

A close-up photograph of a woman with dark hair, looking extremely shocked or surprised. Her eyes are wide open, and her mouth is agape in a scream or gasp. She is holding a white mobile phone to her ear with her right hand. The background is dark and out of focus.

# 96Hours

SAN FRANCISCO CHRONICLE | 10.08.09-10.11.09 | 4-DAY WEEKEND ENTERTAINMENT GUIDE

PERFORM

## TRAGIC COMEDY

'Loveland' gets laughs  
out of character dealing  
with death. Page 15

# Perform

Thursday, October 8, 2009



Leland Auslander

**Ann Randolph, writer and star of the solo show "Loveland," says she often tries out her characters on unsuspecting people on the street to come up with lines, improvise and get feedback from passers-by.**

## ‘Loveland’: Writer creates a funny character to deal with the death of her mother — who is still very much alive

Ann Randolph writes about pretty heavy stuff.

Her hit show "Squeeze Box," which she performed off-Broadway, was about looking for love and working in a women's homeless shelter. She wrote that hit show while she worked the graveyard shift at a homeless shelter for mentally ill women.

Her latest solo show, "Loveland," deals with her mother's death. But, Randolph says, while her subject matter can be dark, her performance isn't.

"I see things funny," she says.

Randolph's definition of "funny" is Franny Potts, a sort-of version of Randolph who is dealing with the death of her mother. (Randolph's parents are alive, but Randolph says she often worries that when she goes home to visit that it might be the last time she sees them.)

Potts, Randolph says, is always going 100 miles an hour, a high-octane character who says all of the stuff you'd want to say when you're grieving - but you're polite enough not to.

"I play with the pain of loss, and then I just exaggerate," she says. "I really exaggerate everything that I think is

**8 p.m. Thurs. 5 p.m. Sat.  
No shows Oct. 22 and 24.  
Through Nov. 14. \$15-\$50.  
The Marsh Studio  
Theater, 1074 Valencia St.,  
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incredibly revealing and honest, even though I'm playing a character. It's just my truth."

The challenge of playing Franny Potts as well as the other characters in "Loveland" has made the show Randolph's most difficult to date, she says, both physically and performancewise. Randolph spent much of the summer getting ready to perform the show.

But that was after she tested Franny, still in development, on the unsuspecting folks in the Mission District.

When Randolph came to San Francisco last year to perform "Squeeze Box" at the Marsh, she would often venture into the Mission in character, a method she uses to come up with lines, improvise and get feedback from passers-by.

"That's just part of the way I work, is taking it to the street," Randolph says. "I think a lot of it is just me improvising and writing on what's going on in my life, and then I fictionalize it and put it in a really outrageous but also deeply moving type of text."

That's the line Randolph, and by extension Franny, walk in "Loveland." Franny is funny, yes, and she's extreme and inappropriate. But she's also reflecting some of Randolph's deep-seated fears about loss. She balances her fears with her sense of humor.

But, on the last point at least, she's getting a little help from Mom.

"I think, oh my God, I'm writing and my mom's not dead yet," she says. "I call my mom, and she's like, 'You're writing about me and I'm not dead.' And then she'll give me lines for the character, saying 'I would say this.' So she's giving me lines that she would say from the grave."

- Andrea Abney,  
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**F - 15** of the  
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