



THE LAST ROMANCE



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REVIEWS

THEATER REVIEW

Fall awakening at heart of touching 'Last Romance' at Old Globe

By Jennifer Chung Klam

SPECIAL TO THE UNION-TRIBUNE

When octogenarian Ralph first meets Carol, something sparks in his heart — and it's not his pacemaker.

Love can happen at any age, as it does for the two seniors at the center of "The Last Romance," a tender romantic comedy now playing at the Old Globe.

When widower Ralph unexpectedly deviates from his daily routine, his life takes a detour. He meets an elegant woman at the dog park, and suddenly life becomes exciting again. Carol, at first aloof, eventually admits an attraction to this new friend. Although the two seem worlds apart, they are drawn together by the same yearning to connect.

Call it a fall awakening. The Globe's intimate White Theatre reflects the late-stage romance — Alexander Dodge dresses the stage in autumn colors and fallen leaves in a simple and evocative design.

But when you've lived as long as Ralph and Carol, things can be, well, difficult. Each carries secrets and baggage.

Further complicating matters,

DETAILS

"The Last Romance"

When: Tuesdays-Wednesdays, 7 p.m.; Thursdays-Fridays, 8 p.m.; Saturdays, 2 and 8 p.m.; Sundays, 2 and 7 p.m., through Sept. 12

Where: Old Globe's Sheryl and Harvey White Theatre, Balboa Park

Tickets: \$29-\$62

Phone: (619) 234-5623

Online: TheOldGlobe.org

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"What if you die?" she asks frankly.

The play handles many of the delicate issues surrounding love later in life with gentle humor and the easy charm of its two leads.

Real-life couple Paul Michael and Marion Ross star in the play Joe DiPietro wrote specifically for them at Ross' request. Together they make a pair

worthy of rooting for.

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Here Ross gives a graceful, touching performance as the emotionally closed-off Carol, who learns to open up, try new things and take a chance on love.

Michael gets Ralph's odd charisma and teasing humor just right, and his blunt yet innocuous come-ons are seen as the product of the constantly ticking clock.

"He's 80. He moves fast," says Ralph's sister, Rose, played with delicious curmudgeonly wit by Patricia Conolly.

DiPietro, who won a 2010 Tony Award for the La Jolla Playhouse-originated "Memphis," wrote bits of Ross and Michael into the play. Carol is a dog lover just like Ross, and Ralph, like Michael, is an opera lover who once had the chance to sing with The Metropolitan Opera.

Joshua Jeremiah plays the younger Ralph and brings to vibrant life arias from the operas Ralph talks about. The arias — and Jeremiah's rich, colorful baritone — help lead the audience through the play's emotional arc. (He



Real-life couple Marion Ross and Paul Michael are starring in “The Last Romance” at the Old Globe. *David Brooks / Union-Tribune*

also happens to look strikingly similar to the young Michael.)

Director Richard Seer strikes a fine balance in teasing out the play’s emotional core without wandering into sappy territory.

As the characters say, things can

change in half a second. A husband has a stroke. A wife just doesn’t wake up. And tentative new lovers can reach across a park bench to hold hands and perhaps find their last romance — or at least common understanding.

Fall awakening at heart of touching ‘Last Romance’ at Old Globe

By Jennifer Chung Klam, Special to the Union-Tribune

Monday, August 9, 2010 at 11:33 a.m.



David Brooks

[Marion Ross](#) and Paul Michael sit on a bench in Balboa Park’s Alcazar Gardens with Blanche, the couple’s petite Coton de Tulear.



Marion Ross as Carol Reynolds and Paul Michael as Ralph Bellini in the West Coast premiere of "The Last Romance" by Tony Award winner [Joe DiPietro](#). Photo by Craig Schwartz.

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THE LAST ROMANCE at the Old Globe Theatre

Play stars Marion Ross and Paul Michael

By Welton Jones

Posted on Fri, Aug 6th, 2010

Last updated Fri, Aug 6th, 2010

An abundance of dying golden leaves rims Alexander Dodge's dreamy setting for THE LAST ROMANCE at the Old Globe's White Theatre, appropriate for the play's autumnal theme, love's last round, featuring the elders.

None of the three characters in Joe DiPietro's fond, gentle play will ever see 75 again. All have left behind spouses and each faces loneliness stretching out ahead.

There can be no winners in this race, but DiPietro suggests that the homestretch is not without potential for stimulation. And we all, especially those of us identifying with the characters, hope he's right.

The play was written, apparently, for Marion Ross, a Globe legend with roots in the 1940s, and her longtime life-partner, Paul Michael, who here play the leading roles, a long retired Italian-American gent and the handsome lady he's noticed walking her dog in the local park each day.

As in the exquisite lyrics of Kurt Weill's "September Song," they haven't got time for the waiting game. The old boy launches himself at the lady and, following the barest of decorous hesitation, she responds.

But there's another person in this world, his last surviving sibling, the sister who's looked after him all these years without admitting he has become her whole life since her husband bolted 22 years earlier. And, with impatience turning gradually to wonder, the three find themselves playing roles usually assigned to people generations younger.

The ending is bittersweet and calm. These people are who they have become and this late romance serves mostly to help their better understanding of the endgame.

Ross is elegant, generous and inevitably accurate as the former executive secretary now in love with a rat-like dog. Michael constructs a blunt geezer serenely resigned to reality but still capable of drollery and dreams. Not surprisingly, they mesh like old couch cushions.

Conolly, well-remembered from her too-infrequent Globe visits over the past 34 years, is virtually flawless as the possessive sister, giving her odd-woman-out status a poignant polish.

The humor of the play is as comfortable as a long-running comic strip, gags about ugly dogs, home-cooking and, naturally, the wear and tear of age: “He’s a real catch. He can still drive after dark.”

The author gets a rise with a sprinkling of current slang and pop references but his best humor comes in the form of wry takes from this quiet backwater of modern life, such as speculation on the reason for airline contraband rules: “Apparently terrorists are wearing makeup these days.”

A broad stream of opera runs through the play. He could have been a contender back in the day but somebody forgot to pass on the Metropolitan Opera call-back phone message. In his memory, he becomes again the stalwart tenor with the golden voice – represented here by the excellent Joshua Jeremiah, who makes Italian excerpts work even with recorded accompaniments by what sounds like a tea-dance salon orchestra.

(Much is made of “Pagliacci” but its composer is never mentioned amidst references to Puccini and Verdi. Jeremiah demonstrates why Leoncavallo belongs in that company.)

In a summer of excellent directorial work, Richard Seer can feel right at home. This play might have been spoiled by too much or this or not enough of that. Seer has steered precisely the course to bring it through the treacherous shoals of sentimentality and into a warm, comfortable park bench ideal for relaxed contemplation.

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Dates	7 p.m. Sundays, Tuesdays and Wednesdays; 8 p.m. Thursdays-Saturdays; 2 p.m. Saturdays and Sundays through Sept. 12, 2010.
Organization	Old Globe Theatre
Phone	619 234-5623
Production Type	<u>Play</u>
Region	<u>Balboa Park</u>
Ticket Prices	\$29-\$62
URL	www.theoldglobe.org
Venue	The White Theatre, Old Globe, Balboa Park

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The Last Romance

(Sheryl and Harvey White Theater, Old Globe, San Diego; 285 seats; \$62 top)

By BOB VERINI

An Old Globe presentation of a play in two acts by Joe DiPietro. Directed by Richard Seer.

Carol Reynolds - Marion Ross
Ralph Bellini - Paul Michael
Rose Tagliatelle - Patricia Conolly
The Young Man - Joshua Jeremiah

The boulevard comedy -- once a staple of commercial and community theatrical activity, now in semi-eclipse -- gets a shot in the arm with Joe DiPietro's "The Last Romance," making its West Coast debut in the Old Globe's arena space. No great shakes as dramaturgy, the golden years love story casts a bewitching spell in the hands of real life partners Marion Ross ("Happy Days") and Paul Michael, for whom it was written. Remarkably free of cliché, it should enjoy a long life in nonprofit and community venues.

The oldster odd couple conjured up by Tony winner DiPietro ("Memphis") consists of tastefully tailored matron Carol and working class Italian American retiree Ralph, who meet, bond and eventually take each other's breath away at a Hoboken dog run. Michael is earth to Ross' water, droll and direct in his approach even as she manages to skitter away. Two decades of intimacy endow the stars with chemistry any helmer would kill for, exploited to the hilt by Richard Seer in his efforts to ensure they remain adorable but never cloying.

Biggest surprise is that unlike most scribes who deal with the elderly, DiPietro indulges in no corny byplay about Medicare, piles, grandchildren or death. Instead, we're treated to mature give and take between once-married, twice-shy grownups wondering whether to take one last plunge.

The fly in the ointment is Ralph's sister Rose (Patricia Conolly), written in the overprotective-Italian-relative trope already worn out when Paddy Chayefsky employed it in "Marty" 60 years ago. Conolly overdoes the hand gestures and would do well to take a craftier approach in objecting to Carol's horning in. But by play's end, the affectations recede, and she taps into the leads' mellow mood.

Some of the humor misses the mark, as when Ralph and Rose struggle to recall the acronym "ASPCA," an unnecessary humiliation.

But DiPietro hits the bull's eye in making Ralph an opera buff who long ago auditioned for the Met, which enables him to bring in the man's younger self in the person of the impressively courtly Joshua Jeremiah. Brief, moving arias between scenes connect the art form, the mourned past and the stark present. As Ralph shrugs to Carol, "The thing about opera, see, is all the lovers want to do is be in love. But it ain't ever that simple. Something always gets in the way."

Sets, Alexander Dodge; costumes, Charlotte Devaux; lighting, Chris Rynne; sound, Paul Peterson; stage manager, Lavinia Henley. Opened Aug. 5, 2010. Reviewed Aug. 8. Runs through Sept. 12. Running time: 2 HOURS.

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Los Angeles

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SAN DIEGO

Regional Reviews by Bill Eadie

The Last Romance

Old Globe Theatre

Also see Bill's review of [A Midsummer Night's Dream](#)

Playwright Joe DiPietro is a master of "Aw." No, I don't mean "awe," I mean "aw," which is a sound heard often from the audience while watching his play, *The Last Romance*.

It shouldn't surprise that Mr. DiPietro's work evokes such a reaction, as he's the author of *I Love You, You're Perfect, Now Change*, a musical revue about dating and relationships that ran Off-Broadway for more than 5000 performances over the span of twelve years. Mr. DiPietro, who is also a Tony Award winner for co-writing the musical *Memphis*, has great experience tugging on the heart strings while portraying the chaff and grist of ordinary relationships.



Marion Ross and Paul Michael (front), with Patricia Conolly (rear)

In *The Last Romance*, now in its West Coast premiere at the Old Globe Theatre, he tackles the sensitive subject of love late in life. Ralph (Paul Michael) breaks his usual routine one day and in the process spots Carol (Marion Ross) exercising her dog in the local dog park. Impressed by the elegant Carol, Ralph decides to pursue her, much to the disapproval of Rose, Ralph's sister (Patricia Conolly), who lives with him and finds satisfaction in caring for him.

Carol is resistant, but Ralph isn't going to take no for an answer. It turns out that they're both somewhat old fashioned: Carol, who was an executive secretary, insists on wearing a nice dress and heels to walk her dog, so Ralph starts to come to the dog park in a coat and tie (Charlotte Devaux dressed the cast quite nicely). As they talk, bits and pieces of their lives come out: Ralph loves opera and in his youth auditioned for the Metropolitan Opera (singer Joshua Jeremiah plays Ralph as a young man and provides lovely musical transitions between scenes). Carol has never seen an opera, but she spent a good deal of time caring for her husband, who was disabled by a stroke. "It's what you do," says Carol while discussing the situation, evoking one of many "aw" reactions from the audience.

Of course, Ralph, Carol and Rose all have secrets, and the play happens as those secrets are revealed. But Mr. DiPietro's point seems to be that love and romance can find people late in life, and the audience is more than willing to play along.

The "aw" moments are played to perfection by the fine cast under Richard Seer's direction, though Ms. Ross and Mr. Michael, who are longtime partners offstage, display so much chemistry from the start that it is clear Carol won't be able to resist Ralph's charms. Ms. Conolly's character could have been shrill and shrewish, but she manages to make Rose's disapproval sympathetic. Mr. Jeremiah sings his arias sensitively in a well supported baritone and earns his bravos at the curtain call.

Alexander Dodge's simple set design uses colorful autumn leaves to evoke both the dog park and the play's theme. Chris Rynne's lighting design and Paul Peterson's sound design add just the right touches.

With so many plays portraying relational dysfunction (and the Old Globe will be staging the queen of such plays, *August: Osage County*, in 2011), it is most satisfying to enjoy a story about a relationship that works. All together now: "Aw."

The Old Globe presents *The Last Romance* by Joe DiPietro through September 12, 2010 at the Sheryl and Harvey White Theatre on the Old Globe campus, 1363 Old Globe Way in Balboa Park. Tickets (\$29 - \$62) are available by calling (619) 23-GLOBE or by visiting [the Old Globe's website](#).

Directed by Richard Seer, with Alexander Dodge (Scenic Design), Charlotte Devaux (Costume Design), Chris Rynne (Lighting Design), Paul Peterson (Sound Design) and Lavinia Henley (Stage Manager).

With Marion Ross (Carol), Paul Michael (Ralph), Patricia Conolly (Rose) and Joshua Jeremiah (The Young Man).

Photo: Craig Schwartz

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- [Bill Eadie](#)

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THEATER REVIEW LAUGHS OVERCOME CLICHES IN 'ROMANCE'

BY PAM KRAGEN
pkragen@nctimes.com

Finding love in the autumn of life doesn't happen very often, but it happened for actors Marion Ross and Paul Michael, and it does for the characters they play onstage in Joe DiPietro's "The Last Romance" at the Old Globe.

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The four-character play (well, five, if you count the homely Chihuahua who makes a brief appearance) is a bittersweet little slip of a story that's enhanced by Michael's innate charm and a bounty of solid laughs. The play's second act doesn't have the magic of the first half, and you're likely to see some of the "surprise twists" coming, but it's an enjoyable evening — both as theater and as an opportunity to see these two seasoned actors — so clearly in love after 22 years together — onstage.

DiPietro wrote the play as a gift to Ross and Michael, so the roles were tailored to their interests, personalities and acting

'Romance'

Continued from Page 21

skills. Michael's deadpan comic delivery and naturalism dovetail perfectly with his nonsense character Ralph, while Ross brings her characteristic sparkle and vivaciousness to the role of Carol. Even in their 80s, these two stage vets have their lines and roles down cold.

Staged by director Richard Seer in the new arena-style Sheryl & Harvey White Theatre, "The Last Romance" blossoms between widower Ralph Bellini, an 83-year-old retired railroad man, and Carol Reynolds, an affluent retired secretary in her late 70s, still mourning the loss of her husband to a stroke four years before.

They meet one fall afternoon in a dog park, where Ralph has dressed up in his best Banana Republic shirt to introduce himself to Carol (who arrives each afternoon with her dog, Peaches). The aloof Carol repeatedly rebuffs Ralph's very

direct advances, but gradually he wears down her defenses with his confidence, compliments and robust sense of humor (he raps about the “junk in her trunk” and eases her fears by describing their relationship as “just two friends who find each other very ugly”).

In truth, Ralph’s gobs-macked by Carol’s beauty, and she’s enthralled by his stories — particularly the tale of his audition at the Metropolitan Opera some 60 years before, a scene Seer brings beautifully to life onstage with the help of talented operatic baritone Joshua Jeremiah. Their love is sealed when Ralph tracks down Carol’s lost dog and she rewards him generously with kisses and opera tickets.

Inevitably, problems arise. Ralph’s companion and roommate is his sister Rose, who has cooked, cleaned and cared for



Marion Ross and Paul Michael in “The Last Romance.” Craig Schwartz photo

him ever since his wife died a dozen years earlier. She bristles with jealousy over Ralph’s fast-moving relationship with Carol and she worries that she’ll be left alone if they wed. And there are secrets. Ralph is hiding the truth about his declining health, and Carol hasn’t been honest about her past.

Many of the second-act plot revelations are delivered in setups that have the feel of a made-for-Hallmark Channel movie, but fortunately DiPietro peppers the script with some big laughs, and director Seer steers clear of sentimentality. One distracting problem

on opening night was the meandering accent employed by Patricia Connolly, who plays Ralph’s sister, Rose. Although she’s supposed to be Italian-American, she dropped repeatedly into an English or Irish dialect during the first act, but hopefully that was just first-night jitters.

The show’s production values are high. Alexander Dodge’s minimalist set (vivid harvest leaves and a park bench) is beautifully lit in warm golden hues by Chris Rynne. Paul Peterson designed the bark-filled sound, and Charlotte Devaux created the costumes (Ross’ outfits are especially flattering).

The play runs just over two hours with intermission and has broad appeal. Seniors in the audience on opening night seemed quite moved by the story and many held hands through the second act.

Not many plays are written for the over-60 set — even though they make up a large portion of today’s theatergoing audience — so “The Last Romance” is sure to be a popular draw for seniors this summer.

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THEATER REVIEW: Laughs overcome cliches in bittersweet 'Romance'

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By PAM KRAGEN - pkragen@nctimes.com | Posted: August 11, 2010 9:46 am | No Comments Posted | Print

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Craig Schwartz Marion Ross as Carol Reynolds and Paul Michael as Ralph Bellini in the West Coast Premiere of "The Last Romance" at The Old Globe. Photo courtesy of Craig Schwartz.

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Info: 619-234-5623

Web: theoldglobe.org

Posted in Theatre on *Wednesday, August 11, 2010 9:46 am* | Tags: Entertainment Preview, Nct, Theater, [Share This Story](#)

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The Last Romance

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Life begins at eighty or so for the two lead characters in *The Last Romance*, Joe DiPietro's charming, funny, and very romantic new comedy now in its West Coast Premiere at San Diego's Old Globe Theatre. Like DiPietro's earlier *Over The River And Through The Woods*, *The Last Romance* offers some of the best comedic roles ever for septuagenarian and even octogenarian actors, and was written especially for two of them, Marian Ross of TV's *Happy Days* fame and WWII vet Paul Michael, her real life partner.

What would a romantic comedy be without its "meet cute," this one taking place soon after a quarrel between elderly siblings?

"Since when do you leave the house without telling me?" barks an angry gray-haired lady at the elderly man sitting on a park bench, autumn leaves in the trees above him and at his feet. Noticing the man's outfit, the lady demands to know why he's wearing his Banana Republic shirt in a filthy place like this, and more importantly, "Who are you meeting?" "Nobody you know," replies the man curtly, and promises to be back home in twenty minutes.

Soon after the old lady's exit, a similarly aged but considerably more youthful and elegantly dressed redheaded woman arrives, leash in hand. "Run and play," she calls out to a dog somewhere in the distance. "Mommy's right here."

The elderly gent begins to chat her up. "Do you like opera?" he asks. "Are you speaking to me?" she responds icily. "What about rap music?" he continues, and performs a snippet of hip hop, body language and all: "What you gonna do with all that junk? With all that junk, in your trunk?"

The man introduces himself as Ralph, a retired railroad worker who once auditioned for the Met. "I'm Carol," answers the woman in a way that indicates she'd like to end the conversation here and now. Persistent type that he is, Ralph asks Carol what kind of dog she owns. "A Chihuahua mix," she responds, to which Ralph replies that the "scrawny" mutt "looks like a rat who can bark," clearly not what Carol wants to hear. Seeing a dog in the distance, Ralph pretends it's his, calling out, "Jump up and down, Rex!"

"Can I sit closer to you?" Ralph asks Carol, rather boldly for a stranger. "You're coming on to me!" gasps the object of his attention, her outraged expression making it clear that Ralph's pickup lines are not hitting their target. "You can tell me tomorrow if your husband is dead or you're divorced," he goes on with a wink, and then with obvious sincerity, "You're just the most beautiful woman I've seen in 20 years."

And Carol runs away.

Anyone doubting Carol's return to the dog park has never seen a romantic comedy before, and *The Last Romance* is not only romantic but laugh-out-loud funny to boot. It's also a moving look at loneliness and aging ("What if I develop feelings for you, and you die?" wonders Carol at one point) and hope and second chances in equal measure.

Under Richard Seer's brisk and breezy direction, Ross and Michael simply couldn't be better or more endearing in their roles. It's a pleasure to watch brittle, proper Carol begin to turn to

mush in Ralph's hands and equally fun to see eighty-three-year-old Ralph as smitten as a boy of sixteen. That the real-life couple have great chemistry together goes without saying. That two eighty-plus performers have learned and mastered as many lines as would challenge actors one quarter their age deserves mention, and a round of applause.

Supporting them as Ralph's embittered but loving, caring sister Rose is the marvelously grumpy Patricia Conolly, whom DiPietro has given her own quite touching storyline as well. Joshua Jeremiah plays a young Ralph, the majority of his role composed of arias sung to perfection by the gifted operatic baritone.



This reviewer did wonder why Ralph at twenty speaks with a pronounced Italian accent and at eight-three with none whatsoever. (Virtually no one with an accent past the age of eighteen is likely to lose it later in life, even with practice.) Other than that, there are no nits to pick with this perfectly wonderful play and production.

Alexander Dodge's splendid in-the-round scenic design has autumn leaves suspended above the audience and stage, fallen leaves below, a park bench center stage, and notes from an operatic score painted where grass would normally grow. Charlotte Devaux's costumes reflect precisely the fashion choices of each character, from Carol's prim and proper chic to Ralph's grandfatherly jackets and ties to Rose's frumpy unchic. Chris Rynne's lighting design bathes the stage in an autumnal glow. Paul Peterson's sound design lets us close our eyes and believe we are in an honest-to-goodness dog park. Lavinia Henley works behind the scenes as stage manager.

Filled with laughs galore and a few tears as well, The Last Romance is a welcome summer arrival at The Old Globe, and one sure to captivate and delight audiences from eighteen to eighty ... and beyond.

Old Globe Sheryl and Harvey White Theatre, Balboa Park, San Diego. Through September 5. Tuesdays and Wednesdays at 7:00, Thursdays and Fridays at 8:00, Saturdays at 2:00 and 8:00, Sundays at 2:00 and 7:00. Reservations: 619 234-5623 www.oldglobe.org

--Steven Stanley
August 8, 2010

Photos: Craig Schwartz

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THEATER REVIEW: Marion Ross and Paul Michael are delightful in "The Last Romance"

Jean Lowerison - SDGLN Theater Critic | Sat, 08/14/2010 - 9:22am | [Login to bookmark or comment](#)

SAN DIEGO -- Golden leaves in profusion above the set reflect the sweet plot and the golden oldsters playing below in Joe DiPietro's "The Last Romance," in its West Coast debut through Sept. 12 at the Old Globe's Sheryl and Harvey White Theatre.

Richard Seer directs this story of late-life love, written for Old Globe favorite Marion Ross and her longtime companion Paul Michael.

Ralph Bellini (Michael), an 83-year-old Italian-American working-class retiree, takes a different walking route and winds up in a Hoboken dog park where well-dressed matron Carol Reynolds (Ross) is exercising her chihuahua Peaches.

Romance is the last thing on Carol's mind, but Ralph wastes no time trying to strike up a conversation. Carol is reluctant, but his persistence, directness and charm eventually win out.

DiPietro, author of a trenchant play about love among the younger set in "I Love You, You're Perfect, Now Change," avoids the pitfalls of writing about romance once again by giving his characters mature interactions as they separately contemplate the possibility of involvement.

Fear not, there's no boring talk about Medicare or memory loss or even grandchildren. Instead, these two discuss Peaches ("He looks like a rat that can bark," he says) and opera.

It turns out that Ralph trained as an opera singer and even auditioned for the Metropolitan Opera way back when. DiPietro gives us a taste of the young singer in the person of wonderful baritone Joshua Jeremiah, singing snippets of Mozart, Verdi, Massenet, Offenbach and Leoncavallo.

Will they/should they reach for the golden ring one last time? There's not much question that this is their last chance. And, as Rose tells Carol, "my brother is a good catch ... he can still drive at night."

But Rose has her own concerns. She has taken care of Ralph since his wife's death and her husband's desertion. And Carol is evasive about her situation.

It's practically an opera plot. And as Ralph explains to Carol, "The thing about opera, see, is all the lovers want to do is be in love. But it ain't ever that simple. Something always gets in the way."

"The Last Romance" is a winner because of the natural chemistry of its stars and its refusal to fall into cliché territory. Michael's Ralph lights up the stage; Ross' initial starchiness as Carol eventually melts as they fall into an easy relationship. Conolly is excellent as the sister who fears being replaced in her brother's affection, and Jeremiah scores big as Ralph, the young opera hopeful, with a rich round tone that delights.

The details

"The Last Romance" plays through Sept. 12 at the Old Globe's Sheryl and Harvey White Theatre.

Sunday, Tuesday and Wednesday at 7 p.m.; Thursday through Saturday at 8 p.m.; matinees Saturday and Sunday at 2 p.m.

For tickets, call (619) 234-5623 or visit www.TheOldGlobe.org.

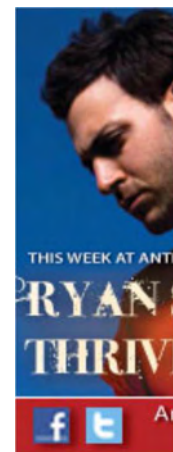
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Photo credit: Craig Schwartz

Marion Ross as Carol Reynolds and Paul Michael as Ralph Bellini and Peaches.



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SAN DIEGO CITY BEAT

August 11, 2010

ON STAGE

CHECK THIS OUT

Hood ornaments: If Chicago is the greatest city in the nation (and it is), then it stands to reason it warrants a great stage biography (which The Old Globe Theatre's Robin and the 7 Hoods partially succeeds in becoming). Playwright Rupert Holmes drops the Robin Hood legend into 1960s gangland Chicago, where—in shady restaurateur Robbo Ortona (Eric Schneider) sets a local crime boss on his ear and wins the love of a good woman. It's all very schmaltzy and predictable—but music and dancing are what drive a piece like this, and this show is second to none. Classic Sammy Cahn and Jimmy van Heusen tunes like "All the Way" and "Call Me Irresponsible" dot the landscape, and director-choreographer Casey Nicholaw has lit up "Come Blow Your Horn" with some of the best dance moves I've ever seen. Through Aug. 29 at The Globe's Donald and Darlene Shiley Stage, 1363 Old Globe Way in Balboa Park. \$68-\$89. oldglobe.org

—Martin Jones Westlin

Unexpected pleasure

The Old Globe Theatre's *The Last Romance* and the rest of this week's theater happenings

By [Martin Jones Westlin](#)



The Last Romance

Widower Ralph Bellini (Paul Michael) figures he needs a change of pace in his advancing years, so he takes a different path on his daily walk, only to discover a second chance at love when he meets Carol Reynolds (*Happy Days*' Marion Ross) at a Hoboken dog park. There's more to The Old Globe Theatre's *The Last Romance* than all that, in the form of a medical mystery in Ralph's life—the problem is that it doesn't hold up as that serious under the suspense in which writer Joe DiPietro shrouds it. But Michael is superb as the cynical Bellini, and Ross would be just as outstanding if her part had the heft that Michael's does. All told, this is a sweet Richard Seer-directed story about romance in old age, and we should all look so good in our 80s as these two. Through Sept. 12 at the Sheryl and Harvey White Theatre, 1363 Old Globe Way in Balboa Park. \$29-\$62. oldglobe.org

— ON STAGE —

Marion Ross and Paul Michael star in romance about their real life



Joshua Jeremiah plays a younger Ralph Bellini (Paul Michael) in *The Last Romance*

Review by Diana Saenger

Romance is the base of many books, motion pictures and television shows. Whether following

TV's *Bachelorette* in her quest for a groom, reading Sandra Brown's new novel *Smash Cut* or being swept away by yet another production of *Phantom of the Opera*, a good romance can draw a big audience. When the romance is actually written for the leads who are real life partners and based partly on their own unique romance – it's a real treasure. That's the scenario behind *The Last Romance* now playing at the Globe Theatre.

Marion Ross (Mrs. Cunningham on *Happy Days*) plays Carol Reynolds, a lonely woman whose husband is existing only on a ventilator. Her new found love is a small puppy she's named Peaches. One day while visiting a dog park, Carol is approached by an overly attentive stranger. Ralph Bellini doesn't mean to be a nuisance to Carol. He's been a widower for a while now and Carol is quite appealing to him.

Ross's real life partner Paul Michael plays Ralph. While both actors have a huge and impressive resume of work – films, stage, opera (Michaels) to their credits, this story is performed with such joy and passion, it's hard for them to hide their affection for each other. Especially for Ross whose eyes light up when she sees him.

They pull off their characters well. Carol is leery of Ralph and for a good reason that unfolds later in the play. Ross (*Arsenic and Old Lace*, *Love Letters*) plays her anxious moments perfectly as she does her concern when her beloved Peaches comes up missing. "Peaches saved me," she confesses to Ralph about her loneliness.

Michael (*Barefoot in the Park*, *Breakfast at Tiffany's*) is equally compelling as the lonely Ralph who lives with his bossy sister Rose (Patricia



Marion Ross, Patricia Conolly and Paul Michael star in *The Last Romance*. Photo credit: Craig Schwartz.

Conolly). He understands Rose only wants to take care of him, but he's ready for an intimate relationship he hopes is with Carol.

Rose is apprehensive about Carol, and lets her and Ralph know it. Conolly (*As You Like It*, *Ghosts*) is outstanding as the fuss budget who insists Ralph is "talking crazy" about Rose.

The Last Romance was written by Joe DiPietro – recent winner of two Tony Awards for co-writing the musical *Memphis*. He also wrote the plays *Over the River and Through the Woods*, *Barefoot in the Park*, and *Love Letters*, which

both Ross and Michael appeared in; so Ross asked him to write a play about the couple's real life romance.

He was resistant at first fearing they might not like the story but feel obligated to perform it anyway. As he thought about the couple, who were also friends, he overcame his hesitation. DiPietro said in his notes about the play; "Their natural affection for each other is so strong that I realized I could write intense conflict between their two characters and the audience would still root for them to get together."

And the audience does in-

deed root for them. They also gave a rousing applause for Joshua Jeremiah, who plays The Young Man – flashbacks of Ralph at a younger age – singing opera. An artist who has performed with many opera companies and was nominated for a 2010 Grammy for his role in *Volpone*, Jeremiah added an additional element of charm and class to an already heart-felt and thoroughly entertaining performance.

Americans Love Romance!

(StatePoint) Call Americans old softies, but romance is booming nationwide.

Date night is back. Film attendance climbed 16 percent last year, the biggest rise in 20 years according to Media by Numbers.

Sales of romance novels are up. Nielsen BookScan reports increased adult fiction sales, with many romance publishers enjoying boosts.

"Romantic novels and movies inspire us to infuse our relationships with romance," says relationship expert and romance novelist, Gayle Rogers, who has seen increased sales of her 1972 million-copy classic, "Nakoa's Woman," which follows two star-crossed lovers in the Old West, and its sequels, "Gladysce with a C," and "For Love's Sake Only," in which the lovers meet in other eras.

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THEATRE - TO GO

Who: *The Last Romance*

Where: The Globe's Sheryl and Harvey White Theatre

1363 Old Globe Way, Balboa Park

When: Now - September 5, 2010

Tickets: \$29 - \$62 (619) 23-GLOBE or www.TheOldGlobe.org



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Globe's 'Last Romance' a sweet-heart deal for Ross and Michael

August 14, 2010 [Leave a comment](#) [Go to comments](#)



Marian Ross Patricia Conolly and Paul Michael in "The Last Romance" at the Globe (Photo:Craig Schwartz)

By Carol Davis



Carol Davis

SAN DIEGO— It's no secret that Marion Ross and Paul Michael are an item. They have been together for 22 years now. But how wonderful is it that, among other things, they can play opposite each other in Joe Dipietro's (*I Love You You're Perfect Now Change*, co-writer for Tony winning *Memphis* and *All Shook Up*) newly minted work (written just for them), *The Last Romance*?

Ross (Mrs. C on *Happy Days* and Sally Fields' mother in *Brother's and Sisters*) has been associated with The Old Globe since 'the 'Craig Noel' early days of the 1940's when she made her Globe debut in *Ladies in Retirement*.

She and Noel had a special relationship over the years and she spoke lovingly and with humor of him at the recent memorial for Noel. She and Michael last shared the stage together in *Over The River and Through the Woods* in 2000 again at The Globe. Michael, a star in his own right, has appeared on Broadway numerous times.

The Last Romance is a valentine for Ross. It is both charming and telling. I know this is stretching the memory for some, but remember the radio soap *The Romance of Helen Trent* and the announcer blurbs out, "Can love come to a woman of 35?" Yes Helen, it can come to women of all ages and as for Carol (Marion Ross) in *The Last Romance* it came when she was in her 70's. So there ya go.

Both Ross and Michael had some input into the overall look of the play, if you will. Their likes, interests and hobbies are pretty much written into the dialogue, her love of dogs and his of opera, and that makes the play even more personal; that's what sells. It just naturally suits them to a tee and fits like a glove.

Set designer Alexander Dodge sets the tone with red and gold autumn leaves hanging from tree branches above and scattered over the theatre's arena stage. Most of what happens takes place in a doggie park on a park bench where the two share, reach out and grow.

Ralph Bellini (Michael) is a widower and Carol Reynolds (Ross) not quite widowed (her husband had a stroke four years ago and is on life support but she refuses to pull the plug) meet in a nearby park. It's not so much by accident that it's the very same park Carol lets her newly acquired pooch, Peaches run amok, but more by design after Ralph sees her there one day on his walk.

It seems that Ralph, who goes out for a daily stroll decided to change his route this day and head to the doggie park instead. After being tracked down by his sister Rose (Patricia Conolly) and scolded for not letting her know where he was going (he's eighty) and a long interrogation of why he came here instead of his usual hunting grounds, she goes off with the promise he will follow shortly. The two live together.

Carol then shows up in the park with her dog Peaches. He's smitten at once, she's aloof but he's determined to get to know her no matter what. Time is of the essence for both. They are no youngsters and there is no time for games. But when Carol holds back, Ralph jumps in with both feet. "Do you like opera?" begins Ralph. "Have we met?" she coyly retorts.

And so it begins. For the next two or so hours we find out that she is a retired executive secretary (that's apparently why she is impeccably dressed) and loves dogs and he is a retired railroad man (he's now wearing his new Eddie Bauer sport shirt to impress) who once had an audition with the Metropolitan Opera. He loves to kid around, something Carol finds a bit offensive at first.

They continue to meet in the park and get to know each other, becoming a little friendlier and divulging more and more about each other. But things aren't always as they seem even for these two seniors who have seen their share of happy times and tragic times. Two thorns keep digging into them like stickers they cannot remove.

Ralph's sister Rose, his one and only surviving family member isn't keen on Ralph's choice of Carol. "Ralph's a good man. He has his faults-but...I see you spending more and more time with him. And you'd be doing me a big favor if you didn't." She looks after her brother and takes care of him more like a wife than a sister and she is jealous of anyone who might take her place. "She's the only family I got left. What are you gonna do?" asks Ralph.

On the other hand, Carol's in limbo because her husband is neither here nor there in her life. She can't get on with her life until that issue is resolved and she refuses to do anything about his situation. She's also concerned that if she does get involved with Ralph, he may up and die on her. "What if you die?" she asks.

Watching Carol and Ralph navigate through the minefields of starting anew is a tricky business but with Ross and Michael

at the helm it sails without a hitch. Ross is stylishly coifed when we first meet her dressed to the nines (Charlotte Devaux), gloves and all. Watching her go from cold to coy to lukewarm to all smiles when she's with Ralph is the sign of a seasoned actress who knows her audience and circumstances well.

Patricia Conolly has all the right gestures as Rose, Ralph's devoted sister. Lonely and abandoned by her own husband as a younger woman, some twenty years earlier she keeps herself busy looking after, cooking, cleaning and caring for her brother almost to a fault.

Michael's Ralph is charming, down to earth, and salt of the earth and a sincere romantic. Even the interplay with his overbearing sister is more tender than thorny. His love of life, love of opera and his yearning for a second chance at love is true to form.

An added fourth character The Young Man (Joshua Jeremiah) as a younger Ralph, singing selected arias as the story moves along, adds another dimension to this otherwise satisfying and lovely play. Jeremiah, who has a powerful and full baritone voice, breaks into aria about five or six times (highlighted by Chris Rynne's spot on lighting) throughout the evening starting with a selection from "Mattinata" by Leoncavalla to Mozart's "Cosi Fan Tutte" to "Pagliacci". It was glorious.

With Richard Seer's gentle but straight forward direction and Joe DiPietro's lovely yet bittersweet play, *The Last Romance* is the frosting on the cake for those of us whose total number of birthday candles are enough to empty a box and cover the entire top. It is just the beginning of what can be if we let it happen, or so they are saying. Seers gentle prodding of these octogenarians makes it look so easy. They may as well be in their thirties.

The Last Romance gives hope to our aging generation. It has just the right ingredients for a play about second chances and growing older gracefully but realistically, devoid of sentimentality but loaded with humor, and that's what makes the world go round and this play worth seeing.

See you at the theatre.

Dates: July 30th-September 12th

Organization: Old Globe Theatre

Phone: 619-234-5623

Production Type: Romantic Comedy

Where: 1363 Old Globe Way, Balboa Park

Ticket Prices: \$29.00-\$62.00

Web: theoldglobe.org

Venue: Sheryl and Harvey White Theatre

*

Theatre critic Davis is based in San Diego

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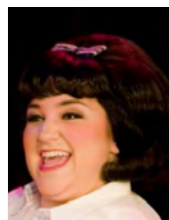
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THE LAST ROMANCE

THE LAST ROMANCE'S NEWS

The Last Romance written by Joe DiPietro, and sensitively directed by Rick Simas, for Marion Ross and Paul Michael (her real life partner) is a charmer. Playing at the Sheryl and Harvey White Theatre through September 12, a wary pair of mature people meet in a dog park and "sniff" each other out. Paul Michael's Ralph Bellini is a rascal of the first order. He may be 83 but he is spry and sly as he attempts his seduction of the more sedate and cautious Carol Reynolds played by Ross. They circle each other throwing barbs while looking for her dog Peaches, which Ralph describes as a rat that can bark. Enter the scene Rose Tagliatelle, Ralph's sister (played with a cunning sneakiness by Patricia Connolly who recently became a Globe Associate Artist) and the love triangle takes hold. Life in its happiest and saddest moments plays out through these three characters who are joined by a fourth with the voice of an angel. Joshua Jeremiah as the Young Man, should be invited to sing in every production, even where music is not stipulated. Ralph wanted to be an opera singer and Jeremiah plays his alter ego, moving the play forward and creating greater understanding of the gently unfolding plot. Jeremiah stands on the theatre stairs to create his magic. When he opens his mouth to sing, time stops as his beautiful baritone fills every corner of the theatre. He alone is worth the price of admission!



THE SHOW: Joe DiPietro's *The Last Romance*, playing through September 5 and directed by **Richard Seer** in the Sheryl and Harvey White Theatre at the Old Globe

THE STORY: 82-year-old widower Ralph Bellini waits in the dog park near the Hoboken, New Jersey, home he shares with his grass widow sister, Rose Tagliatelle. Ralph has returned to this park because he's seen the most beautiful woman in the world, the well-dressed 70something Carol Reynolds, who comes here daily to walk her Chihuahua named Peaches. Both are lonely. He comes on a bit too strong. She hangs back. Rose is furious when she discovers the pair necking on the chaise in "her" living room. Oh, yeah, Carol's dog runs away, and Ralph retrieves it from the ASPCA. Carol surprises Ralph, who as a young man was an aspiring opera singer, with the trip of his dreams; but before the couple depart for La Scala to hear *I Pagliacci*, Rose insists that Ralph pop the question in Hoboken instead of waiting till he and Carol get to Milan. Many secrets are divulged, most telegraphed ahead of time.

THE PERFORMERS: DiPietro, known for his musical theater works (*Memphis*; *I Love You, You're Perfect, Now Change*; *The Toxic Avenger*; and *The Thing About Men*) and to Globe audiences as author of the play *Over the River and Through the Woods*, wrote *The Last Romance* specifically for actors **Marion Ross** and **Paul Michael**, who are a couple in real life. Unlike his counterpart, Ralph, Michael fulfilled his singing aspirations and had quite a film career. Ross is known for her many Globe appearances and her endearing friendship and professional relationship with the late Craig Noel, who always gave her a theatrical home between "gigs" such as Mrs. C on "Happy Days," her best-known television role.



Marion Ross, Patricia Conolly, Paul Michael Photo: Craig Schwartz

Ross plays Carol with a great deal of warmth and a certain un-melting quality. If we haven't received the advance foreshadowing, the reasons for the latter are revealed at the play's 11th hour. Michael has a lot of old world charm, and when he conjures up his youthful, operatic self (bona fide opera singer **Joshua Jeremiah**) to put him in touch with his music again, it is magical

indeed. Jeremiah is a veteran of and Grammy nominee for the world premiere of John Musto's *VOLPONE* and has performed roles with Glimmerglass and Seattle Opera's Young Artists Program. He is an excellent baritone, and although his character, The Young Man, is not real, his appearances enliven, especially for the opera lover, what could be a mere sentimental slog. During the course of the play he sings, among many others, parts of Jules Massenet's *Herodiad* ("Vision Fugitive") and Ruggerio Leoncavallo's *I Pagliacci* (Silvio's aria and part of the Silvio/Nedda duet).

As Rose, esteemed classical and Broadway actor **Patricia Conolly** is magnificent, capturing this fraught, jealous woman's angst and motivation, no easy job and an amazing, quiet tour de force that should be seen by every aspiring actor in town and beyond.

THE PRODUCTION: the smallest and most magnificent miracle of meticulous design in the production is the costume design of **Charlotte Devaux**. With scenic designer **Alexander Dodge**'s dog park, the Globe seems to have cornered the market on faux autumnal leaves this season. **Paul Peterson**'s quadraphonic sound places us in the pocket dog park, and **Chris Rynne**'s lighting captures the times of day as well. Lovely work. **Richard Seer**, as always, has his finger on the pulse of human emotion and keeps the play from plunging into bathos. No small feat as well.

THE LOCATION: Through September 5, Sheryl and Harvey White Theatre at the Old Globe, www.theoldglobe.com or (619) 239-2255

BOTTOM LINE: Worth a try, especially for nostalgia and opera lovers and those who believe one is never too old for love



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The Last Romance

By January Riddle



Ross, Michael
Photo by Craig Schwartz

The thing about *The Last Romance*, currently enjoying its delight-filled West Coast premiere at The Old Globe's Sheryl and Harvey White Theatre, is that it makes you want to shout, "Yahoo! Finally!"

Well, maybe that shouting is loudest among those of us who:

- Have not worn low-rise jeans for at least two decades for fear the muffin-top would explode
- Rejoice that Elder Hostel's (now Exploritas) travel catalogue includes more mountain biking, river rafting and ocean kayaking than museum lectures and that it is no longer called "Elder" anything
- Remember when there were no blue M&M's
- Learned to type on a thing cleverly called a typewriter
- After seeing the film, "The Bucket List," resolved to whittle away at our own, but keep adding to it
- Refuse to wear panty hose or Speedos

In other words, can you say "Baby Boomers"? Yep, those of us born during Truman and Eisenhower's presidencies have been longing (perhaps subconsciously) for a romantic comedy that does not take us back to the halcyon daze of college frat parties or entry-level office jobs, but instead gives us something to look forward to in our dotage. "What about a lovely happy romantic fairy tale for us?" We have wailed. "We are not love-dead! Playwrights, pay attention!"

Tony Award winner Joe DiPietro heard our cries and created a marvelous, uplifting but not sappy, starry-eyed but not dreamy, funny, tender, amorous, intelligent and thoughtful play about finding love in life's autumn. Never mind that he wrote it for the starring long-time couple Marion Ross and Paul Michael, whose real-life attraction for each other sizzles and sighs on stage. We can all relate to both the possibilities and the fears in this most welcome of love fables.

Perceptively directed by Richard Seer, and nicely showcased by Alexander Dodge's leaves and sheaves round stage set, this play focuses on later-life characters, but its dual themes of longing for love and dreading aloneness are ageless.

The story is about Ralph, an 80-something widower, who, yearning for the intimacy and comfort that only a love affair can offer, pursues Carol, an attractive woman of equal maturity. In a charming twist of locale, Ralph finds Carol in a tiny Hoboken dog park. Dressed in upscale office attire and high heels, she comes there daily, toting her Chihuahua mix, Peaches

(played by a cuddly, kissy-face pup named Stewart). Ralph pretends to own a dog, and the ensuing action around that ruse brings some of the play's most hilarious moments. There are many laughs more, all of them touching the truth of life after mid-life crises. All three of the major characters want the same thing, a special romantic love, and all three fear an all-too-common old-age fate, loneliness.

Michael is perfect as the aging, but not aged, Ralph, teasing and lovable, yearning for a reprise of the love he once had. Ross plays Carol with exactly the right mix of haughtiness and vulnerability, especially when her character is unwittingly funny.

At first hesitant, ("What if we go on a date and you die?") Carol warms to Ralph's attentions and insights, and Ralph begins wearing ties to their afternoon rendezvous. That change of attire is not lost on Ralph's only surviving sibling, his protective sister Rose, whose jealousy is partially justified by her own love lost. Patricia Conolly adeptly interprets what could otherwise be an unsympathetic character with perfect timing and understated expressions. "My brother is quite the catch," Rose tells Carol. "He can still drive at night."

Ralph woos Carol with reminiscences of his long-ago audition for the Metropolitan Opera, and she responds with a gift worthy of any music lover's Bucket List.

Grammy award nominated tenor Joshua Jeremiah as Ralph's younger self adds a magical rift to his scenes, beguiling those of us who like to sip a nice cab while daydreaming with our Andrea Bocelli CD's.

Family secrets and confessions threaten to derail everyone's happiness, but the wisdom that comes from long living prevails in the not-so-foreseeable end. All can be forgiven. This is a comedy, after all. Besides, as those of us seeing September as a life symbol know all too well, there is not much time left for more chances at a last romance.

"The Last Romance" plays through September 12 at San Diego's Old Globe Theatre on the Sheryl and Harvey White Theatre stage in Balboa Park. Showtimes are: 7 pm Tues-Thurs and Sun; 8 pm Fri & Sat. Matinees at 2 pm Sat-Sun. Tickets are \$29-62. Reservations online at: www.TheOldGlobe.org or by phone at (619) 23-GLOBE.

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Funding for "Pat Launer, Center Stage", is provided by the **Elaine Lipinsky Family Foundation**.



"The Last Romance" – The Old Globe & "Crazy for You" – Moonlight Stage Productions

It's an age-old love story: persistent male, resistant female. The twist is, in "Crazy for You," they're singing and dancing, tapping their way through gorgeous Gershwin tunes. In "The Last Romance, the cautious lovers are octogenarians, played by real-life, 80-something

Marion Ross and her long-term partner, Paul Michael.

They were last together onstage at the Old Globe a decade ago, in Joe DiPietro's lightweight comedy, "Over the River and through the Woods." DiPietro wrote this one specifically for Ross and Michael, folding in a few elements from their lives. It's still a fluff-piece, sweet, but sentimental and predictable, with minimal insight into the trials of late-life love. Michael is wonderful, though, effortless and thoroughly engaging as Ralph, the gruff old guy giving it one last go. Ross, an associate artist at the Globe, seems to be working harder, as Ralph's somewhat more upper crust, and considerably more reluctant, paramour. As the third wheel, Patricia Conolly is a hoot as Ralph's possessive, overprotective sister from Hoboken, where the action takes place. The symbolism is pretty heavy-handed – in the text and the design – but there's one delightful surprise element: the play is laced with operatic arias, magnificently sung by robust baritone Joshua Jeremiah. The bottom line, intoned twice, in case we miss it, is that their story is just like opera: "People fall in love but can't get together, because Life gets in the way." Heavy, man.

No effort made in the direction of anything but featherlight entertainment in "Crazy for You." There's even a New Jersey connection. Some of the timeless George and Ira Gershwin songs were discovered in a warehouse in Secaucus in 1982. Ten years later, some of those finds, coupled with numbers culled from the 1930 score of "Girl Crazy," became the big Broadway hit, "Crazy for You." Like most jukebox musicals, it tries to cram a silly plot into a flashy song catalogue. Here, it's the unlikely meet-cute of a New York rich boy and a downhome gal from Deadrock, Arkansas. Havoc ensues. But oh, those fabulous songs: "I Got Rhythm," "Embraceable You," "Someone to Watch Over Me," and more than a dozen others.

Moonlight Stage Productions has pulled out all the stops for this one. The excellent 19-piece orchestra, under the assured baton of Terry O'Donnell, is playing the original Broadway arrangements and orchestrations, which are phenomenal. And director-choreographer John Vaughan has re-created all the original choreography, which is fabulous, and fantastically executed by a killer ensemble. The tapping is terrific, and the singing is, too.

At the center of it all is one mega-talented, triple-threat knockout: the adorable, rubber-limbed, charismatic Jeffrey Scott Parsons. Dazzling dancing, singing, music, costumes and comedy. As the Gershwins would put it, "Who could ask for anything more?"

Moonlight Stage Productions' "Crazy for You" runs through August 28, in Vista's Brengle Terrace Park.

"The Last Romance" continues at the Old Globe, in Balboa Park, through September 12.

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Join J

Marion Ross and Paul Michael star in romance about their real life



Joshua Jeremiah plays a younger Ralph Bellini (Paul Michael) in *The Last Romance*

Review by Diana Saenger
Romance is the base of many books, motion pictures and television shows. Whether following

TV's *Bachelorette* in her quest for a groom, reading Sandra Brown's new novel *Smash Cut* or being swept away by yet another production of *Phantom of the Opera*, a good romance can draw a big audience. When the romance is actually written for the leads who are real life partners and based partly on their own unique romance – it's a real treasure. That's the scenario behind *The Last Romance* now playing at the Globe Theatre.

Marion Ross (Mrs. Cunningham on *Happy Days*) plays Carol Reynolds, a lonely woman whose husband is existing only on a ventilator. Her new found love is a small puppy she's named Peaches. One day while visiting a dog park, Carol is approached by an overly attentive stranger. Ralph Bellini doesn't mean to be a nuisance to Carol. He's been a widower for a while now and Carol is quite appealing to him.

Ross's real life partner Paul Michael plays Ralph. While both actors have a huge and impressive resume of work – films, stage, opera (Michaels) to their credits, this story is performed with such joy and passion, it's hard for them to hide their affection for each other. Especially for Ross whose eyes light up when she sees him.

They pull off their characters well. Carol is leery of Ralph and for a good reason that unfolds later in the play. Ross (*Arsenic and Old Lace*, *Love Letters*) plays her anxious moments perfectly as she does her concern when her beloved Peaches comes up missing. "Peaches saved me," she confesses to Ralph about her loneliness.

Michael (*Barefoot in the Park*, *Breakfast at Tiffany's*) is equally compelling as the lonely Ralph who lives with his bossy sister Rose (Patricia



Marion Ross, Patricia Conolly and Paul Michael star in *The Last Romance*. Photo credit: Craig Schwartz.

Conolly). He understands Rose only wants to take care of him, but he's ready for an intimate relationship he hopes is with Carol.

Rose is apprehensive about Carol, and lets her and Ralph know it. Conolly (*As You Like It*, *Ghosts*) is outstanding as the fuss budget who insists Ralph is "talking crazy" about Rose.

The Last Romance was written by Joe DiPietro – recent winner of two Tony Awards for co-writing the musical *Memphis*. He also wrote the plays *Over the River and Through the Woods*, *Barefoot in the Park*, and *Love Letters*, which

both Ross and Michael appeared in; so Ross asked him to write a play about the couple's real life romance.

He was resistant at first fearing they might not like the story but feel obligated to perform it anyway. As he thought about the couple, who were also friends, he overcame his hesitation. DiPietro said in his notes about the play; "Their natural affection for each other is so strong that I realized I could write intense conflict between their two characters and the audience would still root for them to get together."

And the audience does in-

deed root for them. They also gave a rousing applause for Joshua Jeremiah, who plays The Young Man – flashbacks of Ralph at a younger age – singing opera. An artist who has performed with many opera companies and was nominated for a 2010 Grammy for his role in *Volpone*. Jeremiah added an additional element of charm and class to an already heartfelt and thoroughly entertaining performance.

THEATRE – TO GO

Who: *The Last Romance*

Where: The Globe's Sheryl and Harvey White Theatre
1363 Old Globe Way, Balboa Park

When: Now – September 5, 2010

Tickets: \$29 - \$62 (619) 23-GLOBE or www.TheOldGlobe.org

EVENTS

The Last Romance

Balboa Park | Theater

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Old Globe Theatre

1363 Old Globe Way
 San Diego, CA 92101
 619-234-5623

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It helps that Joe Di Pietro wrote this lightweight charmer for Marion Ross and her husband Paul Michael. Their backstory proves that the play's theme is possible. Eighty-three-year-old Raphael Bellini (two great Italian artists in one name) has walked the same walk for years. In a play loaded with life-changing events, he takes a different path and meets Carol Reynolds. They slowly grow together (but have secrets, and will they become like an opera's plot: people meet but can't get together "because life gets in the way"?). The script's complications are predictable and a mite forced. What works is Ross and Michael's interplay. The actors are obviously having fun meeting each other, as it were, for the first time. Patricia Conolly plays Ralph's potentially spurned sister Rose with crusty conviction. Joshua Jeremiah performs during scene changes with a big, operatic voice. And in keeping with the theme, designer Alexander Dodge crowns the stage with a wreath of autumn leaves.

Worth a try.**August 5 through September 12****When:**

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‘Romance’ features real-life couple

Posted by [admin](#) on 8/20/10 • Categorized as [Arts & Entertainment](#), [Balboa Park](#), [Communities](#), [Theater](#)

By **Patricia Morris Buckley**

SDUN Theatre Critic



Marion Ross (left) as Carol Reynolds,
Patricia Conolly (center) as Rose
Tagliatelle and Paul Michael as Ralph
Bellini in the West Coast premiere of “The
Last Romance” by Tony Award winner Joe
DiPietro. (Courtesy Craig Schwartz)

It’s a rare opportunity to see a play performed by the actors it was written for. But that’s the treat that audiences get with the Old Globe’s “The Last Romance.”

The play stars Marion Ross, best known as Mrs. C in TV’s “Happy Days,” and her longtime partner, Broadway actor Paul Michael. This isn’t the first time they’ve appeared on the Globe stage in a Joe DiPietro play. They acted in “Over the River and Through the Woods” in 2000 at the Globe and at other theaters around the country.

At their urging, DiPietro wrote “The Last Romance” just for them. The show premiered originally in Kansas, but gets a new staging here in a deftly directed production by Richard Seer.

“The Last Romance” tells the story of Ralph, an 80-year-old widower who one day takes a walk to a different New Jersey park, a dog park, and falls for a beautiful woman named Carol. He starts to romance her, telling her of his love of opera, pretending that he too has a dog. His sister, who keeps house for him, is suspicious and cold to her brother finding someone else. Yet just as the romance is set to take flight, it’s not his sister but reality that brings it back to ground.

What makes the show work isn’t just the wonderful performances, but the rock solid script by Di Pietro, who just won a Tony Award for “Memphis.” It’s really funny. Funnier than most TV sitcoms. The laughs are harder and

more born of character than what TV audiences are used to—and nary an old age joke in sight. Using the metaphor of opera (Ralph once had the chance to be in an opera at the Met), the playwright points out that falling in love is easy, while being in a romance is rarely romantic at all.

“The thing about opera, see, is all the lovers want to do is be in love,” Ralph tells Carol. “But it ain’t ever that simple. Something always gets in the way.”

Ross is just what you’d expect from watching her for decades—sweet, funny and ultimately able to touch our hearts in a delicate and graceful way. But this show belongs to Michael. It starts with the character. Ralph is funny, a little bit crazy and ever the showman. He’s someone you’d probably try not to get in a conversation with at a park, but once you get to know him, he’d be at every party you’d throw.

The role could easily be cartoonish, but Michael is able to give Ralph so much humanity and boisterous charm that he feels real. His rumble-deep voice, overactive eyebrows and tired slumped shoulders say more about Ralph’s real background than all his witty quips ever could.

DiPietro adds a nice theatrical device in the part of the Young Man, who is Ralph as a young man. Joshua Jeremiah has no lines, but just sings opera tunes so beautifully, we can’t help be brokenhearted that Ralph never achieved his operatic dreams. The role of Rose, Ralph’s sister, isn’t as well written and Patricia Conolly is never able to give us more than just a nagging, two-dimensional old woman clinging to her brother a bit too tightly.

Alexander Dodge’s set is filled with autumn leaves, a park bench and a ground painted with opera scores—and it captures the spirit of the play perfectly. Bravo also to Charlotte Devaux’s costumes, which are pitch perfect as well.

“The Last Romance” is satisfying theatre with exceptional actors in the leads and a highly polished production. It’s the kind of show you wish would last forever.

“The Last Romance”

Through Sept. 12

Sheryl and Harvey White Theatre, Old Globe

Tickets: \$29-\$62

23-GLOBE

TheOldGlobe.org

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Marion Ross (left) as Carol Reynolds, Patricia Conolly (center) as Rose Tagliatelle and Paul Michael as Ralph Bellini in the West Coast premiere of “The Last Romance” by Tony Award winner Joe DiPietro.
(Courtesy Craig Schwartz)

‘Romance’ features real-life couple

By Patricia Morris Buckley
SDUN Theatre Critic

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see Romance, page 27

FROM PAGE 25
ROMANCE

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“The thing about opera, see, is all the lovers want to do is be in love,” Ralph tells Carol. “But it ain’t



Marion Ross—famous for her role as Marion Cunningham in the TV sit-com “Happy Days”—stars in “The Last Romance.”
(Courtesy Craig Schwartz)

ever that simple. Something always gets in the way.”

Ross is just what you’d expect from watching her for decades—sweet, funny and ultimately able to touch our hearts in a delicate and graceful way. But this show belongs to Michael. It starts with the character. Ralph is funny, a little bit crazy and ever the showman. He’s someone you’d probably try not to get in a conversation with at a park, but once you get to know him, he’d be at every party you’d throw.

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◦ Uncategorized

- Politics
- Pride
- Religion and Faith
- Social Scene
- Sports

Native thespian Marion Ross returns to Globe stage with a pooch and gentle panache

Posted by admin on 8/31/10 • Categorized as Uncategorized



Marion Ross as Carol Reynolds in the West Coast Premiere of "The Last Romance" by Tony Award winner Joe DiPietro, at The Old Globe July 30-Sept. 12. (Courtesy Craig Schwartz)

THE LAST ROMANCE

Through Sept. 12

The Old Globe

www.theoldglobe.org

(619) 234-5623

Sunday, Tuesday and Wednesday 7 p.m.

Thursday Saturday and Sunday 2 p.m.

By Cuauhtémoc Kish/Theatre Critic

Even before the play's opening performance, The Old Globe had announced that Joe DiPietro's "The Last Romance" would be extended through Sept. 12. It must be nice having that much box office buzz before you even walk out onto the stage.

I would suggest that Marion Ross is the reason why so many are signing up for this production sight unseen. Ross was only 19 when she acted in her first production, "The Marriage Proposal," for The Old Globe Theatre in 1948. Since then she has been a recurring—and popular—visitor to the Globe's stage, and returns with this show that was written especially for her and

her longtime partner.

It's a gentle play, one that tugs on your heart and reminds us that we only go around once in this life, and that we should make the best of it when we can. If romance knocks—even if it's the second or third time—perhaps we should open the door and at least listen to what he or she has to say.

Ralph (Paul Mitchell), Ross's real-time partner of a decade or so, opens the first scene under a simple but appropriate autumn leaves setting with a nudge that time flies by much too quickly. Ralph is one of three characters in the play who have lost spouses (one still suffering from the results of a massive stroke) due to illness, or to a change of the heart. It's obvious that this man, who has entered his eighth decade, is on the prowl. He's eager to romance a woman who caught his eye (Carol, played by Ross) while she was walking her darling Chihuahua, Peaches, in a neighborhood dog park.

Reluctant at first to share information, but pressed by Ralph, Carol gives up information and then guarded emotions to her new paramour.

Afraid of losing her brother to another woman, Rose (Patricia Conolly) tells Carol why Ralph is not a good catch. Of course, we find out that she's just protecting herself; Carol doesn't want the heartache of being left alone, especially after she's cooked and cleaned for him (her own husband walked out on her some 22 years ago) since his wife died (12 years ago).

Director Richard Seer manages his small, mature cast delicately, allowing for natural expression and movement, so much so that you can't exactly pinpoint that dropped line or momentarily delayed response. Conolly does the best acting of the bunch, while The Young Man (Joshua Jeremiah) makes pretty operatic music throughout, which the author seamlessly threads throughout the production.

"The Last Romance" is a comfortable production, one that allows for all the players to look back to their first romances and see how it all played out. The scary commonality in this play seems to be the universal fear of ending up alone, but Dipietro incorporates gags and laughter that lighten up that fear.

The play is sweet and sentimental and will likely have most theatergoers reflecting upon their own lives and romances—hopefully laughing politely at the play and at themselves.

Tool Box:

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**Erin Reiter**

San Diego Theater Examiner

The Last Romance

September 9th, 2010 2:37 pm PT

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The Last Romance at The Old Globe is a touching and sweet story of people trying to find love in the later years of their life. Extended until September 12th, this is your last chance to catch this show!

The Last Romance explores the relationship of Carol (Marion Ross) and Ralph (Paul Michael). Carol is elegant, self composed and at first very reticent to speaking with anyone, let alone Ralph. Ralph is a friendly, boisterous guy who loves opera and lives with his sister Rose (Patricia Conolly). The fourth member of the cast is Joshua Jeremiah who sings some beautiful operatic transitions between scenes.

The play is not only about a second chance at love, but also about how people, of any age, deal with the unexpected that come into their lives. Ralph catches a glance at the intriguing Carol when he ventures off his normal walking route. He alters his routine so that he can meet her at the dog park. Carol visits the dog park with her dog that is her last remaining reason to leave the house. Carol has a chilly initial reaction to Ralph's overtures, but soon thaws to his more boisterous personality and stories. Ralph lives with his sister Rose who is disapproving of this blossoming friendship. Rose, who jealously guards Ralph's attention, is in the midst of her own personal adjustment with her husband. Tired of losing people near and dear to her she is overprotective and sometimes overly harsh..

As Ralph explains to Carol,, "The thing about opera, see, is all the lovers want to do is be in love. But it ain't ever that simple. Something always gets in the way." The same can be said for this play. In the end, everyone in the play has a secret that gets in the way and forces them decide who they are and who they want to be.

The Old Globe presents *The Last Romance* by Joe DiPietro through September 12, 2010 at the Sheryl and Harvey White Theatre on the Old Globe campus, 1363 Old Globe Way in Balboa Park. Tickets (\$29 - \$62) are available by calling (619) 23-GLOBE or by visiting www.theoldglobe.org

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Slideshow: The Last Romance



(l. to r.) Marion Ross as Carol Reynolds, Patricia Conolly as Rose Tagliatelle and Paul Michael as Ralph Bellini
Photo: Photo by Craig Schwartz





FEATURES

Real-life
'Romance'
one for ages
— and aged

DiPietro wrote play for
Globe stars Ross, Michael

By James Hebert
THEATER CRITIC

The "last" in the title of Joe DiPietro's play "The Last Romance" might reflect the late stage of life its two main characters find themselves in.

Then again, it might be a salute to the magnitude of passion between the two performers who inspired (and star in) the work, opening Thursday at the Old Globe. Because theirs seems almost a romance to end all romances.

Marion Ross and Paul Michael finish each other's thoughts, clasp hands while they talk, gaze dreamily while the other speaks, and generally engage in every mushy cliché of young, besotted lovers.

DETAILS
"The Last Romance"

Old Globe Theatre

When: Now in previews. Opens Thursday. Schedule: Tuesdays-Wednesdays, 7 p.m.; Thursdays-Fridays, 8 p.m.; Saturdays, 2 and 8 p.m.; Sundays, 2 and 7 p.m. (no matinee today), through Sept. 12.

Where: Sheryl and Harvey White Theatre, 1363 Old Globe Way, Balboa Park.

Tickets: \$29-62

Phone: (619) 234-5623

Online: theoldglobe.org

Except, maybe, for DiPietro. The playwright first became friends with Ross and Michael when the couple portrayed grandparents in a 2000 Globe production of his "Over the River and Through the Woods," directed by the late Craig Noel.

"Marion would tell him, 'You write well for old people — why don't you write us a play?'" recalls Michael, a veteran Broadway actor ("Bells Are Ringing," "Breakfast at Tiffany's," "Zorba") turned producer. "And he'd say, what are you talking about?"

Ross laughs as the couple cozies up on a sofa in the Globe's subterranean Balboa Park rehearsal space.

"I would call him in New York, yeah," she acknowledges a little sheepishly.

'ROMANCE'

CONTINUED FROM E1

Playwright gave actor the work as a birthday gift

DiPietro, of course, had a few other things going on. Though best-known at the time for the 1996 off-Broadway hit "I Love You, You're Perfect, Now Change," he was working on a little something called "Memphis," the musical that (after a pre-Broadway staging at La Jolla Playhouse) would go on to the win the 2010 Tony Award as best musical and earn DiPietro the Tony for best book.

Yet DiPietro did manage to write a play for the couple, surprising even Ross and Michael — especially as they recognized the moments from their lives that he worked into the narrative.

"We never knew he was planning to write all this and put it in a play," says Michael. "But four years ago, when I turned 80, he gave me the play and said, 'Here, this is your birthday gift.'"

To which Ross adds: "And then he goes and wins the Tony this year. My son said, 'This is such good planning.'" (Though Ross and Michael have never wed, both have children from marriages earlier in life.)

"So it's kind of our story, and it kind of isn't. It has romance, it has opera, it has little dogs ..."

Ross pauses to pet Blanche, the couple's petite Coton de Tulear pooch, who (alas) didn't make the casting cut.

"He wrote a beautiful piece," says Michael.

"The Last Romance," directed by longtime Globe pro Richard Seer (who also heads the Globe/USD graduate theater program), focuses on Ralph and Carol, two older folks who forge an unexpected bond that revives their resolve to make the most of every moment.

At a rehearsal session in mid-July, the two worked through a critical scene with Joshua Jeremiah, who plays a younger version of Ralph (Patricia Conolly rounds out the production as Ralph's sister Rose).

The real-life Michael's first



Marion Ross and Paul Michael rehearse for "The Last Romance." David Brooks / Union-Tribune photos



Director Richard Seer (left) observes his actors at The Old Globe's rehearsal area in Balboa Park.

ers and Sisters"), the moment for "The Last Romance" is bittersweet because of Noel's passing in April. "Over the River" was the second-to-last show directed at the theater by the Globe's founding director.

"This is my home nest here," says Ross, an SDSU graduate who started acting at the Globe under Noel's direction in the late 1940s. "Craig should have been here. If he could've hung on, that was going to be the other cherry on the top of the sundae."

But this well-seasoned pair is managing to enjoy the sweet course of things just the same.

"These are the happiest days of my life, with Marion," Michael says.

Replies Ross: "We've just lived lickety-split. And it keeps us young, doesn't it?"

love was opera; in the scene (based on a story Michael once told DiPietro), Ralph describes to Carol a glorious audition he had at the Metropolitan Opera decades earlier.

As he does so, Jeremiah stands behind him, singing a powerful aria.

"And no one told me to stop, so I kept on singing," Ralph exclaims over Jeremiah's vocals. "I kept on singing right till the

end!"

That sense of joy in the moment seems to characterize "The Last Romance." Michael likes to invoke a quote from Sir Walter Scott to describe the play's spirit: "One crowded moment of glorious life is worth an age without a name."

For Ross, still a busy TV actress (most recently on "Grey's Anatomy," "Nurse Betty" and as Sally Fields' mother on "Broth-



Marion Ross and Paul Michael sit on a bench in Balboa Park's Alcazar Gardens with Blanche, the couple's petite Coton de Tulear. David Brooks / Union-Tribune

SEE 'Romance,' E5

Real-life ‘Romance’ one for ages — and aged

[DiPietro](#) wrote play for Globe stars [Ross](#), Michael

By [James Hebert](#), UNION-TRIBUNE THEATER CRITIC

Sunday, August 1, 2010 at 12:01 a.m.



David Brooks

Marion Ross and Paul Michael sit on a bench in Balboa Park’s Alcazar Gardens with Blanche, the couple’s petite Coton de Tulear.

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Marion Ross and Paul Michael finish each other’s thoughts, clasp hands while they talk, gaze dreamily while the other speaks, and generally engage in every mushy cliché of young, besotted lovers.

Except these two are both in their 80s, and nothing about their bond — now at 22 years and counting — comes off as a put-on.

“People are capable of very hot romances as they get older,” says Ross, the longtime Globe associate artist and “Happy Days” TV icon. “We sort of forget that, and sort of give up on that.”

Michael chimes in: “And nobody writes about that.”

Except, maybe, for DiPietro. The playwright first became friends with Ross and Michael when the couple portrayed grandparents in a 2000 Globe production of his “Over the River and Through the Woods,” directed by the late [Craig Noel](#).

“Marion would tell him, ‘You write well for old people — why don’t you write us a play?’ ” recalls Michael, a veteran Broadway actor (“Bells Are Ringing,” “Breakfast at Tiffany’s,” “Zorba”) turned producer. “And he’d say, what are you talking about?”

Ross laughs as the couple cozies up on a sofa in the Globe’s subterranean Balboa Park rehearsal space.

“I would call him in New York, yeah,” she acknowledges a little sheepishly.

DiPietro, of course, had a few other things going on. Though best-known at the time for the 1996 off-Broadway hit “I Love You, You’re Perfect, Now Change,” he was working on a little something called “[Memphis](#),” the musical that (after a pre-Broadway staging at La Jolla Playhouse) would go on to win the 2010 Tony Award as best musical and earn DiPietro the Tony for best book.

Yet DiPietro did manage to write a play for the couple, surprising even Ross and Michael — especially as they recognized the moments from their lives that he worked into the narrative.

“We never knew he was planning to write all this and put it in a play,” says Michael. “But four years ago, when I turned 80, he gave me the play and said, ‘Here, this is your birthday gift.’ ”

To which Ross adds: “And then he goes and wins the Tony this year. My son said, ‘This is such good planning.’” (Though Ross and Michael have never wed, both have children from marriages earlier in life.)

“So it’s kind of our story, and it kind of isn’t. It has romance, it has opera, it has little dogs ...”

Ross pauses to pet Blanche, the couple’s petite Coton de Tulear pooch, who (alas) didn’t make the casting cut.

“He wrote a beautiful piece,” says Michael.

“The Last Romance,” directed by longtime Globe pro Richard Seer (who also heads the Globe/USD graduate theater program), focuses on Ralph and Carol, two older folks who forge an unexpected bond that revives their resolve to make the most of every moment.

At a rehearsal session in mid-July, the two worked through a critical scene with Joshua Jeremiah, who plays a younger version of Ralph (Patricia Conolly rounds out the production as Ralph’s sister Rose).

The real-life Michael’s first love was opera; in the scene (based on a story Michael once told DiPietro), Ralph describes to Carol a glorious audition he had at the [Metropolitan Opera](#) decades earlier.

As he does so, Jeremiah stands behind him, singing a powerful aria.

“And no one told me to stop, so I kept on singing,” Ralph exclaims over Jeremiah’s vocals. “I kept on singing right till the end!”

That sense of joy in the moment seems to characterize “The Last Romance.” Michael likes to invoke a quote from [Sir Walter Scott](#) to describe the play’s spirit: “One crowded moment of glorious life is worth an age without a name.”

For Ross, still a busy TV actress (most recently on “Grey’s Anatomy,” “Nurse Betty” and as Sally Fields’ mother on “Brothers and Sisters”), the moment for “The Last Romance” is bittersweet because of Noel’s passing in April. “Over the River” was the second-to-last show directed at the theater by the Globe’s founding director.

“This is my home nest here,” says Ross, an SDSU graduate who started acting at the Globe under Noel’s direction in the late 1940s. “Craig should have been here. If he could’ve hung on, that was going to be the other cherry on the top of the sundae.”

But this well-seasoned pair is managing to enjoy the sweet course of things just the same.

“These are the happiest days of my life, with Marion,” Michael says.

Replies Ross: “We’ve just lived lickety-split. And it keeps us young, doesn’t it?”

THEATER

Globe vet Marion Ross returns with life-inspired ‘Romance’

BY PAM KRAGEN
pkragen@nctimes.com

Art imitates life this month onstage at the Old Globe, where real-life 80something lovebirds Marion Ross and Paul Michael will co-star in “The Last Romance,” a play about finding love late in life that was written in their honor by Tony winner Joe DiPietro.

Globe audiences have a long relationship with Ross, who first arrived in San Diego from the Midwest as a wide-eyed 16-year-old in 1945, and made her Globe debut three years later as what she calls “a little Cockney” in “Ladies in Retirement.” Although she’s best known for her long-running role as Mrs. Cunningham on the television series “Happy Days,” Ross said her creative home has always been the Globe, where she and Michael last shared the stage in a 2000 production of Joe DiPietro’s “Over the River and Through the Woods.”

After that experience, the couple — who recently celebrated their 22nd anniversary together — jokingly asked DiPietro (who won a Tony for Best Book of a Musical in June for the La Jolla



Marion Ross as Carol Reynolds, Patricia Conolly as Rose Tagliatelle and Paul Michael as Ralph Bellini in “The Last Romance” at the Old Globe. Photo by Craig Schwartz

Playhouse-developed “Memphis”) to write them their own play about two seniors taking a chance on love.

Four years ago, he delivered a script as Michael’s 80th birthday gift. The play had its world premiere two years ago in Kansas

City and makes its West Coast premiere at the Globe in a production directed by Richard Seer, who runs the Globe’s masters acting program at the University of San Diego.

The play is the story of two lonely seniors — 80-year-old

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WHERE Sheryl & Harvey White Theatre, Old Globe complex, Balboa Park, San Diego

TICKETS \$29-\$62

INFO 619-234-5623
www.theoldglobe.org

widower Ralph and elegant 78-year-old widow Carol — who meet on a park bench a dog park and gradually fall in love. Their romance is complicated by their own fears of heartbreak and loss and Ralph’s jealous sister.

Ross said DiPietro based many of the situations in the play on elements from their life. For example, Michael (a longtime Broadway actor) once worked as an opera singer, and that has been worked into the play.

Ross, who said she and Michael split their time between homes in Woodland Hills and Cardiff, is thrilled to be back at the Globe this summer, except for one thing — it will be one of her

only opening nights at the Globe without founding artistic director Craig Noel in the house. Noel (who directed most of her Globe performances over the years) passed away last April at the age of 94.

“Craig was always there and it’s hard to believe he won’t be there this time,” Ross said. “To me, he represents my whole career. Whenever I needed a push or was in a rough place, Craig was always there to pick me up, dust me off and put me back on the path again.”

Ross said Noel directed her Globe debut. He wrote letters to help her get a Paramount film contract in 1951. He brought her back to the Globe whenever her TV/movie career hit a dry patch, particularly after “Happy Days” was canceled in the mid-’80s and she feared she’d never work again. And he gave her and Michael a rare chance to share the stage in 2000’s “Over the River.”

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- Story
- Discussion

By PAM KRAGEN - pkragen@nctimes.com | Posted: August 4, 2010 10:00 am | No Comments Posted | Print

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Craig Schwartz Marion Ross as Carol Reynolds, Patricia Conolly as Rose Tagliatelle and Paul Michael as Ralph Bellini in the West Coast Premiere of "The Last Romance" at the Old Globe. Photo by Craig Schwartz.

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BY DIANA SAENGER
Contributor

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"Paul and I would go to New York often and have dinner with Joe, and a few years ago on Paul's birthday, Joe said, 'Here's your play.' He had gotten to know us, so it's based on us a little bit," Ross said.



Carol Reynolds (Marion Ross) and Ralph Bellini (Paul Michael) connect in 'The Last Romance.' MARK BALTZLEY

Michael plays Ralph Bellini, a widower who's lost his ray of sunshine. Even his sister can't fill the emptiness. Then one day he decides to take a different turn on his daily walk and gets a second chance at love. Michael has numerous Broadway, television and film credits to his name, including "Bells Are Ringing," "Breakfast at Tiffany's," "Fiddler on the Roof," and more on stage.

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SEE ROSS, PAGE B11



Ross has a humorous moment in 'The Last Romance' on stage at The Old Globe. MARK BALTZLEY

ROSS, FROM PAGE B10

Vincent Millay.

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Marion Ross returns to Old Globe in semi-biographic comedy

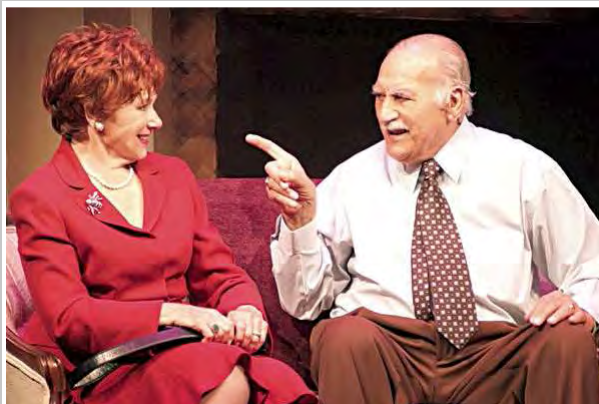
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By Diana Saenger



Marion Ross has a humorous moment in 'The Last Romance' at The Old Globe.

Photo by: Courtesy



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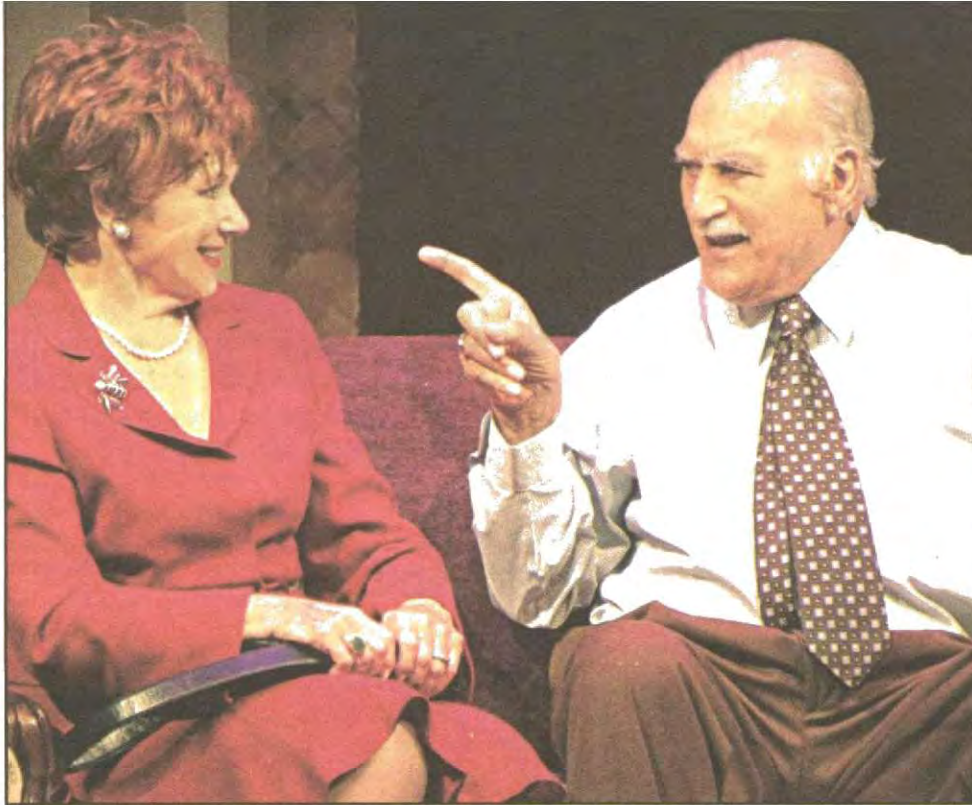
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COMMENTARY: Oh what a year it was in theater!

JEAN LOWERISON - SDGLN THEATER CRITIC
 December 31st, 2010

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Recommend

This was a great theater year for women, teens and one-person shows.

Plays like "Eurydice," "Private Lives," "Ghosts" and "Ruined" gave women a chance to shine, as did three terrific one-person shows featuring women: the Old Globe's "Golda's Balcony," Broadway Vista's "Shirley Valentine" and Broadway San Diego's "An Evening of Classic Lily Tomlin."

Meanwhile, teenage favorite Austyn Myers flexed his dramatic and comedic muscles in "Lost In Yonkers" at the Old Globe, while 14-year-old newcomer Dylan Hoffinger proved an actor wise beyond his years in Diversionary's "Anita Bryant Died For Your Sins."

Hannah Rose Kornfeld was terrific as Little Red Riding Hood and seemed to easily conquer Stephen Sondheim's tricky score for "Into The Woods." And pint-sized Victoria Matthews from the School for Creative and Performing Arts demonstrated her huge voice and fine acting chops as Little Inez in "Hairspray" at San Diego Repertory Theatre.

Here's the best of what I saw in 2010. I include shows seen in Los Angeles and even toss in two shows I saw in Chicago during the summer. The winners are listed in random order.

Drama: Particularly fine were "Summer And Smoke" at New Village Arts; Moxie's stunning "Eurydice" and the thought-provoking classic "The Crucible;" Mo'olelo's "Yellow Face;" ion's "Dr. Jekyll and Mr. Hyde" (which broke all attendance records there); Lamb's Players' enigmatic "An Inspector Calls;" North Coast Rep's "Ghosts;" Geffen Playhouse's "Ruined" and the Mark Taper Forum's rerun of my pick for best play of the last decade, "Bengal Tiger At The Baghdad Zoo."

Comedy: San Diego Rep's quirky, futurist "boom;" ion's "Frankie And Johnny In The Clair De Lune;" Christopher Ashley's novel take on "A Midsummer Night's Dream" at La Jolla Playhouse; Cygnet's pitch-perfect "Private Lives" and three-part "The Norman Conquests;" the always-reliable (and goofy) Ballets Trockadero de Monte Carlo at Broadway San Diego; "The 25th Annual Putnam County Spelling Bee" at North Coast Rep; Scripps Ranch Theatre's wonderfully oddball "Deathtrap;" and two from New Village Arts: "Seven Year Itch" at their downtown theater and "As You Like It" at the Moonlight Amphitheatre.

Musical: North County gets the gold star here. All three of Moonlight Stage Productions' summer shows ("Crazy For You," "Oklahoma!" and "Miss Saigon") were exceptional; New Village Arts did a fine job on its first musical, "Into The Woods" and Welk Resorts Theatre did a delightful "Footloose." Here in town, Calvin Manson's Ira Aldridge Repertory Players did an excellent "Nina" (a tribute to Nina Simone); Cygnet gave us a smashing "Sweeney Todd: The Demon Barber Of Fleet Street;" and Old Globe offered the pleasure of Sammy Cahn's songs in "Robin And The Seven Hoods."

One-Person Shows: The men got into the one-person show sweepstakes with Culture Clash's Herbert Siguenza was fascinating in "A Weekend With Pablo Picasso," and Ed Harris riveting in Neil LaBute's "Wrecks" at the Geffen Playhouse in Los Angeles; James Knight's harrowing interpretation of Yuri Kladiev's meditation on war, "I Am The Machine Gunner" at New Village Arts and Brian Bielawski's hilarious portrayal of a compulsive computer gamer in "Gam3rs."

Most Unusual Show: Victoria Thierree Chaplin's delightful "Aurelia's Oratorio," a wacky and whimsical combination of vaudeville, burlesque, circus and dance, at La Jolla Playhouse.

Director: Glenn Paris did a fine job on the Hollywood satire "Hurlyburly;" Delicia Turner Sonnenberg conquered the nearly impossible demands of "Eurydice;" Tom Dugdale, a third-year directing student at UCSD, did lovely work on Chekhov's "The Seagull;" Christopher Ashley gave us a stunning "A Midsummer Night's Dream;" Jessica John showed a fine comedic touch

ENLARGE



Justin Lang and Jennifer Eve Thorn star in Moxie's "Eurydice."



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with "Deathtrap;" Kim Strassburger gave us a brilliant "Dr. Jekyll And Mr. Hyde" at ion, and Seema Sueko did fine work on the complex "Yellow Face."

Actor: Fran Gercke, for ion's "Hurlyburly;" Jason Maddy, for both North Coast Rep's "The Voice Of The Prairie" and Stone Soup's "Miss Julie;" Paul Michael, for the Globe's "The Last Romance;" Diep Huynh, for ion's "Song of Extinction;" Richard Baird, for North Coast Rep's "Ghosts;" and David Cochran Heath, for Lamb's Players' "Harvey."

Actress: Jennifer Eve Thorn, in Moxie's "Eurydice;" DeAnna Driscoll, for ion's "Frankie And Johnny In The Clair De Lune;" Jo Anne Glover, in New Village Arts' "Summer And Smoke;" Rosina Reynolds and Aimee Burdette, for North Coast Rep's "Ghosts;" Rachael VanWormer, for three shows: San Diego Repertory's "boom," ion's "Dr. Jekyll and Mr. Hyde" and Diversionary's "Speech and Debate," and Tovah Feldshuh for her stunning portrayal in "Golda's Balcony" at the Old Globe.

Ensemble Cast: Ion's "Dr. Jekyll And Mr. Hyde;" Cygnet's "Sweeney Todd" and "Private Lives;" UCSD's fine student production of "Joe Turner's Come And Gone;" the Mark Taper Forum's revival of "The Subject Was Roses."

Best New Find: The 14-year-old Dylan Hoffinger, absolutely stunning in his professional debut at Diversionary in "Anita Bryant Died For Your Sins."

Best Singer: Baritone Joshua Jeremiah, providing gorgeous incidental operatic music in the Old Globe's "The Last Romance."

Set design: Jennifer Brawn Gittings for Moxie's breathtaking "Eurydice;" Sean Fanning's dark, foreboding set for Cygnet's "Sweeney Todd;" Giulio Cesare Perrone, for his wonderfully detailed set for "The Road To Mecca" at San Diego Rep; Rob Howell for the handsome set of "Boeing-Boeing," and Andrew Hull's elegant set for Cygnet's "Private Lives."

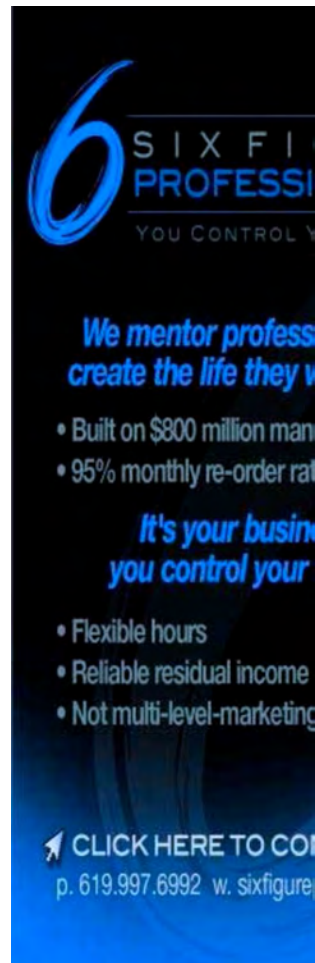
Costumes: Shirley Pierson, for her elegant costumes for Cygnet's "Private Lives" and grungier ones for "Sweeney Todd: The Demon Barber Of Fleet Street."

College Productions: MiraCosta, for their lovely "The Caucasian Chalk Circle" and their co-production with the Old Globe of "The Tempest;" the USD/Old Globe production of "The Winter's Tale," and UCSD's fine "The Seagull" and "Joe Turner's Come And Gone."

Way Out of Town: In Chicago, Steppenwolf impressed with its production of Bruce Norris' enigmatic "A Parallelogram" and Lookingglass mounted a terrific Cirque du Soleil-type treatment of my favorite Lewis Carroll book in its "Lookingglass Alice."

On The Big Screen: National Theatre (of London) has jumped on the Met Live bandwagon to present plays from England at downtown's Reading Gaslamp Cinemas. So far this year they've offered a replay of last year's "Phèdre" with Helen Mirren (who can do no wrong), Alan Bennett's "The Habit Of Art" and a stunning production from Complicite in Plymouth called "A Disappearing Number."

To read more reviews by SDGLN Theater Critic Jean Lowerison, click [HERE](#).



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Carol Reynolds (Marion Ross) and Ralph Bellini (Paul Michael) connect in 'The Last Romance.' MARK BALTZLEY

jak," and the films "Pennies from Heaven," "The Music Within" and "The Streetsweeper."

"The play is a romance about older people," Ross (Carol Reynolds) said. "We found a quote from Sir Walter Scott that read, 'One crowded hour of glorious life is worth an age without a name.' And so even though this couple is nearing the end of their lives, they can share this one crowded hour of glorious life."

"The Last Romance" plays in the Globe's newer Sheryl and Harvey White Theatre. Ross is not only excited about the stage in the round, but returning to the Globe in general, although she had a short stint as Queen Eliza-

beth at the Globe's recent 75th Anniversary celebration.

Ross earned critical acclaim for her "Arsenic and Old Lace" Broadway and national tours, and for performing with Jean Stapleton in the national tour of "Steel Magnolias." She also performs "A Lovely Night" a one-woman show celebrating the life, loves and poetry of Edna St. Vincent Millay.

In addition to her long run on TV's "Happy Days," Ross has starred in many other TV shows including "Brooklyn Bridge," "Gilmore Girls" and "Brothers & Sisters."

Kids love her as the voice of grandma on "Sponge Bob Square Pants."

"The Last Romance" also

features opera singer Joshua Jeremiah as The Young Man, and Patricia Conolly as Rose Tagliatelle.

Directed by award-winning actor/director Richard Seer, "The Last Romance" offers a rare opportunity to see two actors perform in a very special play, that Ross assures will entertain.

"I want those who come to know Paul and I don't think about ourselves as real-life partners when we act together because we're both professionals," Ross said. "And there's kind of a wonderful selfishness among professional people. So Paul would steal the show away from me if I'm not on my toes. So we're on our own, baby!"



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MOST STO

Patricia Conolly, Marion Ross, et al. Set for Joe DiPietro's *Last Romance* at Old Globe

By: **Dan Bacalzo** · Jul 7, 2010 · San Diego

Patricia Conolly and Joshua Jeremiah will join the **previously announced** Marion Ross and Paul Michael in 2010 Tony Award winner Joe DiPietro's *The Last Romance*, to play the **Old Globe Theatre**, July 30-September 5. Richard Seer will direct.

The play is about an 80-year-old widower who gets an unexpected second chance at love. The creative team will include Alexander Dodge (scenic design), Charlotte Devaux (costume design), Chris Rynne (lighting design), and Paul Peterson (sound design).

For more information, visit www.TheOldGlobe.org.



Marion Ross in *The Last Romance*
(© Mark Baltzley)

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Ross, Michael Star In Old Globe's THE LAST ROMANCE



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Executive Producer Lou Spisto today announced the complete cast and creative team for the West Coast Premiere of Tony Award winner Joe DiPietro's *The Last Romance*. Old Globe Associate Artist and television icon Marion Ross will star with her longtime partner Paul Michael in the new romantic comedy which was written for them by DiPietro. Ross and Michael have previously appeared on stage together in DiPietro's *Over the River and Through the Woods*. Directed by Richard Seer, *The Last Romance* will run in the Sheryl and Harvey White Theatre July 30 - Sept. 5. Previews run July 30 - Aug. 4. Opening night is Thursday, Aug. 5 at 7:00 p.m. Tickets can be purchased online at www.TheOldGlobe.org, by phone at (619) 23-GLOBE or by visiting the Box Office.

On an ordinary day in a routine life, an 80-year-old widower named Ralph decides to take a different path on his daily walk - one that leads him to an unexpected second chance at love. Relying on a renewed boyish charm, Ralph attempts to woo the elegant, but distant, Carol. Defying Carol's reticence - and the jealousy of his

lonely sister Rose - he embarks on the trip of a lifetime and regains a happiness that seemed all but lost. *The Last Romance* is a heart-warming comedy about the transformational power of love.

In addition to Ross and Michael, the cast of *The Last Romance* includes Patricia Conolly (Rose Tagliatelle) and Joshua Jeremiah (The Young Man).

The creative team includes Alexander Dodge (Scenic Design), Charlotte Devaux (Costume Design), Chris Rynne (Lighting Design), Paul Peterson (Sound Design) and Lavinia Henley (Stage Manager).

Joe DiPietro recently won two Tony Awards for co-writing *Memphis*, which also received the 2010 Tony, Drama Desk and Outer Critics Circle Awards for Best Musical. His other plays and musicals include, *I Love You, You're Perfect, Now Change* (the longest-running musical revue in Off Broadway history), *The Toxic Avenger* and *The Thing About Men* (both winners of the Outer Critics Circle Award for Best Off Broadway musical), the much-produced comedy, *Over the River and Through the Woods*, *The Art of Murder* (Edgar Award winner for Best Mystery Play) and the Broadway musical, *All Shook Up*. His drama, *Creating Claire*, debuted this past spring at George Street Playhouse, and his newest musical, *Falling for Eve*, opened this summer at the York Theatre Company in New York. His work has received thousands of productions across the country and around the world.

Marion Ross is known to millions of fans for her 11-year portrayal of Mrs. C on "Happy Days." Ross is an Associate Artist of The Old Globe and has appeared in numerous productions on the Globe's stages. She received critical acclaim for her Broadway and National Tour with Jean Stapleton in *Arsenic and Old Lace* and the National Tour of *Steel Magnolias*. She also performs a one-woman show celebrating the life, loves and poetry of

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Edna St. Vincent Millay in *A Lovely Night*. Ross starred in the acclaimed television series "Brooklyn Bridge" for which she was twice nominated for an Emmy and was a two-time winner for Best Comedy Actress of the year by Viewers for Quality Television. She won a Golden Globe nomination for her role as Rosie in the movie *The Evening Star* with Shirley MacLaine. She has played Drew Carey's mother on "The Drew Carey Show," the feisty matriarch on "Gilmore Girls" and the terrible mother-in-law on "That '70s Show." Ross currently plays Sally Field's mother on "Brothers & Sisters" and recently played Leslie Nielsen's wife in the movie *Superhero*. She is the voice of Grandma SquarePants on "SpongeBob SquarePants" and Mrs. Lopart on "Handy Mandy." In 2001, she received a star on the Hollywood Walk of Fame.

Paul Michael has appeared in 14 productions on Broadway and countless musicals, comedies and dramas on stage, television and film. His distinguished career began with the 1956 Broadway musical *Bells Are Ringing* starring Judy Holliday, followed by *Whoop Up*, *13 Daughters*, *Bajour*, *Do Re Mi*, *Tovarich*, *Breakfast at Tiffany's*, *Illya Darling*, *Fade Out*, *Fade In*, *Arturo Ui*, *Zorba*, *Man of La Mancha*, *Music Is* and 1,000 performances as Tevye in *Fiddler on the Roof* throughout the country. Michael has performed with such legendary stars as Vivien Leigh, Jean-Pierre Aumont, Ginger Rogers, Don Ameche, Phil Silvers, Rock Hudson, Christopher Plummer, Marilyn Maxwell, Melina Mercouri and Richard Kiley. He has acted under the guidance of a host of award-winning directors, such as George Abbott, Jerome Robbins, Bob Fosse, Hal Prince, Jose Quintero, Abe Burrows, Tony Richardson, Delbert Mann, Peter Glenville and Herbert Ross. Television audiences have seen his work on such shows as "Frasier," "Seinfeld," "T.J. Hooker," "Hill Street Blues," "Masada," "Kojak," "General Hospital" and "Dark Shadows." His films include *Masque of the Red Death*, *Pennies from Heaven*, *House of Dark Shadows* and the recent Hallmark Channel movie *Where There's a Will*.

Patricia Conolly first appeared at The Old Globe as Rosalind in Jack O'Brien's production of *As You Like It*. Other Globe appearances include Mrs. Alving in *Ghosts*, the Fool in *King Lear*, Wendy in *Clap Your Hands* and Emilia in *Othello*. She recently completed a critically-acclaimed run in the Off Broadway production of *Gabriel* at Atlantic Theater Company. Her many Broadway credits include Mark Twain's *Is He Dead?*, *Waiting in the Wings*, *Judgment at Nuremberg*, *The Heiress*, *The Circle*, *The Sound of Music*, *A Small Family Business*, *Blithe Spirit*, roles with the APA-Phoenix Repertory Company and *The Coast of Utopia* at Lincoln Center Theater. In England, she worked with the Royal Shakespeare Company, Laurence Olivier's company at Chichester Festival Theatre and with Maggie Smith in *Virginia* on the West End.

Joshua Jeremiah was nominated for a 2010 Grammy Award in the Best Opera category for his role in John Musto's opera, *Volpone*. An artist with Glimmerglass Opera in their 2009 season, Jeremiah performed the role of Alidoro in *La Cenerentola* as well as understudying John Sorel in *The Consul*. Prior to Glimmerglass Opera, he was a Filene Young Artist at Wolf Trap Opera Company performing the roles of La Rocca in *Un Giorno di Regno*, Harlequin in *Ariadne auf Naxos* and, to critical acclaim, *Volpone*. As a member of the Seattle Opera Young Artists Program, Jeremiah performed the title roles of Gianni Schicchi and Falstaff, as well as Sam in *Trouble in Tahiti*. On the concert stage, he has most recently performed the music of Victor Herbert at Lincoln Center's Alice Tully Hall.

Richard Seer is an award-winning director and actor and has directed and/or performed on Broadway, Off Broadway, on film and television, and in over 70 productions at regional theaters in this country and Great Britain, including The Kennedy Center, Goodman Theatre, Stratford Shakespeare Festival, Brooklyn Academy of Music, Huntington Theatre Company, Washington's Playwrights' Theatre, San Jose Repertory Theatre, Studio Arena Theatre, Edinburgh Festival Fringe in Scotland and the Sybil Thorndike Repertory Theatre in England. He originated the role of Young Charlie in the 1978 Tony Award-winning Broadway production of *Hugh Leonard's Da* and received the Theatre World Award for his performance. At The Old Globe, he has directed productions of *The Price*, *Romeo and Juliet*, *Who's Afraid of Virginia Woolf?*, *Trying*, *Fiction*, *Blue/Orange*, *All My Sons*, *Da* and *Old Wicked Songs*. Recent directing assignments also include *Third* (Huntington Theatre Company) and *Sonia Flew* (San Jose Repertory Theatre). Seer has been Director of The Old Globe/University of San Diego Graduate Theatre program since 1993.

TICKETS to *The Last Romance* can be purchased online at www.TheOldGlobe.org, by phone at (619) 23-GLOBE or by visiting the box office at 1363 Old Globe Way in Balboa Park. Performances begin on July 30 and continue through Sept. 5. Ticket prices range from \$29 to \$62. Performance times: Previews: Friday, July 30 at 8:00 p.m., Sunday, Aug. 1 at 7:00 p.m., Tuesday, Aug. 3 at 7:00 p.m. and Wednesday, Aug. 4 at 7:00 p.m. Opening Night: Thursday, Aug. 5 at 7:00 p.m. Regular Performances: Tuesday and Wednesday evenings at 7:00 p.m., Thursday, Friday and Saturday evenings at 8:00 p.m., Saturday and Sunday matinees at 2:00 p.m., and Sunday evenings at 7:00 p.m. Discounts are available for

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Associated events taking place during the run of The Last Romance include:

POST-SHOW FORUMS: The Last Romance

Tuesday, Aug. 17 & 24 and Wednesday, Aug. 18. FREE

Discuss the play with members of The Last Romance cast and crew at post-show discussions led by the Globe's creative staff after the August 17, 18 and 24 performances.

INSIGHT SEMINAR: The Last Romance

Monday, Aug. 2 at 7:00 p.m. FREE

Insight Seminars are a Monday night series of informal presentations of ideas and insights to enhance the theater-going experience. The seminars feature a panel selected from the artistic company of each production and take place in the theater where the production is performed. Reception, 6:30 p.m. Seminar, 7:00 p.m. Admission is free and reservations are not required.

OUT AT THE GLOBE: Thursday, Aug. 12 at 6:30 p.m. \$20

An evening for gay and lesbian theater lovers and the whole GLBT community, Out at the Globe includes a hosted wine and martini bar, appetizers, door prizes and a pre-show mixer. \$20 per person. RSVP at (619) 23-GLOBE. (Tickets to The Last Romance and the Shakespeare Festival are sold separately.)

THANK GLOBE IT'S FRIDAY: Friday, Aug. 6 and 13 at 6:30 p.m. \$20

Kick off the weekend with the Globe's Friday pre-show bash. TGIF includes a hosted wine and martini bar, appetizers and dessert, and live music from a local San Diego artist. \$20 per person. RSVP at (619) 23-GLOBE. (Tickets to The Last Romance and the Shakespeare Festival are sold separately.)

LOCATION: The Old Globe is located in San Diego's Balboa Park at 1363 Old Globe Way. There are numerous free parking lots available throughout the park. Valet parking is also available (\$10). For additional parking information visit www.BalboaPark.org.

CALENDAR: King Lear (6/12-9/23), The Madness of George III (6/19-9/24), The Taming of the Shrew (6/16- 9/26), Robin and the 7 Hoods - A New Musical (7/14-8/22), The Last Romance (7/30-9/5).

The Tony Award-winning Old Globe is one of the country's leading professional regional theaters and has stood as San Diego's flagship arts institution for 75 years. Under the direction of Executive Producer Louis G. Spisto, The Old Globe produces a year-round season of 15 productions of classic, contemporary and new works on its three Balboa Park stages: the 600-seat Old Globe Theatre, the 250-seat Sheryl and Harvey White Theatre and the 612-seat outdoor Lowell Davies Festival Theatre, home of its internationally renowned Shakespeare Festival. More than 250,000 people attend Globe productions annually and participate in the theater's education and community programs. Numerous world premieres such as The Full Monty, Dirty Rotten Scoundrels, A Catered Affair, and the annual holiday musical, Dr. Seuss' How the Grinch Stole Christmas!, have been developed at The Old Globe and have gone on to enjoy highly successful runs on Broadway and at regional theaters across the country.

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07 Jul 2010

Tony Award winner Joe DiPietro's *The Last Romance*, a romantic comedy written for Marion Ross and her longtime partner Paul Michael, will get its West Coast premiere at The Old Globe's Sheryl and Harvey White Theatre in San Diego July 30–Sept. 5.

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In addition to Ross and Michael, the cast of *The Last Romance* includes the newly announced Patricia Conolly (as Rose Tagliatelle) and Joshua Jeremiah (as The Young Man). Richard Seer directs.

Ross — famous for her role as Mrs. Cunningham on TV's "Happy Days" — and Michael have previously appeared on stage together in DiPietro's *Over the River and Through the Woods*.

Opening night is Aug. 5. Here's how The Old Globe describes *The Last Romance*: "On an ordinary day in a routine life, an 80-year-old widower named Ralph decides to takes a different path on his daily walk — one that leads him to an unexpected second chance at love. Relying on a renewed boyish charm, Ralph attempts to woo the elegant, but distant, Carol.

Defying Carol's reticence — and the jealousy of his lonely sister Rose — he embarks on the trip of a lifetime and regains a happiness that seemed all but lost."

The production team includes Alexander Dodge (scenic design), Charlotte Devaux (costume design), Chris Rynne (lighting design), Paul Peterson (sound design) and Lavinia Henley (stage manager).

DiPietro recently won two Tony Awards for co-writing the musical *Memphis*, which also received the 2010 Tony, Drama Desk and Outer Critics Circle Awards for Best Musical. His other plays and musicals include *I Love You, You're Perfect, Now Change* (the longest-running musical revue in Off Broadway history), *The Toxic Avenger* and *The Thing About Men* (both winners of the Outer Critics Circle Award for Best Off Broadway musical), the much-produced comedy, *The Art of Murder* (Edgar Award winner for Best Mystery Play) and the Broadway musical *All Shook Up*. His drama,

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Creating Claire, debuted this past spring at George Street Playhouse, and his newest musical, *Falling for Eve*, is playing this summer at the York Theatre Company in New York City.

Ross is an associate artist of The Old Globe and has appeared in numerous productions on the Globe's stages. She starred in the Broadway and national touring productions of *Arsenic and Old Lace* (with Jean Stapleton) and the national tour of *Steel Magnolias*. She also performs a one-woman show celebrating the life, loves and poetry of Edna St. Vincent Millay in *A Lovely Night*. Ross also starred in the acclaimed television series "Brooklyn Bridge" for which she was twice nominated for an Emmy.

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Marion Ross Is Joe DiPietro's Leading Lady in West Coast Premiere of *The Last Romance*

By *Kenneth Jones*

30 Jul 2010

Marion Ross
photo by Mark Baltzley

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Ross — famous for her role as Mrs. Cunningham on TV's "Happy Days" — and Michael have previously appeared on stage together in DiPietro's *Over the River and Through the Woods*.

The production team includes Alexander Dodge

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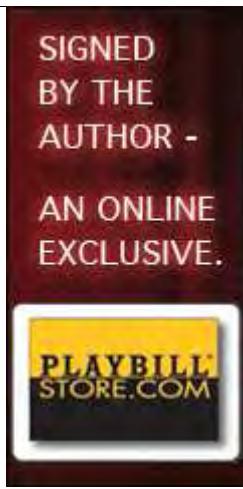
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(scenic design), Charlotte Devaux (costume design), Chris Rynne (lighting design), Paul Peterson (sound design) and Lavinia Henley (stage manager).

DiPietro recently won two Tony Awards for co-writing the musical *Memphis*, which also received the 2010 Tony, Drama Desk and Outer Critics Circle Awards for Best Musical. His other plays and musicals include *I Love You, You're Perfect, Now Change* (the longest-running musical revue in Off Broadway history), *The Toxic Avenger* and *The Thing About Men* (both winners of the Outer Critics Circle Award for Best Off Broadway musical), the much-produced comedy, *The Art of Murder* (Edgar Award winner for Best Mystery Play) and the Broadway musical *All Shook Up*. His

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Marion Ross and Paul Michael
photo by Mark Baltzley

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Executive Producer [Lou Spisto](#) presents the West Coast Premiere of Tony Award winner [Joe DiPietro](#)'s THE LAST ROMANCE. Old Globe Associate Artist and television icon [Marion Ross](#) stars with her longtime partner [Paul Michael](#) in the new romantic comedy which was written for them by DiPietro. Ross and Michael have previously appeared on stage together in DiPietro's Over the River and Through the Woods. Directed by [Richard Seer](#), The Last Romance will run in the Sheryl and Harvey White Theatre July 30 - Sept. 5. Previews run July 30 - Aug. 4. Opening night is Thursday, Aug. 5 at 7:00 p.m. Tickets can be purchased online at www.TheOldGlobe.org, by phone at (619) 23-GLOBE or by visiting the Box Office. BroadwayWorld brings you a sneak peek at the production below!

On an ordinary day in a routine life, an 80-year-old widower named Ralph decides to take a different path on his daily walk - one that leads him to an unexpected second chance at love. Relying on a renewed boyish charm, Ralph attempts to woo the elegant, but distant, Carol. Defying Carol's reticence - and the jealousy of his lonely sister Rose - he embarks on the trip of a lifetime and regains a happiness that seemed all but lost. The Last Romance is a heart-warming comedy about the transformational power of love.

In addition to Ross and Michael, the cast of The Last Romance includes [Patricia Conolly](#) (Rose Tagliatelle) and Joshua Jeremiah (The Young Man).

The creative team includes [Alexander Dodge](#) (Scenic Design), Charlotte Devaux (Costume Design), Chris Rynne (Lighting Design), [Paul Peterson](#) (Sound Design) and Lavinia Henley (Stage Manager).

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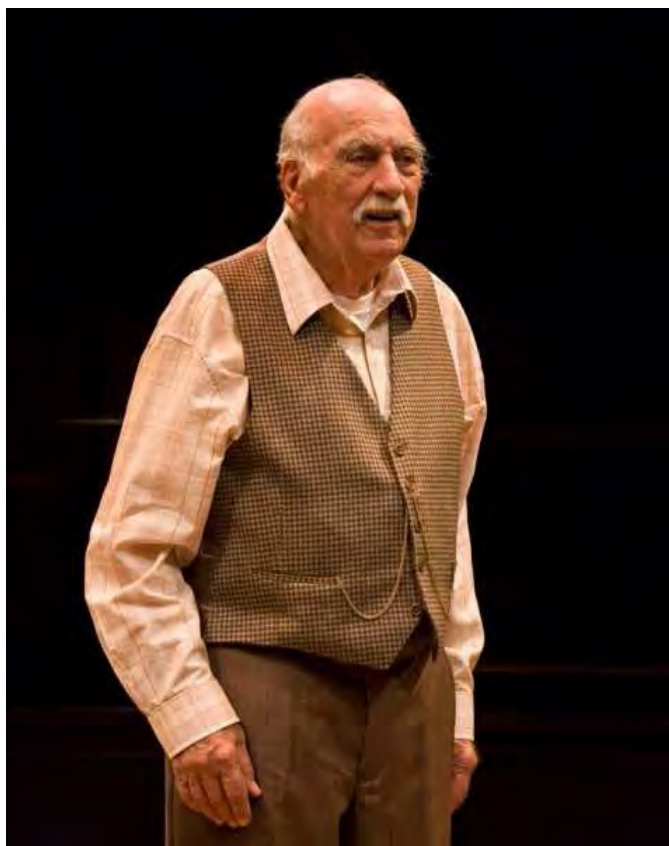
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PHOTO CALL: Marion Ross in Joe DiPietro's *The Last Romance* at The Old Globe

By Irina Khodorkovsky
03 Aug 2010

Tony Award winner Joe DiPietro's *The Last Romance*, a romantic comedy written for Marion Ross and her longtime partner Paul Michael, started its West Coast premiere on July 30 at The Old Globe's Sheryl and Harvey White Theatre in San Diego.

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Performances continue to Sept. 12, representing an extension of one week. Opening night is Aug. 5.

In addition to Ross and Michael, the cast of *The Last Romance* includes Patricia Conolly (as Rose Tagliatelle) and Joshua Jeremiah (as The Young Man). Richard Seer directs.

Here's how The Old Globe describes *The Last Romance*: "On an ordinary day in a routine life, an 80-year-old widower named Ralph decides to takes a different path on his daily walk — one that leads him to an unexpected second chance at love. Relying on a renewed boyish charm, Ralph attempts to woo the elegant, but distant, Carol. Defying Carol's reticence — and the jealousy of his lonely sister Rose — he embarks on the trip of a lifetime and regains a happiness that seemed all but lost."

Here is a look at the production:

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Marion Ross
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Marion Ross Is Joe DiPietro's Leading Lady in West Coast Premiere of *The Last Romance*, Opening Aug. 5

By [Kenneth Jones](#)

05 Aug 2010



Marion Ross
photo by Craig Schwartz

Tony Award winner Joe DiPietro's *The Last Romance*, a romantic comedy written for Marion Ross and her longtime partner Paul Michael, gets its official West Coast premiere Aug. 5, when it opens following previews from July 30, at The Old Globe's Sheryl and Harvey White Theatre in San Diego.

Performances continue to Sept. 12, representing an extension of one week. In addition to Ross and Michael, the cast of *The Last Romance* includes Patricia Conolly (as Rose Tagliatelle) and Joshua Jeremiah (as The Young Man). Richard Seer directs.

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The production team includes Alexander Dodge (scenic design), Charlotte Devaux (costume design), Chris Rynne (lighting design), Paul Peterson (sound

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Marion Ross, Patricia Conolly and Paul Michael
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REVIEW ROUNDUP: Joe DiPietro's *The Last Romance*, With Marion Ross, Paul Michael, Opens at the Old Globe

 By: **Andy Propst** · Aug 11, 2010 · San Diego

Tony Award winner Joe DiPietro's *The Last Romance* has opened at the **Old Globe Theatre**. Directed by Richard Seer, the production will continue through September 12.

The play is about an 80-year-old widower who gets an unexpected second chance at love. The company features Patricia Conolly, Joshua Jeremiah, Paul Michael, and Marion Ross.

The creative team includes Alexander Dodge (scenic design), Charlotte Devaux (costume design), Chris Rynne (lighting design), and Paul Peterson (sound design).

Two of the area's daily papers and the industry paper *Variety* have published reviews, which are receiving the play and the performers warmly.

The reviews include:
San Diego Union-Tribune
Fall awakening at heart of touching *Last Romance* at Old Globe

"The play handles many of the delicate issues surrounding love later in life with gentle humor and the easy charm of its two leads."

"Here Ross gives a graceful, touching performance as the emotionally closed-off Carol, who learns to open up, try new things and take a chance on love.

"Michael gets Ralph's odd charisma and teasing humor just right, and his blunt yet innocuous come-ons are seen as the product of the constantly ticking clock."

Variety
The Last Romance

"No great shakes as dramaturgy, the golden years love story casts a bewitching spell in the hands of real life partners Marion Ross ("Happy Days") and Paul Michael, for whom it was written. Remarkably free of cliché, it should enjoy a long life in nonprofit and community venues."

"Biggest surprise is that unlike most scribes who deal with the elderly, DiPietro indulges in no corny byplay about Medicare, piles, grandchildren or death. Instead, we're treated to mature give and take between once-married, twice-shy grownups wondering whether to take one last plunge."

North County Times
Laughs overcome clichés in bittersweet *Romance*

"...a bittersweet little slip of a story that's enhanced by Michael's innate charm and a bounty of solid laughs. The play's second act doesn't have the magic of the first half, and you're likely to see some of the "surprise twists" coming, but it's an enjoyable evening ---- both as theater and as an opportunity to see these two seasoned actors ---- so clearly in love after 22 years together ---- onstage."

"DiPietro wrote the play as a gift to Ross and Michael, so the roles were tailored to their interests, personalities and acting skills. Michael's deadpan comic delivery and naturalism dovetail perfectly with his no-nonsense character Ralph, while Ross brings her characteristic sparkle and vivaciousness to the role of Carol. Even in their 80s, these two stage vets have their lines and roles down cold."


 Marion Ross in *The Last Romance*
(© Mark Baltzley)

ABOUT THE SHOW

The Last Romance

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Best Bets

by Phyllis DeBlanche

Events, exhibits and other fun you don't want to miss this month.
More events are listed on page 117.



[Through September]

Finish Lineup

A day at the races can end well even if your ponies didn't perform as hoped: On select days, the Del Mar Thoroughbred Club provides free-with-track-admission concerts as dessert. The Summer Concert Series at 4 includes Pinback, July 23; Common Sense, July 30; The B52's, August 6; The Soft Pack, August 13; Reggae Fest featuring Jimmy Cliff and Matisyahu, August 14; Ozomatli, August 20; Weezer, August 21; Super Diamond, August 27; Craft Microbrew Festival and Local Music Showcase, August 28; The English Beat, Sept. 3; ZZ Top, Sept. 4. At the Del Mar Fairgrounds' Seaside Terrace (west end of the grandstand), 2260 Jimmy Durante Boulevard, 858-755-1141, delmarscene.com.



[July 30–September 5]

First Last Kiss

Romance walks right into a widower's path in Joe DiPietro's *The Last Romance*, making its West Coast premiere at the Old Globe and showcasing Marion Ross and partner Paul Michael, July 30–September 5: Tuesday & Wednesday at 7, Thursday & Friday at 8, Saturday at 2 & 8, Sunday at 2 & 7. Sheryl & Harvey White Theatre, 1363 Old Globe Way, Balboa Park, 619-234-5623, theoldglobe.org.

[August 20]

Our Best to You

Rumor has it *San Diego Magazine* throws great parties. And rumor has it right! August 20, 6:30-9:30, our annual Best of San Diego® bash shows off the region's finest stuff, with dozens upon dozens of the county's food, drink, performance and visual artists lining Liberty Station's NTC Promenade, eager to hand out samples and otherwise demonstrate their best. The event includes a runway show, live music and Best of San Diego® winner booths aplenty. Proceeds benefit the Salvation Army's Door of Hope. Historic Decatur Road at Roosevelt, Point Loma. sandiegomagazine.com/bestofsandiegoparty.



[August 7]

The Sand Played On

The 30th annual U.S. Open Sandcastle Competition sculpts for glory on the Imperial Beach sands August 7 starting at 9 a.m., with viewing till about 4 (or whenever the tide takes the sandy art away). The street festival features live music, vendors and entertainment all day along Seacoast Dr. Free. 619-424-6663, usopensandcastle.com.



BRETT ALAN PHOTOGRAPHY

DEL MAR TIMES

July 23, 2010



NORTH COUNTY TIMES

August 1, 2010

:: ARTS & ENTERTAINMENT

THURSDAY, AUG. 5



"THE LAST ROMANCE" STARTS (LEFT) —

The Old Globe presents Marion Ross and Paul Michael in the West Coast debut of Joe DiPietro's play about a late-in-life romance between a widower and an elegant woman he meets on a neighborhood walk; 8 p.m. (also 8 p.m. Friday; 2 and 8 p.m. Saturday; 2 and 7 p.m. Aug. 8); runs through Sept. 12; Sheryl & Harvey White Theatre, Old Globe complex, Balboa Park, San Diego; \$29-\$62; 619-234-5623 or theoldglobe.org.

"CHILDREN OF EDEN" —

Carlsbad Community Theatre presents Stephen Schwartz and John Caird's musical that tells the biblical story of the creation, from the garden of Eden to Noah's ark; 7 p.m. (also 2 and 7 p.m. Friday and Saturday; 2 p.m. Aug. 8); Carlsbad Community Cultural Arts Center, 3557 Monroe St., Carlsbad; call for ticket prices; 760-931-8709.

MICHAEL MCDONALD — 7:30 p.m.; Humphrey's Concerts by the Bay, 2241 Shelter Island Drive, San Diego; \$70; 800-745-3000 or humphreysconcerts.com.

GAY & LESBIAN TIMES

August 5, 2010

OUT AND ABOUT

Friday, August 6th

The Last Romance – The Old Globe Theatre will be showing The Last Romance on Friday, August 6th at 8 p.m. America's favorite mother comes home. Marion Ross ("Happy Days," "The Drew Carey Show," "Brothers & Sisters") returns to The Globe to star with her life partner, Paul Michael in this new romantic comedy. A crush can make anyone feel young again – even a widower named Ralph. On an ordinary day in a routine life, Ralph decides to take a different path on his daily walk – one that leads him to an unexpected second chance at love. For more information or to purchase tickets, visit www.theoldglobe.org.



Friday, August 6

SAN DIEGO DOWNTOWN NEWS

September 2010

URBAN ARTS



Starring in "MiXtape, a Musical Journey Through the '80s," making its world premiere at Lamb's Players Theatre, are (from left) Spencer Rowe, Season Marshall Duffy, Louis Pardo and Joy Yandell.

Photo by J.T. McMillan

'The Last Romance,' 'MiXtape' and Sutton Foster



THE LIVELY
ARTS
Charlene Baldrige

What happened to summer? Not ready to fall into fall just yet? It's still summertime on San Diego stages. Just take a look:

At the Old Globe

- All are recommended: Joe DiPietro's gentle romantic comedy, "The Last Romance," with Marion Ross, Paul Michael and Patricia Conolly plays through Sept. 12.
- Shakespeare's "King Lear" and "The Taming of the Shrew" continue in rotating repertory through Sept. 23 and 26, along with "The Madness of King George," which continues through Sept. 24. Information: www.theoldglobe.com or (619) 23-GLOBE.

At the Horton Grand Theatre

- Lamb's Players Theatre presents the world premiere of "MiXtape, a Musical Journey Through the '80s," created by Jon Lorenz and Colleen Kollar

Smith and directed by Kerry Meads at the gemlike theater located at 444 4th Ave. in the Gaslamp Quarter. Information: www.lambplayers.org or (619) 437-6000.

At the Balboa Theatre

- Saturday, Sept. 25, 4 p.m., the 2010 regional champions, San Diego Chorus Sweet Adelines, presents its annual show, featuring four-part harmony "songs from today and yesterday" at the acoustically-excellent theater, 868 Fourth Ave. at E Street in the Gaslamp Quarter. Information: <http://sdchorus.org> or (619) 685-3385.

- Friday, Oct. 1, 8 p.m., dynamite Broadway star Sutton Foster, who got her start at La Jolla Playhouse in the title role of "Thoroughly Modern Millie," appears in a cabaret concert accompanied by Michael Rafter. Information: www.broadwaysd.com/suttonfoster or ticketmaster.

At the Lyceum

- Sept. 24-Oct. 10, San Diego Musical Theatre presents Leiber and Stoller's "Smoky Joe's Café," which presents the golden age of rock with hits from Elvis, the Drifters, Dion, the Coasters and Ben E King. The Lyceum is located at San Diego Repertory Theatre, 79 Horton Plaza. Information: www.sdmt.org or (858) 560-5740

PLAYBILL

Critic's Choice

'King Lear': In Adrian Noble's lucid and moving production for the Old Globe Shakespeare Festival, a fine ensemble cast speaks the classic tragedy's poetry with a crispness that informs nearly every aspect of the show. Robert Foxworth is an understated but achingly tormented Lear, and the staging has a spare but sometimes magical visual sense. (Hebert) Lowell Davies Festival Theatre, 1363 Old Globe Way, Balboa Park. Through Sept. 23. (619) 234-5623, oldglobe.org. \$29-\$78.

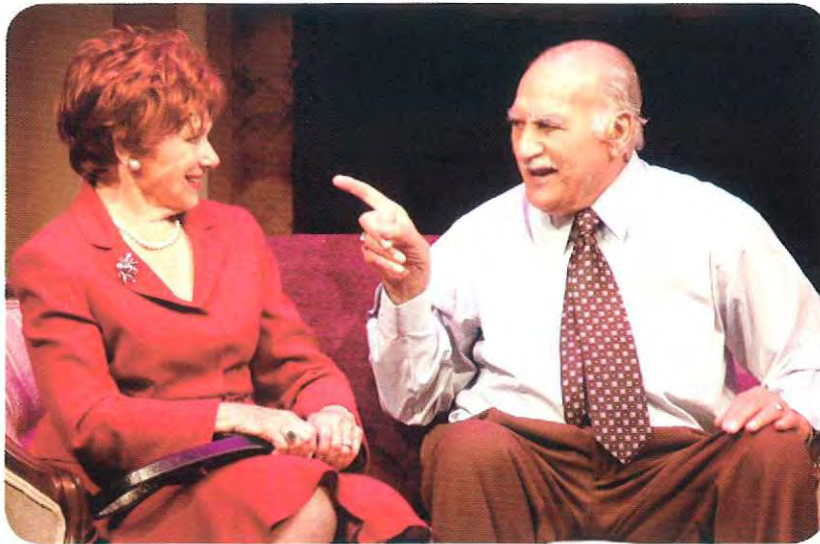
'The Last Romance': When widower Ralph unexpectedly deviates from his daily routine, his life takes a sudden detour. Life becomes exciting once again when he meets an elegant woman at the dog park. Real-life couple Marion Ross and Paul Michael star in Joe DiPietro's tender romantic comedy that serves as a reminder that time is short and, regardless of age, life should be lived to the fullest. (Klam) Sheryl & Harvey White Theatre, 1362 Old Globe Way, Balboa Park. Through Sept. 12. (619) 234-5623, oldglobe.org. \$29-\$62.

'The Taming of the Shrew': Go to see the crackling performances of Emily Swallow as Kate and Jonno Roberts as Petruchio and grit your teeth, if you must, over the problematic gender politics of Shakespeare's much-debated romcom. Director Ron Daniels doesn't totally solve the play's thorny thematic issues (nor the somewhat wandering feel of the second act), but his inventive and loose-limbed staging brings the fun nonetheless. (Hebert) Lowell Davies Festival Theatre, 1363 Old Globe Way, Balboa Park. Through Sept. 26. (619) 234-5623, oldglobe.org.

In Focus:

ARTS

BY EDWIN RENDÓN



Old Globe Theatre: *Last Romance*

America's favorite mother comes home. Marion Ross ("Happy Days," "The Drew Carey Show," "Brothers & Sisters") returns to The Globe to star with her life partner, Paul Michael in this new romantic comedy. A crush can make anyone feel young again – even a widower named Ralph. On an ordinary day in a routine life, Ralph decides to take a different path on his daily walk – one that leads him to an unexpected second chance at love. Relying on a renewed boyish charm, Ralph attempts to woo the elegant, but distant, Carol. Defying Carol's reticence – and his lonely sister's jealousy – Ralph embarks on the trip of a lifetime, and regains a happiness that seemed all but lost. *The Last Romance* is a heart-warming comedy about the transformational power of love. Now - September 5th

August / Agosto

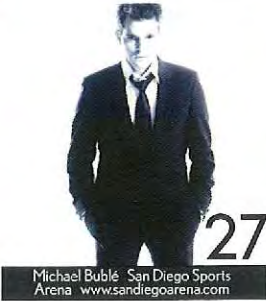
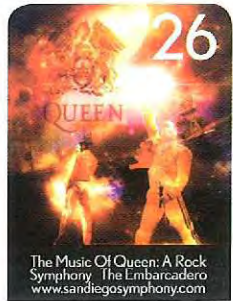
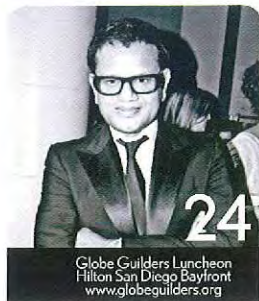
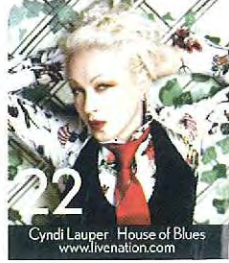
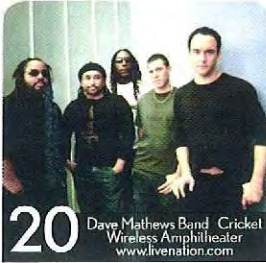
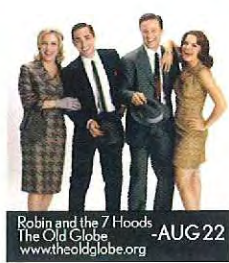
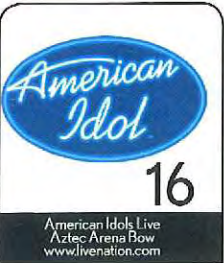
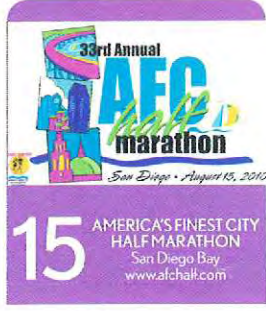
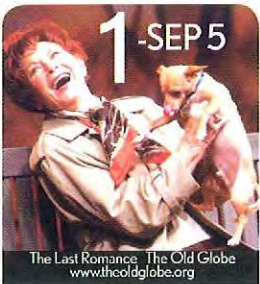
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2010

Monday Tuesday Wednesday Thursday Friday Saturday Sunday



JOIN US FOR TWO VERY SPECIAL EVENTS IN SEPTEMBER:
SEPTEMBER 8 - Fashion Show Featuring Tiffany & Co. and Fashion Valley boutiques at the San Diego Museum of Art to benefit VIFAC.
SEPTEMBER 12 - GB Presents the Willis Allen Cup at the San Diego Polo Club to benefit Las Damas De San Diego. Featuring the San Diego Opera, South Coast Plaza, Southwest Airlines and many more!



» CITYFILES

Best Bets

by Phyllis DeBlanche



[July 30–September 5]

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Giving Back

September 2010

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September 2010

SUNDAY MONDAY TUESDAY WEDNESDAY THURSDAY FRIDAY SATURDAY

septiembre

