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SENSUOUS & STEAMY 'TANGO'

By CLIVE BARNES



Jorge Torres and Marcela Duran in "Forever Tango."

July 26, 2004 -- WHEN Luis Bravo 10 years ago started a spectacular tango show with his life savings, he called it "Forever Tango."

He must have had a special premonition because internationally it's been going "forever" ever since, and on Saturday night it returned to Broadway for a special six-week engagement at the Shubert Theatre.

With 14 dancers, a singer and a 12-piece onstage orchestra, the show — which had a year-long Broadway run, plus multiple Tony nominations, during the 1997-98 season — seems as blithe, sensuous and steamily innocent as ever.

Knees are constantly slightly bent, the man's body, impassively aggressive, is usually more rigid than the woman's, which bends pliantly, while flicking legs are forever intercutting and entwining, symbols almost of the dance's impersonal, genderless sexuality.

Essential to the tango is the bandoneon, that eccentric Argentinean button accordion, a squeeze-box of infinite variety in its plaintive nostalgia, and "Forever Tango" has four bandoneon players, plus two violinists (how could you play "Jealousy" without a violinist?), a violist, a cellist, a bass player, a pianist and a guy on keyboard.

This latest edition of "Forever Tango" apparently dates from 2000, but it is pretty much the same mixture of grace and snarl remembered fondly from its earlier incarnation.

FOREVER TANGO

The Shubert Theatre, 225 W. 44th St. (212) 239-6200. Performances through Aug. 29.