Evita: A Practical Approach to Creating and Implementing Choreography for Professional Theater

Kimberly Ball

University of Central Florida

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EVITA:
A PRACTICAL APPROACH FOR CREATING AND IMPLEMENTING CHOREOGRAPHY
FOR PROFESSIONAL THEATER

by

KIMBERLY BALL
BSN, Western Governor’s University, 2015

A thesis submitted in partial fulfillment of the requirements
for the degree of Master of Arts
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ABSTRACT

From Oklahoma!, 42nd Street, and A Chorus Line to Hairspray, Kinky Boots, and Hamilton, we have watched musical theater dance transcend conventional boundaries and open up worlds that were once unimaginable and distant. Musical theater choreography is a crucial element to the storytelling process. When dialogue, either spoken or sung, isn’t fully able to express feelings, dance is there not only to heighten the emotion, but also to reveal character depths and further the plot. As an extension of expressed language, movement becomes the link that connects text and emotion, and ultimately the story and the audience.

How does a choreographer go about creating effective choreography that facilitates storytelling, yet still inspires, energizes, and engages audiences? What is the process of taking a premature concept and turning it in to a living piece? What are some of the tools that a choreographer can use to design movement in non-traditional spaces or achieve a balanced vision with a cast of varied dance skills? As a dancer, educator, and choreographer, I set out to use my experience to outline the process of what it takes to create, develop, and implement choreography for a professional theater production in a thrust space, specifically, the main stage production of Evita at Orlando Shakes.

The goal of this thesis was to analyze the elements of creating and implementing dance and movement within a musical, beginning with a conceptual idea, journeying through the design and application phase, and ending with a final production. Throughout this process, various methodologies were used to create choreography, such as the creative utilization of individual skill sets, the effective use of space and patterns, the precise play with
instrumentation, and the careful blending of movement and dance. I also examined and explored teaching strategies that foster the confidence of both movers and dancers.

The first part of this thesis focuses on research and the pre-production phase of Orlando Shakes’ production of *Evita*. The latter half discusses the choreographic process I used to design and teach choreography and the steps it took to achieve the final product.
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CHAPTER ONE
INTRODUCTION

In February of 2019, I was asked to serve as the Choreographer for Orlando Shakes’ main stage production of the Andrew Lloyd Webber classic, *Evita*. Having only seen the film version featuring Madonna, I knew I would have a lot of work ahead of me in learning everything about this beautifully complex piece of musical theater. It is a story rich in culture, history and controversy partnered with dynamic characters and a rock opera score containing broad vocal ranges and peculiar and frequent meter changes. Initially, I had doubts I would even be able to successfully translate the music and text into movement that boldly told the story of Eva Peron and the people of Argentina. Would I be able to offer a fresh take on a timeless classic? On the other hand, I was very excited to once again work at a theater that is reputable and known for their high-quality productions and to be able to join a strong creative team I knew well from past productions. It was a challenge I was up for, and I welcomed the opportunity to bring this story to life on the stage.

The work that goes in to choreographing a professional musical is immense. It involves more than just placing bodies on stage and telling them to kick and twirl. It is an intricate puzzle that requires a lot of time, planning, and careful execution. Musical theater choreography is multidisciplinary. It requires a knowledge of not only all the components of musical theater but also dance training, dance history, and dance styles. It’s understanding dance composition, spatial choreography, and the elements of dance. It’s awareness of the technical side of musical theater such as how lighting and scenic design will impact choreography. It’s knowing how to analyze scripts and scores, how to read music, and how to interpret it through movement. It’s
having a creative mind and the ability to entertain and engage audiences. It’s being mindful of how choreography affects the voice and how we emote through movement. Most importantly, it’s knowing how to tell a story that comes from truth.

So, how do you go about choreographing a musical? Where do you begin? How do you create a dance that continues to tell the story? What are some strategies to teaching a cast of varying abilities of movers and dancers? How can you creatively utilize space in traditional and non-traditional settings that still enable the audience to feel connected and part of the story?

Throughout this thesis, I hope to be able to explore and examine the process of creating and implementing choreography for a professional musical theater production, specifically Orlando Shakes’ production of *Evita*. Having never choreographed this show throughout my career, I knew I would be starting this journey from the very beginning and working through each element of the choreographic process. I felt it was the perfect time to deconstruct the process that I, personally, use to choreograph musicals in the hopes I can provide a tool for other aspiring musical theater choreographers.
CHAPTER TWO

EVITA: THE MUSICAL

The musical, *Evita*, was originally birthed not as a stage production but rather a 1976 rock opera concert album by Composer Andrew Lloyd Webber and Lyricist Tim Rice. Its conception is credited to Rice, who, on his way to a dinner party one evening in 1973, caught the end of a BBC radio program, “Legends in our Lifetime”, about Eva Peron. He immediately became interested and fascinated by the beloved First Lady of Argentina. As a child, he recalled seeing her images on stamps, but he knew very little about who she really was and the impact she had on her country and its people. He knew he wanted his colleague and friend Andrew Lloyd Webber to partner and compose the score; however, Webber was busy working on another project. Rice ventured out on his own and spent a year researching the political and fashion icon Eva Peron, even traveling to Argentina to study and conduct interviews. Because his previous musical, *Jesus Christ Superstar*, was not well-received in Buenos Aires, evidenced by extremists bombing the theatre on May 2, 1973, Rice kept a low profile while traveling about the country (Barnett). He also consulted British author Mary Main (*The Woman with the Whip*) and American author Fleur Clowles (*Bloody Precedent*), both of whom wrote highly regarded biographies of Eva Peron and both of whom were criticized with writing “anti-Peronista gossip columns” (Allison, 11).

With the completion of *Jeeves*, Andrew Lloyd Webber teamed up with Rice to collaborate on his proposed musical of *Evita*, meaning “little Eva”. The songwriting duo decided to release *Evita* as an album musical, just as they had done with their previous album, *Jesus Christ Superstar*. The original recording/concept album was released in the UK in 1976,
featuring Julie Covington singing the title role. Rounding out the cast was Paul Jones as Juan Peron, Colm Wilkinson as Che, Barbara Dickson as Peron’s Mistress, and Tony Christie as tango singer Augustin Magaldi. The album, along with the singles “Don’t Cry for Me Argentina” and “Another Suitcase in Another Hall,” was well-received, reaching platinum status in 1978.

Original West End Production

The album, *Evita*, garnered enough interest to persuade Robert Stigwood, producer of *Jesus Christ Superstar*, to bring the opera to life on stage. Renowned American director, Harold Prince, who by this time was responsible for several Broadway hits, was invited to take part in the stage production. He agreed, saying, “Any opera that starts with a funeral can’t be that bad.” (Citron, 230). Rounding out the creative team was Choreographer Larry Fuller and Timothy O’Brian and Tazeena Firth partnering on scenic design.

Elaine Paige was chosen from hundreds of women who auditioned for the leading role of Eva Peron, after Julie Covington declined the role. “She was the best,” said Tim Rice (Barnett). English actor Davis Essex played Che with Joss Ackland as Peron and Siobhan McCarthy as Mistress.

The show opened on June 21, 1978 at the Prince Edward Theatre and closed on February 18, 1986 after running for 3,176 performances. It was a successful opening and critics largely matched the excitement of the audience with Derek Jewell of *The Sunday Times* proclaiming *Evita* to be “quite marvellous” and praised Andrew Lloyd Webber’s ambitious score as “an unparalleled fusion of twentieth century musical experience.” (Essex, 178)
In 1978, the West End production of *Evita* received a Laurence Olivier Musical of the Year Award, and Elaine Paige won a Performance of the Year Award. Hal Prince and David Essex received Laurence Olivier nominations for Director of the Year and Performance of the Year, respectively, that same year.

**Original Broadway Production**

Following a strong start to the West End Production, *Evita* was brought to the United States, first premiering in Los Angeles and subsequently in San Francisco. It opened on Broadway at the Broadway Theatre on September 25, 1979 and closed on June 26, 1983 after 17 previews and 1,567 performances.

Elaine Paige was originally promised the opportunity to re-create her role in the Broadway production; however, Actor’s Equity Association refused permission to allow a non-American to perform in the United States. Patti LuPone starred as Eva, Bob Gunton as Peron, Mandy Patinkin as Che, Mark Syers as Magaldi, and Julie Ohringer as Mistress.

In 1980, *Evita* was nominated for ten Tony awards and won seven of those nominations that year, including awards for Best Musical, Best Original Score, Best Book of a Musical, Best Performance by a Leading Actress (Patti LuPone), Best Performance by a Featured Actor in a Musical (Mandy Patinkin), Best Direction of a Musical, and Best Lighting Design.

Beginning in 1980, *Evita* began to reach all parts of the world with original productions opening in Australia, Spain, Mexico and Brazil. The first US national tour began in 1980, followed by numerous international tours that continued for the next thirty-eight years. A film
adaptation of *Evita* premiered in 1996, featuring Madonna as Eva and Antonio Banderas as Che. The film was directed by Alan Parker and choreographed was by Vincent Paterson. The movie, and Madonna’s performance, received mixed reviews, but was surprisingly nominated for five Academy Awards, winning one for Best Original Song ("You Must Love Me," which was composed specifically for the film). Madonna received a Golden Globe Award for Best Actress in a Motion Picture Musical or Comedy. A 2006 London revival and a 2012 Broadway revival were resurrected and received many nominations for Olivier, Tony, and Drama Desk Awards, but failed to take the top honors.
CHAPTER THREE
PRE-PRODUCTION PROCESS

It takes a village to put on a large-staged musical production. Each cog in the wheel is important to its function and its comprehensive success. The pre-production process for me as a choreographer is invaluable as it’s my time to get a head start on collaborating with the other designers, study the script and score, and begin exploring choreography for the show.

Design Meetings

We began our initial design meetings for *Evita* about five months before rehearsals began. In the beginning, we came together to brainstorm ideas, hear the director’s concept, present our “wish lists,” and discuss the overall visions we had for our department. I really enjoy the early phases of the design process. It gives us all a chance to bring our ideas and experience together in one room to explore possibilities that will enable us to create a believable world. Most often our meetings are held in the conference room at Orlando Shakes with the members of the creative and design team as well as staff from the theater. These include the Production Manager, Artistic Director, Director, Music Director, Choreographer, Set Designer, Costume Designer, Sound Designer, Lighting Designer, Stage Manager and Assistant Stage Managers, Properties Master, Sound Engineer, Technical Director, and Master Electrician.

Attending these meetings is crucial for me as a choreographer, because it not only allows me to gather the information I need to create the dances, but it also gives me the opportunity to provide input as to what is important for choreography. Close conversations with the Director, Music Director, Costume Designer, and the Set Designer helps me to design the best physical
movement on stage I can, as well as keeping the actors and dancers safe. Establishing these relationships well in advance is important to the design process.

**Director and Choreographer Relationship**

Having worked with the Director of *Evita* on two past productions, we have a very strong working relationship. We clearly and effectively communicate our ideas to each other, bounce new ideas off one another, laugh at our mistakes together, and, when challenges arise, we work through them and find solutions. I find it helpful to have such an amicable bond, as it makes our collaboration much easier and the process a lot more enjoyable.

At our first design meeting, the team was presented with the Director’s Concept (Appendix A). This is a description of his ideas and how he envisions the show in his mind’s eye. It also gives us an avenue on where to focus our artistry for this show. Specifically, he gives us an insight into who Eva Peron really was and her political and social impact on Argentina. We follow the arc of her as a young teenager working in a man’s world and using whatever means she can to climb her way to the top. But there is still good in Eva, and the Director wants to make sure that that image is not lost. He also focuses on Che, who is the narrator of the story, serving as our eyes and ears, and offering the voice of reason. He represents opposition to Peronism and has the ability to foresee what’s coming versus Eva who, in contrast, lives only in the moment. We see, too, that it’s a turbulent time of politics and social unrest, ironically not far from today’s world. The director gives information about how he imagines the set to look and function by stating, “Unit Set. Open and able to adapt to all scenic locations. Using representative pieces of furniture and props to define where we are. Able to make fast and interesting choreographed
transitions. In some way evoking the style of Buenos Aires and the Casa Rosada. Using all areas of the theatre to give the audience an immersive feeling....particularly when the crowds outside Casa Rosada are crying ’Evita, Evita’”. Music and choreography are briefly touched on, giving direction that they are exciting, passionate, and with an Argentine flair. Overall, his concept for the show stays in line with the traditional Evita that many know and love, which I appreciate. I am, more often than not, a traditionalist when it comes to choreographing certain musicals, and keeping true to the original concept gives honor to the timeless classic.

Prior to beginning rehearsals, the Director and I had multiple conversations about the choreography needs for the show. We went through all the songs and discussed which ones would need staging/blocking and which ones would need more choreographed movement. We created a list of Staging and Choreography Assignments (Appendix B) which divided the duties between Director and Choreographer. The Director for Evita felt very comfortable staging numbers that did not involve intricate choreography. Occasionally, you will work with a Director who will not stage any kind of musical number, even if it has no choreography requirements. Luckily, this was not the case. For numbers that had a combination of staging and movement, or if the Director needed me to clean one of his numbers, we would collaborate and work together. Several of the bigger choreographed numbers I would be responsible for were “Buenos Aires,” the tango dance in “I’d Be Surprisingly Good For You,” “Peron’s Latest Flame,” and “And the Money Kept Rolling In.” These will be discussed later in more detail.
Music Director and Choreographer Relationship

In our production, we were fortunate to have both a Music and Vocal Supervisor and a Music Director. They were truly a dream team, and it was so great to have them both for the rehearsal process. I relied heavily on their expertise and knowledge of this difficult score to help guide me through complex rhythms and frequent meter changes. I was grateful our production included a live orchestra. In a time when arts budgets are slashed and theaters are more likely to use tracks for the accompaniment, it’s refreshing to have an accompanist at all the rehearsals. And there’s certainly nothing that compares to the beautiful sound of a live orchestra during a performance.

I worked closely with the Music Directors. They were invaluable to me. They were able to play the music at an adjusted tempo while the dancers were learning the choreography. As an extra set of eyes and ears, they watched as I built the choreography and offered ideas about places in the music that I could use to accentuate the choreography, or vice versa. We jointly discussed motifs and themes and how I could tie that in to telling the story through movement. There were no cuts in the music for this production, but if there were, we would work together to examine parts of the music and make cuts or adjustments that would make the most sense musically and choreographically.

Costume Designer and Choreographer Relationship

A happy marriage between choreography and costumes must exist both in functionality and in style. The wrong costume paired with choreography can have negative effects on a show. It has the potential to skew the storyline, make movement unsafe, inhibit what the choreographer
can create, and clearly just not make any sense to what is happening on stage. But when the
costume designer and design team are all on the same page, it’s magical!

Early conversations in the design process were had as we collaborated on costume style
selections and choreography. We were presented with “mood boards,” which are representational
ideas of the costume designers’ vision for the characters in the show. While they are not the
exact costume looks, they are groups of pictures/renderings used to inspire and give the other
designers a general direction of how the costume designers would like them to look.

Various components of costuming can affect choreography. Overall style, types of
material and fabric, footwear, and accessories are all factors that can help or hinder
choreography, or factors that need to be worked around if necessary. For example, in the Tango
Dance in “I’d Be Surprisingly Good For You,” it was important to have the correct style of
ballroom shoe in order to properly execute the style of dance for both the male and female
dancer. It needed to match the choreography, both in style and in function. In the same dance, the
Tango dress had two long pieces of material down the back, but as we built the choreography,
we found that these pieces of material got in the way of executing lifts, so the costume designer
removed the material. Often, there are instances where costume components are not able to be
adjusted so easily, so the choreographer and actors must be flexible and find alternative means to
find a compromise. In “Art of the Possible,” a few of the Generals had stiff, knee-high riding
boots that were made of a material that did not have a lot of flexibility. It made rocking in the
rocking chairs difficult. What may seem like an easy task was difficult due to the lack of
movement in the actors’ legs and feet while sitting in the chair. The boots were not able to be
returned nor altered, so we worked on how we could rock in the chairs without affecting the overall staging.

**Script Analysis**

To tell story through movement, we must first understand the story on paper. When I begin to prepare for a show, I always read the entire script first and make my own notes on factors that may affect my choreography. I first do a thorough read-through and then I go back to break down the scenes and characters (Appendix D). Understanding variables such as time, place, circumstances, characters, relationships, motivation, conflicts and social and economic issues is important and can influence physical gesturing and how the body moves. As I read through the script, I look for clues within the text that may spark an idea or interest that will help me to create the vision I see for that moment of the show.

With historically-based shows, such as *Evita*, I am mindful to do a lot of research to make sure I understand who Eva Peron really was and the impact she made on the people of Argentina. And, to also understand her husband, Juan Peron, and the political ideology of Peronism during that time. The descamisados, or “shirtless ones,” are seen a lot throughout the show, so comprehending their way of life and their struggles during the 1940s has great value.

Movement must reflect what is happening at the time and what the characters are feeling and experiencing. There is purpose behind every action and to create that is dependent on understanding the “why.” Investing the time in reading through both spoken and sung text, and
really grasping what is being said, will only give strength and believability to the choreography produced on stage.

**Music Analysis**

A more challenging part of the pre-production process for me is analyzing and studying the score for the songs I am assigned to choreograph. Apart from a couple years of piano lessons as a small child, I have never had any formal music training, so learning how to read music was a personal challenge early in my career. Over the past 20 years of being a choreographer, and with the help of classes and some wonderful music directors, I have gained the skills that enable me to better understand and identify musical notation, time signatures, key signatures, tempo marks, leitmotifs and varying rhythmic changes throughout the score.

The score for *Evita* is so beautifully complicated. It’s inspired by Latin, Pop, and Jazz music and many tunes are infused with a tango flair. It’s Andrew Lloyd Webber’s most brilliant and mature score to date, far surpassing *Jesus Christ Superstar* and *Phantom of the Opera*. His ability to create and tell a story through music is genius and an example of artful composing. The interwoven network of leitmotifs throughout the score proves to be a powerful device that sometimes can indicate what a character is thinking, contradict what a character is saying, or even foreshadow an event that is about to happen. In an excerpt from his book, *Literally Anything Goes*, author Scott Miller gives light to how Webber uses one central leitmotif:
“The central leitmotif here is the melody to "Don’t Cry for Me, Argentina." We hear it first as Che’s "Oh, What a Circus," making the audience think this is his music, but it’s not. He has taken Eva’s signature tune and "corrupted" it, turning her soaring ballad into angry rock and roll. But within the same song, we hear Eva sing her version; and before the first number is over, Lloyd Webber has linked these two characters with the same melody. Lloyd Webber is following the example of Meredith Willson’s *The Music Man*, in which Marian’s song "Goodnight My Someone" shares its melody almost exactly with Harold Hill’s song, "Seventy-Six Trombones." In *The Music Man*, this device tells us that Harold and Marian belong together. In the more ambiguous *Evita*, these two central characters are drawn by their shared music into an existential relationship neither one wants. This music returns midway through Act II with "Santa Evita," in which the Argentine people express the love for Eva that she expressed for them in "Don’t Cry for Me." Eva returns to it again in "Eva’s Final Broadcast," and it becomes a tragic love song now as she says goodbye to her people. Finally, in her last moments, as her life passes before her in the "Montage" number, Che’s "Oh, What a Circus" returns. He gets the last word, musically speaking. He takes her love song away from her and leaves us with his more cynical indictment of her. He has the last word.” (Miller, 2010)

A majority of the songs in *Evita* are leitmotifs of the singers: Eva (“Don’t Cry For Me Argentina,” “I’d Be Surprisingly Good For You,” “A New Argentina”); Peron (“Dice Are Rolling”); The Army and the Aristocrats (“Peron’s Latest Flame,” repeated in “The Chorus Girl Hasn’t Learned” and “She’s A Diamond”); and Eva’s Designers (“Rainbow High” and they then repeat it as the embalmers in the final song, “Lament”).

The recorded soundtracks of *Evita* also were useful tools I studied and listened to in order to create choreography. They helped me make discoveries about the story, the character’s emotions or content that shifts and arcs. Listening to the tracks enabled me also to hear the various instruments arranged in the song that may set the tone or provide specific chords or “hits” I can use to accentuate the choreography. Before listening to the tracks, however, I am
sure to double check that the score matches the track. Having the skill to read music plays an important part in comparing score vs. recorded soundtracks.
CHAPTER FOUR
CREATING CHOREOGRAPHY

“Choreography is writing on our feet.” -Bob Fosse

Just as we write stories with our hands, or tell stories with our voices, we can communicate stories with our bodies through movement. Movement, big or small, is powerful enough to transmit the thoughts, ideas, and emotions that lie within our internal state of being. Movement also can take words on a page and create a visual form of art that brings the story to life. In musical theater choreography, we take the language of dance and weave it together with the language of music and text to enhance the story, further plot points, and express emotions that are unable to be spoken or sung.

Creating choreography is no easy task. It requires time, patience, and a creative imagination. At times, the steps just flow together very easily, while at other times, you run into a mental block that stops you dead in your tracks. As a choreographer, I often get asked, “How do you come up with your dances?” It’s not an easy answer to explain.

**Inspiration**

As a young child, I would dance on my back porch with my purple boom box and watch myself dance and twirl around in the reflection of the sliding glass door. I would invite my friends over, and we would make up flashy dance routines and put on recitals for my parents and siblings and anyone who would watch us. More often than not, I was the leader of the group and
made up a lot of the steps, told everyone where to stand, and corrected them if they were doing it wrong. I didn’t know it then, but I was a natural choreographer!

As a professional choreographer today, I can look back on those times when I was creating dances for my friends and see there was indeed a root source of inspiration. It was play. Play is natural. Play is fun. Play allows the mind to illuminate so we can tap into new creative thoughts and ideas. As adults, we forget to use play as part of our daily lives because of the responsibilities and stresses that life throws our way. But, as a child, play enables us to naturally let go, act on impulse, and move freely without any inhibitions.

Improvisation is another tool I use to create choreography. I turn on either the piece of music I am choreographing to, or a similar piece of music, and just let the music move my body. I close my eyes and visualize through my mind’s eye what I feel the music is telling me. I follow its lead; its poetic imagery in my mind, and as I move through space, I am able to translate the music into dance.

In today’s world, modern day technology has helped to open a vast amount of resources one can utilize for research and inspiration. The instant access to images, videos, literature, and music on the internet provides us with an endless amount of material we can listen to or view. I will use the internet to look up images from the time frame the show is taking place or view stock photographs from some of the original productions. For each show, I create my own page of inspirational images for every song I choreograph. I reference them while choreographing. In the images I choose, I look for fashion trends, poses or body carriage, expressions, colors or patterns, and a general way of life I feel represents the characters or time period. Researching
historical facts and data from reliable sources on the internet is also beneficial. I utilize videos from YouTube for research. For example, for the tango dance at the Charity Concert, I especially found it helpful for me to look at vintage Argentine Tango videos from the 1950s to study their variation in style and movement. I watched documentaries on YouTube about Eva Peron, her life in Argentina, and her rise and fall as the First Lady.

While the internet is a great place, there’s nothing like an “old-fashioned” library to find a lot of the information you need. While in graduate school and prepping to create choreography for *Evita*, I frequented the library at UCF to obtain a lot of information on Eva Peron. I read books on her life and accolades, researched the archives for articles and interviews of those who knew her, and sifted through videos of old Broadway footage of the original US production of *Evita*, as well as documentaries on Argentinean life in the 1950s. The library is such an invaluable and underutilized resource!

Another method I use to create choreography involves no research, writing, or laborious physical acts. I simply sit quietly in the theater or the space where my choreography will be performed and visualize what I expect my choreography to look like. Sometimes I play music; sometimes I just “play” the music in my mind. I also place myself in various seats throughout the house to give me a sense of what the audience will be seeing from that angle. Being in the space, either with or without the set, will often spark some creative ideas for me.
Creating Choreography for the Space

Our production of *Evita* was pre-determined to be performed in the Margeson Theater, which houses a thrust stage. It’s a beautiful space that holds 324 people. I really enjoy choreographing in the thrust space. It offers challenges that a proscenium stage doesn’t. It makes the performance more intimate and an overall immersive experience.

The thrust stage configuration is the oldest known type of fixed staging. The ancient Greek amphitheaters had thrust stages and there also was one in the old Globe Theater where many of Shakespeare’s works were performed during Elizabethan times. For the actor, it gives them a sense of what it would be like to perform to a hillside of spectators during that time. (Steen). The thrust stage can be rectangular, semi-circular, or even a half polygonal shape. The thrust stage in the Orlando Shakes Margeson Theater is a square-shaped proscenium stage upstage with a rectangular thrust. Two “voms” extend out on the downstage right and left side of the thrust. A “vom” is a shortened word for vomitorium, which implies a tunnel or corridor built under or behind the seats of a theater or stadium.

Each seat in a thrust space offers a unique perspective. As a choreographer, it is my job to create a dance that gives each audience member the best view of the action, no matter where they are sitting. It can be frustrating as an audience member to watch a show in a thrust space that is linear and staged in a more proscenium-based fashion. If I was to sit on the side of the stage and two people stood close together and faced each other, as if they were on a proscenium stage, they would cancel each other out, and my view of the person farthest from me would be non-existent. Placing the ensemble in linear lines all facing downstage is a sure way to cut off engagement
with the audience on the sides of the stage. And, usually the strongest point on a proscenium stage is downstage center, but putting your lead in this position for their big “moment” in a thrust space will ultimately make for a weaker statement. These are just a few challenges that a thrust space creates when blocking or choreographing.

The unique set for *Evita* was designed with the thrust challenges in mind. Scenic Designer Jim Hunter created a beautiful unit set that offered multiple “phases,” which allowed the director the ability to stage the show by manipulating scenic elements and props. Two examples of moving parts of our set were two large side levers (we used the term “flippers”) that easily could be moved by actors and a center portion that moved downstage and upstage via automation (Figure 1 & 2). *Evita* required 28 scene changes, or changes in environment, so it was important to have a set that easily could be altered to bring the audience to a new ”place.” Jim Hunter explains that, “These phases can be something as simple as bringing on a bed and nightstand to create a bedroom to having the entire rear wall of the set open for Eva Peron’s first grand entrance onto the stage” (“Telling the Story of Evita With Scenic Design,” 2019). The versatility of the set gave us multiple options for blocking and choreography.

The creative use of space, angles, and patterning is key in designing choreography on the thrust stage. I try to develop pieces that not only give the audience a great view, but also ones that are visually appealing, interesting to watch, and ones that infuse the audience with the energy that radiates from the stage, inside out. I knew I wanted the choreography of *Evita* to be exciting and alive. I wanted it to breathe within the walls and become the pulse of the show. I wanted the audience to stay engaged and not struggle to see what was happening on stage. And, I
wanted to keep the story moving forward. I knew in order for that to happen, I had to create stage “stories” throughout my choreography so I could help not only tell the story, but, more importantly in a thrust space, guide the audience’s attention to focus in on important story plot points that were being sung or spoken. Since Evita is a sung-through “opera” with little spoken text, it becomes even more important that the music, lyrics, and choreography continue to give the story momentum and become the unspoken text.
Figure 1: Evita Set Plan, Lower Level (Scenic Designer: Jim Hunter, image used with permission)
Figure 2: Evita Set Plan, Upper Level (Scenic Designer: Jim Hunter, image used with permission)
Creating Choreography for Dancers and Movers

The cast of *Evita* at the Orlando Shakes included 22 actors, 4 principal roles and 18 ensemble roles. We also employed 9 understudy roles, both within the cast and outside the cast. The ensemble consisted of talented actors with varying skills in movement and dance. Some actors had extensive dance training, while others were strong movers. Depending on the show, I strongly believe that having the diversity in skills can enhance the choreography.

A valuable step of creating choreography is a strong trust and collaboration with the actors. I was part of the audition process of this show, and each actor was selected with their specific skillset in mind. Knowing their strengths and weaknesses is important for me to understand so I can really create a piece that highlights not only their individual performance but also compliments the style of the show overall. For specific moments in the numbers, I give the actors permission to play and create movements and sequences they feel best reflect their character in that moment in time, within their field of expertise. If they need assistance, I will provide coaching or, if adjustments need to be made, I will offer suggestions and correction. Giving them the opportunity to bring their own choreography to the piece, within their realm of comfortability, brings a beautiful sense of authenticity and realness to the show.

I enjoy creating choreography that will empower and energize actors. Dance is often an uncomfortable and nerve-racking endeavor for some individuals, especially if they do not have experience. It takes the right choreographer and teacher to study their abilities, and potential abilities, and find choreography that suits those qualities. I find joy in making actors successful
in overcoming their fear and self-doubt when it comes to dance. I really believe everyone can dance.

Over the years, I’ve discovered there are times that my choreography is not a one size fits all. Sometimes it will only look great on half the class because there are dancers and movers in the same class and there are those who are not able to execute the choreography as well. Or, I may teach a combination my way and then have a couple of dancers add their own style, giving it a totally different look, and I love it. I have also learned to be flexible when creating choreography at home and in my head. It’s not until I get into the rehearsal studio with the actors that I can really play with the movements and see how it evolves. It is important for me not to give a mover extensive choreography that cannot be performed well because that will just emphasize their lack of training. I believe in creating seamless pieces which involve a beautiful, fluid mix of skillsets and not those that pull focus due to poor technique or execution.

Creating multi-leveled choreography for movers and dancers comes with a lot of work, but the end results are the pay-off. When you have choreography that suits everyone and brings out the best in everyone, you have actors who can give a better performance, have a more visually interesting piece, and can potentially encourage those movers to want to further their dance education and training.

The choreography in our production of *Evita* at the Orlando Shakes was a testament to my philosophy of dance. I had a healthy blend of trained dancers and strong movers, and I created choreography that not only utilized their specific talents but also told the story of Eva Peron. The multi-leveled choreography in “Buenos Aires” and “And the Money Kept Rolling In”
was fun and electric. The tango number in “I’d Be Surprisingly Good for You” was simply stunning. And, the patterning and precision in “Peron’s Latest Flame” was mesmerizing and intriguing. The actors exceeded my expectations in their performance and, overall, I am pleased with how well the choreography turned out.
CHAPTER FIVE
CHOREOGRAPHY HIGHLIGHTS

In this chapter, I will focus on four numbers in Evita that I choreographed: “Buenos Aires,” “I’d Be Surprisingly Good For You,” “Peron’s Latest Flame,” and “And The Money Kept Rolling In.” These numbers were initially discussed together with the Director before rehearsals began. We brainstormed ideas and visions we had for each song. We also conferenced on the technical aspects of the dance, relating to the set, lighting, and costuming needs. Following our conversation, together we made casting assignments, so we knew how many dancers and movers would be in each number.

“Buenos Aires”

The song, “Buenos Aires,” is one of the biggest dance numbers in the show. It’s more than a song about a 15-year-old girl going to the big city to become an actress. It’s filled with themes and critical story points. It’s about establishing the culture of the people of Argentina, the hustle of big city life, the economic strife of the workers, the sin of doing whatever it takes to make it to the top, the intrusion of outsiders, the display of the riches of the oligarchs, and the presence of a firm military government. There is so much happening in one song. I wanted to highlight each one of these story points.

In storytelling through movement, I use a layering technique to my choreography. While it involves a lot of detailed work on my part, it creates a more believable story as well as a more visually interesting number to watch. I created many different tracks of movement and patterning for each character in this show. Rather than having everyone perform uniform movements, each
character got their own “story” to create at times, and it carried throughout the number and even throughout the show. For example, I used the beginning of “Buenos Aires” to set up our environment of being in the city. I had one couple entering and arguing in Spanish and there was a couple flirting and executing a type of cat-mouse chase. I chose to have another playful couple dancing while two prostitutes and their “pimp” suggested the darker side of the city. A man ran across the top platform of the set and down the stairs to meet the pimp and exchange cash or perhaps drugs, again signifying the part of town that Eva was in was not the greatest area. I had a couple of men circulating around Eva, interested in her youthfulness and naivety. And two women danced by Eva to give us a sense of another woman intruding on their turf and into “their” town. Each of these tracks had specific movements and specified choreographed counts.

After establishing these relationships and city dynamics, the stage picture shifted to triangulated groups in the voms and a smaller group upstage, while Eva stood center stage. All groups faced Eva with an all-eyes-on-the-new-girl feel. Each group had different choreography, challenging her to join in and pick up the ways of the city folk. She faced each group as she sang, “Fill me up with your heat, with your noise.....Let me dance to your beat, make it loud....” and she picks up the choreography in perfect sync absorbing the pulse of the people. Musically during this section, I heard a tone of a shift and struggle between major and minor chords. It happens frequently throughout this song. By carefully creating appropriate choreography during those moments, it helped me create an initial unbalanced and disjointed relationship between Eva and the city.
Throughout the orchestration of “Buenos Aires,” I heard different instruments distinctly stand out as well. These were important to take notice of as either a representation of some component within the environment or symbolism of some aspect relating to the show’s storyline. An example I used in this choreography was the sound of the trumpets. They represented the sound of honking car horns in a big city. During one of these specific moments, while dancing, I patterned the ensemble moving in opposing lines as if in the flow of traffic, and Eva finding her way through, again showing an example of her trying to fit in. A second example is the violins during the dance break. The violins have a repeating section that plays as underscore. It reminds me of a pulse or heartbeat and its underlying repetitive and consistent drive lays a foundation that keeps the momentum going.

After the opening sequence, there were sixteen more formation changes. It was important for me to keep the stage fluid, evolving and energetic. I didn’t want the energy to fall flat. To keep the audience engaged and immersed, I used every bit of space I had available to the dancers. The actors danced in the voms, in the aisles, and on the stage. In our thrust space, we had a deck that was at floor level. We did not build up the deck so we could give the actors the most dance space and keep them safe and free from any fall or trip hazards. The audience and actors were in close proximity to each other, so keeping that in mind for choreography was critical. Angles are very important in a thrust space. When actors dance on the side, it’s a must that they turn on an angle to give the audience on that side a better view and more eye contact and engagement. Keeping the actors always facing front can give the side audience a feeling of being ignored or neglected. I used a triangle formation for one moment in this dance and
instructed those actors in the positions signified by the red x to angle out towards the sides (Fig.1). This keeps the audience from feeling disconnected.

\[
\begin{array}{cccccc}
  X & X & X & X & X \\
  X & X & X & X \\
  X & X \\
  X \\
\end{array}
\]

Figure 3: Triangle Formation

At the start of the dance break, Che delivers three speeches to the audience: one referencing the descamisados, the second the government, and the final speech the aristocracy. These are brief introductions to the different classes and forces that make up Buenos Aires society, and ultimately who Eva will devote her life to campaigning for and against. During Che’s dialogue, I wanted to keep the ensemble on stage and alive, but more in the background without pulling focus from Che. For the first speech, they danced close together with simple movements representing the descamisados’ reliance on each other, sticking it out together, and the simplicity in their daily lives. Next, I then molded them into three lines as two military soldiers marched down the aisles that the ensemble created. As Che spoke of the government, the two soldiers performed strong, militant type marches and goosesteps while the ensemble marched in more of a cadence style march, making sharp turns to face each side of the audience. Lastly, the ensemble shifted to upstage right for the third speech introducing the aristocracy. I had six aristocrats for this section, and I wanted them to represent the “higher than thou” part of
society. Physically they were poised, had a straight spine and raised chin, at times an epaulement, and they were always connected in the group, either with a hand, arm, upper back, shoulder, or elbow. I had them shift their position according to the meter changes in the score, which was frequent for this section. While shifting their position, I also added a directional change. It made it a bit difficult for the cast to learn at first, but they were very successful once it became a habit. While the aristocrats zig-zagged their way across the stage, the ensemble performed a series of movements that were more upright, on releve, with epaulement, and a little more sass. Concluding these speeches, the music ignites, and a big dance break takes place. I wanted us to return to the city streets of Buenos Aires and watching how Eva now transitions to becoming one with the city. I utilized the layering technique, again breaking out to many different tracks of movement, including partnering, small group work, and individual solos. Eva danced with everyone in a tight group with quick rhythmic footwork, Argentinean-inspired movements, and syncopated clapping. She partnered separately with three men executing spins and lifts, signifying her promiscuity and flirtatious behavior. At another moment during the dance break, the ensemble surrounded Eva and circulated around her while a male partner held her up in a basic straight vertical lift.

As Eva began to sing her final verse, she danced with the ensemble as they all performed uniform movements together, as if she’s finally being accepted into society. They enjoy her company and welcome her as one of them. For the conclusion of the song, the ensemble returned to the original formation of triangulated groups in the voms and a smaller group upstage. They faced Eva as she sang at center stage and just as they began their final exit, she “calls” them back
with her big note on “STAR quality”. Energetically, the ensemble performed a strong final 8-count combination leading them back in to surround Eva finishing the song with all eyes on her.

I really enjoyed how this number turned out. I enjoyed the many variations of patterning I created. I made it a great number to watch. The eye will always follow what’s moving on stage and there was never a static moment that gave the audience time to be disconnected. I loved letting the cast play with movements and seeing some of the moments they created together on stage. I highlighted story points well and focused the action where it needed to be in order to guide the audience’s attention. The cast did an amazing job of keeping the energy alive and giving life to the characters.

I didn’t have too many challenges in this number. Many of the ensemble members in this number were experienced dancers. Those who were more movers were assigned to roles of the military soldiers or aristocrats. That worked well. This was the first number I taught; it was the most technically involved dance in the show. I wanted to make sure the cast had enough time to rehearse the number in our three weeks of rehearsal. There were not many meter changes in this number. The only one I gave more attention to, choreographing and teaching, was the section in Che’s third speech, as previously mentioned. During those 10 measures, they quickly changed from 4/4 to 3/4 to 4/4 to 3/4 to 4/4 to 2/4 meter. It was a bit of a puzzle to come up with steps that fit within those measures, but it worked!
“I’d Be Surprisingly Good For You”

In the original production of *Evita*, the dance numbers were few. “Buenos Aires” was beautifully choreographed and “Peron’s Latest Flame” showcased Larry Fuller’s brilliant staging. It wasn’t until the 2006 West End Revival of *Evita* when more exciting choreography was infused into the aged show. Rob Ashford, the choreographer for that production, used dance to reflect more of the Argentinean culture, while making it more contemporary and relatable. One way he did that was he added a tango number into the dance break of “I’d Be Surprisingly Good For You.” Eva and Col. Peron danced together along with multiple couples on stage.

For our production, the director wanted a similar dance during the dance break. He only wanted one couple upstage dancing (facing upstage) as if they were on stage during the Charity Concert referenced in the script. Eva and Col. Peron were predominantly center or downstage of center, as if they were backstage conversing at the Charity Concert. When it came time for the dance break, the director and I wanted to change the audience’s perspective and create their view to be as if they were now watching the concert from the front, rather than being backstage. To accomplish this, we had a creative lighting shift as the Tango Dancers continued their choreography down the right side of the thrust, while Eva and Peron executed a similarly stylized walk upstage on the left side of the thrust. This created the sense of a revolving set that brought the Tango dancers forward and Eva and Peron upstage to watch. I wanted the dance to be representational of a type of courtship dance, emphasizing the themes of Eva’s seductive behavior and Peron’s power.
The choreography created for the Tango piece was a true collaboration between me and the two dancers. I had two experienced dancers performing the number, and I wanted it to be a piece that was custom designed to fit them. They partnered well together and provided valuable input, and it was a great collaboration between designer and performers. I had certain visions I knew I wanted to create, and having experienced ballroom dancers to help me bring those visions to life was a blessing. I wanted to keep some traditional Tango steps in the dance; however, I wanted to add a little flair. While in traditional Tango dance there are no lifts, I felt I had two very strong dancers who could execute some pretty amazing and beautiful lifts for a statement that would be remembered. With the lifts, we combined close to the floor footwork, layouts, lunges, and flicks, and made sure to emphasize the passion, sensuality, and beauty of the Tango dance.

I worked closely with the music director for this number. There was one section where the music built to this grand moment, and I had the dancers execute a spiral shoulder lift. We felt like we needed a couple extra beats to hold the lift at the top to sustain the lift before the music accelerated and before the female dancer came swiftly down into a cradle catch spin. We were able to add those beats with the orchestra. We also felt the tempo dragged a little for our liking during the dance break, so with permission we were able to speed up the tempo just a bit. What seems like small and minor changes were complicated by the use of click tracks, a program used by the musicians to keep tempo. The music director also was able to watch the choreography during all the rehearsals, and he helped me to find some artistic moments in the orchestration I could use to accentuate the dance.
As the dance break ended, we circulated the dancers back upstage and brought Eva and Peron downstage, just as we did earlier, to return it to the original view of being backstage. The dancers finished their choreography in a striking pose. Their performance received an enthusiastic applause at every performance.

“Peron’s Latest Flame”

This song is sung by both the Aristocrats and Peron’s Army, two groups with a strong prejudice against Eva. The members of the aristocracy scorned her for her illegitimate upbringing and loose behavior. Eva equally hated the rich. To the military, Eva was just an actress, and they often called her Peron’s whore. The thought of her becoming the next commander-in-chief of the military was unthinkable. Thematically, I wanted this number to reflect opposition, rigidity, and distaste.

Before I started the choreography, I studied the lyrics of the song, because they are important to understand so that motivation of movement can be achieved. At the start of the number, Che introduces us to the Aristocrats. Their lyrics are potent.

**Che:** “At the watering holes of the well-to-do

I detect a resistance to our heroine’s style

The shooting sticks of the upper class

Aren’t supporting a single arse that would rise for the girl”

**Aristocrats:** “Such a shame she wandered in to our enclosure

How unfortunate this person has forced us to be blunt.

No, we wouldn’t mind seeing her at Harrods

But behind the jewelry counter not in front”

(Tim Rice, 1976)
The Aristocrats started on stage at the top on this number. There were 12 Aristocrats total. They were in their connected, tight group that we saw earlier in “Buenos Aires.” They moved in the same fashion as before, small steps, zig-zagging across the stage, always traveling as a group careful not to let anyone in their “enclosure” or part of society. They were poised, proper, and dressed to the nines. They frequently changed their positions, focus, and their directions, making sure that all sides of the theater had a view of an actor’s face.

As the Aristocrats finished their first section, they traveled upstage, walking backwards, still connected, opening the stage for the arrival of Peron’s Army. Che donned a pair of sunglasses matching the soldiers and joined in the goosestep-style marching as they entered singing:

Che: “Could there be in our fighting corps
    A lack of enthusiasm for Peron’s latest flame?
    Should you wish to cause great distress in the tidiest officers’ mess
    Just mention her name”

Army: “Peron is a fool breaking every taboo
    Installing a girl in the Army’s H.Q.
    And she’s an actress! the last straw
    Her only good parts are between her thighs
    She should stare at the ceiling not reach for the skies
    Or she could be his last whore
    The evidence suggests she has other interests
    If it’s her who’s using him he’s exceptionally dim
    Bitch – dangerous jade”

(Tim Rice 1976)
Clearly, they have strong feelings against Eva. They appear uniformed, with sunglasses, and remain expressionless. They move with strength, purpose, rigidity, and uniformity. They stand in lines, but always changing their direction. To execute this, I used a repeating pattern of pivot turns. Instead of taking a basic pivot turn in the usual downstage-upstage-upstage-downstage patterned footwork, I used a quarter turn pivot and a half turn pivot, making it a three-quarter pivot total in the four-count measure. Repeating this sequence four times gave us an opportunity to face all four walls but mixing it up enough that it was more interesting to watch than just basic pivot turns.

I wanted to keep the Aristocrats fluid and still telling their “story,” so while the Army was singing their verse downstage and, in the foreground, the Aristocrats continued moving in the background, careful not to pull focus from the Army. I used smaller, subtle movements upstage, while the soldiers executed bigger and precise movements downstage. Hearing the soldiers singing and having them centered and downstage naturally allows the eye to focus on them. Keeping the Aristocrats somewhat stationary also allows for focus to remain downstage. A fun moment that I created with the Aristocrats was to take their linked group at stage right and “unravel” it and create a new connected picture on stage left. As they unraveled one at a time, they stayed joined by a body part, facing different directions, and molding and twisting into the new formation. It was just enough movement to keep the stage fluid without pulling focus from the soldiers.

As the song continued, the Aristocrats and the Army always were in sync with one another as they moved throughout the stage. Each group had their own specific choreography but
utilizing the space effectively and efficiently; they moved almost as one. As one group turned
downstage, the other group turned upstage, and as one turned right, the other turned left,
revolving around each other with ease. It was a constant change of sharp movements and
directional changes. The number possessed a feel of precision, which best suited both the Army
and the Aristocrats.

One challenge of creating and teaching this number was the meter changes. When the
Aristocrats sang, they were mostly in a 7/4 time. Creating the number of steps and precisely
when the directional changes occur in the measure was difficult for me. When I taught this
number, it took us a few tries to get it right. I remember teaching it the way I heard it in my head,
but after working with the actors for a couple rehearsals, they felt it a different way, and we
adjusted the directional changes accordingly. I appreciated their feedback and collaboration. The
Army remained in a 4/4 time.

The only moment in the song I kept the Army and Aristocrats in a freeze was during
Che’s and Eva’s exchange, as I didn’t want the audience to miss that moment. After Che was
escorted off, the number resumed with the military marching in a pin-wheel style rotation and in
similar fashion, the big “clump” of Aristocrats broke off into smaller “clumps” around the stage.
They continued to stay connected and eventually met up to form two somewhat larger clumps
and ultimately returning to their large group formation to end the song. They, once again, zig-
zagged their way downstage, changing their posture and position, ending in one final strong
tableau downstage right.
“And The Money Kept Rolling In”

The Eva Peron Foundation operated from 1948-1955 while Eva was the First Lady of Argentina. Its primary goals were to provide financial assistance to help the poor. It had authorization to build houses, schools, hospitals, and orphanages. “It employed 14,000 people. Every year, it bought 500,000 sewing machines, 400,000 pairs of shoes, and 200,000 cooking pots. At Christmas it delivered 5,000,000 toys and 4,000,000 cakes and bottles of cider. The Foundation was a state within the state, the closest contact between the government and the people, and the generator of phenomenal propaganda and popularity” (Foss, 54). Allegations that Eva set up a separate bank account in Switzerland floated around but were never proven to be true.

For this particular piece, I wanted to showcase Eva’s impact on the people of Argentina. How greatly the poor relied on her contributions and how desperate they were for help. Showcasing her generosity and connection with the impoverished was important to me. And as recipients, I wanted the ensemble to express the joy and honor of meeting her and how monumental and life changing her actions were for them.

The ensemble was divided into two groups, the descamisados and Eva’s assistants. This number is truly a story-telling piece, and I knew it was essential that I paid attention to story points that needed to have focus. The number begins with Eva on the spiral staircase looking down to her “people,” as she states, “Everything will be justified by my Foundation.” Che introduces us to Eva and her Foundation, praising her good deeds, but making note to say, “when the money keeps rolling in, you don’t ask how,” shedding light on the possible corrupt side of
the Foundation. The ensemble ran to her, and as Che narrated, they reached up to try and touch her in a slow-motion fashion. The stage brightened and energized with dance from the ensemble as they sang “Rollin’ Rollin’ Rollin’...”. The ensemble filled the stage with diverse individual choreography and staging that displayed their hope, celebration, and optimism for Eva Peron and her Foundation’s gifts. Che narrates once again, and his words are important to the descamisados, so I had Che elevated on the stage left house stairs and the ensemble gathered around at different levels to listen. While Che kept focus at stage left, Eva’s office assembled downstage right at the vom. He handed out tickets to the descamisados telling them that all they need to do is write down their dreams and hopes on the ticket. Should Eva Peron choose theirs, their dreams will come true. The ensemble, again, took the stage with their tickets and ignited the stage with renewed excitement. We continued to create pictures telling the story of how Eva selects tickets, bringing the poor and indigent to her office and giving them not only money but also hope and promise. She was seen kissing them and touching them, a true saint to the people of Argentina. A brief display of her depositing money into a briefcase with the Swiss flag once again signified the rumored money laundering.

There is a beautiful dance break in this number. I chose 7 dancers from the ensemble to feature while the remaining actors were scattered throughout the house clapping, vocalizing, and interacting with the audience. Eva and her assistants continued their office “work” upstage. The dance break was to be a joyous celebration. I worked with the ensemble and encouraged them to discover how they would express and release their grateful hearts through movement. We played with the movements I created, and I asked each one to demonstrate how they would use that movement to symbolize hope. We talked about focusing our energy upwards and using a type of
undulating release of the torso. We discussed where, internally, the root of our emotion came from and how we could locate it and project it outward through our physicality.

An interesting part of choreographing this song was the fact that it was in a septuple, or 7/8, meter. I’m not sure I’ve ever choreographed a song in that specific time. It was tough for me at first to get a grasp on counting the song and finding the specific rhythm. If I couldn’t understand the timing, I most certainly could not choreograph it or teach it. I listened to the song repeatedly and asked some questions of the music director, and I was eventually successful in comprehending Lloyd Webber’s genius work.
CHAPTER SIX
FROM AUDITIONS TO STAGE

Orlando auditions for *Evita* were held in March and April of 2019. It was open to both Equity and Non-Equity performers (union vs. non-union performers). I was not a part of the open call auditions; however, I was present at callbacks, which is when the dance auditions took place. The callback auditions were held at Orlando Shakes, and, as the Choreographer, it was my job to teach a dance combination to those actors who were called back by the casting team from the open call auditions.

**Orlando Auditions**

The actors arrived at scheduled times throughout the day to audition for the Director, Music Director, and Artistic Director. If they were asked to stay and dance, they were sent into the rehearsal studio in groups of fifteen to twenty people at a time. I was allotted about sixty minutes to teach and evaluate each group.

A dance audition can be intimidating to some actors. Many hide behind a fake smile and nervous laughter. Others can’t wait to dance, and they come racing to the front, eager to learn and perform. No matter the level of dance ability, I want everyone to have their personal best audition, and I can help ease the anxiety by being a friendly face and welcoming spirit. When actors arrive to my audition, I welcome them and greet them with a handshake and/or a hello. I ask them their name, and I let them know who I am. I try to keep a relaxed, light-hearted atmosphere. If they are relaxed when they come in, I can set them up for a better audition. Before I begin teaching, I usually have a brief discussion about the process of the dance audition and
how it will run. I let them know what I will be teaching, what style I am looking for, and if we are looking for movers, dancers, or both. If there is a specific story point to the song I am choreographing, I will give that to the actors so they can make choices for either a character or style of movement.

For this callback, I chose to teach a combination to the dance break in “And The Money Kept Rolling In.” I began the audition by briefly discussing the descamisados and Eva Peron’s charitable contributions to the poor and how that relationship would affect their movement. I also let them know the song was in 7/8 meter, so they needed to be aware of that when learning the combination and accenting the movements. I do try and teach the combination at a faster pace, as it allows me to see if they are able to pick up choreography quickly. This is important due to the fact that we only had a three-week rehearsal process before the show opened. I encourage the actors to ask questions if they need clarification on steps or counts. I also give options for steps that may be too challenging for an actor with less dance training. After I am finished teaching the combination, the actors rehearse the combination several times. I observe and make adjustments if necessary. I try and make the experience very positive, educational, and fun.

When it is time for the audition portion, the Director, Music Director, and Artistic Director come into the room to observe. The process is turned over to the Company Manager, who is responsible for the logistics of the audition process. She divides the actors into smaller groups according to her database and explains how the process will work. All actors remain in the rehearsal studio during the auditions. Each group performs the dance combination twice, changing lines after the first round.
There are many factors I look for during an audition. Obviously, I look for technique first. I can usually tell if someone is a dancer within seconds of watching their audition. I also look for execution, retention, and their ability to pick up and learn choreography quickly. I notice their style, personality, commitment, energy, and overall performance. I will take note of how they are to work with during the teaching phase of the audition. Did they ask questions? Were they present and engaged? Did they enjoy being there? Were they respectful and cordial to other actors in the room? I also look for how they exit the room. It can really tell a lot.

Once we get through all the groups, I will sometimes create my own groups, so I am able to see some actors dance together to observe how their styles blend together. While I did not do so for this particular audition, I will also ask some actors to perform improvisational dance, partnering, or special skills (i.e. gymnastics, tricks, etc.) if it is needed in the show. Following the audition, I thanked the actors for their time, and they were notified that we would be casting sometime in the near future.

**New York City Auditions**

In May 2019, Orlando Shakes held their season auditions in New York City for five days, again, looking for both Equity and Non-Equity performers. I was fortunate to be able to teach the dance combination at the dance callback. Those actors who auditioned earlier in the week for the Director, Music Director, and Artistic Director and received a callback attended a morning dance call later in the week at Ripley Grier Studios. The dance audition ran similar to the Orlando auditions, except there was only one session for the dance callback. I taught the same choreography as I did in Orlando. We were on a tighter schedule and had a large group, so I
taught quickly and gave the actors time to ask questions and review the combination with any remaining time we had before they auditioned. In my experience in teaching audition combinations in NYC, I have found the actors do pick up the choreography a lot faster and generally have more dance training. As before, the Company Manager divided the actors into small groups and each group performed the combination twice for the creative team in the room. For this audition, I did have a couple of additional groups dance a third time, and I also grouped the gentlemen together and had them perform the combination.

I always have a great time at auditions and this show was no exception. I enjoyed seeing familiar faces at both the Orlando and NYC auditions and meeting new people and potential future colleagues is always a bonus!

Casting

Casting the show was hard! We had so many talented actors and to narrow it down was difficult. As the choreographer, my role in casting the show was to provide feedback regarding dance skill and choreography requirements. The final decision was left ultimately up to the Artistic Director, Director, and Music Director. We had twenty-two spots to fill, four principal roles, and eighteen ensemble roles, utilizing both Equity and Non-Equity performers. We also cast nine understudy roles, using five internal cast members and four external actors.

During auditions, a spreadsheet was created for each member of the creative team to input their feedback on each actor who auditioned. This was a great tool to use to look back on for casting purposes. I provided choreography and dance evaluations on each actor during the
dance callback so that when casting, the Artistic Director, Director, and Music Director had the information available to make casting decisions. We knew we needed a strong dance ensemble, so I was able to select my top tier dancers, but the chances of getting them all would be dependent on several factors (i.e. vocal audition, Equity contracts, local performer/available housing, conflicts, etc).

Having eighteen ensemble members did present challenges when trying to cast all the smaller roles within the show. We needed them to play multiple roles, such as the mourners, the descamisados, the military, the aristocrats, Eva’s dressers and staff, Peron’s administration, the heavies, the men and women of Argentina, and more. This would involve careful casting and tracking of ensemble member’s roles. A detailed scene breakdown was created by the Director to help track the actors and the roles they would perform (Appendix D). Some roles involved more dance skills than others, while other roles did not, so we had to keep in mind each actor’s level of movement.

Another challenge faced is the possibility of not getting the actors you selected. After our Orlando and NYC auditions were completed, we met to cast our production of *Evita*. We knew we had selected strong, diverse actors from both locations, so we were hopeful they would all sign contracts for our show. In the event that our first selections declined our offer, we had to choose alternate candidates for each role and also decide who our understudies would be. It was a daunting task, but the experience is always a learning process.

I have come to gain a lot of respect for an understudy actor in a production. They will agree to learn a role, sometimes multiple tracks, with the possibility of never performing. If they
never take the stage, the only credit they receive is their name in the program. For our production, we carefully selected five of our ensemble cast members to also understudy the principal roles. We had two female and two male swings not in the core ensemble to understudy all the ensemble tracks in the event an ensemble member was out or had to go on for a principal role. It was a structure that worked really well for our production.

Rehearsals

Our rehearsal schedule was a four-week rehearsal process, rehearsing Tuesday through Sunday, with Mondays as a day off. We used the first two days of rehearsal to learn a majority of the music and then began blocking and choreographing by day three. We had two rehearsal spaces and would use each space daily to rehearse music, blocking, and choreography.

A daily schedule was created by the Director, Music Director, Choreographer, and Stage Manager the day before each rehearsal and sent out to the cast so they knew who was called and what we would be rehearsing that day. Costume fittings were built into the daily schedule as well. To keep myself on track, I created a journal to document the timeline of my process as a Choreographer on this show. I kept track of daily events, notes from production meetings, rehearsal reflections, and any other pertinent information that helped me along the way (Appendix E).

For choreography rehearsals, actors are expected to arrive prepared, warmed up, and familiar with the music they learned with the Music Director. I begin my choreography rehearsal by discussing the piece we will be choreographing. We talk about why it’s happening, what the
song is about, what we will be trying to relay through movement, the overall style, and other factors that will aid in their comprehension of learning and performing the piece. I encourage them to ask questions and bring individual ideas to the process when needed. I come to choreography rehearsals with a broad vision of how I see the number. I will create choreography notes to aid me in the process. I also believe in creating choreography in the space and letting it happen organically. I’ve encountered many instances where I will have an entire number choreographed on paper, and once I begin to implement the process, everything changes. While it can be frustrating when that happens, I find that when you learn to trust the process as it happens is when the most magical moments will occur.

Implementing choreography enables me the opportunity to learn a lot about an actor. I can take notice of what kind of learning methods they prefer: visual/demonstrative, kinesthetic, or auditory. Do they prefer to watch the step and then perform it? Or, do they pick up choreography easier by diving right in and trying? Does it help to count out loud or put the steps to lyrics, or say the steps in a patter-type rhythm? When working with actors on choreography, especially those that have little experience in dance, I will spend a little extra time to evaluate how they learn, and I’ll find the best method of instruction that helps them to be successful. Getting to know the actors’ strengths, weaknesses, and learning style supports the ability to achieve the overall cohesive look of the ensemble.

I was fortunate to have a talented and reliable dance captain for our production of *Evita*. She was cast in the female ensemble, and I have had the privilege of working with her on past productions at the Orlando Shakes. When selecting a dance captain for one of my productions, I
find it’s important to have someone who not only has a dance background but also has the visual eye for understanding how I want my choreography to look on stage. During rehearsals, we will spend time watching the numbers together and discussing important details of each number to make sure we are on the same level of understanding. After the show opens, the dance captain is responsible for maintaining the choreography and also troubleshoots any problems that may arise in my absence. I expect the dance captain to attend all the choreography rehearsals and any staging/blocking that may involve movement. She/he also takes notes on all choreography and runs any warmup and/or choreography review as needed.

After three weeks of rehearsals, we moved to the theater to begin our cue-to-cue, technical, and dress rehearsals. We were faced with an unexpected challenge during these rehearsals, as we watched the path of the impending storm, Hurricane Dorian, on Labor Day weekend. The theater closed on our only dark day and we had to cancel a tech rehearsal, which caused a setback in our process, ultimately leading to a canceled preview performance. As always, the show must go on, so with a lot of late nights and hard work, we were able to open the show as scheduled on opening night.

Performances

Orlando Shakes’ production of *Evita* ran for a total of 38 performances, including student matinees. Student matinees were educational showings of the production to students from public and private schools, as well as home-schooled students. Students would attend a 10:00 a.m. showing, and then the actors gave talk back sessions at the end of the show to give students the opportunity to learn and ask questions about theater and the process of creating *Evita*. 
Once the production of *Evita* opened, my contract was complete. However, as a professional courtesy and as a personal preference, I do attend shows throughout the run to take notes on the performance in order to make sure that my choreography remains intact and unchanged. I send those notes to the Stage Manager and Dance Captain to relay to the actors. The Dance Captain will call brush up rehearsals throughout the run if needed.

Our production of *Evita* was well-received in the community, and I was proud of the work completed by all designers. It is a beautiful story that needs to be told, especially in the light of our country’s current political turmoil.

The choreography received great reviews from local media outlets. In theater critic Matt Palm’s review in the Orlando Sentinel, “Dancing Electrifies by-the-book Evita”, he writes, “The real star of the show is Ball’s choreography. The tango is used to great effect, as you would expect. But other dances show vitality that reflects the pent-up energy of the Argentine people. And the authoritarian military generals move in a combination of fascist goose-stepping and Broadway razzmatazz” (Palm) (Appendix F). The choreography was also nominated by the Central Florida community for the 2019 Broadway World Orlando Awards for Best Choreography in a professional production and the Orlando Sentinel’s Critic’s Pick for Best Choreography. I am a firm believer I cannot have great choreography without a talented cast. The cast of *Evita* was brilliant. They were strong, passionate, and invested. We collaborated to create art and bring our ideas to life. I could not have done it without them. While I do not ever choreograph for the awards, it is heart-warming to know I am creating art that matters to my community.
CHAPTER SEVEN
FINAL REFLECTION

Creating the choreography for Orlando Shakes’ production of *Evita* was an honor. From conception to closing, it was a process I thoroughly enjoyed. In every show I choreograph, I learn more about the process of creating and implementing choreography and more about myself as a Choreographer. This process involved moments of challenges and self-doubt paralleled with moments of triumph and creative breakthroughs.

It was not my intention to use this project to invent anything new, but rather to analyze and deconstruct the process I use to create and implement choreography for a musical theater production. Often, I find I go through the motions when I choreograph, so to strip away the procedural layers was enlightening and a chance for me, personally, to see where I can improve the technique of my craft.

I was successful in creating choreography for *Evita* by using various methodologies. In “Peron’s Latest Flame,” creative utilization of space allowed the Aristocrats and Army Generals to revolve and rotate around each other fluidly. I made sure that in all the numbers, the dancers/actors were constantly creating stage pictures that enabled every audience member to have a clear view of what was happening on stage. That is key in a thrust space. The precise play with instrumentation when creating choreography, specifically in the tango dance, gave the piece more excitement and passion. It was just stunning! Additionally, in “And The Money Kept Rolling In,” I used the 7/8 meter and accents in the orchestration to help guide the movements of...
the descamisados. Carefully blending technical dance and simplistic yet stylized movement creates more of an interesting piece to watch, and, if done correctly, has the potential to hold audiences even more captivated and engaged. In “Buenos Aires,” the number did just that.

While I enjoy the process of creating choreography to enhance and tell a story, I have come to realize that I find the most enjoyment in facilitating the process of implementation. I love teaching and educating actors on how to find purpose in movement, how to make the human body express emotion through dance, and how to bring text to life through movement. Helping an actor realize and value their potential as a dancer, especially those with less experience, is personally satisfying and an experience that never gets old. When there is individual progress in execution, when the fundamentals finally click, and when a student has a “lightbulb moment,” there is a certain level of pride and gratitude that you, as a teacher, were able to make it happen. There is great joy in helping others succeed.
Politics and sensationalism. Not unlike today and always a fascinating subject.

A poor, illegitimate child’s rise to fame and fortune and eventual political power is a story that caught the attention of the world. A “Kennedy-esque” life full of fashion, jet-setting and privilege, Eva Peron was a bigger-than-life personality that caught the attention of the world.

Evita concentrates on the life of Argentine political leader Eva Perón, the second wife of Argentine president Juan Perón. The story follows Evita's early life, rise to power, charity work, and eventual death.

Opening in a movie theatre in Buenos Aires we hear the announcement of Eva’s passing. Profound grief among the people, the everyday people or who she referred to as descamisados (the shirtless ones).

From there we go back in time and watch the arc of Eva as a teenager work her way to the top using all means. She is a woman in a man’s world and does what she needs to do to get there.

Unit Set. Open and able to adapt to all scenic locations. Using representative pieces of furniture and props to define where we are. Able to make fast and interesting choreographed transitions. In some way evoking the style of Buenos Aires and the Casa Rosada. Using all areas of the theatre to give the audience an immersive feeling....particularly when the crowds outside Casa Rosada are crying “Evita, Evita”.

Evita
Director Concept
Director: Nick Degruccio
This was a desperate time for all and the people of Argentina were clearly divided between rich and poor. Stakes are high.

While Eva was dedicated to her “descamisados”, there was a heavy opposition to Peronism by the military and the wealthy.

A goal of mine is to make the story clear. Eva’s arc. To show how the poor and labor classes were wanting change....and the rich were wanting to hold onto what they had.

The story also reflects the ‘revenge’ of a disadvantaged girl scorned and hated by the upper class. “Screw the middle classes, I will never accept them”

Evita rose to fame in dubious ways using men along the way. Shamed and looked down upon by those born to money and status.

Eva Perón became powerful within the pro-Peronist trade unions, primarily for speaking on behalf of labor rights. She also ran the Ministries of Labor and Health, founded and ran the charitable Eva Perón Foundation, championed women's suffrage in Argentina, and founded and ran the nation's first large-scale female political party, the Female Peronist Party.

She did do good in her time.

However, when in power, there was misappropriation of funds and bank accounts in Switzerland. People who opposed Juan Peron and Eva disappeared or were jailed.

However, Evita is not a villain. It is clear that I need to show all aspects of her personality.

Che represents the “voice of reason” and the opposition to Peronism. He can see what is
coming down the line whereas Evita only saw what was in the moment. Seeing through the sensationalism and jewels blinding the truth, he fought for the country he sees becoming bankrupt.

“Forgive my intrusion but fine as those sentiments sound
Little has changed for us peasants down here on the ground
I hate to sound childish, ungrateful, I don't like to moan
But do you now represent anyone's cause but your own?” – Che

He also serves as our eyes and ears....a narrator to the story.

Che as well as Evita symbolize certain naïve, but effective, beliefs: the hope for a better world; a life sacrificed on the altar of the disinheritied, the humiliated, the poor of the earth. They are myths which somehow reproduce the image of Christ.
— Tomas Eloy Martinez

So we have a great conflict here for this musical.

The musical employs an eclectic range of styles. Rock to classical.

The vocals are strong, in-your-face and passionate. At times, they need to blow the roof off.

Choreography is exciting and energetic...with an Argentine flair.

Costumes are historic and can be taken from the pages of newspapers and magazines.

Her fashion was specific and recognizable. You can say that Evita was one of the first pop culture icons.
APPENDIX B

*EVITA STAGING/CHOREOGRAPHY ASSIGNMENTS*
Evita Staging/Choreography Assignments

Act One

1. A Cinema In Buenos Aires  Nick
2. Requiem for Evita  Nick
3. Oh What a Circus  Nick/Kim
4. On This Night of a Thousand Stars  Nick
5. Eva and Magaldi/Eva Beware of the City  Nick
6. Buenos Aires  Kim
7. Goodnight and Thank You  Nick
8. Art of the Possible  Kim
9. Charity Concert (Tango)  Kim
10. Another Suitcase in Another Hall  Nick
11. Peron’s Latest Flame  Kim
12. A New Argentina  Nick

Act Two

1. On the Balcony of Casa Rosada  Nick
2. Don’t Cry For Me Argentina  Nick
3. High Flying Adored  Nick
4. Rainbow High  Nick
5. Rainbow Tour  Nick
6. The Actress Hasn’t Learned the Lines  Nick/Kim (Aristocrats)
7. And the Money Kept Rolling In  Kim
8. Santa Evita  Nick
9. A Waltz for Eva and Che  Kim
10. You Must Love Me  Nick
11. Peron’s Latest Flame Playoff  Kim
12. She’s a Diamond  Nick
13. Dice Are Rolling/ Eva’s Sonnet  Nick
14. Eva’s Final Broadcast  Nick
15. Montage  Nick/Kim (tango)
16. Lament  Nick
APPENDIX C

EVITA SCRIPT ANALYSIS
Evita Script Analysis

Time: 1934-1952

Place: Argentina, Buenos Aires, Junin

Characters:

EVITA (Female, 20s-30s. Argentinean) Must be able to play ages 18 to 33 while projecting both a toughness and charisma. Beautiful, ambitious and power-seeking, she rises to become the spiritual leader of Argentina. The actor playing this role must have strong vocal stamina and excellent control. Legit Mezzo with a clear, strong mix that can belt to a high G and sing to a low E (below middle C). Passionate and strong lead actor who can move well.

CHE (Male, 18-35. Argentinian) Radical, dashing, and impulsive. Political activist and narrator of the show. An actor/singer that must move very well with a high, rock tenor voice that can sing a low A to high B, falsetto to high F.

PERON (Male, 30-50. Argentinian) An officer in the Argentinean army who rises to become the Argentine President. Dignified, charming, and authoritative. A strong actor and singer who can play character/leading man. Vocal bass/baritone to high F.

MISTRESS (Female, Teens/20s. Argentinian). Fragile, vulnerable, innocent young girl, Juan Peron’s teenage Mistress. She is “dismissed” out of Peron’s life by his future wife, Eva. The Mistress ponders the rejection during her song, “Another Suitcase in Another Hall.” Also appears in the ensemble. Must be able to move well and sing a low A to a high E.

MAGALDI (Male, 30 – 40. Argentinian) A tango singer with whom Eva has her first love affair. A charming loser. Sings “On This Night of a Thousand Stars” and establishes a Latin flavor to the piece. Also appears in the ensemble. A Latin American “personality” type and feel that needs to be bigger than life, but real at the same time. Sings to tenor High G.

ENSEMBLE: Seeking a broad range of males and females of all ethnicities and ages. Excellent singing voices in all ranges. All shapes and sizes to play everything from Generals to Peasants. Also looking for women and men who are strong dancers to play soldiers, tango dancers, and the dance chorus.

*Reference: www.Orlandoshakes.org
Scene Breakdown:

I: I
Time: July 26, 1952
Place: A Cinema in Buenos Aires
Circumstances: Audience watching a movie, movie interrupted by announcement that Eva Peron has died
Songs: “Requiem”, “Oh What A Circus”
Characters: Ensemble (Mourners, Pallbearers, Girls in White), Che, Eva

I: II
Place: Nightclub in Junin
Circumstances: Magaldi, a tango singer, performs in nightclub; Meets Eva Duarte and the Duarte Family;
Songs: “On This Night Of A Thousand Stars”
Characters: Eva, Che, Magaldi, Duarte Family, Ensemble (Club Patrons)

I: III
Place: Streets of Buenos Aires
Circumstances: Eva traveled with Magaldi to Buenos Aires; seen among dock workers, sleazy entertainers, two-bit hustlers, lower middle white-collar works
Songs: “What’s New Bueno Aires?”
Characters: Eva, Che, Ensemble (Buenos Aires Dance Ensemble, Aristocrats, Soldiers)

I: IV
Place: Outside Eva Peron’s Door (Apartment/House?)
Circumstances: Eva bids farewell to her lovers
Songs: “Goodnight and Thank You”
Characters: Eva, Che, Ensemble (Lovers)
I:V

Time/Place: Unspecified

Circumstances: Five Officers of the G.O.U. (United Officers Group); The United Officers' Group or GOU was a nationalist secret society within the Argentine Army which staged a coup d'état in 1943 to overthrow President Ramón Castillo, thus ending the Infamous Decade and forming a military junta which lasted until 1945.

Songs: “The Art of the Possible”

Characters: Juan Peron, Eva, Ensemble (4 officers, Reporter)

I:VI

Time: January 22, 1944

Place: Buenos Aires, Luna Park Stadium

Circumstances: Charity Concert to aid the victims of an earthquake that devastated the town of San Juan

Songs: “Charity Concert”, “I’d Be Surprisingly Good For You”

Characters: Che, Magaldi, Eva, Juan Peron, Ensemble (Tango Dancers, Stage Manager, 3 Officers, Fans, Aristocrats)

I:VII

Place: Juan Peron Bedroom/Street

Circumstances: Eva kicks out Peron’s young Mistress and sends her to the street

Songs: “Another Suitcase Another Hall”

Characters: Juan Peron, Eva, Mistress, Che, Ensemble (Men on the Street)

I:VIII

Time/Place: Unspecified

Circumstances: Two factions of Argentine Society that were never to accept Eva, the Aristocrats and the Military

Songs: “Peron’s Latest Flame”

Characters: Che, Eva, Ensemble (Aristocrats, Military Army, Heavies)
I:IV
Time/Place: Unspecified
Circumstances: During the course of the number the Peron forces gather; Laborers, politicians, white-collar workers….their numbers overwhelm the opposition
Songs: “A New Argentina”
Characters: Eva, Juan Peron, Che, Ensemble (Descamisados, Heavies)

II:I
Time: 1946, Inauguration
Place: Balcony of the Casa Rosada
Circumstances: Juan Peron is being inaugurated as President, surrounded by dignitaries, ministers, directors, and the military. He removes his Jacket and has the other dignitaries to follow suit to look like the descamisados; He and Eva have now married; He introduces Eva to the people of Argentina
Songs: “Don’t Cry For Me Argentina”
Characters: Juan Peron, Eva, Che, Ensemble (Descamisados, Dignitaries, Heavies)

II:II
Place: Eva Bedroom, at Vanity
Circumstances: Eva sitting at Vanity, removes jewelry and lets down hair, Che sings to Eva
Songs: “High Flying Adored”
Characters: Eva, Che, Ensemble (Eva’s assistant)

II:III
Time/Place: Unspecified
Circumstances: Eva’s designers dress her
Songs: “Rainbow High”
Characters: Eva, Ensemble (Eva’s designers)
II:IV
Time: 1947
Place: Italy, Spain, France
Circumstances: Eva embarks on a European Tour aka Rainbow Tour, meeting with dignitaries and heads of state in Italy, Spain, and France. England would not recognize her visit as a state visit, so she declined a visit citing exhaustion
Songs: “Rainbow Tour”
Characters: Eva, Che, Juan Peron, Ensemble

II:V
Time/Place: Unspecified
Circumstances: A change in Eva is seen, the wealthy are stripped of their jewels and finery
Songs: “The Chorus Girl Hasn’t Learned”
Characters: Eva, Ensemble (Aristocrats, Henchmen)

II:VI
Place: Eva Office, Streets
Circumstances: Eva gives money to the poor, through Eva Peron Foundation (1948)
Songs: “And The Money Kept Rolling In”
Characters: Eva, Che, Ensemble (Descamisados, Office Personnel)

II:VII
Time/Place: Unspecified
Circumstances: Children Sing, representational of how Eva was viewed as a Saint by the masses
Songs: “Santa Evita”
Characters: Eva, Che, Ensemble (Children, Descamisados)
II: VIII
Time/Place: Unspecified
Circumstances: Dream-esque sequence, ideas conflict between Eva and Che, Eva collapses, representing her illness is progressing
Songs: “Waltz For Eva and Che”, “You Must Love Me”
Characters: Eva, Che, Peron

II: IX
Time/Place: Unspecified
Circumstances: Peron speaking to the military praises Eva, comparing her to a Diamond
Songs: “She Is A Diamond”
Characters: Juan Peron, Ensemble (Military)

II: X
Place: Peron Bedroom
Circumstances: Juan and Eva discuss affairs, Eva’s body is breaking down, yet she still wants to be Vice-President
Songs: “Dice Are Rolling”
Characters: Juan Peron, Eva

II: XI
Time/Place: Unspecified
Circumstances: Eva gives one final broadcast to the people of Argentina
Songs: “Eva’s Final Broadcast”
Characters: Eva, Che, Ensemble (Nurses, Eva’s Assistant)
II: XII

Time: 1952 (July 26? Date of Death)

Place: Eva Bedroom

Circumstances: Eva is dying, delusional, having flashbacks of life

Songs: “Montage”, “Lament”

Characters: Eva, Peron, Che, Magaldi, Ensemble
APPENDIX D  
EVITA CHARACTER/SCENE BREAKDOWN SAMPLE
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<th>SCENE</th>
<th>Page (libretto)</th>
<th>SONG</th>
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<td>SE. 1</td>
<td>pg 2</td>
<td>&quot;A Cinema in Buenos Aires&quot;</td>
<td>Che</td>
<td>Pallbearer</td>
<td>Che</td>
<td>Magaldi</td>
<td>Magaldi</td>
<td>Eva</td>
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<td>pg 2</td>
<td>&quot;Requiem&quot;</td>
<td>Magaldi</td>
<td>Mourners</td>
<td>Che</td>
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<td>&quot;Oh What a Circus!&quot;</td>
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<td>&quot;On This Night of A Thousand Stars&quot;</td>
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<td>Argentinian</td>
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APPENDIX E
EVITA CHOREOGRAPHY JOURNAL
Evita Choreography Journal

March 14, 2019 @ 3:30pm
Brainstorm Design Meeting via Teleconference
Overview of Director’s Concept and “Wish List”
Discussed Prelim set plans, orchestra, audition dates

April 7-8, 2019 10a-10p
Auditions @ Orlando Shakes
Taught combination to 3-4 groups per day

April 25, 2019 @ 4:30p
Design Meeting via Teleconference
Discussed Set, Budget, Lighting, Costumes, and Sound
Set has multiple levels for Choreo.
Cast size 22-23 (10-11 males/11-12 females)

May 18, 2019 @ 10a-6p
NYC Auditions, Ripley Grier Studios
Taught Combination to one group in the morning
Callback in the afternoon

May 30, 2019 @ 4:30pm
Design Meeting via Teleconference
Not a lot of new info, update in all departments
Casting went well, offers are out
Costumes will get a rental package from PA Shakes for some costumes
July 23, 2019
Phone Conference with Choreographer, Director, and Music Director
Discussed casting and tracks for each performer
Since we only have 23 performers, it will be a challenge for quick changes
Worked on Character Breakdown, many actors will be playing various ensemble parts

July 29, 2019
Permission given from Jim Helsinger, Artistic Director of Orlando Shakes, to use Evita for M.A. Thesis

August 9, 2019 @ 4:30p
Final Design Meeting before rehearsals begin

August 13, 2019 @ 11a-8:30p
Meet/Greet, Orientation
Music Rehearsal
Director, Choreographer, Music Director met to go through casting
Director and Choreographer met to discuss choreo assignments

August 14, 2019 @ 11a-8:30p
Music Rehearsal

August 15, 2019 @ 11a-8:30p
Music Rehearsal
Choreo Rehearsal: start Buenos Aires (worked only with core ensemble)

August 16, 2019 @ 11a-8:30p
Choreo: Finish Bueno Aires w/ Dance Ensemble
Start: Peron’s Latest Flame with Aristocrats and Soldiers

August 17, 2019 @ 11a-8:30p
Blocking/Staging (Director Only)

August 18, 2019 @ 11a-8:30p
Choreo: Art of the Possible (Choreo/Dir)
Finish Peron’s Latest Flame

August 19, 2019 Day Off

August 20, 2019 @ 11a-8:30p
Choreo: Money Kept Rolling In

August 21, 2019 @ 11a-8:30p
Choreo: Waltz for Eva and Che
Tango (start, brainstorm, explore movements/lifts)
She’s a Diamond (Soldiers)
Chorus Girl... (Aristocrats)
Add Eva/Che to Money Kept Rolling In

August 22, 2019 @ 11a-8:30p
Choreo: Tango
Add Eva to Buenos Aires
Stumble Through Act One

August 23, 2019@ 11a-8:30p
Stumble Through Act Two/Designer Run

August 24, 2019 @ 11a-8:30p
Choreo: Tango work with Dancers and Music Directors
Review/Clean Peron’s Latest Flame, She’s a Diamond
Work through Act One

August 25, 2019 11a-8:30p
Work Through/Clean Act Two

August 26, 2019 Day Off

August 27, 2019 @ 11a-8:30p
Run Through, Work Notes

August 28, 2019 @ 11-9:30p
Run Through, Work Notes

August 29, 2019 @ 11-9:30p
Spacing on the stage
Worked through the show and spaced on the set
Choreo: Worked Tango

August 30, 2019 @ 12-9:30p
Tech

August 31, 2019 @ 11a-11p
Cue to Cue
September 1, 2019 @ 11a-11p
Cue to Cue

September 2, 2019 Day Off
Theater Closed, impending Hurricane

September 3, 2019 12-9:30p
Reh cancelled, Hurricane

September 4, 2019 6-11p
Modified Reh Schedule due to Hurricane
Dress Reh/Act One
Production Meeting

September 5, 2019 @11-5p
Dress Reh, Preview Cancelled
Production Meeting

September 6, 2019 @ 1-5p
Rehearsal
Opening Night 7:30p
APPENDIX F
“DANCING ELECTRIFIES BY-THE-BOOK EVITA”
Dancing electrifies by-the-book ‘Evita’ | Review

By MATTHEW J. PALM
ORLANDO SENTINEL | SEP 10, 2019 | 5:00 AM

Yael Reich plays Argentine first lady Eva Peron in "Evita," onstage at Orlando Shakes.
(Megan Pridemore / Courtesy photo)
In 2004, Donald Trump wrote “My favorite Broadway show is 'Evita' by Andrew Lloyd Webber, starring Patti LuPone. I saw it six times, mostly with Ivana,” his first wife whom he divorced in 1992.

So keep your eyes peeled. With the president’s penchant for Florida, you might just see him at Orlando Shakes, where the theater is opening its 2019-20 season with the Andrew Lloyd Webber-Tim Rice musical.

Should President Trump buy a ticket, he will likely be pleased by what he sees. For the Shakes, director Nick DeGruccio has taken a traditional approach. From the musical chairs of the Argentine generals to the shimmery white dress and upstretched arms, this is the “Evita” everyone knows — given a huge jolt of energy by Kim Ball’s thrilling choreography.

It’s not hard to see why the president might be a fan of the story. Roughly, it tells how an entertainer captured the hearts of millions who felt ignored by their government — and then took control of the country through a series of populist rallies. Just change the chants of “Peron! Peron!” to “Lock her up!”

Of course, Trump critics and cynics might point out other parallels, such as those between Eva Peron’s radio addresses and the president’s tweets. As the show pointedly puts it, “She didn’t say much, but she said it loud.”

As seen at a preview, DeGruccio doesn’t play up the politics of the musical, which follows the rise to power of Eva and Juan Peron — and the subsequent disintegration of their country, Argentina. There’s no scruffiness to the poor with their snazzy suspenders. Even anti-Peron agitator Che, the story’s cynical narrator, suffers little more than being sedately dragged off stage.
At Orlando Shakes, Dan Domenech is a dynamic Che in the musical "Evita." (Megan Pridemore / Courtesy photo)

That leaves it up to actor Dan Domenech to convey Che’s outrage, which he does with a modern bent that succeeds marvelously. Rather than fueled by pure anger, Domenech’s Che seems disgustedly amused. His attitude asks, “How could we have done this to ourselves?” His singing voice, especially on big numbers “And the Money Kept Rolling In” and “High Flying Adored” is also superior.

Speaking of strong singing, Valerie Torres-Rosario has just one song but she makes the most of it. As Juan Peron’s discarded mistress, she hits all the right emotional (and musical) notes. It’s a lovely performance, buoyed by some surprises in the staging.
As half of the powerhouse Perons, Rodrigo Ignacio Cruz is a somewhat passive Juan. In the title role, Yael Reich captures Eva’s strength and determination with brassy vocals and fire in her eyes. Yet we don’t see much else in the character until the show’s very end when Reich delivers a powerful lament to her life.

The real star of the show is Ball’s choreography. The tango is used to great effect, as you would expect. But other dances show vitality that reflects the pent-up energy of the Argentine people. And the authoritarian military generals move in a combination of fascist goose-stepping and Broadway razzmatazz. It’s perfect for a show that repeatedly reminds us when government turns from statecraft to stagecraft, well, we’re all in for a bumpy ride. Don’t cry for us, Argentina.
1/10/2019

Jim Hunter
Professor, Dept of Theater and Dance
University of South Carolina

Dear Jim:

This letter will confirm our recent email conversation. I am completing a master’s degree at the University of Central Florida entitled "Suits: A Practical Approach to Creating and Implementing Choreography for Professional Theater." I would like your permission to reprint in my thesis/dissertation excerpts from the following:

Orlando Shakes Evita Set Plans, Upper Level
Orlando Shakes Evita Set Plans, Lower Level

I’ve attached a copy of the plans that I will be using.

The requested permission extends to any future revisions and editions of my thesis/dissertation, including non-exclusive world rights in all languages. These rights will in no way restrict republication of the material in any other form by you or by others authorized by you. Your signing of this letter will also confirm that you own or your company owns the copyright to the above-described material. If these arrangements meet with your approval, please sign this letter where indicated below and return to me via email.

Sincerely,

Kimberly Ball

PERMISSION GRANTED FOR THE USE REQUESTED ABOVE:

By: ____________________

Date: 1/10/2019
1/10/2019

Nicholas DeSucco
Professor
AMDA, Los Angeles

Dear Nick:

This letter will confirm our recent email conversation. I am completing a master's degree at the University of Central Florida entitled "Evite: A Practical Approach to Creating and Implementing Choreography for Professional Theater." I would like your permission to reprint in my thesis/dissertation excerpts from the following:

1. Director Concept
2. Character/Scene Breakdown Sample

I've attached the copies that I will be using.

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Sincerely,

Kimberly Ball

[Signature]

Date: 1/14/20
2/20/2020

Lexie Hoag
Digital Marketing Coordinator
Orlando Shakes

To Ms. Hoag:

This letter will confirm our recent email conversation. I am completing a master’s degree at the University of Central Florida in Theater/Musical Theater and have written my thesis entitled “Evita: A Practical Approach to Creating and Implementing Choreography for Professional Theater.” I would like your permission to reprint in my thesis a copy and excerpts from the following:

1. Article: “Telling the Story of Scenic Design” (by: Lexie Hoag)
2. Courtesy Photos by Megan Pridemore in Orlando Sentinel article: “Dancing Electrifies by-the-book Evita” (by: Matt Palm)
3. Orlando Shakes Character/Scene Breakdown

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Sincerely,

Kimberly Ball
M.A. Student, UCF Dept of Theater/Musical Theater

PERMISSION GRANTED FOR THE USE REQUESTED ABOVE:

By: ____________________________

Date: 2/21/2020
2/21/2020

Barbara Jay
Editorial Administrator
Orlando Sentinel Media Group

To Ms. Jay:

This letter will confirm our recent email conversation. I am completing a master’s degree at the University of Central Florida in Theater/Musical Theater and have written my thesis entitled "Evita: A Practical Approach to Creating and Implementing Choreography for Professional Theater." I would like your permission to reprint in my thesis a copy and excerpts from the following:

   **Permission to use courtesy photos by Megan Pridemore to be approved by Orlando Shakes**

I’ve attached the copy that I will be using.

The requested permission extends to any future revisions and editions of my thesis, including non-exclusive world rights in all languages. These rights will in no way restrict republication of the material in any other form by you or by others authorized by you. Your signing of this letter will also confirm that you own or your company owns the copyright to the above-described material. If these arrangements meet with your approval, please sign this letter where indicated below and return to me via email.

Sincerely,

Kimberly Ball
M.A. Student, UCF Dept of Theater/Musical Theater

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By ____________________________
Editor in Chief

Date: 2/21/20
LIST OF REFERENCES


