

C4

The Arts

**Tango dancers seduce
 with sultry steps**

IF it looks like sex, smells like sex and moves like sex then it must be sex, right? Wrong, say tango purists. They insist that the dance of the *pampas* is not about fatal attractions, but about loss and longing and other melancholic feelings. And, just to make it confusing, they make their prim pronouncements dressed in black seamed stockings and dresses cut up to their nether regions and heels so high they make the long muscles of their spectacular gams look even longer. Talk about mixed messages.

But if you think of it instead as a mind game, the kind of cerebral seduction that takes place before coitus, then it is easy to succumb to the charms of *Forever Tango*. Recently returned to Toronto for a limited engagement at the Princess of Wales Theatre after a season on Broadway, *Forever Tango* entices like no other dance show. With its cast of 14 dancers and 11 musicians playing the most erotically charged music heard outside a sultan's tent, *Forever Tango* presents couples whose bodies are wedded together for an unforgettable evening of carnal abandon.

Director Luis Brava has quickened the pulse on *Forever Tango*, since its last foray into the city 18 months ago. He has cut out the intermission and so has heightened the pleasure. *Forever Tango*, clocking in at just under two hours, is now an unrelenting orgy of physical expressiveness, so hot it burns the retina. The cast has changed, too. And because the dances are the creation of its couples, so has the choreography. The scintillating acrobatic opening and finale numbers by silver-lashed and buxom Miriam Larici and muscle-armed partner Claudio Villagra are still in place, as are the back-kicking comic dances by Claudia Mendoza and Luis

DANCE REVIEW

FOREVER TANGO

Reviewed by Deirdre Kelly

Castro and the sultry duets by the silver-haired Carlos Gavita and his drop-dead gorgeous partner, Marcela Duran.

Among the newcomers is the husband-and-wife team of Hector and Elsa Maria Mayoral. You can't miss them. He is as round as barrel and as wrinkled as an old shoe; she is a flaming redhead of a certain age. Their foot work is rapid fire; their form sleek and elegant. They constantly make goo-goo eyes at each other — it's a smouldering portrait of a marriage between two mature people who look as though they can't wait to tear each other's clothes off.

Alongside them are stripling couples such as the tempestuous Natalia Hills and Oscar Mandagaran, and the balletic Karina Piazza and Jorge Torres. That tango can accommodate both testosterone-driven young men and refined, expanded old ones shows just what an elastic art form it is.

The orchestra, led by musical director Lisandro Adrover, plays mournful tunes on bandoneons, Argentine accordions with a sonorous, nasal sound. Pianist Mario Araolaza and singer Miguel A. Velazquez (singing songs by Carlos Gardel, the voice of tango) provide the intimacy of a softly lit nightclub. The music, rousing as it is, serves as an interlude between dancing numbers. And a good thing too. After watching the "sexcapades" of one set of tango dancers, the audience needs to catch its breath before taking on the next. Nobody ever said that rapture was easy. *Forever Tango continues at the Princess of Wales Theatre in Toronto until Sunday.*