

Arts

The New York Times

HOME

- [▶ JOB MARKET](#)
- [▶ REAL ESTATE](#)
- [▶ AUTOS](#)

NEWS

- [International](#)
- [National](#)
- [Washington](#)
- [Business](#)
- [Technology](#)
- [Science](#)
- [Health](#)
- [Sports](#)
- [New York Region](#)
- [Education](#)
- [Weather](#)
- [Obituaries](#)
- [NYT Front Page](#)
- [Corrections](#)

OPINION

- [Editorials/Op-Ed](#)
- [Readers' Opinions](#)



FEATURES

- [Arts](#)
- [Books](#)
- [Movies](#)
- [Travel](#)
- [NYC Guide](#)
- [Dining & Wine](#)
- [Home & Garden](#)
- [Fashion & Style](#)
- [Crossword/Games](#)
- [Cartoons](#)
- [Magazine](#)
- [Week in Review](#)
- [Multimedia/Photos](#)
- [College](#)
- [Learning Network](#)

SERVICES

- [Archive](#)
- [Classifieds](#)
- [Book a Trip](#)
- [Personals](#)
- [Theater Tickets](#)
- [NYT Store](#)
- [NYT Mobile](#)
- [E-Cards & More](#)
- [About NYTDigital](#)
- [Jobs at NYTDigital](#)
- [Online Media Kit](#)
- [Our Advertisers](#)

SEARCH [Go to Advanced Search/Archive](#)

[LOG IN](#)
[REGISTER NOW. It's Free!](#)

July 24, 2002, Wednesday

THE ARTS/CULTURAL DESK

THEATER REVIEW; Spotting the Sane and Insane in a Topsy-Turvy World

By D. J. R. BRUCKNER

In a nation gone crazy, the sane are outlaws. But they have a kind of immunity since it is almost impossible to determine who belongs in which category. This situation has given rise to comedies for a few thousand years, and Jacobo Langsner's aptly named "Happily Mad" ("Locos de Contento") proves that it remains marvelously robust.

Mr. Langsner, who has been writing popular plays, films and television shows for more than 50 years, has an advantage: he is an Argentine who has been able to watch his country's economic crises drive its population into street protests for so long that few can remember when they started. When one character in "Locos de Contento" refers to the "first economic crisis," the other character says he must have lost his wits since everyone knows there was no first; the disorder has been forever.

On the surface, that is the only rueful moment in a play filled with laughter, although it has a sharp sting in its tail. Claudia and Román are a 40-ish couple whose sole slim hope is that a powerful senator they have invited to dinner will get Román a diplomatic appointment in some country that is stable enough to allow the couple to regain their balance.

This is sitcom at its most elemental: story is nothing, character and lines everything, and the production by Repertorio Español exploits this imbalance to great advantage.

As Román, Nelson Landrieu, who has explored a huge range of Hispanic male roles on stage and screen, is a paranoid so alert to danger and so articulate about failure that his few moments of assurance seem life threatening. When he is not in despair he can't breathe.

He is not in peril of much self-assurance, however, not when his wife can ask, "Do you really want to make love, or do you just want to try?" As Claudia, Beatriz Córdoba combines a gift for comic insouciance with projections of power learned in years of portraying tragic heroines in Garcia Lorca plays.

As Claudia attempts to pump up Román's optimism, Ms. Córdoba can purr about wildly imaginative indecencies with such innocent intonation that you have to wonder whether her character is a bit idiotic. But the next moment she can let us see a dominating shrew peeking out from the mask she has turned her face into.

The New York Times

Save 50% on Home Delivery of The New York Times.

[Click Here](#)

MEMBER CENTER

- [Your Profile](#)
- [E-Mail](#)
- [Preferences](#)
- [News Tracker](#)
- [Premium Account](#)
- [Site Help](#)
- [Privacy Policy](#)

NEWSPAPER

- [Home Delivery](#)
 - [Customer Service](#)
 - [Electronic Edition](#)
 - [Media Kit](#)
 - [Community Affairs](#)
-
- [Text Version](#)

The image created by the director, Daniel Marcove, is of an ever more intricate and accelerating dance as Claudia and Román pursue and retreat from one another around a great bed on a balcony over the street and in the rooms and doorways of their apartment. And the verbal jousting -- the simultaneous translation of the highly idiomatic Spanish is very effective -- accelerates throughout.

This is the first play I have seen in several years that seems only about half its length, which at 70 minutes is short enough.

As it rockets to its end, it seems ever clearer that Claudia is the sane one in a country turned hysterical. Then in an abrupt swerve out of control, with a bang she brings down the world she and Román inhabit (the collapse of Rocío Matosas's set is a fine spectacle), leaving you wondering whether you have not misunderstood the whole play up to that moment, and then, more subversively, whether you can ever know who is mad who is not.

There is not time to dwell on such confusion, however. With the roof and walls of their building gone, only whirling stars surround Claudia and Román, and the dance hidden in their previous movements becomes a profoundly sensuous tango that makes you want to leap from your seat and join in.

HAPPILY MAD
(LOCOS DE CONTENTO)

By Jacobo Langsner; directed by Daniel Marcove; lighting by María C. Fusté; choreographer, Valeria Solomonoff; sets by Rocío Matosas; wardrobe, María Brites; director's assistant, Gabriel Flores; lighting technician, Ivan Salinas. Presented by Repertorio Español, Gilberto Zaldívar, executive producer; René Buch, artistic director; Robert Weber Federico, associate artistic producer. At the Gramercy Arts Theater, 138 East 27th Street, Manhattan.

WITH: Nelson Landrieu (Román) and Beatriz Córdoba (Claudia).

Published: 07 - 24 - 2002 , Late Edition - Final , Section E , Column 3 , Page 5



Start the day informed with home delivery of The New York Times newspaper. [Click Here](#) for 50% off.