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**BROADWAY REVIEW**

# Opposites attract, and dance a while

**FOREVER TANGO.** Written and directed by Luis Bravo. Shubert Theatre, 225 W. 44th St., Manhattan. For tickets, call 212-239-6200 or visit [www.telecharge.com](http://www.telecharge.com).

**BY RHONDA GARELICK**

They hold each other close enough to kiss, but their gaze remains stony. With eyes locked and upper bodies stiff, they swivel, stamp and whirl with urgency. They seem constantly about to injure each other. She kicks sharply between his legs, high heel pointed up. He flings her carelessly to the ground. But then he caresses her cheek and she swoons.

Will they kill each other or make wild love? Impossible to know, since this is tango, a dance mingling passion and violence while the bandoneón sings its plaintive accompaniment. Luis Bravo's "Forever Tango" returns to Broadway with a tribute to the art form invented by immigrant workers frequenting Buenos Aires' bordellos at the beginning of the 20th century.

"Forever Tango" is a grand affair, with 28 numbers and a dazzling cast of 15 dancers and one tango singer, Miguel Velázquez. The dancers have pride of place, but there are also instrumental pieces showcasing an 11-piece orchestra, including four of the world's 200 bandoneón players. Pianist Jorge Vernieri also deserves special mention for his moving and expressive solo.

Tango is about attitude, and this production is highly stylized. The men's hair is slicked back, they wear hats pulled low over one eye, pencil mustaches, unbuttoned white shirts and black suits. The women are gorgeous and haughty, their voluptuous figures set off by clinging evening dresses. Their hair — shiny black or flaming red — is pulled into severe chignons or cropped short with spit curls.

Not all of the cast is young, which reminds us that tango, unlike ballet or jazz, is a social dance you can perfect over a lifetime.

The evening presents a spectrum of tango's many tonal and narrative permutations. "El Suburbio" takes place in a smoky


NEWSDAY PHOTO / ARI MINTZ

**Juan Pablo Horvath and Alejandra Gutty perform "Negracha."**

brothel where two louche men in fedoras quarrel over a woman and dance a violent yet sexy tango together. (In early days,

men often tangoed together.)

The cast divides into recognizable couples that perform together throughout the evening. In

"La Mariposa," Carlos Vera and Laura Marcarie fit together like erotic magnets. "Comme il faut" features Claudio González and Melina Brufman in a lighter, Fred-and-Ginger-style tango with airy lifts and scissors kicks. In "La Tablada," Marcelo Bernadaz and Verónica Gardella do a comic dance with slapstick stumbles, mocking tango's usual seriousness.

In the second act, "Romance entre el Bandoneón y mi Alma" overturns expectations with a ballet-tango between Jorge Torres and Guillermina Quiroga. Former ballerina Quiroga, wearing only a blue leotard, performs classical ballet moves but in sinuous tango fashion, turning her body into acrobatic sculptures. The evening ends with a group tango in which couples dance in the required counter-clockwise circle, reminiscent of a Viennese waltz.

While the show is too long at two hours, overall it's a delicious night of sexy ballroom dancing, haunting music and beautiful people.

*Rhonda Garelick is a freelance writer.*