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Annie Abbott's 'Giving Up Is Hard To Do' at the Victory Theatre Center

Give up? Not this performance.

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Veteran actress Annie Abbott performs a one-woman show, "Giving Up Is Hard To Do" at the Victory Theater in Burbank (Cheryl A. Guerrero/Burbank Leader/Feb, 15, 2013)

Getting back into the dating scene "when you're 100 years old — or might as well be," isn't for shrinking violets. Neither is breast cancer, losing your beloved husband unexpectedly, watching two brothers deal with mental illness, and hoping the bikini top that you're expected to wear for a commercial audition will cover your mastectomy prosthesis.

Veteran stage and screen actor Annie Abbott shares her years of hard knocks and success, love, loss and new love with high-octane spirit and a great deal of humor in her new one-woman show, "Giving Up Is Hard to Do," at the Victory Theatre Center in Burbank. And if Abbott's revelations

aren't exactly earth-shattering, the life they represent is one that has been lived fully and is moving full steam ahead into the future.

On production designer Francois-Pierre Couture's unfussy set — a table with laptop, well-stocked bookcase, brick walls, potted plants, folding chairs — Abbott, directed by Joel Zwick (the long-time Hershey Felder collaborator whose film credits include "My Big Fat Greek Wedding"), moves with enviable energy, traveling back and forth in time and introducing multiple characters from past and present. These include her late husband, children and grandchildren, her strong-minded Russian Jewish grandma (the family matriarch), and assorted others, from prima donna plastic surgeons to a beautiful stranger on the plane who unexpectedly imparts a much-needed message of affirmation.

Abbott opens the show in the guise of a group facilitator who decides it's time she unburden herself of her own baggage from years past, beginning with the frustration and eye-opening challenges of online dating that she experienced some years after her husband's death. The Internet "is the new Wild West," she discovers, and Abbott's often hilarious and salty encounters with dating prospects include doddering elderly hopefuls with more use for a live-in nurse than a romantic partner, and one smug respondent with inordinate pride in his below-the-waist endowment.

Beneath the humor, Abbott's desire for companionship is shadowed by her painful and confidence-crushing dilemma: Just when do you mention the fact that you have only one breast?

Before her show ends on a forward-looking note of life's adventures yet to come, Abbott will cover her happy marriage and numbing widowhood, the birth-to-adult trajectory of her two children and her start in show biz: an engaging anecdote about being tapped as a last-minute replacement in the chorus of a touring production of "Stop the World I Want to Get Off."

Abbott's experiences will resonate with many women of a certain age, as will her decision to "open my eyes wide" to life and not allow herself to be sidelined — or defined — by the past.