

**Louise Jury**  
Chief Arts Correspondent

THE STAR of the new West End production of the musical *Evita* said audiences should consider the politics of the period before judging Eva Peron for her marriage to a dictator.

Portuguese actress Madalena Alberto said what was accepted in Argentina when Juan Peron was president in the Forties and Fifties was very different from what would have been permissible in post-war Europe.

"There was a lot of murder. There was a lot of corruption. She was the wife of a fascist dictator and there's nothing I can defend about that," she said.

"But there's so much that we in Europe don't really understand. In the social and political climate of the time, that was quite popular."

Alberto said the experience of playing *Evita* on tour had revealed something of the appeal of Eva Peron, who was admired for her glamour and for trying to alleviate some of the poverty from which she herself had come. Known popularly as *Evita*, she died of cancer in 1952 at the age of 33.

"When she was 15 she dreamed of being a movie actress," Alberto said. "She was going to the pictures all the time. And her mother used to sew so even though they were poor, she always had this sense of dress. The glamour came from the movies really."

Alberto said it was great to bring the show to London, which has been her home since she came to study aged 16. "It's very nice to be ending the *Evita*

# We need to understand *Evita's* mad existence, says star



**Controversial:** Madalena Alberto plays Eva, inset, wife of Argentina's fascist dictator Juan Peron

journey in a beautiful theatre in the centre of London," she said.

Singer Marti Pellow, who co-stars as Che Guevara in the production having appeared in musicals including *Chicago* and *Blood Brothers*, said it was his first time in an Andrew Lloyd Web-

ber show. "I'm really enjoying it," he said. The 49-year-old got to know Tim Rice, who wrote *Evita* with Lloyd Webber, because Rice's daughter was a fan of Pellow's band, Wet Wet Wet.

■ *Evita* is at the Dominion Theatre until November 1



## REVELLING IN THE LUDICROUS

### REVIEW

#### BALLYTURK

National Theatre (Lyttelton)

★★★★☆

#### HENRY HITCHINGS

BALLYTURK is a deliciously strange new play from Enda Walsh, which brings together three superb actors: the wiry but elegant Cillian Murphy, here eye-poppingly athletic and very funny, alongside the enigmatic and wonderfully hangdog Stephen Rea and restless shape-shifter Mikel Murfi.

Like most of Walsh's work it revels in the ludicrous. It's explicitly set in "no time" and "no place", and the characters are known by numbers rather than names. Murphy's breathless 1 and Murfi's sturdy 2 are trapped in a viewless room – a bedsit, garage or ward in an unconventional asylum.

Their relationship, dominated by fantasies of the world beyond this space, feels like a hybrid of Morecambe and Wise, Samuel Beckett and Dylan Thomas's *Under Milk Wood*. As they work out to Eighties

pop songs or swing golf clubs dementedly, 1 and 2 resemble Beckett's tramps in *Waiting For Godot*, forever finding ways to pass the time. But unlike in Beckett's play the Godot figure turns up – and Rea's dry, urbane 3 is a mix of night-club crooner and self-important philosopher. His arrival is cataclysmic. It also inspires 1 and 2 to start a tense game of Jenga with their best biscuits.

There are scenes of manic physicality as well as slow-moving intensity, and Walsh (who directs) makes full use of the Lyttelton Theatre's space. The production's technical finesse is typified by Murfi who bounces around like a rubber ball yet even in his most animal moments moves with balletic precision.

For all the flashes of humour Ballyturk is a bleak and exacting piece – abstract, at times cloyingly whimsical and pickled in its own absurdity.

But it's stunningly performed, and Walsh's writing has wild verve.

■ Until October 11 (020 7452 3000, nationaltheatre.org.uk)