

STAGE



Veronica Gardell and Luis Bravo in Bravo's 'Forever Tango.'

'The Tango' is hot

By SIOB SHEFFIELD
STAFF WRITER

A major heat wave is on its way to Palm Beach — in the middle of winter. "Forever Tango" opens Wednesday and runs through Feb. 23 at Royal Poinciana Playhouse in Palm Beach.

Temperatures will surely rise in the staid 600-seat theater as a large company of Argentine dancers, singers and musicians bring to life the country's most famous and most sensual performing art form.

"Forever Tango" is Luis Bravo's baby, and he's as passionate about the show he created in 1990 as the dancers who interlock artfully in a passionate display of horizontal foreplay.

"In the three years we have been on the road with two companies, we have been accepted everywhere we've gone," says Bravo by telephone from Buenos Aires. "We played Covent Garden in London for four months and won an award at the Spoleto Festival in Italy. The last step is Broadway, but we've just got to find the right theater."

Bravo's show is not to be confused with "Tango Argentina," a music and dance review that toured in the mid-1980s. Choreographer-director Bravo is himself a musician, a classically trained cellist, and he has taken a historical approach to the now refined and stylized dance that began in the late 19th century in the rowdy bordellos of Buenos Aires.

"The dance was first an imitation of knife fights by men in Bordellos, which weren't just houses of prostitution but common meeting places where people would go to socialize, play cards and

drink," Bravo explains. "The men started dancing with the prostitutes and the dance took on a more sensual nature. Because the tango was dancing in bordellos, it was condemned by the Pope in 1914. By the 1920s, it was accepted by high society in Paris and the rest of Europe. I don't think it's lascivious. It's just a very sensual art form."

Tango is taught in practically dance studio in America, but "Forever Tango" is the real thing, born and bred in Buenos Aires. The cast includes 14 dancers — seven matched couples — 11 musicians and a crooner-style singer named Carlos Morel. The musical director is Lisandro Adrover, whom Bravo met when he performed the world premiere of Adrover's Concerto for Cello, Bandoneon and Orchestra at the Cervantes National Theatre. Lisandro was musical director of "Tango Argentina" in 1985 when Bravo joined the cast as a fill-in musician. Bravo, who had emigrated to Los Angeles and was working as a freelance musician, was so inspired to be again playing the music of his homeland that he began formulating plans for his own show as a personal statement.

"Tango is very internal and introspective, not external, like other dances," says Bravo. "It's self-feeling, melancholy, yet it is danced with a partner. It is an art form that has evolved from many cultures; the Caribbean, Africa, the Pampas. Buenos Aires is a big port city and has always been a melting pot. It is beautiful, passionate and unique." □

■ Tickets for "Forever Tango" are \$29.50 to \$45 at TicketMaster and the box office. Call (561) 659-3310.