

NORA'S WILL



A Film by Mariana Chenillo

U.S. Distributor:
Menemsha Films
Neil A. Friedman
213 Rose Avenue, 2nd Floor
Venice, CA 90291
Tel: 310-452-1775
Fax: 310-452-3740
Email: neilf@menemshafilms.com

Cinco días sin Nora / Nora's Will

FICHA TÉCNICA / TECH SPECS

Año de Producción / Production Year: **2008**

País / Country: **México**

Duración / Running Time: **92 min. Color**

Formato: **35 mm.**

EQUIPO TÉCNICO / CREW

Dirección / Director: **Mariana Chenillo**

Producción / Producer: **Laura Imperiale**

Guión / Screenplay: **Mariana Chenillo**

Fotografía / Cinematography: **Alberto Anaya Adalid**

Edición / Editing: **Oscar Figueroa Jara – Mariana Chenillo**

Sonido / Sound: **Santiago Arroyo, Matías Barberis**

Música / Music: **Darío González**

Dirección de Arte / Art Direction: **Alejandro García Castro**

Compañías Productoras / Production Companies:

Cacerola Films, Fondo de Inversión y Estímulo al Cine (FIDECINE).

Con el apoyo a través de la ley del Estimulo Fiscal de Ixe Banco – Banco Deuno

REPARTO / CAST

Fernando Luján / José

Cecilia Suárez / Bárbara

Ari Brickman / Rubén

Verónica Langer / Aunt Leah

Enrique Arreola / Moisés

Angelina Peláez / Fabiana

Silvia Mariscal / Nora

Marina de Tavira / Young Nora

Juan Pablo Medina / Young José

Juan Carlos Colombo / Dr. Nurko

Martin LaSalle / Rabbi Kolatch

Max Kerlow / Rabbi Jackowitz

SINOPSIS / SYNOPSIS

Sinopsis Corta: Antes de morir, Nora elabora un plan para que José, su ex marido, tenga que hacerse cargo del velorio. Sin embargo, la única falla del plan -una misteriosa foto olvidada bajo la cama- provocará un inesperado desenlace haciéndonos descubrir que las más grandes historias de amor se esconden en los lugares más pequeños.

Sinopsis Mediana: Nora planea el último de los quince intentos de suicidio de su vida con la intención de que sea José, su exmarido, quien tenga que hacerse cargo de su cadáver. Ella se suicida sabiendo que Rubén, su único hijo, no está en la ciudad y que, debido a una serie de festividades judías, el entierro no podrá ser llevado a cabo sino hasta dentro de casi cinco días. José se entera que Nora ha muerto sin saber que esta espera de cinco días es en realidad un viaje sin retorno hacia su pasado. A partir de esta experiencia, él tendrá un involuntario e intenso acercamiento a Nora, a su vida con ella, a los secretos que nunca lograron compartirse. Pasará de odiarla con todas sus fuerzas, a darse cuenta que en realidad nunca ha dejado de amarla.

Uno de los principales valores de esta película, que es una comedia negra, es el sutil pero agudo sentido del humor generado por el contraste entre los personajes y sus situaciones, tales como el ateísmo de José enfrentado con el contexto religioso en el que deberá llevarse a cabo el velorio, o las arraigadas costumbres cristianas de la nana contrapuestas con las estrictas reglas impuestas por el rabino Jacowitz.

La historia se lleva a cabo en un contexto lleno de choques y contradicciones que se detonan unas a otras hasta generar un inesperado desenlace: el único personaje que logra cumplir todos sus objetivos está muerto desde el inicio de la historia, y aquél que odia con todo su corazón termina por amar con igual o mayor intensidad.

3-Line Synopsis: Before dying, Nora schemes a plan to make José, her ex-husband, take care of her corpse. But she is missing something. For the only flaw in the plan –a mysterious photograph forgotten under the bed- will lead to an unexpected outcome reminding us that the biggest love stories are sometimes hidden in the smallest places.

Long Synopsis: Nora prepares her home for her own funeral. She of course knows it, but the rest of us remain unaware, as we see her arranging her house as if she were planning an elegant dinner party. The plan, which will culminate with the whole family gathered for the dinner celebration of the Jewish Passover, begins with some frozen meat scheduled to be delivered once she is no longer there. The building's doorman has been previously instructed by Nora that, should the food arrive in her absence, it is to be sent to her ex-husband José's apartment, who lives across the street. José had been married to her for 30 years, until he gave up and decided to flee. But he never managed to forget her.

This story, which is a dark humor comedy, begins as José finds out that Nora has finally committed suicide. Their only son is not in the city, reason for which he must go to Nora's apartment to take care of the corpse. Shortly after, he finds out through Rabbi Jacowitz, whom has taken the task of organizing the burial, that the events shall not be as simple as he thought. The rabbi explains to José (who was born Jewish but is a completely atheist man), that due to the celebration of the Passover festivities, together with a few other factors, if Nora is not buried that same day before 3 o'clock, they will have to wait almost five days to be able to carry out the burial. José has been divorced for more than 20 years and he can't bury Nora without their son, so he is forced to wait with the corpse until his son arrives. As soon as he is alone, José serves himself a cup of coffee (from a suspiciously full coffee maker) and opens the refrigerator to discover that Nora has left all the food for the Passover

dinner ready to be prepared. As he walks through the apartment, he realizes that there is a Machiavellian plan behind all this in order for him to be there taking care of the corpse.

In an act of defiance, José decides to refuse to grant Nora her will, and decides to search for an alternative. If the Jewish cemeteries did not want to bury Nora during those days, there was sure to be another cemetery that would. So he hires a Christian burial in which he is offered bargain, a “wake-to-go” meaning a coffin, a cross, candles and flowers and a refrigeration system for the same price. José cannot think of a better way to live a sweeter revenge. Once he returns to Nora’s apartment, he finds himself with Moisés, a young apprentice that has been sent by Rabbi Jacowitz to make sure that everything is done under the strict laws of the religion. Moisés ends up being José’s jailer, since he not only makes him cancel the Christian burial, but he also prays at full volume.

To this silent fight, there are more characters that are incorporated: the nanny, who is the woman that has cooked and cleaned in Nora’s home for the past 50 years, and who is determined to prepare, against José’s will, the food that Nora left in the refrigerator. His son, Rubén, who is in disagreement with how José has handled the situation; rabbi Jacowitz, who comes back to the house and tries to convince José to seek help from his daughter in-law’s father (a very influential man among the Jewish community members), advising him that the religious men of the cemetery will not want to bury Nora there knowing that she committed suicide.

Besides the turmoil that occurs, while José spends time in Nora’s home taking care of her corpse, he suffers a strange transformation. He changes from hating Nora, and not wanting to know anything about her, to remembering the good times that they had together. When the final day of the burial arrives, the death march is interrupted by the news that the hole that had been dug for Nora is not exactly inside the cemetery, but almost outside the gate, near the sidewalk (just as therewith sacred texts proclaim for the burial of a suicidal death). There is nothing to discuss. Rubén refuses to bury his mother near the sidewalk, so the body is taken back to the house, where they all take on the task of finding a new cemetery. But Rabbi Jacowitz has previously taken the trouble of calling all the Hebrew cemeteries of the city so that none of them would dare accept the body resulting from a suicide. After many phone calls and a few fights, especially with his father, Rubén decides to give up and to accept the burial by the gate of the cemetery.

Nonetheless, following an unexpected act of love, José refuses to do this and goes to the cemetery where both of his parents are buried: the Old Hebrew Cemetery, which has almost no space for new tombs. There, he meets the rabbi in charge of the cemetery: Rabbi Kolatch, who is a very old man of almost transparent blue eyes that radiate a great inner peace. As José explains the situation to Rabbi Kolatch, he slowly realizes that Nora actually died, and that he has never stopped loving her. Since Rabbi Kolatch’s comprehension of religion is much more deeper than that of Rabbi Jacowitz, he does accept to bury Nora in his cemetery.

That afternoon, Nora is finally buried in the old Hebrew cemetery between the tombs of her ex-mother-in-law and her ex-father-in-law. Once they return home, they realize that the nanny (who in all of these days had been doing nothing but cooking the food that Nora left in the refrigerator) has set the table. There is nothing left to do but sit down and enjoy the last delicious Passover meal prepared by Nora, whom, even after her death, has managed to bring her family together for the Passover dinner.

BIO DE DIRECTOR / DIRECTOR'S BIO

Mariana Chenillo was born in Mexico City in 1977. She entered the Centro de Capacitación Cinematográfica of Mexico City in 1995, where she specialized in film directing.

Since then, she has worked as a script supervisor, 1st Assistant Director, Production Manager, and as a Production Coordinator with several film directors.

As a teacher, she has worked at the Centro de Capacitación Cinematográfica since 2005 counseling in the area of direction and direction assistance, and she is currently in charge of the direction class of the first year students.

NORA'S WILL is her first feature film as a director and writer.

With a grant provided by the National Fund for the Arts and Culture (Jóvenes Creadores 2003-2004), she started writing the feature film screenplay entitled *Five Days Without Nora*. In December of 2004, this project was awarded with a grant to assist to the *XI Taller de Análisis de Proyectos Cinematográficos*, in Entre Ríos, Argentina, organized by the TyPa Foundation, the Rockefeller Foundation and the Hubert Bals Fund. In March 2005, the same project was invited to participate in the First Co-production Encounter in the Film Festival of Guadalajara.

In May 2005, the same screenplay was awarded with the first prize of the *First Contest of Feature Film Screenplays for Women Film Writers* in Mexico City.

In July 2005, the project was awarded with a monetary fund for project development given by the Mexican Film Institute, and by the Project Development Program for Operas Primas organized by the Centro de Capacitación Cinematográfica.

In April of 2006, the project was invited to participate in the Buenos Aires Lab, where it was awarded a Special Mention from the jury.

In February of 2006, the FIDECINE public fund approved a support for the production of the film. The film was shot during October and November of 2007.

FILMOGRAFÍA / FILMOGRAPHY

MAR ADENTRO/ *DEEP SEA*

2003, Fiction, 35 mm, color, 19 minutes

Festival Internacional de Escuelas de Cine, Ciudad de México, Festival Internacional de Cine Contemporáneo, Mexico City, Festival de Cine Mexicano de Guadalajara, México, XIX Corrida Audiovisuelle, Toulouse, France, International School Film Festival, Tel Aviv (*Special mention to excellence*) 1ª Muestra Internacional de Mujeres en el Cine y la Televisión, Mexico City, International Short Film Festival of Drama, Greece, Festival Internacional de Cine de Morelia, Trieste Film Festival, Italy, Abgedreht International Film Festival, Germany (*nomination to Best Photography*) 8th Int. Latino Film Festival, San Francisco, Imperial Beach Film Festival, Festival de Cine Latino de Los Ángeles, First Week of Mexican Film, Montreal, Festival der Nationen, Austria, Międzynarodowy Festiwal Filmowy in Zabrzu, Poland.

EN POCAS PALABRAS/ *IN A FEW WORDS*

2002, Documentary, DV PRO, color, 24 minutes.

Concurso José Rovirosa al Mejor Documental, Mexico City, Festival Escenarios 2002, Ciudad de México,

Sehsuechte International Student Film Festival, Germany, Filmfestival der Filmakademie, Viena, Festival Internacional de Cine de Morelia.

PRELUDIO/ *PRELUDE*

2001, Fiction, 16 mm, color, 15 minutes

XVI Festival del Cinema Latinoamericano, Trieste, Italia, VI Festival Internacional de Escuelas de Cine, 2001, Mirarte, Festival de Artes, Centro Nacional de las Artes, 2001, Festival Internacional Juvenil Jolgorio en Querétaro, Marzo, 2002, Festival Internacional de Cortometraje "Voladero", Monterrey, México, 2002, Latin American Film Festival, London, Great Britain, 2002

AWARDS

Mexican Academy of Film – Ariel Awards

2009 Winner

Best Picture of the Year

Best Actor - Fernando Luján

Best Supporting Actress - Angelina Peláez

Best Original Screenplay – Mariana Chenillo

Best Score - Darío González

Best Makeup

Best First Film – Mariana Chenillo

Biarritz International Festival of Latin American Cinema

2009 Won A.F.C.A.E. Award Best Film

Expresion en Corto International Film Festival

2009 Won Best Mexican Film

Havana Film Festival

2009 Won Grand Coral

Huelva Latin American Film Festival

2009 Won Silver Colon

Best Actor - Fernando Luján

Los Angeles Latino International Film Festival

2009 Won Jury Award

Best Director - Mariana Chenillo

Best First Film - Mariana Chenillo

Mar del Plata Film Festival

2009 Won Best Film - Mariana Chenillo

Miami Film Festival

2009 Won Audience Award - Mariana Chenillo

Morelia International Film Festival

2008 Won Audience Award - Mariana Chenillo

Moscow International Film Festival

2009 Won Silver St. George

Best Director - Mariana Chenillo

Skip City International D-Cinema Festival

2009 Won Best Screenplay - Mariana Chenillo



Posted: Mon., Oct. 26, 2009, 7:12pm PT

5 Days Without Nora

Cinco dias sin Nora

(Mexico) A Cacerola Films, Fidecine-Mexico production. (International sales: Latinofusion, Guadalajara.) Produced by Laura Imperiale. Executive producers, Imperiale, Mariana Chenillo. Directed, written by Mariana Chenillo.

With: Silvia Mariscal, Fernando Lujan, Juan Carlos Colombo, Max Kerlow, Marina de Tavira, Juan Pablo Medina, Enrique Arreola, Angelina Pelaez, Ari Brickman, Cecilia Suarez, Arantza Moreno, Vanya Moreno, Veronica Langer, Rodrigo Cachero, Jorge Eduardo Cordova, Martin LaSalle.

By JAY WEISSBERG

A woman's suicide just before Passover creates complications for her loved ones in Mariana Chenillo's warm and entertaining feature debut, "5 Days Without Nora" (also titled "Nora's Will"). It may not sound like a comedy, but Chenillo loads the scenario with more *Yiddishkeit* than a gross of matzo, sure to elicit laughs and knowing nods throughout the Diaspora. Though custom-made for Jewish fests worldwide, "Nora" has amply demonstrated its crossover credentials with a string of awards in Miami, Morelia and Moscow, and should easily transfer to Stateside arthouses.

When Jose (Fernando Lujan) enters his ex-wife's apartment, he finds her dead body along with an elegantly set table and a refrigerator full of Post-it instructions for the Passover meal. Nora (Silvia Mariscal) had attempted suicide many times before (one plot flaw is that Chenillo never fully comes to grips with Nora's depression), and now, after putting everything in order, she's succeeded. Though Jewish custom dictates that the body has to be buried quickly, the Sabbath plus the holiday means nothing can be done for four days.

Rabbi Jacowitz (Max Kerlow) is the first to arrive, sparking clashes with atheist Jose, who wickedly enjoys baiting the venerable sage. According to orthodox law, a mourner must watch the body until it's put in the grave, so the rabbi sends Moises (Enrique Arreola, very funny), a recent convert unprepared for Jose's irreverence. Nora and Jose's son, Ruben (Ari Brickman), finally return from vacation with his family, but there's a further setback when the cemetery informs them that a suicide can't be buried in sanctified ground.

Occasional flashbacks of the young Jose (Juan Pablo Medina) and Nora (Marina de Tavira) provide some background to the couple's difficult relationship, though some of the scenes border on predictable, if restrained, melodrama. Far better are the side characters, including housekeeper Fabiana (Angelina Pelaez, perfect), slipping a cross on Nora's body while getting the house ready for the seder, and half-blind cousin Leah (Veronica Langer), all set to make the gefilte fish. Though there's an element of caricature in them all, every one of them is an instantly recognizable true-to-life type, lovingly and hilariously delineated.

All the performers appear to thoroughly enjoy themselves, especially vet Lujan, who maintains a marvelously underplayed comic timing yet still gives Jose an emotional heart. Lensing is never less than attractive, while the editing underscores the humor and keeps the pace moving even during some of the unnecessary flashbacks.

Camera (color, widescreen, HD-to-35mm), Alberto Anaya Adalid; editors, Oscar Figueroa Jara, Chenillo; music, Dario Gonzalez Valderrama; production designer, Alejandro Garcia Castro; costume designer, Gabriela Fernandez; sound (Dolby Digital), Santiago Arroyo, Matias Barberis; assistant director, Berenice Ubeda; casting, Alejandro Reza. Reviewed on DVD, Rio de Janeiro, Sept. 27, 2009. (In Rio de Janeiro Film Festival -- Latin America; Vancouver, Mar del Plata, Miami, Morelia, Moscow film festivals.) Running time: 92 MIN.

Los Angeles Times

Movie Review: 'Nora's Will'

This tale of a man's fight against his dead ex-wife's final wishes, set in Mexico's Jewish community, has universal appeal.

By Kenneth Turan, Los Angeles Times Film Critic
October 29, 2010

Battles of wills between divorced couples are nothing new, but "Nora's Will" adds a delicious twist. The struggle in this poignant and tremendously appealing film features a man who fights a stubborn rear-guard action against his dead ex-wife's final wishes and in the process learns more than he anticipates about his family and himself.

Under its original title, "Cinco Dias Sin Nora" (Five Days Without Nora), this film was a great success in Mexico, winning seven Ariels, the Mexican Oscar, including best film, original screenplay and a pair of acting awards.

Though this is her first feature, writer-director Mariana Chenillo displays great sureness of touch behind the camera. She creates fully imagined eccentric characters, places them in a wryly comic and specific world and takes deft pokes at the occasional rigidity of organized religion in the process.

That religion is Judaism, and the Nora of the title is enough of a believer to be shown in the film's opening minutes carefully setting the table for what looks to be a formal and elaborate Passover Seder. Without ever seeing her face or hearing her speak, we know before the credits are over that Nora is both strong-willed and meticulous.

How meticulous, her ex-husband Jose (Ariel winner Fernando Luján, in a pitch-perfect performance) is about to rediscover. Divorced from Nora for decades but still living in an apartment across the street, Jose is lured into Nora's place by an elaborate stratagem only to find that his ex-wife has taken an overdose of sleeping pills and, in her 15th attempt in 30 years, finally succeeded in killing herself.

Nora has not only carefully arranged for her death — she left her cat with a neighbor by pretending to be on vacation — she also has plans for the next few days. By committing suicide on the eve of Passover, she has ensured that she can't be buried in a Jewish cemetery for four days, especially because her son Ruben (Ari Brickman) and daughter-in-law Barbara (Cecilia Suárez) are out of town and want time to return.

More than that, Nora has filled her refrigerator with food ready to be cooked for that Seder, labeling every container with Post-its and leaving an entire book of instructions for her faithful maid, Fabiana (the wonderful Angelina Peláez, also an Ariel winner), to execute. Clearly Nora, with the aid of strategically placed dry ice, wants to be in the apartment while her family celebrates a last holiday meal together.

This may sound sentimental, albeit a bit unusual, but it considerably aggravates ex-husband Jose. For one thing, he dislikes being manipulated from beyond the grave, and for another, though born Jewish, Jose has become a fierce atheist who has no patience for his former religion and its rules and constraints.

Jose is especially irked at his ex-wife's crotchety, old-school spiritual advisor, the venerable Rabbi Jackowitz (Max Kerlow). Expecting a traditional grieving former husband, this worthy man of faith is dumbfounded by someone who tries to give Nora a quick Catholic burial (hence the huge floral cross that finds its way into the apartment) and whose idea of an appropriate snack for the rabbi is a sausage and ham pizza.

All of this plus additional characters and further plot complications that are best discovered on screen, are executed with a rare delicacy and a genuine affection for the foibles of fallible human beings trying to make the best of the complications life throws at them..

Perhaps most impressive of all is filmmaker Chenillo's ability to make universal a very particular experience, to make something so firmly grounded in Mexico's Jewish community appealing across the board. That's a talent well worth appreciating today and watching out for in the future.

Leonard Maltin's **MOVIE CRAZY**



A Website for People Who Love Movies

Film Review: Nora's Will

by Leonard Maltin

October 28th, 2010

Indie and foreign films have a tougher time than ever in today's marketplace, which is why I want to call your attention to an import that's truly worth seeing—even though you may not have heard much about it. *Nora's Will* has won a number of film festival awards, which got my attention. I also put considerable stock in Menemsha Films, the small, dedicated distributor that has taken on its U.S. release. They tell me that business actually increased after its first week at the Paris Theater in Manhattan because of strong word-of-mouth; now it's opening at a number of Laemmle Theaters in Los Angeles, with other cities to follow in the weeks and months ahead.

Quiet, original, irreverent, ironic: these are some of the adjectives that describe Mariana Chenillo's bittersweet comedy about a Jewish family dealing with the suicide of its matriarch on the eve of Passover. The main character is Nora's ex-husband, played with quiet authority by Fernando Luján, a veteran actor who reminds me of another venerable performer, Fernando Rey—the kind of man who can effortlessly command the screen. His character is pragmatic, unsentimental, and self-possessed, making him a kind of straight man for the colorful parade of people who invade Nora's apartment in the days following her demise—including an Orthodox rabbi, his young and inexperienced disciple, Nora's devoted Catholic housekeeper, a well-meaning cousin, and finally, Nora's son, with his wife and two young daughters, who treat the experience of seeing their grandmother's corpse as an adventure.

Why Nora took her own life, and why her ex-husband José refuses to serve the Passover dinner she left behind for her family, is for you to discover in this disarming, pitch-perfect chamber piece. It is a film of modest ambitions, but it's so well realized that it left me with a smile of satisfaction—a reward too few films offer nowadays. I suspect other, flashier foreign films with bigger promotional budgets will capture the lion's share of media attention this movie season, but I doubt any will surpass this one for pure enjoyment.

THE HUFFINGTON POST

THE INTERNET NEWSPAPER: NEWS BLOGS VIDEO COMMUNITY

Review: Nora's Will

Marshall Fine, Author and Film Critic

October 19th, 2010

It's always a pleasant surprise to discover a film you know nothing about and find that it transports you in ways you never expected.

So it is with *Nora's Will*, a Mexican import that opened in limited release last Friday (10/15/10) before going wider. Written and directed by Mariana Chenillo, it is a film that never telegraphs its surprises -- and offers both low-key and broader comedy, even as it finds its way to the heart.

At the center of the film is Jose (Fernando Lujan), older and seemingly retired, whose apartment doorbell rings one day. It's a delivery man with a huge order of frozen meat; it's meant for his neighbor, Nora, across the street but she's not home -- and she's given the orders to have it sent over to Jose to keep.

Jose, however, has no room in his freezer. So he carries the meat back over to Nora's apartment - and then produces a key to let himself in. He finds space in her freezer for the meat and starts to leave - but notices that the coffee pot is on and so are several lights. He calls Nora's name but there's no answer. Still, he can't quite leave -- and when he goes looking for her, he discovers her dead body in her bed.

His first phone call peels away a couple of layers. In fact, Nora is his ex-wife -- and she has swallowed several bottles of sleeping pills. It is, Jose notes, only the latest in a lifelong series of suicide attempts -- but her first successful one.

Suddenly Jose is overwhelmed by the demands of disposing of her remains because his son, Ruben, is traveling out of the country. Jose and his family are Jewish, though he has long since stopped being observant. But when the rabbi, a friend of Jose's son Ruben, arrives, he points out that, according to Jewish tradition, suicides are not allowed to be buried in a Jewish cemetery. However, if Jose's son will talk to his influential father-in-law about making a large contribution to the synagogue's building fund, the cause of death can be finessed and the burial can take place.

Except that it's the first night of Passover -- and so, while Jewish tradition demands burial within 24 hours of death, the holiday supersedes that tradition. Nora's burial will have to wait until after the first two nights of Passover -- and then after the Sabbath, which comes the next day and also takes precedence.

All of this is casually set up in the first 10 minutes or so of the film. So is Jose's obvious distaste for Jewish ritual -- or at least for the organized-religion portion of it. Forced to stay with Nora's body (for which the rabbi sends a crew bearing a shroud and dry ice to keep the body until burial is possible), Jose begins to see Nora's hand in everything that is happening.

For him, it becomes a battle of wills -- the same struggle that cost him his marriage. In death, Nora has finally gained control over Jose, returning him to her home and forcing herself back into his thoughts, if belatedly. In part, it's respect for the dead; in part, it's his curiosity after finding a misplaced photograph of the young Nora -- taken during their marriage -- with another man.

But even as he secretly searches her apartment for something that will reveal the identity of her former lover, he also gains unexpected insight into his ex-wife. In flashback, we see that her suicide efforts were a result of mental illness over which she had no control. The younger Jose, however, took her attempts personally, seeing them as acts of selfishness that would rob him of his wife and their young son of his mother long before either was ready to lose her.

As downbeat as this all sounds, it's actually quite funny, with a dry, light touch to Jose's tiny rebellions against both Nora's will (referring to her manipulations, as opposed to her last will and testament) and everyone who arrives to serve it. Lujan, with his distinguished beard and deadpan manner, is an unlikely mischief-maker, which is what gives each of his actions a particular zing.

Indeed, Chenillo achieves that difficult trick of creating subversive humor, while slowly revealing Jose's long-buried feelings. What starts as a comedy of one man's rebellion against what is expected of him turns into a moving story in which his understanding of his own life blossoms.

That's a rare balancing act, one that *Nora's Will* achieves with both grace and wit.