



## THE LAST ROMANCE at SJ Rep will sweep you off your feet

By [Kerry Smith](#)

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[The San Jose Reparatory Theatre's](#) regional premiere of Tony Award-winning Joe DiPietro's [The Last Romance](#) is brilliant. The story flows perfectly and there is never a dull moment. The actors are phenomenal and the direction by Laird Williamson keeps the characters rich and delightful.

You can tell right off the bat that the characters are humorous and enchanting. Rose (Sharon Lockwood) is great as the bossy, disapproving sister of Ralph (Will Marchetti). Ralph likes to joke around. He is jovial and gets a kick out of life, even if he is lonely.

Rose and Ralph, who are in their golden years, are set in their ways. Rose has dinner on the table for her brother every night at the same time. Ralph takes a walk every day on the same route, until one day he goes a different way and his life is changed forever.

He comes across a dog park where he sees the beautiful Carol (Kitty Winn). He is intrigued by her and goes back the next day to see her again. He gets talking to her, but she is very proper and standoffish and wants nothing to do with his come-ons. Throughout their interactions, you can see the rich characters that Laird Williamson has created; the humor and flirting from Marchetti and the rigidity from Winn.



Carol (Kitty Winn) and Ralph (Will Marchetti) meet for the first time in San Jose Rep's regional premiere of *The Last Romance*. Photo by Kevin Berne.

Carol has some fears that keep her from fully living her life. She's afraid of flying, so she doesn't get to visit her family. She also has a fear of loss that makes it difficult to experience romance. There is a great moment when Ralph, after much cajoling, gets Carol to discipline her dog in a very strict and authoritative way. She quickly goes from reserved and fearful to confident and strong. This is the arc that helps lead her to giving in to Ralph's come-ons. And so the romance begins.

There are delightful moments in Ralph and Carol's romance. They are like teenagers again and Ralph quickly falls in love. Unfortunately there is something standing in the way of their romance.

Throughout the play there is beautiful Opera singing by a young man (Joshua Jeremiah). Ralph loves the Opera. He has always wanted to go to Italy and see an Opera at La Scala. He used to sing himself, in his younger years. Ralph says that in all Italian Operas, life gets in the way of love and that the music makes it better. In this story, even though life gets in the way of love, everyone changes for the better.

Ralph has a strong acceptance of the end of his romance with Carol. He has a newfound appreciation of his sister and his desire to make their relationship stronger is the music that gets him through the loss of his last romance.

Carol makes a tremendous leap into the unknown and faces her fear of flying head on by flying to Italy and going to La Scala by herself, after Ralph realizes he can't go with her. She absolutely loves Italy and is shining because she is finally living her life to the fullest.

It's rare to find a play that gives you that much needed catharsis. I definitely felt the emotions in this production. The characters were so real to life, that they touched something inside me that brought up my own thoughts on love and life. When that happens, you know that everyone involved; the writer, the director, and the actors have done their job.

What came up for me is that something amazing can come along and you get lost in the idea of making it reality. Real strength comes when after finding you cannot have what makes your heart sing, you realize your life is just as wonderful without it and you appreciate what you do have and do all you can to make it better.

The last Romance will take you on a compelling ride of love, loss and the strength to change and appreciate life.

The last Romance runs through Nov. 6, 2011 and tickets can be purchased at [www.SJRep.com](http://www.SJRep.com) or by calling 408.367.7255.