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VARIETY

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BROADWAY

FOREVER TANGO

NEW YORK A Steven Baruch, Richard Frankel, Thomas Viertel, Marc Routh, Jujamcyn Theaters, Interamerica Inc. presentation of a dance revue in two acts. Created and directed by Luis Bravo. Costumes, Argemira Affonso; musical direction, Lisandro Adrover; stage manager, Jorge Gonzales. Opened June 19, 1997, at the Walter Kerr Theater. Reviewed June 17; 950 seats, \$75 top. Running time: **2 HOURS, 8 MIN.**

Dancers: Miriam Larici, Diego DiFalco, Luis Castro and Claudia Mendoza, Jorge Torres and Karina Piazza, Guillermo Merlo and Cecilia Saia, Pedro Calveyra and Nora Robles, Carlos Gavito and Marcela Duran, Carlos Vera and Laura Marcarie, Gabriel Ortega and Sandra Bootz, Carolina Zokalski.

With: Carlos Morel (singer).

For all its obvious single-mindedness, "Forever Tango" accomplishes what it sets out to do, seducing an audience with infectious, fervent tempos, haunting Latin rhythms and, most certainly, the masterful techniques of its seasoned dancers. There are some languid orchestral interludes, which tend to slow the pace to a crawl, as do a couple of songs ardently crooned by an Argentine troubadour, but the entertainment, conceived and staged by Luis Bravo, is mesmerizing when it's dancing.

With musicians seated onstage for the entire show, against the backdrop of a starry sky, dancing couples glide in from the shadows of the night. Each couple offers distinctive variations on the intricacies of the tango, an immigrant-inspired dance born over a century ago in the back rooms and saloons of Argentina. From lightning-quick steps to dramatic pauses and dips, the partners move with studied grace and precision, dominated by intense, steely-eyed expressions. The women coil around their men like serpents, and kick out with effortless leggy extensions.

"Forever Tango" has enough style and sophistication to arouse the savage heart, but it lacks the variety, color and panache of its illustrious predecessor, "Tango Argentino," which came along to celebrate the centennial of the tango in 1985.

Still, each specialty number is marked with its own sexy flavoring and a decided edge of danger. Every dance tells a little story. Carlos Gavito as an old aristocrat expresses his obsession with a young woman. The swift humor of Guillermo Merlo and Cecilia Saia is particularly refreshing, as is the spirited athleticism of Miriam Larici and Diego DiFalco in the knockout penultimate dance.

All the dancers provide their own dazzle, but Jorge Torres and the alluring Karina Piazza seem to define the sense of romantic involvement. Sadly, there are but three ensemble numbers. One of the most visually descriptive sequences takes place in a smoky brothel and projects a dark Brechtian landscape. The most well known of tangos, "La Cumparsita," is elegantly expressed by three couples.

The orchestra is led by an impassioned Lisandro Adrover, who plays a bandoneon, similar to an accordion but with a more limited range. Instrumental segments feature solos for the pianists and violinist, the most persuasive statement being the familiar "Jealousy." —Robert L. Daniels