

DANCE REVIEW

Sensual tangos are feast for the senses

The Otero Dance Company dazzles the eyes as its ace musicians play at the Ford Amphitheatre.

By Victoria Looseleaf
Special to The Times

August 14, 2006

Sex oozed from the stage Saturday night under a waning moon as Gloria and Claudio Otero slithered, slinked and stalked their way through some serious tango business at the John Anson Ford Amphitheatre. Founders of the locally based Otero Dance Company, this couple — not husband and wife, but siblings — give new meaning to the term brotherly love.

Of course, they had heaps of help from singer Esther Segovia, whose plaintive yearnings and soulful demeanor recall Edith Piaf, and a quartet of ace musicians, including pianist José Luis Motta and bandoneonist Raúl Jaurena, in an evening dubbed "Fiesta Argentina 2006 de Tango a Malambo."

Clocking in at three hours, the show's first set could have been trimmed by half, but it featured some first-rate plucking by guest harpist Julio Montero, the mellow vocalese of Júlían Córdoba and the more folksy footwork of the Otero troupe, the men flaunting gaucho prowess. Whether deftly dancing on the sides of their feet in pliable boots, brushing the floor with their soles or brandishing "boleadoras" (leather balls tied to a rope and originally used for hunting), the dexterous dudes — Eduardo Rodriguez, Mario Marine and Claudio Otero — delivered.

Rodriguez, in particular, dazzled, twirling two ropes with bullet-train speed as he daringly dipped, turned and even bent backward on his knees, the props becoming a blur in the night. Also offering ahhh-worthy moves were Elizabeth Roccella, Susan Gregory and Gloria Otero, swirling ponchos with finesse as the Pampas (plains) of Argentina came to life vividly.

So, too, did the smoky saloons of Buenos Aires, with Segovia the barroom belter, roaming among couples caught in fervent embraces. A statuesque Gregory excelled in split-leg stances, her partner Marine mopping the floor with her. Rodriguez and Roccella executed quicksilver kicks and twisting maneuvers, while the Oteros (call her the Marisa Tomei of tango) blazed through sumptuous lifts and thigh-thrusts.

Myriad costume changes — from spats and pinstripes on the men to tricked out ladies in spangly velvets and skin-baring frocks — pumped up the style quotient in this festive affair.