

Q&A: Vancouver singer Luisa Marshall is simply the best

BY FRANCOIS MARCHAND, VANCOUVER SUN NOVEMBER 26, 2015



Luisa Marshall (as Tina Turner) poses with singer Selena Gomez after a taping of Ellen in October 2015.

Photograph by: Picasa, Handout

Hail The Queen: A Tribute to Tina Turner

Nov. 26, 8 p.m. | Edgewater Casino Stadium Club

Tickets: \$39.95 plus charges at brownpapertickets.com

Wait, is that Tina Turner catching a plane? Did she just run into that washroom over there?

You can forgive many for having followed Vancouver singer Luisa Marshall as she hopscotches around the globe, thinking she was Turner herself.

Heck, even pop star Selena Gomez fell for it after a taping of Ellen in October where Marshall was introduced as the singer. The crowd fell for it too, jumping to its feet to give Marshall a loud standing ovation. Marshall had been invited to stand in for Tina as a member of Ellen's "squad" in a skit poking

fun at Taylor Swift's entourage. (Ironically, Marshall rubbed shoulders with Swift when she attended the Golden Globes in 2014.)

Marshall, who was never identified by her own name on Ellen, joined a crew that included Gomez, Nick Carter, Bob Harper (of television show *The Biggest Loser*), members of the original cast of *Full House* and comedian Carrot Top.

A local singer and TV host on Shaw community television — *Simply The Best*, where she hosts musicians, artists, cooks and other inspirational figures — Marshall has been impersonating the famous singer for more than two decades. She is performing at the Edgewater Casino on Nov. 26 in a show entitled *Hail The Queen*, a tribute to Tina Turner being held on the singer's 76th birthday.

I caught up with Marshall to talk about the Ellen experience and the art of being Tina Turner.

Q: You've been doing Tina for how many years now?

A: This started as a joke when (my band and I) were in Dubai in 1995. I've been singing for a long time. It's always been my bread and butter as a Filipino Canadian. That was my way of supporting the whole family after college. Luckily, I'm here in Canada and I was given the opportunity to go mainstream.

I forgot all about it until our agent asked, 'Are you going to do Tina?' And I said, 'No, I only have one song or two songs.' And then it turned into a musical and we added the dancers and it turned into a real Tina Turner concert and we toured all over Canada and the U.S. It's crazy how destiny happens.

Q: You've won awards for your Tina Turner impersonation?

A: I won the grand prize at the World Rock 'N' Roll Tribute Artist Championship in 2003 (in Toronto). A few tribute artists from all over the world were there. They invited me to join it. I didn't even know anything about it. Word of mouth. That all happened so fast. Then I was invited to go to Europe for a Canadian military show, and then the Middle East. I was on Oprah twice. The first one was in 2003 and then in 2007, when Tina Turner was the guest of Oprah and Cher too. There were 4,000 people watching me perform in front of Tina Turner in Las Vegas (for Oprah's "biggest show ever" held at Caesars Palace).

Q: What did Tina think of your performance?

A: She just gave me the thumbs up. That's the best she could do. I was feeling numb just to be invited to that and to be able to sing. The first time they invited me (on Oprah) they asked me not to wear the wig. I came as myself and still people — the mother of the producer of Oprah — thought I was Tina Turner. She followed me into the ladies' washroom and she thought I was Tina Turner. I was like, "Huh? Am I really exuding the Tina Turner essence?" People have been following me at the airport, especially in Tel Aviv. It's the same thing in New York. It's crazy.

Q: Maybe you're just a natural look-alike?

A: I think so. People picked me to be Tina Turner. I didn't pick it. In Dubai, it was the Brits who asked

me to put a wig on.

Q: Where did you get the wig?

A: That's a very expensive wig. It was made for me by a great company in Vancouver, Eva & Co Wigs. All the other tribute artists in the U.S. and Europe want that wig.

Q: What about Ellen? How did you end up being Tina there?

A: They called me! I thought it was a prank, honestly. We only had an hour to get ready. They already knew about me and picked me. There are other Tina Turners in the U.S. that are probably cursing at me. It's really quite something for my career.

I thought they were going to introduce me as Luisa Marshall from Vancouver, Canada. I panicked when she said, "Tina Turner!" That wasn't in the script at all. Some people who knew me actually thought it was the real Tina Turner. And these people are my friends. But I wasn't allowed to say anything until it aired (on Oct. 9).

Q: From what I understand, other people were trying to get their picture taken with Selena Gomez and she was saying, "No, I want to get my picture taken with Tina?" Did you tell her you weren't Tina Turner?

A: No! We didn't even have the chance to do that. Carrot Top was saying, "You look fabulous!" We had to be whisked out of there really fast because there was another taping. Selena said, "No, no, no. Don't go yet. I've got to take a selfie with you. My mother would love to see this." And I was like, "Oh no!" She even sent her makeup artist to my dressing room to tell me I am her hero. My heart was melting. I didn't know what to do. But I wasn't allowed to talk to anyone. They really pulled a prank on them. Selena probably deleted all my pictures.

fmarchand@vancouver.sun.com

twitter.com/FMarchandVS

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Luisa Marshall (right) with Taylor Swift at the 2014 Golden Globes.

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