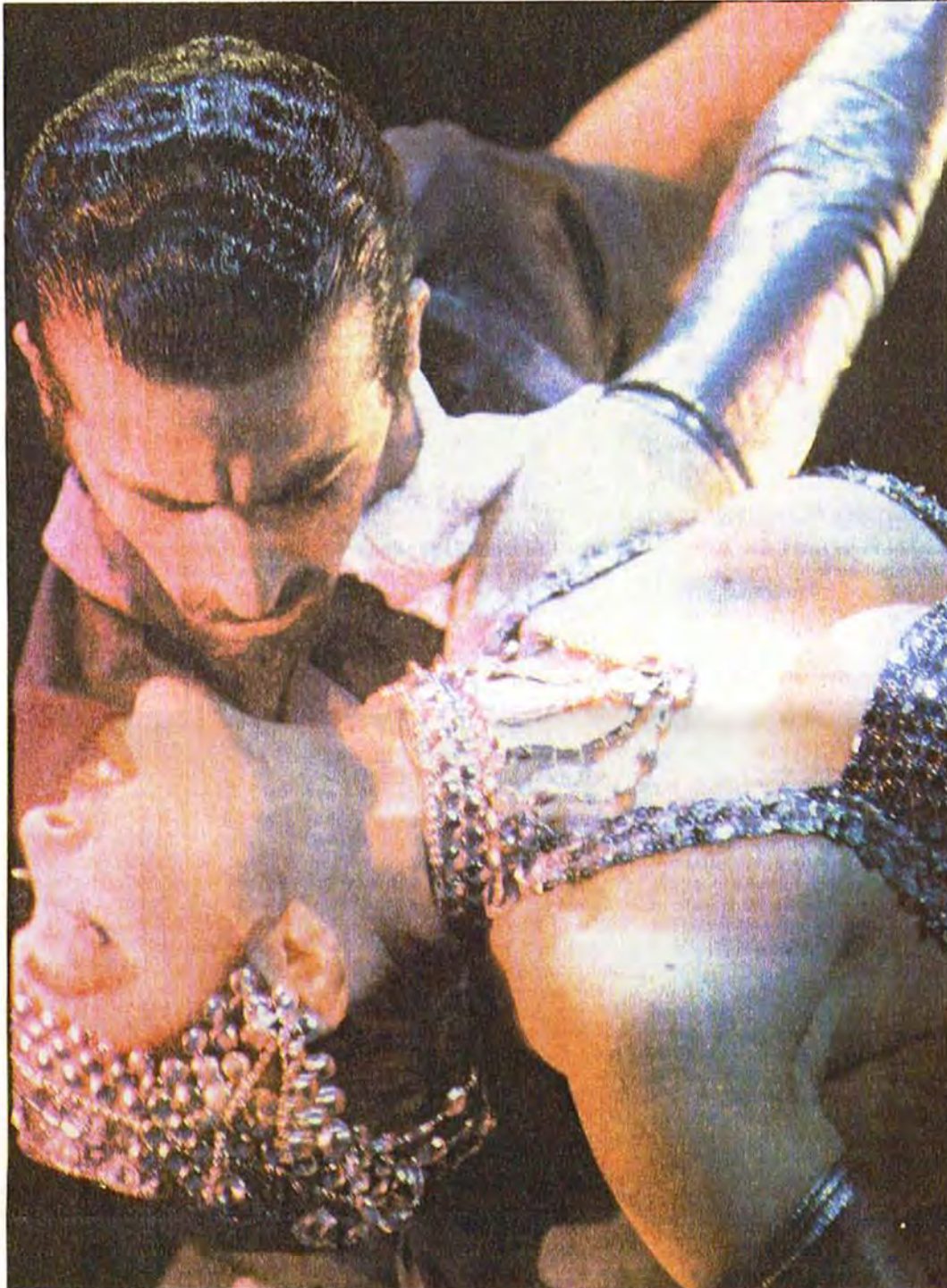


## Dirty Dancing



WAYNE CUDDINGTON, THE OTTAWA CITIZEN

Forever Tango dancers Miriam Larici and Diego Di Falco strut their sensuous stuff.

“The vertical expression of a horizontal desire”—why it takes two to tango

### Forever Tango

**When:** Through June 8

**Where:** National Arts Centre Theatre

**Tickets:** \$29.50-\$47.50, available at the NAC box office, or, with surcharges, through TicketMaster outlets (755-1111)

BY STEVEN MAZEY  
The Ottawa Citizen

The plaintive sound of the Argentine accordion fills the air, and the man and woman begin to dance, staring into each other's eyes with laser-beam intensity.

Bathed in red light and wisps of smoke, they strut and slink across the floor, mixing short, quick steps with long, slow gliding movements, their bodies intertwined. As they dance, they also tell a story, a three-minute drama of loneliness, passion, longing, despair.

This is tango, the dance form that started in the slums and bordellos of Buenos Aires near the turn of the century, went on to worldwide popularity and is still going strong a hundred years later.

Described by one critic as “the vertical expression of a horizontal desire,” the tango is the subject of a show that has been touring North America and Europe for the past three years, attracting capacity audiences and rave reviews.

Opening last night at the National Arts Centre, it will run until June 8, before heading to Broadway for an eight-week run.

Created, directed and choreographed by classically-trained Argentine cellist Luis Bravo, *Forever Tango* features 14 dancers, a singer and 11 musicians who trace the history of tango music and dance, from its lower-class beginnings to its introduction to Parisian café society in the 1920s and to its later reintroduction, in modified form, to the Argentine middle classes.

See **TANGO** page F2

Friday: Review of Forever Tango

# Tango: Success sweet for creator

Continued from page F1

The orchestra, led by Argentine composer Lisandro Adrover, includes cellos and violins and four specialists on the bandoneon, the small Argentine accordion that features buttons instead of a keyboard. Adrover has made special arrangements for the show of pieces by composers including Astor Piazzolla.

*Forever Tango* arrives with lavish advance praise for both the musicians and the dancers.

"It makes you realize how rich the grammar of tango can be," wrote a *London Times* critic.

"With its swooning, surging rhythms and suave hesitations, the tango permits its dancers to execute an infinite variety of complex, quicksilver movements while exulting in some of the most urbanely sensuous attitudes imaginable," said *The Los Angeles Times*.

For the show's creator, the success has been sweet.

Luis Bravo studied cello at the University of Buenos Aires and in the U.S. and went on to play with the Argentine National Symphony, the Los Angeles Philharmonic and with chamber groups and in recital.

He says his greatest satisfaction has come from creating a show that has helped spread enthusiasm for the music of his own country.

Bravo, who put together an early version of the show in 1990, was



WAYNE CUDDINGTON, THE OTTAWA CITIZEN

**Forever Tango creator Luis Bravo, centre, is shown with dancers Guillermo Merco, left, Cecilia Saia, Miriam Larici and Diego Di Falco. The show has been touring for the past three years.**

thrilled with its immediate success.

"For the first time as an artist I didn't have to explain anything about my identity. I was reaching people with my own art and culture," Bravo says.

After touring in the early 1990s, *Forever Tango* took a break but was revived three years ago and hasn't stopped since.

Bravo attributes part of the success of the show to its simplicity.

"There are no tricks or special ef-

fects. It is about music and dance and lighting. This dance has a strong personality. The tango dancers are also actors playing characters. Each dance tells a story. You don't have to speak Spanish or be from Argentina to appreciate that."

Bravo worked with the dancers to create the pieces and trace the development of the tango.

Though he says North American audiences tend to think of the tango as a

dance of sexual attraction, Bravo says one of the ideas is to show that there is more to the tango than sex appeal.

"If you watch closely, you see many moods in one dance. These moods reflect some of the upheavals and influences that have affected Argentina over the past century," he says.

"As an artform, it gives testimony of the time that it was created."

## Tango's roots

An early scene in *Forever Tango* illustrates the tango's beginnings.

"In the late 1800s, there were many European immigrants to Argentina who were lonely and without their families. People socialized in the bordellos, and many of the immigrants were homesick, so the music was nostalgic and melancholic," Bravo says.

"People today find this dance very sexual, but there is more to the dance than sexuality. In a certain way, although these dancers are with partners, this is also an internal dance, and the dancers are in their own emotional worlds."

Bravo says that though the tango may look effortless thanks to the skill of the performers, the dancers are specialists who have been training for years. Many of them teach the tango in workshops around the world. They also spend two or three hours a day practising, he says.

"It's not just a technique. You have to stay immersed in tango to dance it well."