


REVIEW: Tanguera "the embodiment of the tango"



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If your only experience of tango is watching *Strictly*, then you have been miss sold and may need to rethink your ideas of what tango could be.

Tanguera is billed as sensuous spectacle and it does not disappoint. On at Sadler's Wells until the 6th August it is the story of a young immigrant in early 20th century Buenos Aires.

Visually *Tanguera* is impressive. Lighting is used to great effect, bringing to life simple sets and augmenting the dancing, which is simply stunning. At times light encages the action making the stage claustrophobic. Elsewhere the Argentinian backdrop from the docks to clubs is lit expertly bringing it beautifully to life.

Tango has been described the as the vertical expression of a horizontal desire, and in this case, a truer word has not been spoken. *Tanguera* walks a fine line between passion and agony, often delivering a more than adept pasada over that line; achieving set pieces which are both exquisite and intimate, daring and deliciously decadent. The show moves from solemn to sultry, to sleazy, to sexy against a sumptuous live soundtrack with ease, panache and dramatic flair.

What was completely unexpected was Marianella's striking voice resonating across the auditorium. My one regret? That I couldn't understand her words. Despite that, the story was clear and nothing was lost.

For the musical theatre lovers out there, *Tanguera* feels like an old friend, with hints of *Chicago*, *Cabaret* and *West Side Story* in places. I went not knowing what to expect but anticipating a dance show, I left feeling vibrant, having experienced a musical masterpiece.

Tanguera taps into an age old human need for a simple narrative and adds some sound and movement. This story used to deliver an explosion of dance, swirling skirts, shawls, stunning lifts and stalking trilbies reminiscent of Michael Jackson's *Smooth Criminal*.

Was the narrative needed for the show? I could have watched and enjoyed it without. Did the narrative add to the viewing pleasure? Without a doubt. And all elevated by the musicians' and performers' mastery of their craft.

From overture to encore *Tanguera* was a showcase of dance, music and song. A tale of power, passion, longing and lament; delivered skillfully and honed to perfection. It was the embodiment of the tango.

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