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'Hedwig' Tony Winner Lena Hall Takes On Zeppelin, Bowie, Hozier at NYC Concert

By [Suzy Evans](#), New York | April 09, 2015 10:50 AM EDT



Did Café Carlyle know what it was in for when it invited multi-hyphenate Lena Hall -- Broadway songstress-slash-rock band-frontwoman-slash-solo singer -- to perform? Probably not, and you could say the same of those who bought tickets for the New York City revue running through April 18.

Many might have expected ballads or showtunes from the Tony winner and Grammy nominee, largely recognized for her work in musicals like *Kinky Boots* and *Hedwig and the Angry Inch*. However, Hall, who moonlights as the lead singer of rock band The Deafening, is a rocker at heart, and for “Sin and Salvation,” her show at the Cafe Carlyle running through April 18, she aimed to shatter expectations.

“So yeah, I’m doing very appropriate songs for this room,” Hall cracked after performing what she called a “mellow song,” [Led Zeppelin](#)’s “Dazed and Confused.” Said Hall from the stage: “I actually asked the Carlyle, what should I do? And they were like, do whatever you want! We want whatever you want to do. So I’m doing what I want to sing because these songs mean something to me and they inspire me.”

Dressed in a kimono-inspired Zac Posen dress, with her hair swept to the side and adorned with a large white flower, Hall’s lady-like get-up contrasted her song choices, many of them covers of songs usually sung by men.

She opened the set with [Jack White](#)’s “Three Women,” based on “Three Women Blues” by Blind Willie McTell, and after soaking up her welcome applause, made sure to direct

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the crowd to check out White's work. It figures the typical cabaret-seeking audience that frequents the Carlyle might not be familiar.

Next up, she took on [David Bowie](#)'s "It Ain't Easy," from the *Ziggy Stardust* album, which she called "a weird song," and followed it with covers of [Jet](#)'s "Are You Gonna Be My Girl" and the [Talking Heads](#)' "Psycho Killer" -- Hall's vocals expertly tailored to each selection, every note possessing just the right amount of rocker gravel.

"I just worked with [David Byrne](#)," Hall told the room, alluding to a mysterious project. The Talking Heads frontman's musical, *Here Lies Love*, based on former First Lady of the Philippines Imelda Marcos, closed in January at New York's Public Theater.

Hall's gender-bending turn as Yitzhak on *Hedwig*, for which she won a Tony, makes her attraction to the male voice understandable, if not natural, by this point. But Hall also confessed her love for female singers like [Tori Amos](#) and [Erykah Badu](#) before taking on their songs "God" and "Otherside of the Game," respectively. "She's kind of a musical genius," Hall said of Amos. "I feel like this song is a masterpiece."

Hall peppered in current pop hits with a moving rendition of [Hozier](#)'s "Take Me To Church," which Hall recalled seeing at the [Grammy Awards ceremony in February](#)-- she attended as a nominee for *Hedwig*. She also broke out her tambourine skills on [Janelle Monáe](#)'s "Tightrope," with her music director and guitarist Watt White rapping the [Big Boi](#) verses. Said Hall: "I think that might have been the first rap in the Carlyle!"

With accompaniment by John Deley on keyboards, Lee Nadel on bass and her future brother-in-law Brian Fishler on drums, Hall also bared her soul stylings with the [James Brown](#) classic "It's a Man's Man's Man's World," and the "very B-side" "Have Mercy on the Criminal" by [Elton John](#). "I'm a b-side kind of girl," she quipped, taking a swig of her whiskey. "I need a minute to relax because, of course, I put the hardest song in the set at the end. ... Whiskey makes everything better."

Indeed, Hall hasn't really had a moment to relax before kicking off her Carlyle engagement. She just left a yearlong run in *Hedwig*, playing the East German rocker's cross-dressing husband. Hall's four "wives," [Neil Patrick Harris](#), Andrew Rannells, [Michael C. Hall](#) and John Cameron Mitchell all came out for her final performance on Sunday. Three days later, she was primed and ready for the Carlyle.

"I basically jumped from one show into the next," Hall said before concluding her set with [Paul McCartney](#)'s "Maybe I'm Amazed," which she dedicated to her dad. "I was a little scared, just going to be honest," Hall reflected. "But now I'm not scared anymore."