

# Passion fills the stage for a night of torrid tango

By Anne Marie Welsh

DANCE CRITIC

**T**ango dancers always come in pairs — which tells you most of what you need to know about "Forever Tango," the latest touring show to celebrate the sad, sexy, exuberant music and dance of Argentina.

If you enjoyed "Tango Argentino" anywhere, or the short-lived "Dangerous Games" at the La Jolla Playhouse, or the recent, small scale "Tango x 2" in Escondido, this fourth show, "Forever Tango," will no doubt please and excite you. It's already been extended at the Spreckels Theatre through June 23.

This time, an 11-piece bandoneon orchestra fully shares the spotlight with the dancers. And much of the performance by six accomplished couples has a wonderfully knowing wit about the domination-submission games the dancing implies.

Though "Forever Tango" makes no attempt to give a history of or commentary on the tango as its predecessors did, it does open with two riveting images.

First a sleek macho man (dancer Fabio, no kidding!) emerges from a prop bandoneon, the plaintive-sounding lap accordion that gives the music its characteristic raspy sob. He seeks and finds Night in the person of a silver-clad woman, Miriam (nobody uses last names).

They dance off cheek-to-cheek while the orchestra plays a lush-on-the-strings overture that segues into a tango drama set in the sort of dockside brothel in Buenos Aires where the dance was born.

The man of the house is Mayoral, a memorable veteran of "Tango Argentino." He's surrounded by five women who quickly pair up with the arriving men, until two of these macho customers have a stylized fight.

The stabbing footwork, the push-pull of resisting male bodies, the spontaneity and drama of the music suggest that tango can be as much a dance of violence and death as of love and life. By now, the themes are sketched, the audience is hooked, and the couples alternate with the musicians in highly personalized displays of passion and virtuosity.

Mayoral and Elsa Maria are the most subtle, elegant and witty couple. They're the only holdovers from "Tango Argentino," the Broadway show that 10 years ago kicked off the ongoing tango craze.

Mayoral is portly and of a certain age. Elsa Maria is taller than he, with long, strong legs, an auburn pageboy and a behind his hands keep finding. Their classic style ranges from slow, smooth strides to fast, between-the-legs kicking to novelty moves in which she stands on his outstretched foot.

With a couple this mature, it's not the technique that matters, but the communication. They've danced together 30 years. They keep their movement within a small circumference. And they keep you as alert and alive as they are; he always looks ready because she's al-

See **TANGO** on Page E-3

## DANCE REVIEW

### "Forever Tango: The Eternal Dance"

8 tonight, 5 and 8:30 p.m.  
Friday, 2 and 8 p.m.  
Saturday, 8 p.m. June  
18-21, 2 and 8 p.m. June  
22, 2 and 7:30 p.m. June  
23. Spreckels Theatre,  
121 Broadway,  
downtown. \$19-\$39.50.  
220-TIXS.



MARTY SOHL

**Music of the night:** Fabio, the tango man born from Argentine music, romances a starry night in the shape of his dance partner, Miriam.