

Dance production opens Thursday

Caught up in the tango

Luis Bravo is sitting on top of the world. And it has nothing to do with the 50-odd floors of skyscraper that separate him from Toronto terra firma.

Take him out of this restaurant on top of the Manulife Centre, and the expatriate Argentine would still be walking at least 10 feet off the ground.

Small wonder when one considers the success of *Forever Tango*, the highly-spiced Latin dance extravaganza that's already been the toast of San Francisco, Los Angeles, London and Chicago.

Now, courtesy of Follows Latimer Productions — the folks behind *Forever Plaid* and this summer's highly successful engagement of *Stomp* — *Tango* is slated to open here on Thursday at the Winter Garden Theatre, where it will play in a limited run before it heads for the bright lights of Broadway.

As the creator of the show, the 40-year-old Bravo — the 'Luis' is Spanish, the 'Bravo,' Italian, reflecting both sides of his ancestry — certainly has something to stamp his feet about.

In North America, the tango is hot stuff, the latest dance-as-a-spectator-sport discovery of thousands who've never before seen it done — at least, not properly.

Bravo understands how they feel.

Until he was eight years old, he'd never seen the tango either. Born in a small town outside of Buenos Aires, it wasn't until he moved to Argentina's sexy and sophisticated port city that he was exposed to the dance that the city spawned.

"The tango seduced me so much," he recalls of the first time he saw it. "I was an immigrant in my own country."

Since then, trained as a concert-level cellist, he's become an immigrant to the U.S., but the rhythm of Buenos Aires still throbs in his veins.

It was that rhythm that gave birth to *Forever Tango*. "I came to (the U.S.) when I was 23 years old — and I was involved in every aspect of musical circles," Bravo explains. "But I never had a chance to play

my music."

As a musician from Argentina, a tango is his music, of course. But it is more, he hastens to add, than merely music.

"A tango is a feeling that you dance," he sighs. "A sad story you tell in three minutes."

"You dance it with somebody — but it is so internal, you dance it by yourself."

And, while it's not necessary to be born in Buenos Aires, it does help to have an Argentine birth certificate. For though the tango can trace its roots back to numerous places, by Bravo's lights, it is a flower that only blooms fully in Argentina's soil.

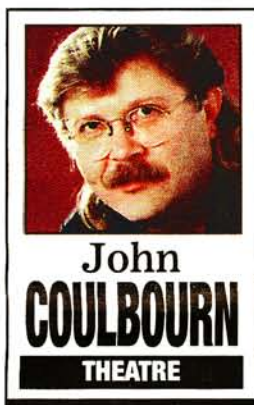
"We received a huge immigration from Italy," he explains of the roots of this dance. "Black people that came from the Caribbean. Natives that had to go to the port to make a living. This whole mixture made the tango."

"It's something that you live with — something that you grow with."

He laughs. "I can recognize an Argentinian from just the way they walk," he says, rising to demonstrate the moves.

The hands go in the pockets. The eyes, now fixed on some distant point on the horizon, are suddenly smoky. The shoulders drop and the hips turn liquid as he stalks an invisible prey on the other side of the room.

It's not dinner he's after — just dessert.



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