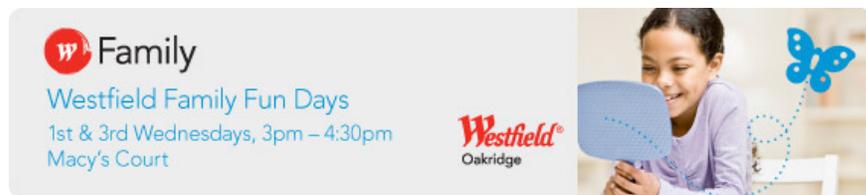


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## Opera San Jose- Pagliacci & La Voix Humaine

by Paria Amini on November 16, 2011 in [Events](#), [Local](#), [Opinion](#), [Review](#) with [1 Comment](#)



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On Saturday evening, Opera San Jose continued its season with a powerful double-bill performance of Leoncavallo's *Pagliacci* and Poulenc's *La voix humaine*. I have wanted to see *Pagliacci* for years, and ever since Opera San Jose announced their 2011-2012 season, have been counting the days till opening night. Opening night was finally here and the California Theatre was packed with young and old anticipating a wonderful evening at the opera. We took our seats and waited for the curtain to go up for the French monodrama *La voix humaine*.

A one-act opera with one character, *La voix humaine* is the story of a young woman whose lover of 5 years has left her for another woman and she is having one final conversation with him. An agonizing phone call, their conversation is interrupted numerous times due to the poor phone service of that time. Lingering on the edge, this woman is desperate to get her lover back, having attempted suicide at the thought of living without him. It is difficult to keep an audience engaged with an opera like *La voix humaine*—one character, one act in the same setting, and the entire opera is a phone conversation.

Betany Coffland gave one of the most sensational performances I have ever witnessed. I was on the edge of my seat, captivated by her singing and raw emotion—as though what I was watching happen on stage was real. Coffland effortlessly captured the character in Poulenc's work, making her character come to life. One of my favorite elements of the opera was the choice for a red telephone cord for the primary prop. I followed the cord as Coffland's character moved all throughout her apartment. In an unforgettable moment of dialogue, the young woman wraps the cord around her neck telling her estranged lover that she has his words around her neck. A well written opera combined with a flawless execution made for an absolutely unforgettable performance.



Following intermission, the audience took its seats again for the Italian opera *Pagliacci*. A timeless classic, *Pagliacci* is the story of a clown who must make others laugh, while masking his own grief regarding his wife's infidelity. The opera begins with a prologue; Tonio, one of the characters in the opera, reminds the audience that actors have feelings too and that the opera is about real humans. With a wide array of emotions in the opera, the show shifts from comedy to romance to drama. Ending in tragedy, the opera tells the story of what can happen when passion and jealousy take over. A superb performance, I was happy to finally see *Pagliacci* after waiting all this time.



*Pagliacci* and *La voix humaine* run from now until November 27<sup>th</sup> at the California Theatre, 345 South First Street in downtown San Jose. Tickets are on sale at the Opera San Jose box office, by phone at [\(408\) 437-4450](tel:4084374450), or online at [www.operasj.org](http://www.operasj.org).

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