

## NEAPOLITAN

+ LIFESTYLE &amp; CLASSIFIED

# 'THE VOICE'

## GET TO KNOW LANA LOVE OF NAPLES

**Charles Runnells**

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Some people sing. Others *perform*.

Lana Love definitely falls into that second category, says her former Naples theater teacher and director. And that could separate Love from the rest of her competition on this season of "The Voice."

Love's skill was apparent during her Oct. 3 blind audition, says Mark Danni of Naples theater company TheatreZone. She sang Mandy Moore's "Candy" and immediately set herself apart from the show's other singers.

"They all had great voices," Danni says, "But she *sold* the song. ... She's an actor and knows how to perform, you know?"

Audiences will get to see Lana perform yet again when she returns for the TV show's battle rounds, which are scheduled to continue through Oct. 31.

Here are 5 things you need to know about the former Naples resident:

### **You might have seen her onstage in Naples – or maybe a Disney cruise**

Love, 30, was born in Atlanta but moved to Naples when she was 12. She graduated from Gulf Coast High in 2010.

Those Naples years were formative ones, she says. The singer/actor attended The Community School of Naples — where Danni was her theater teacher and directed her in school shows — and she performed onstage with TheatreZone, The Naples Players, Opera Naples and more.

"I cut my teeth in Naples, for sure," Love says.

In fact, she credits Danni with kick-starting her theater career. She performed in TheaterZone's "Tommy" and later starred in "Sweet Smell of Success"



Former Naples resident Lana Love performs Oct. 3 during the Blind Auditions on "The Voice." GREG GAYNE/NBC

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# Love

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— when Danni personally gave Love her Actors' Equity union card.

“Mark Danni gave me my start,” she says. “I just loved working with Mark.”

Other local performances included Opera Naples' “Tosca” and The Naples Players' “Thoroughly Modern Millie” (she played Millie).

From there, Love has acted in Off Broadway and Off-Off Broadway musicals, and she played Ariel for a year in a Disney Cruise Line production of “The Little Mermaid.”

“My Naples journey was very fruitful,” Love says.

## She adores her ‘The Voice’ coach, John Legend

Love's team-up with “The Voice” coach John Legend has been years in the making — ever since she met him while catering an event at New York's Apollo Theater.

“I looked on the stage and I was like, ‘I'm gonna work with him one day,’” she told Legend on “The Voice” after he chose her for Team Legend. “So we're here!”

But her love of Legend and his music goes back further than that, she says.

“I've always felt connected to John in some way,” Love says. “We actually have the same birthday, which is funny.”

Love says Legend is one of her all-time favorite musical artists.

“His song ‘Ordinary People’ is the only song I can play with my eyes closed and full-length acrylic nails on the piano,” she says and laughs. “I've been listening to his music since I was a kid.

“I just think his lyrics are timeless, and I think he's a timeless artist.”

## She'd given up on ‘The Voice’ — and the stage, too

Love had auditioned for “The Voice” before and made it through a couple of preliminary audition rounds. But she was done trying to make her mark on reality TV.

Then a show producer messaged her and asked her to be on the show. She didn't even need to go through the normal pre-show audition process.

Until then, Love had been thinking about giving up performing altogether. She'd acted in musical theater and

made a go as a singer-songwriter (including a self-titled 2021 alt-pop EP), but she wanted to try something new.

That included co-directing the 2021 Netflix documentary “Making Malinche: A Documentary by Nacho Cano.”

“I was at a point in my career where I wanted to switch lanes and just go into production and direct,” she says. “And God did not have that planned for me (laughs).

“So I wound up auditioning for the show and it totally changed my life. And here I am.”

## She has what it takes to win ‘The Voice’

That's according to her former teacher, director and mentor, Danni.

He says he's not at all surprised that Love landed on “The Voice.” And she's got a great shot at making it to the show's finals, too.

“This is a very — not only talented, but very driven girl,” Danni says. “And you know, in this business, that's half of it.

“Talent's half of it, and the other half is the drive and the motivation to go out there and make things happen for you. And she's always been like that since I knew her in high school.”

Then there's her theater skills, which give her an edge on the show, he says. Love knows how to sell a song and put its emotion and lyrical meaning across to an audience.

Plus Love has a powerful voice — something that raised the judges' eyebrows during her blind audition.

“She's incredibly versatile,” Danni says. “I mean she can sing high and low and belt. We all saw what she could do on her blind audition.”

## Love felt super-nervous during her blind audition

You'd never know it, though. She nailed her song and then laughed and bantered easily with the judges afterward.

Even Love admits she couldn't tell when she watched her performance on live TV.

“I was SO nervous,” she says. “It's funny, because watching it back it didn't look like that to me. ... I remember feeling nervous, but ready.”

That nervousness turned to joy when Legend turned his chair in just 31 seconds. That meant she'd be moving on to the show's battle rounds.



Love has acted in Off Broadway and Off-Off Broadway musicals, and she played Ariel in a Disney Cruise Line production of “The Little Mermaid.” GREG GAYNE/NBC

It was a huge moment for Love. “When John turned — oh my gosh — I just had the biggest grin on my face,” she says. “My whole body had chills running down it.

“And I just knew, ‘Oh my God, I did it.’” Learn more about Lana Love at lanalove.co, facebook.com/lanalovemusic and instagram.com/lanalovemusic.

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