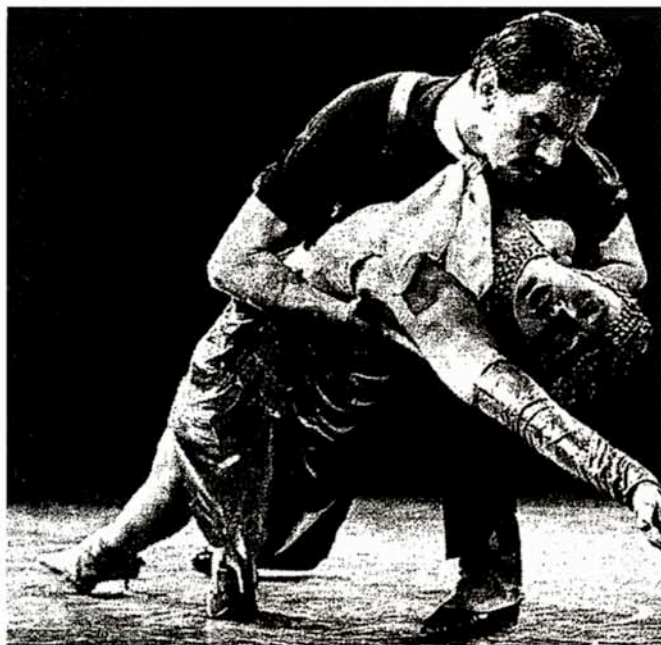




Swayed by seduction and sexual symbolism



In the mood: Sandor and Miriam in Forever Tango

FOREVER TANGO *Strand Theatre*

WHAT a discreetly erotic sort of dance the tango is. Yes, there's no missing the fact that seduction and submission are what its thrusting, athletic steps are all about, but Luis Bravo's exuberant Forever Tango might have been designed to prove that this originally Argentinian dance can be relished by middle-aged sophisticates and louche London clubbers alike: it never risks the really risqué.

Only the women's costumes, with sudden flashes of bare back, upper thighs revealed where dresses are artfully slashed and even a glimpse of bared buttock, could cause a raising of primmer eyebrows.

The show, danced by six couples with a small band and two melodramatic singers who provide relentlessly boring respite from the foot-tappers, is mainly elegant, eloquent wall-to-wall tangoing, from Buenos Aires in the 1880s to today: no time for a single (spoken) word in edgeways.

Anyone addicted to the tango's tense rituals of men and women coming together, and keeping each other at arm's and feet's length will be much rewarded.

But those who like Dance to cover a wider, more varied emotional field, or even to boast an actual narrative, may feel they had the experience, but missed the meaning.

The prelude, performed in crepuscular light by the tangoing Sandor and Miriam with the band seated behind them, is the show's only dance with a theme behind it: Mr Bravo's baffling programme note claims the dance describes a musical instrument "in search of its passion". But the scene is typical of all that follows.

Miriam, voluptuous in skimpy silver costume, tiara and necklace, lightly dances and flicks her fluent limbs in answer to Sandor's — now coming close, now moving away, ending up in submission.

The choreography involves infinite variations on this theme, from the fast and frantic to the elegantly leisured: the foot of one dancer darts between the foot of the other in a fairly basic sexual symbolism.

But only in Libertango, with Guillermo and Cecilia



Nicholas de Jongh's

FIRST NIGHT REVIEW

and Sandor and Miriam, neatly dancing and twirling, in a return to the mood of the prelude, is there a fierce sexual dynamic: the dinner-jacketed Guillermo zooming into athletic fourth gear and Cecilia, in diaphanous black, head held back, whirled into the air and caught in his arms, displays a zippy finesse.

SANDOR, in a sort of thrilled, dancing homage to Miriam, is all energy in contrast to her medium cool repose when she is lifted over his back and almost thrown in the air.

Mayoral and Elsa Maria, who were born and brought up in Buenos Aires, are much older and inevitably less vigorous. But they bring an immaculate air of gracefulness under stress to their proceedings.

The only challenge to the mood of sexual compatibility comes from Carlos Borques, who turns slightly rough and unready in the face of Ines, his provoking and ultimately yielding partner, who literally jumps into his arms.

The dancing and emotional thrills may not be that major. But in Mr Bravo's beautifully drilled and choreographed production the tango sometimes seems a supple and quite subtle form of courtship in dance: and, in this fairytale world, love always comes out right in the end.