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Thom Sesma plays all the male characters in "Craving for Travel," some of them, over the top.



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Michele Ragusa plays Joanne, a travel agent extraordinaire, whose goal is to keep her clients happy—no matter the cost.

'Craving Travel'

Not First Class, but Gets You There

By Judd Hollander

NEW YORK—Sophomoric at times and perhaps more suited to the format of a television sitcom, "Craving for Travel" still offers a lot of fun. A world premiere of a two-person, thirty-character comedy by Greg Edwards and Andy Sandberg, the show is now revving its engines at the Peter J. Sharp Theater on 42nd Street.

Joanne (Michele Ragusa) and Gary (Thom Sesma), formerly a married couple, are running their own travel agencies. Each has a reputation as someone who can get things done for clients, no matter what.

Their reputations are sorely tested as the two of them field requests, which include renting out the aircraft carrier U.S.S. Intrepid for a spin around Manhattan, trying to book six luxury suites at a premiere hotel in Maui for Christmas at almost the last minute, and handling the diva-like demands of actress Patti LuPone.

More mundane, but no less stressful situations also arise, such as placating a woman who is traveling with her quintuplets and trying to calm a jittery bride on her honeymoon.

Writers Edwards and Sandberg do a good job showing an amusing, if more than slightly exaggerated version of what it's like to be a travel agent. They not only offer up clients with some rather off-the-wall demands, but also highlight the satisfaction felt when helping out someone who really deserves it. Gary, for example, tries to fulfill a dream for an aged couple on their 60th wedding anniversary.

The audience is also treated to Joanne and Gary's more personal issues. Joanne has major crush on one of her clients, and Gary

deals with his retired mother, who repeatedly informs him how he's not running the family travel business as well as she and his late father once did.

The show does encounter some turbulence. First is its method of taking care of almost everybody's problem by a rather unbeliev-

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able string of coincidences. These include a Russian forger and a Sheik who is buying up all of the major Hollywood studios.

Other problems are two continual sketches about Lithuania and an annoying Jamaican travel agent, which go on a bit too long—though the latter case gives a nice payoff in the end. But it's as if the writers had run out of fresh things to say and were simply trying to fill out the show.

Ragusa and Sesma do a good job playing the various characters in the show. Ragusa, perhaps, has the more interesting material to

work with. Among the characters she inhabits are Gertrude, a wealthy client of Gary's with a quiet voice of steel, who insists her demands be met; Kathleen, a young woman on her honeymoon, who believes her marriage was a terrible mistake; and Barbara, a quiet, aging woman with a sweet request for herself and her husband.

Sesma, meanwhile, does well as an eager travel intern in Joanne's employment, trying to deal with sick passengers on an ill-fated trip to Florida; and as Carl, a former customer of Joanne's who has left her for Travelocity and now wants her aid when he's caught up in a traveler's nightmare. In one of the more enjoyable moments in the show, one can almost hear the silent glee in Joanne's voice as she says that since he didn't book the trip through her, she's unable to help him.

However, Sesma's portrayal of a redneck U.S. senator is a bit over the top. His lines and innuendos seem to be included for strictly shock value rather than something more tastefully expressed given the rest of the play's content.

Sandberg, who also handles the directing chores, does a decent enough job. However, his priorities as a writer and director sometimes come into conflict, so that the pacing of the show feels uneven at times.

Charlie Corcoran's sets of the different travel agencies are nicely functional.

Amusing throughout, with occasional moments guaranteed to pluck at your heartstrings or make you laugh uproariously, "Craving for Travel" has its share of problems, but still makes for a nice enough way to the pass the time.

Judd Hollander is the New York correspondent for the London publication *The Stage*.

THEATER REVIEW
'Craving for Travel'

Peter J. Sharp Theater
416 West 42nd Street

Tickets:
212-279-4200 or visit
CravingForTravel.com

Running Time:
1 hour, 20 minutes

Closes:
Feb. 9