'EVITA' TAKES THE STAGE AGAIN

The tale of Argentina's beloved first lady is Musical Theater Heritage's latest concert production.

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Katie Karel plays Eva Peron in Musical Theater Heritage's "Evita." SHARON HARTER.

She was an actress and a nightclub singer who ultimately wielded formidable political power in her native Argentina.

And in many ways her story seemed made-to-order for musical theater. Without question, Eva Duarte Peron lived a classic rags-to-riches tale, but one with an inescapable political timbre.

As the second wife of Juan Peron, a military officer who rose to the presidency, Eva Peron was a champion of the poor and disadvantaged. She was only 33 when she died of cervical cancer and became a secular saint to her followers.

That's the basic story line in "Evita," the fine musical by composer Andrew Lloyd Webber and lyricist Tim Rice. For my money, Lord Lloyd Webber did his best work with Sir Tim. Together they wrote "Jesus Christ Superstar" and "Joseph and the Amazing Technicolor Dreamcoat," now onstage in a splendid production at the New Theatre in Overland Park.

The boys teamed up again recently to contribute new songs to Lloyd Webber's lavish stage production of "The Wizard of Oz" in London.

Musical Theater Heritage opens its concert production of "Evita" tonight at the Off Center Theatre at Crown Center. Katie Karel stars in the title role, along with Tim Scott, Christopher Sanders, a large supporting cast and, of course, an orchestra. Sarah Crawford directs. The show runs through Aug. 28.

Call 816-842-9999 or go to www.musicaltheaterheritage.com.

Tim Scott and Christopher Sanders and cast take bows in Musical Theater Heritage's concert production of "Evita." SHARON HARTER