

# AISLE SAY San Francisco

## THE LAST ROMANCE

By Joe DiPietro

Presented by San Jose Repertory Theatre

Directed by Laird Williamson

At San Jose Repertory Theatre

101 Paseo de San Antonio, San Jose, CA / (408) 367-7255

Reviewed by [Judy Richter](#)

It's never too late for love. That's the point made by playwright Joe DiPietro in "The Last Romance." Presented by San Jose Repertory Theatre in its regional premiere, the four-person, two-act play captures the doubts, fears and hopes of people who fall in love late in their lives.

Scenic designer Michael Ganio's set (lit by Daniel Meeker) symbolizes where the major characters are in their lives. It's definitely autumn in a Hoboken, N.J., dog park (sound by Steve Schoenbeck), but there are still some flowers on the shrubs behind a park bench.

That's where 80-year-old Ralph (Will Marchetti) sits expectantly. He hopes to see a woman he had spotted a few days earlier when he deviated from the route he usually took on his afternoon walk. Before he catches sight of her, though, his angry sister Rose (Sharon Lockwood) shows up, berating him for causing her so much worry when he didn't return at his usual time. He manages to send Rose on her way just as the woman, Carol (Kitty Winn), arrives. Smartly dressed (costumes by Elizabeth Poindexter), she ignores Ralph's clumsy attempts at conversation and humor. Still, this first encounter leads to others. Soon their friendship blossoms into something deeper.

Thanks to DiPietro's insightful, often amusing script and Laird Williamson's restrained direction, the actors sensitively undertake their characters' journeys. Ralph, Rose and Carol all carry a heavy load of emotional baggage, but all three manage to shed most of it by the time the play reaches its bittersweet conclusion.

Because Ralph loves Italian opera, DiPietro adds a fourth, mostly nonspeaking character, the Young Man, who sings snatches of arias at appropriate times. Joshua Jeremiah brings a rich baritone voice and accomplished acting skills to each excerpt.

Together, all elements of this play and production add up to a touching, thoroughly enjoyable evening of theater.