

Entertainment :: Theatre

Loveland

by Marvin Candle

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Ann Randolph in Loveland (Source:The Marsh)

Ann Randolph is pretty amazing. What she brings in her performance (and writing) of **Loveland** is something most theaters strive for in every show they produce. At a tight 70 minutes, no time is wasted; the show is quick, hilarious, absurd, and beautiful. A veteran performer, she has an astonishing wit and an amazing sense of grounded humanity in all of her characters.

Like other one person shows, Randolph gives astonishing transformations into her cast throughout the show. Set on an airplane ride across the country to her hometown, Loveland, Ohio, the audience experiences a very confident (albeit strange) woman's journey home. The woman, Frannie Potts, is so incredibly strong and confident that it's hard to see anything break through her facade of force, and when inevitably she becomes frayed, her sensitivity is even more appealing than the well timed comedy that preceded it.

There is nothing new in the story of Loveland; death in one's family is universal. But as in many cases, the story isn't as important as the telling. Shaped very well by director Matt Roth, there is never any time wasted as sitting in an airplane quickly teleports us, in Frannie's mind, to nursing homes, the top of San Gorgonio Mountain (the tallest mountain in Southern California),

and to other, more compromising places (cockpit fantasy for the win!). We meet a woman who is strong because she's always had to be, where it be a lack of money or a lack of understanding from the population around her.

At times, Frannie's hard to like. She's the strange woman on the airplane that seems to enjoy flying. Her art is something hard to understand. And she's brutally honest. That's the kicker, though; her honesty fueled by her loss is how she wins everyone over, including a surprisingly touching and unexpected friendship with a businessman one seat over. Frannie forces people to like her, and it works.

With some great voice acting by Wayne Wilderson supplementing the experience as the Captain turned friend (and maybe lover?), Randolph's unashamed human performance as this group of people is truly a delight. Just please don't forget to bring a hankey.

Loveland runs through December 12, 2009 at the Marsh Studio Theater Upstairs, 1062 Valencia Street, San Francisco, CA. For more information visit www.themarsh.org