

'Tango' exudes pure passion

By Pat Craig
TIMES STAFF WRITER

"Forever Tango" is not a play, but it is a fantasy about a time and place when red meat and Pall Mall Kings were good for you, and carnality was a mutually cooperative contact sport.

Or, maybe it's just the way things are in Argentina, where the tango reigns, and hot hands trace the curves of fire-eyed women to the sound of the pleading bandoneon, a big accordion that seems to be the life blood of the dance.

OK, if you insist on a more familiar frame of reference, you can consider it freak dancing, except with style and sophistication; both types of dance seem aimed at reaching the same goal, only tango dancers appear that they would know more about what to do once they got there.

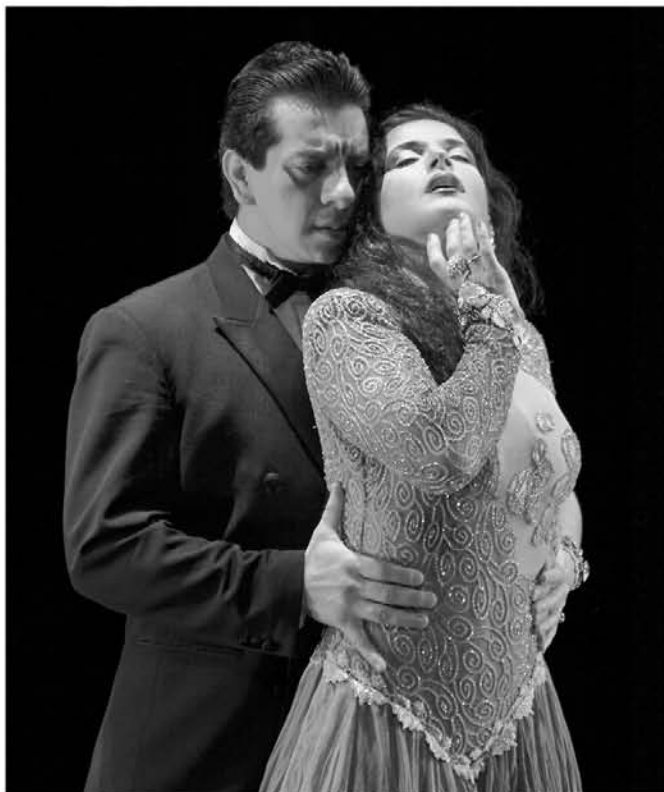
And that may be the overriding charm and passion of "Forever Tango" which opened earlier this week at San Francisco's Post Street Theatre (in one of its many revivals over the past decade). It is unabashedly adult, and in the best sense. It is a show performed by adults, people in their mid-20s to late-30s and older, who appear to have an excellent knowledge of what goes where, how to use it, and don't seem to be the least bit concerned over a bald spot or a bulge.

Yes, this show deals with a dance that brazenly points the way to the after-bedtime you-know-what, but just smile and enjoy it. Remember, it's only a show, so it leaves you without a trace of guilt in the morning.

And beyond that, creator Luis Bravo (who played cello in the opening night orchestra), treats you to a rollicking and memorable evening of music and dance — which, in case you're worried because you've seen it before, is almost completely different than previous "Forever Tango" incarnations. And, while the dancing is geared to tickle the libido, the intent is to entertain while doing it.

The dancers are as close to fluid as muscle and bone can be, slithering through the numbers like snakes navigating a rain forest, and producing just about as much steam.

At some point during the evening, though, you do press the PC button, wondering to yourself if grabbing a woman and



JORGE TORRES and Marcela Duran sizzle in "Forever Tango."

DANCE REVIEW

■ **WHAT:** "Forever Tango," by Luis Bravo

■ **WHEN:** Tuesdays-Sundays through Jan. 21

■ **WHERE:** Post Street Theatre, 450 Post St., S.F.

■ **RUNNING TIME:** 2 hours

■ **HOW MUCH:** \$55-\$75

■ **CONTACT:** 415-771-6900, www.ticketmaster.com

dragging her around the stage, no matter how rhythmical, is a proper thing for a gentleman to be doing in these troubled times.

But then you realize the show takes place neither here, nor in these troubled times. Bravo has created a timeless space on his stage, where the date might be tomorrow or 70 years ago. The place moves from the Argentine bordellos, where the tango originated, through an array of high and low spots, where the variety and sultry beauty of the dance is demonstrated by this incredibly versatile troupe of dancers.

Dance captain Jorge Torres and his partner, Marcela Duran,

seem to lead the company, creating vivid characterizations to go along with their dance numbers. Memorable too, are Cristian Cisneros and Virginia Porriño, who are able to demonstrate that sexy and funny can go hand-in-hand, with some charmingly droll and flirty numbers that relieve the humidity ever so slightly.

What transports the whole production into that erotic fantasy world, where there is no time, is the orchestra, led by bandoneon player Victor Lavallen, whose group includes three additional bandoneons, two violins and violas, cello, bass, piano and keyboard.

The members of the band are almost as much members of the cast as they are musicians, with their facial expressions and reactions presenting an ongoing mute commentary to the unfolding passion and dance going on in front of them.

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