



PHOTO BY LAURA DOMELA

The Vibrations in Your Bones

HOW ROCK STAR **STORM LARGE** HOOKED UP WITH PINK MARTINI

BY SUZI STEFFEN

Storm Large may be a star, but she's a Portland kind of star. She's a rock/punk star singer with her band the Balls and a raunchy cabaret-style singer at regular clubs in P-town. Large became the darling of the theatrical world when she played Sally Bowles in Portland Center Stage's 2007 *Cabaret* — a role *Willamette Week's* Byron Beck called "the biggest gamble of her career."

That gamble paid off in spades, both for PCS and for Large. Two years later, she starred in her own one-woman show, *Crazy Enough*, which ran to ecstatic, bawling, sold-out crowds at PCS. *Crazy Enough* covered pretty much everything about sex, drugs, rock 'n' roll, abuse, neglect, love, loss, and longing, all from Large's persona, that the *Portland Mercury's* Alison Hallett called a "gorgeous, 6-foot tall, kinda-scary-but-weirdly-inspirational glamazon." She's tattooed; she doesn't take any shit; and she's, you know, *Storm Large!*

So Large was more than a little surprised when Thomas Lauderdale, leader of Portland's iconically sophisticated and suave Pink Martini, called her up to help out the group in mid-2011 after the band's China Forbes developed serious vocal cord problems.

More than a year after Large stepped in, and after she published a memoir (also called *Crazy Enough*) and toured with her own band as well as Pink Martini, she alternates with Forbes — and will perform with Pink Martini July 1 in the Oregon Bach Festival's first big show at the Cuthbert Amphitheatre.

Tickets, not surprisingly, are selling fast.

Large took some time out from biking by the Willamette River in Portland on one of June's first sunny days to talk about everything from Pink Martini to what's next on her long, long list of goals for her life.

Let's talk about how you got hooked up with Pink Martini.

China got sick right when they had four sold-out shows at the Kennedy Center in D.C., and the doctor said, you have to be on extreme vocal rest.

Thomas [Lauderdale] begged me. I said absolutely not! I don't know any of your music, I'm a rock 'n' roll singer; I'll embarrass you guys. He said, "No you won't; you'll be amazing, and we need you."

Then China wrote to me and said, "You'll be doing me a huge favor."

So I learned 10 songs in five languages in four days. Not by heart! I said, "I'll do it as long as I'm allowed to have a music stand and read the lyrics, and you tell the audience that I don't know what I'm doing." Thomas said, "I won't do that, but I'll explain that you have courageously stepped in at the last minute to fill in."

It went really well, and then it turned out that China needed surgery. So I did all of the touring with Pink Martini last year, which was insane, because I also have my own band. I managed somehow to be OK.

We had so much fun, and the audiences really embraced me, even though I'm very different from China. Then because of China's health scare and because she has a little boy, she said, I kind of like that I don't have to tour half the year and be away from my son that long. So we've started splitting the singing duties.

We crowd-sourced some questions, and Trisha Pan-cio Mead of the Oregon Ballet Theatre asks, "What's