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## First impressions: 'Forever Tango'

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"FOREVER TANGO": The rumors made it too seductive to resist: Onstage chemistry is so hot inside the company it's produced at least 50 marriages, innumerable offstage couplings and not a few offspring in the bargain. Easy to believe when the stage action in question is the tango -- "the dance of seduction," born in the dockside bars and brothels of Buenos Aires and banned for indecency by the pope in 1914.

But don't go to "Forever Tango" expecting two hours of torrid foreplay. Luis Bravo's long-running show has all the elements of an onstage fever -- an 11-member orchestra wringing blood-stirring pathos and pure sensual smolder from their instruments; a sexy, all-Argentinian cast of 14 dancers; the tangled tension of their movement: predatory, defiant and impossibly fast one moment, languorous and yielding the next. The women are sheathed in razor-sharp stilettos and skintight dresses slit to the hip; the men are dashing in fedoras, spats and tailored suits.

They are gorgeous to watch, feet flicking like knife blades between and around partners' legs, bodies locked in close embrace and lingering in compromised poses, legs spearing the air or snaking around thighs and backs, spines bent in dangerous dips. But only one couple, older than the rest, seems to feel the raw pulse of the tango, the intimate heat of it, in their bones. Theirs is a dance thick with possibilities, and it doesn't look rehearsed.

Otherwise, "Forever Tango" is a fast-moving Broadway glam revue: airborne spins and ice-skater acrobatics, comedic sketches spoofing bourgeoisie buffoons, tarted-up prostitutes vamping for cigarette-smoking pimps and a nod to the tango's origins as a contest between men. Impeccably polished dancing? Oh, yes. Steamy? Except for the orchestra, ardor appears to have been airbrushed out.

Continues 7:30 p.m. Friday, 2:30 and 7:30 p.m. Saturday, 3 p.m. Sunday. Keller Auditorium, 222 S.W. Clay St.; \$19-\$49.50, 503-224-4400, [www.ticketmaster.com](http://www.ticketmaster.com).

-- Catherine Thomas Special to The Oregonian