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★★★25¢ — May vary outside metro Denver

'Forever Tango' sensuous, sultry, theatrical

By Glenn Giffin
Denver Post Dance Critic

Luis Bravo, the creator of "Forever Tango," insisted in an interview that the tango is not about sex.

Maybe. But there is no doubt that the mix of song, music and dance developed in the slums and brothels of Buenos Aires, and it looks as if it's about the most fun a fully clothed couple can have. It is definitely sexy, slinky, sometimes outrageous and fabulously entertaining.

Like flamenco and jazz, tango is as much a way of life — gritty, grainy, messy — as it is an art, and the 14 dancers assembled by Bravo for his show reflect this diversity in many ways. Carlos Gomez leers and winks theatrically as he dances with Alicia Monti, his hand rippling along her spine like a fiddler's on a violin.

The team of Marcelo and Veronica Bernadaz are the kids of the troupe, enthusiastic and high-energy like jitter-buggers of the '40s and ready to try anything. They're adorable.



FOREVER TANGO

★★★★

Produced and directed by: Luis Bravo.

Sponsored by: Denver Center Attractions

When: 8 p.m. Thursday and Friday; 5 and 9 p.m. Saturday; and 2 and 7 p.m. Sunday.

Where: Buell Theatre

Tickets: \$15-\$38 at Denver Center Box Office, 893-4100, or Ticketmaster, 830-8497.

But then there are Carlos Gavito and Marcela Duran, older, experienced, scarred and even jaded. To them were given the world-weary tangos that are danced with grave sensuality. I noticed that this couple got lots of applause from a largely middle-aged audience, as though there's hope for us all. And if Gavito, balding, beaded and somewhat portly, can do all that, then dancing is an obvious physical workout. Very sleek, this pair.

"Forever Tango" is a series of vignettes of tango, ranging from a re-created brothel of the 1890s in "Quilombando En El '90" to the sizzling Miriam Lanci and Claudio Villagra in "Romance del Bandoneon y la Noche." (It is her image, silver-sheathed and posed in front of a huge bandoneon, that adorns many of the "Forever Tango" posters.)

This latter pair represents the current state of tango: theatrical in the extreme and not what you'd try on your own without supervision.

The tango is an amalgam of song, dance and music. You can have the song without the dance, or the dance without the song, but in either case the implication of the missing part is still there.

Especially with vocalist Carlos Morel, who could almost smash the language barrier with his ardent performances.

(And why no translations in the program? That was shoddy treatment of the audience.)

A smashing, albeit purely musical,

moment came with Astor Piazzolla's "Adios Nonino," almost a tango concerto for piano and violin. (Neither soloist was credited in the number, which was a disservice to fine musicians.)

Lisandro Androver did the orchestrations and presided as lead bandoneon player, the bandoneon being one of the defining sounds of tango. It is a variety of accordion with sharply accented and abrupt rhythmic possibilities. Four of them, as in "Forever Tango," make a remarkable sound.

And the dancing? All the sultry moves of tango were there, the *crusado* (cross), the "hooks" (darting feet looking like a wrestler's takedown), the *corte* (a blocking foot suddenly placed), grand sweeps of a leg and high kicks, the "ochos" ("eights," a pattern that can have a dancer going full tilt like the agitator of a washing machine).

Ever since "Tango Argentino" showed the way, tango revues have nurtured a steady and growing interest in tango. If dance classes don't fill up with "Forever Tango" as an inducement, then Denver dancers are laggards.