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## DANCE

# Tangoing Back to Broadway

By PIA CATTON

Luis Bravo's "Forever Tango" is back on Broadway. This showcase of flashy Argentinean dance enjoyed a year-long run in 1997-8, and it's back (with some tinkering) for a six-week engagement at the Shubert Theatre.

### FOREVER TANGO Shubert Theater

One thing's for sure: You'll get your money's worth from this show. The first act features eight dances, the second act, 11. They are all sufficiently different and moods rarely feel repeated. This is a function mainly of the dancers' distinct stage personalities: There's the funny couple, the disdainful couple, the elegant older couple, and so on.

The variation is due to Mr. Bravo's presentation of tango in traditional forms as well as more modern varieties. The show opens with an homage to the beginnings of tango. In a bordello setting, men begin a fight that winds its way into a dance and then begins to incorporate the attractive women standing around. There are also some numbers intended to update the look of the dance — but they're not all winners. In one unfortunate dance, a female dancer shows up in a lace unitard and the choreography suggests an Ice Capades routine.

For the most part, though, the variety and the mix of orchestra segments keep things sexy and interesting. Many of these dancers are long-time partners who work as teams. Their bios list them together, not individually. They come to the stage with personalities that they've developed together over the years.

Carlos Vera and Laura Marcarie, for example, have a mature sexiness about them. They dance like two people who know each other inside and out, who move with respect for each other, and who have perhaps struggled together. By contrast, Alejandra Gutty and Juan Paulo Horvath seem to look past each other, as if they are only dancing together because they can't be with the ones they truly love. Marcelo Bernadaz and Veronica Gardella have a comedy routine that makes him the lovable young cad with a goofy routine and her the society lady who falls for it.

These dances are variations and ex-

trapolations on the traditional movements that make up tango — and the choreography is created by the dancers themselves. In the "La Cumparsita" section, three couples dance in unison with movements that look like the tango of ballroom classes — but only for a little while. Things quickly heat up after and devolve into more individualistic styles.

While an evening at "Forever Tango" is a delight, it's about two numbers too long. Halfway through the second act, I felt I had had enough. What saves it, though, was the hope singer Miguel Velázquez would pop out on stage again.

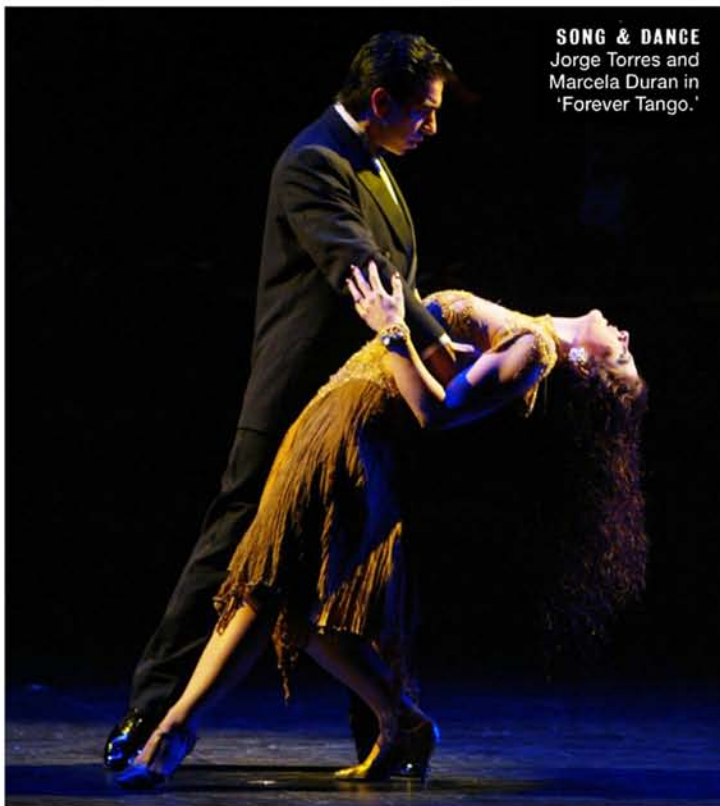
Even with all the spectacular dancing, the hands-down star of the show is Mr. Velázquez, a crooner of the highest order. An absolutely magnetic showman with a luscious voice, Mr. Velázquez has the look of an old-time film star. His double-breasted suits fit his beefy chest, which in turn befits

his slicked-back hair. When he takes the stage for a solo, you want to close your eyes and melt — but doing so means missing his supremely masculine charm.

The musicians, too, in this show are first-rate. The 11-member orchestra features four men on the bandoneon — the instrument, similar to the accordion, that produces that special tango sound. The "Forever Tango" orchestra is so pleasing that that the show is almost worth seeing for the music alone. It's a shame, then, that in a few numbers the lights go out on the band and recorded music takes over.

Still, the orchestra gets several music-only segments, and occasionally some members get to show off a bit during little solos. You're probably better off here for song and dance than anywhere else on Broadway.

Until August 29 (225 W. 44th St., 212-239-6200).



SONG & DANCE  
Jorge Torres and  
Marcela Duran in  
'Forever Tango.'

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