Carole Edrich saw Estampas Portenas in

Tango Fire



Photographs from Tango Fire *by Jeremy Hoare.*

With fast paced footwork, well-coordinated couples, gorgeous ganchos and sets of sinuous lifts and twists, this production of *Tango Fire* is an energetic and talent-filled performance. Artistic director and choreographer Carolina Soler has created a show in two very distinct parts. The first is a vigorous and fleet-footed fantasy of the history of tango from within a Milonga. Men dance together and separately with good natured rivalry, and women huddle to discuss their clothes or pull a friend back from approaching a man, before couples pair off to perform. Dancers keep their characters throughout this section and some wonderfully humorous touches include one dancer accidentally stepping on another's foot and the excruciating pain that results.

Dancers and choreographer refer to the second half as "The Show", and that's exactly what it is. With a format that's typical of Buenos Aires tango shows it's a combination of spectacular dance, moving music and sonorous vocals.

Unfortunately, the two halves feel rather unbalanced. While the first part's performance is technically stunning and the footwork, lifts and spins are impressive, there's no significant change of pace. Even posed tableaux are held only briefly and since it's the slower moves that confer subtlety of expression and enable a better appreciation of the pace of the rest of the dance, the show's impact is reduced.

However, the dancing is excellent and two numbers in the second half are particularly good. Pablo Sosa and Mariela Maldonado dance to Libertango with a wonderful sense of rhythm and music and Mauricio Celis and Inés Cuesta excel themselves with lifts, spins and speed in "Comme il Faut".

The show is suffused with a startling complexity of flawless footwork. The troupe's ganchos (kicks) are astounding in their speed, accuracy and direction; stunning spins, lifts and slides show a level of accuracy, athleticism and a sense of space that comes only from a combination of talent and very hard

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