

DANCE REVIEW

The Tango Travels a Bit But Settles For Lust

By JENNIFER DUNNING

"Forever Tango," which opened on Thursday night at the Walter Kerr Theater, will probably be considered a must-see show by fans of that popular, sexy Argentine dance. Ordinary mortals may find the evening an enjoyable summer entertainment with terrific music and considerably cruder dances. But the superficiality of "Forever Tango" suggests a touring show designed to cash in on the international tango craze.

Fast-paced and gaudy, the show lacks the earthiness of "Tango Argentino" and the savage elegance of "Tango x 2," though the handsome Walter Kerr lends a much-needed intimacy to the genre. The evening begins with a truly terrible vignette in which an elderly pimp gives out the night's assignments in a late-19th-century Argentine brothel, evidently a time and place in which Wonder Bras and flossy Dynel wigs were all the rage.

"Forever Tango" makes a few more required stops along the tango-history route beloved of many of these shows, moving on to "suburbia" and "Paris" before finally settling into the safer and more engaging territory of lust and carnality, as the program notes put it.

In typical tango-show fashion, the evening picks up considerably during the second half, when most of the dancers abandon stock moves and give their numbers a more personal twist. The most distinctive performers are the hard-dancing comic team of Claudia Mendoza and Luis Castro, who impersonate a hapless matron and her overeager aging suitor. Ms. Mendoza has an unforgettable face that looks lived in but gleams with piquant, rueful charm. Mr. Castro courts her with body-skimming hands and scampering feet that lead her smoothly across the stage and back again.

Nora Robles and Pedro Calveyra are the daredevil acrobats of the group, with Laura Marcarie and Carlos Vera dancing with the unerring push of a guided missile. Cecilia Saia and Guillermo Merlo add a note of cool, with extra heat provided by Karina Piazza and Jorge Torres in a



Sara Krulwich/The New York Times

Karina Piazza and Jorge Torres provide heat in "Forever Tango."

There's this older woman, see? And an even older man is after her.

dance cast completed by Miriam Larici, Diego DiFalco, Carlos Gavito, Marcela Durán, Gabriel Ortega, Sandra Bootz and Carolina Zokalski.

Carlos Morel is the genial solo singer. The solo violinist was Humberto Ridolfi; the pianist was Fernando Marzán. The unofficial star of the show is Lisandro Adrover, the conductor and lead bandoneón player. With his drooping eyes and head, topped by a dandelion fuzz of hair, Mr. Adrover is hilariously world-weary, his conducting arm waving up into dim light with all the hopeless energy of a drowning man. And when the 11-man orchestra surges into "Jealousy," one might be dancing on a star-dappled promenade overlooking the sea in a lush movie musical.

Created and directed by Luis Bravo, "Forever Tango" will run through Aug. 9 at the Walter Kerr (218 West 48th Street).