloves. It’s reminiscent of the designer Dior of the period. When she travels to other countries she has a dark blue coat embellished with a fur collar. For the scene at her charity she wears a blue flared skirt, and a pale blue long sleeved top, trimmed with fur. This part is played by Lucy O’Byrne, who you may remember was a runner up in The Voice on BBC1 a few years ago.

Magaldi is of average build, with dark hair slicked back and a thin pencil moustache. He wears a dark lounge suit, dark trousers and white shirt with tie. He dons a cream coloured raincoat when setting of for Buenos Aires and later at the charity concert he wears a smart white evening jacket. This part is played by Oscar Balmaseda.

Che acts as a commentator on the action and is present on stage throughout the whole show. He is tall with long dark hair, close dark eyebrows and deep set intense eyes. He is about 30 years old. This part is played by Glenn Carter. He is always dressed the same way, in military fatigues, with combat trousers and soft jacket in khaki with a maroon coloured t shirt underneath. He has a black beret on his head, decorated with a badge in the shape of a star, and also wears black commando style boots.

Peron, acted by Mike Sterlin, is in his fifties, tall and slim with a firm chin and square shaped face. His short dark hair is receding. He wears a military jacket belted at the waist with epaulettes and brass buttons. Later he wears tails to address the crowd from the presidential balcony. In this guise he wears a splendid blue and white horizontal striped sash decorated with a twinkling silver cross, over one shoulder and extending down to his hips. He also dresses in a light grey lounge suit with waistcoat, white shirt and tie. This suit is also adorned with the blue and white sash for the opening and closing scenes.

The mistress wears a floral silk robe open over a short white satin slip and white court shoes. She is pretty with curly dark hair and a slim and youthful figure. Her coat is knee length fur with a wide collar. This part is played by Christina Hoey.

The opening scene sees the chorus in clerical garb, with long black robes and white surplices while the choir, including the children, wear long red robes. Tea dresses with tight fitting waists and full skirts are later worn by the female members of the chorus, with a waitress wearing an apron round her waist, while the men wear white shirts, braces and dark trousers. Later in the first Act the chorus is transformed into well-to-do aristocrats with the men wearing cream linen suits and panama hats, while the women wear garden party outfits, of pastel coloured frocks, with pert hats in similar pale shades. Frequently the men appear in military uniform with khaki jackets belted in at the waist and lighter trousers, smartly creased. They often wear black peaked caps on their heads. These are the officers. The soldiers wear military fatigues with tin helmets. Some men, acting as Peron’s private guard, wear trousers tucked into high boots and large ornate high helmets trimmed with red and with red tassles. Their dark uniform is trimmed with red braid, with red stripes down the sides of the trousers and red epaulettes. They also carry swords in their scabbards. The secret police wear long leather coats. In the second act the chorus become workers and wear clothes which look cheaper and less attractive. They also become aristocrats once more. This time the women wear full length ball gowns while the men are in formal evening dress with tails. Towards the end of the show some chorus members are dressed in grey skirts and jackets, and others appear in nurses outfits, all white with knee length dresses, and long falls of white fabric covering their hair. Later the outfits acquire long skirts, transforming the nurses into nursing nuns, with white nun-like coifs covering their head and hair. The children of the chorus appear in various outfits, including French school uniforms and working-class clothes. The little girl who sings a solo is about 12 years old, with long plaits framing her face. She wears a pale floral dress, white socks over her ankles and black shoes.

Evita’s lyrics were written by Tim Rice, the music was composed by Andrew Lloyd Webber and Bob Tomson and Bill Kenwright were the directors of this show.

These programme notes are brought to you by Sightlines in partnership with the Grand Opera House Belfast. If you experience any difficulty with your headset during the show, please stand up and try to attract the attention of a member of staff. They will be sitting at the edge of the auditorium. We hope you will enjoy the show.

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