

A tangled 'Tango'

Poor acoustics blur rich music of sensual dance

By **Richard Christiansen**
TRIBUNE CHIEF CRITIC

'Forever Tango," here through Sunday in the Chicago Theatre, is basically the same show that wowed audiences for several months in 1996, first at the Arie Crown Theatre and then, in a long engagement, at the Royal George.

For this return visit of the touring production, several of the splendid Royal George dancers and musicians are still on board; but this time, they are performing in a much larger house with less than ideal sight lines and a muddied amplification system that almost destroys their artistry.

The sound is particularly cruel when the 11-piece orchestra, led by Lisandro Adrover, is going full

Dance review

blast, turning the climaxes of such tango standards as "La Cumparsita" and "Jealousy" into a jangling blur. This is a pity, since the music is wonderful and the musicianship is high, from the quartet of virtuosos playing the large button accordions called *bandaneons* to the stylish and passionate solo singer Carlos Morel.

The program, though it needs no explanation, actually presents a brief history and shows several forms of the tango, from its urban outlaw origins in the brothels of Buenos Aires and its suburbs to its sleek and Europeanized ballroom variations.

As the saying goes, it does take two to tango. Each of the seven couples consists of a perfectly matched man and woman—though the show's introductory segment briefly spotlights an early tango example of two males dancing.

The couples have to be precisely paired, because their swift, quirky kicks, as well as their slow, languorous glides, require them to be in unison, down to the millisecond. Anything less, and they would wind up in the hospital.

The women wear high spike



Carlos Vera and Laura Marcarie dance the tango in Luis Bravo's "Forever Tango," which is at the Chicago Theatre through Sunday.

heels and skirts that twirl about to reveal their legs; the men generally dress in formal clothes and sport slicked-back hair.

The tempo is slow, slow, when the feet barely leave the floor, followed by quick, quick, with incredible knee action. This leads to a climax, often with the woman frozen in a pose hanging from or arching back from her partner.

Within this basic form, the dancers show the many variations on the tango, from the elegant swoops of Jorge Torres and Karina Piazza to the comic struts of Luis Castro and Claudia Mendoza.

Moreover, the tango can be

danced with smooth maturity by Carlos Gavito and Marcela Duran or with Apache-like athleticism by the young, muscular Cesar Coelho and Miriam Larici.

Throughout producer Luis Bravo's staging, the performers are dressed in glittering fashion by the costumes of Argemira Affonso and dramatically framed by Bravo's lighting design.

What a pity that the music, so essential a part of the sexiness and lyricism of the tango, is so messed up by the blaring amplification.

"Forever Tango" plays through Sunday in the Chicago Theatre, 175 N. State St. Phone 312-902-1500.