



Troupe caresses extremes of tenderness and tragedy

Forever Tango

When: Through June 8

Where: National Arts Centre Theatre

Tickets: \$29.50-\$47.50, available at the NAC box office, or, with surcharges, through TicketMaster (755-1111)

BY SUSAN HICKMAN
The Ottawa Citizen

The soulful twang of the accordion, the lilt of the violin from silhouetted musicians and the shimmering blue-green lights behind a smoky curtain set the mood for a performance that is stunning from opening moment to final curtain.

Act One of *Forever Tango* begins with the black-suited Diego Di Falco stepping out of an accordion box. The painful strains of a violin herald the entrance of silver-wrapped Miriam Larici. Then a black veil envelops the couple in a metaphorical scene of the relationship between a *bandoneón* (an Argentine accordion player) and the night, through which he pursues his dream woman. The tango is born.

Luis Bravo, who created this show seven years ago to share with others the art and culture bred in his soul, has put his very essence into a dance and music extravaganza which never falters.

Transitions from one scene to the next are flawless. The 11-piece orchestra, predominantly bandoneóns and strings, 14 dancers and a singer, are

without exception seriously polished and passionate.

Singer Carlos Morel, a veteran of the show, punctuates the performance with a rich, resonant voice of passion that comes from the heart.

Tracing the history of tango from its origins in the slums of Buenos Aires through its introduction into Parisian café society in the '20s and back to Argentina's high society in a modified form, *Forever Tango* features the extremes of tenderness and tragedy.

The men sport slicked black hair, top hats, spats, mirror-shined shoes and egos that personalize distinctively different styles of presenting a dance that is the intensity of lust and power. The women are flamboyant in revealing and sequined costumes, fringed, sleek and high-heeled in black, silver or midnight blue.

Di Falco, a partner for Larici as well as Carolina Zokalski, brings a suavely and confidence to the stage with his unique style of tango, which he teaches in European ballroom dance schools. His last dance with the silver-clad Larici, jewels wrapped around her head and throat, even her eyelids painted silver, is a suggestively sensual and riveting finale. It spells out lust and longing, commitment only to the wild and reckless moment. In the end, Di Falco whirls Larici madly around his head in a spin that ends with her being tossed (with some care, I might add) into the accordion suitcase



WAYNE CUDDINGTON, THE OTTAWA CITIZEN

Cecilia Saia and Guillermo Merlo end dances with flourish.

which has again appeared stage front.

Carlos Vera presents a gentlemanly style to Laura Marcarie's attentive and sensual partnering. Jorge Torres is a more deliberate dancer, considerate to partner Karina Piazza, who is serious and absorbed in the movement of the

moment.

Luis Castro is Mr. Cool, the aggressive macho man. He enters stage with one hand in pocket, white trousers. Partner Claudia Mendoza is the frazzled, careful-to-please, overly man-handled dame. Quick-footed with

somewhat of a charming awkwardness, together they bring a wonderful lighthearted comedy to the tango, she with exaggerated shifts of the hip, his large sweeps across the floor.

The tall Cecilia Saia is the only blond dancer among the entirely Argentine troupe. She presents a sophisticated, modest style with partner Guillermo Merlo, a truly attentive slicker. In spite of a conservative front, they end their dances with a flourish and display adeptly the desperation of the dance. They are sharp and fast.

Carlos Gavito and Marcela Duran, dance teachers in New York and Argentina respectively, present an incredibly co-ordinated partnership. In Act Two, they represent the impossibility of the older man obsessed with a younger woman. They dance a scene of seduction which results in the loss of the challenge. He remains aloof and distant and alone.

The Forever Tango Orchestra provides phenomenal accompaniment to the dancers.

Jacob Gade's *Jealousy* is impassioned with woe. Astor Piazzolla's *Adiós Nonino*, a piece full of fury, features pianist Fernando Marzan plucking the chords of tenderness, rage and futility from which the tango was born, and bandoneón player and musical director Lisandro Adrover, whose very soul is in his instrument.

Susan Hickman is a freelance writer