

A crazy lady with a big heart

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A wild and wacky performance artist doing facial expressions to sound effects — a car alarm in particular — is worth the price of admission to Ann Randolph's "Loveland."

But the one-woman show, which has been extended into the new year at The Marsh, offers much more than a few hearty laughs. It's that rare entertainment that manages to be hysterically funny, tenderly heart-rending and loudly original at the same time.



Ann Randolph makes faces to a car alarm in her one-woman show "Loveland" at the Marsh. (Courtesy photo)

Randolph's alter-ego is Frannie Potts, a woman whose airplane flight to her childhood home in Ohio provides the setting and structure for her tale of her life, and particularly of her relationship with her Chablis-loving, cigarette-smoking mother.

It's easy to understand why Randolph has won awards for her solo performances and been compared to Gilda Radner, with whom she shares a quirky charm. Yet her delightful Frannie is more outrageous, arresting and deep than anything seen on "Saturday Night Live."

Among the treats on Frannie's journey are her comments about the people on the plane: There's the grumpy businessman who wants her to lower the shade and make her miss the view of snow-covered Mount San Jacinto, and, even better, the sexy captain, whose announcements arouse R-rated fantasies which she acts out with hilarious outrageousness.

Yet Randolph doesn't just play no-holds-barred Frannie, with her unendingly brash views on society.

She's also her gruff-voiced, equally attention-getting, wheelchair-riding mother, as well as various people who come up in her reminiscences during the flight — the people she meets as she deals with mom's aging and impending death.

Randolph's characterizations are brilliant. In an instant, she'll move from the sappy-voiced social worker or staffer at Crane Lake Country Manor (the absurdly named nursing home where mom ends up living), back to the unabashedly, delightfully indiscreet Frannie.