

SUBSCRIBE TODAY

San Jose Mercury News

Subscriber Services

The Mercury News
MercuryNews.com



Current: 83°

89° / 62°

Complete Forecast

Shopping for fashion?



NETFLIX Only \$5.99 a month

No Late Fees
60,000+ Titles
Free Shipping

[Click here](#)

Search Recent News Archives Web for

Welcome Niel
[My Classifieds](#) | [My Account](#) | [Sign Out](#)

Wednesday, Jul 19, 2006

- [Jobs](#)
- [Cars](#)
- [Real Estate](#)
- [Apartments](#)
- [Local Shopping](#)
- [All Classifieds](#)
 - Create an Ad
 - Find an Ad
 - Pets
- [Dating](#)

[Back to Home](#) > [News](#) >

Breaking News XML

Posted on Mon, Jul. 17, 2006 [email this](#) [print this](#) [reprint or license this](#)

Theater review: 'Love, Janis' beautifully captures singer and her times

By Pat Craig
CONTRA COSTA TIMES

Cathy Richardson isn't Janis Joplin, but she comes hauntingly close to capturing the personality and spirit of the tortured Texas blues singer in "Love, Janis."

The show opened Sunday at San Francisco's Marines Memorial Theatre, arriving in the city where Joplin found fame in the mid-1960s after playing around the country for several years.

At this homecoming of sorts, the character of Joplin was greeted as an old friend by an audience containing a good representation of survivors of the Summer of Love, when Joplin and Big Brother and the Holding Company exploded onto the local scene, and give Aquarians an earth-shaking version of the blues, as it should be done.

Writer Randal Myler based much of the musical story on the book "Love, Janis," which itself was based on the singer's letters home, along with print and electronic interviews with Joplin. Myler and musical director Sam Andrew, an original Big Brother member who performed with the singer for much of her tragically brief career, got it right.

The show features recollections of Joplin interspersed with 16 of the singer's most familiar tunes. And while that sounds like the ingredients for just another juke box musical from the rock era, "Love, Janis" towers above the rest.

To begin with, Myler realized the show had to be about both the songs and the music. By partnering with Andrew, he was able to give the show an authentic feel, with a musical sensibility that reflects the period as well as the Joplin's unique on-stage character, which, as it turns out, came to haunt the young woman.

Next, Myler realized it would be nearly impossible to find someone who could be Joplin on stage. The girl from Port Arthur was just too complex, both physically and psychologically, to duplicate. Instead, two women were cast in the Joplin role, Richardson (who plays the singing Joplin on alternate nights with Katrina Chester) performs as the public Janis, and Morgan Hallett plays the non-singing private Janis.

This might, at first, seem a little clunky with two people playing the same role, often on stage at the same time. But as it turns out, the drinking, drugging and partying Joplin is worlds away from the dutiful daughter who writes to her family, loves her new clothes and pet dog and cat, feels guilty about perceived slights to her parents, and feels the



AP Archives

Janis Joplin's letters home inspire a new musical.

More photos

- [History proves musicals can't always be carried by tunes](#)
- [Janis Joplin by the letters](#)

OM KITCHEN & BATH

1030 Duane Avenue Santa Clara, CA 95054
408-845-9305
Call now for more information!

University of Phoenix
ONLINE

BACHELOR'S DEGREES
Bachelor of Science in Business/Accounting
Bachelor of Science in Business/Administration
Bachelor of Science in Business/Marketing
Bachelor of Science in Criminal Justice Admin.
Bachelor of Science in Health Administration
Bachelor of Science in Information Technology
RN to Bachelor of Science in Nursing

MASTER'S DEGREES
Master of Arts in Education
Master of Business Administration
Master of Science in Nursing

[LEARN MORE](#)

MORE NEWS FROM TOPIX.NET

- [Arts](#)
- [Janis Joplin](#)
- [Pop/Rock](#)
- [Theater](#)
- [Big Brother & the Holding Company](#)
- [Discuss Big Brother & the Holding Company](#)

- News**
- [Breaking News](#)
 - [Local News](#)
 - [Crime & Courts](#)
 - [Politics](#)
 - [San Jose/Valley](#)
 - [Central Coast](#)
 - [Peninsula](#)
 - [Alameda County](#)
 - [California](#)
 - [Nation](#)
 - [World](#)
 - [Obituaries](#)
 - [Education](#)
 - [Health / Science](#)
 - [Lottery](#)
 - [Weird News](#)
 - [Photos](#)
- Special Reports**
- [Norcal Scandal](#)
 - [Gas Prices](#)
 - [Immigration Debate](#)

- [Opinion](#)
- [Business](#)
- [Sports](#)
- [Entertainment](#)
- [Life & Style](#)

ONLINE EXTRAS

- [Newspaper Ads Online](#)
- [Blogs](#)
- [Podcasts](#)
- [Photo / Video](#)
- [RSS Feeds](#)
- [Discussion Boards](#)
- [Traffic Reports](#)
- [Weather](#)
- [Past articles](#)
- [Newsletters](#)
- [Coupons](#)
- [Today's Front Page](#)

SITE SERVICES

- [Maps & Directions](#)
- [Yellow Pages](#)
- [Contact Us](#)
- [Feedback](#)
- [Registration Help](#)
- [Advertise](#)
- [Print Services](#)
- [Jobs at MN.com](#)
- [Buy Photos](#)
- [Ethics Policy](#)

ambivalence about the social changes going on in the mid-'60s.

And it is the richness of this character that creates an emotional connection with the audience that goes well beyond the astonishingly well-performed music. The private Janis, expressing almost constant guilt over her relationship with her family, invites them to San Francisco, shyly, but proudly, confessing that she has made something of herself. She answers her mother's complaint about her screaming and shouting so much by explaining she's saving her nice voice in case she plays Las Vegas.

Meanwhile, the public Janis is becoming a superstar, throwing the girl's life wildly out of control and playing into her fondness for the wild life with its unlimited opportunity for booze and drugs.

It was something that couldn't last -- she arrived in San Francisco at age 23 in 1966. She was dead before the end of 1970, of a heroin overdose.

But in that short four years, Joplin became a legend, with a voice that still tears at your soul. Richardson goes a long way to re-create this with some astounding replications of the singer's work. There are times when you can close your eyes and swear you are listening to the real thing. And when you open your eyes and watch Richardson, you'd swear you were watching Joplin.

Richardson has managed to blend the raw sexuality of Joplin, with her intense exuberance for performing. Joplin was genuinely sexy on stage, but what came through just as much, if not more, was the sheer joy she got from performing, from being the center of attention.

Joplin was the girl who was never pretty enough, never popular enough, never pleasing enough, finally towering in the center ring. And it is a joy to watch all this once again, through Richardson's interpretation.

It is a difficult thing to re-create, particularly because both Richardson and Hallett are considerably more physically attractive than Joplin was. But the show's not out to create a carbon copy, but to re-create the feeling of a specific time -- and "Love, Janis" succeeds beautifully there.

Pat Craig is the Times theater critic. Reach him at 925-945-4736 or pcraig@cctimes.com.

THEATER REVIEW

- WHAT: "Love, Janis," by Randal Myler
- WHERE: Marines Memorial Theatre, 609 Sutter St., SF
- WHEN: Tuesdays through Sundays, through Sept. 3
- RUNNING TIME: 2 hours
- HOW MUCH: \$35-\$67
- CONTACT: 415-771-6900, www.ticketmaster.com



Ads by Google

[Janis Joplin Ringtones](#)
Download Free Janis Joplin Tones. Every Song is Here. Get Them Now!
FreeRingtoneOffer.com/JanisJoplin

[Janis Joplin t-shirts](#)
Jam Band Merchandise and tie dyes for adults kids and babies
eDeadShop.com

[Janis Joplin Ringtones](#)
Available Now And For Free. Send It To Your Cell Phone Now!
www.free-ringtones-now.net



[About The Mercury News](#) | [Mercury News Jobs](#) | [About the Real Cities Network](#) | [Terms of Use & Privacy Statement](#) | [Copyright](#) | [RSS Feeds](#)

