

## HUFFPOST GAY VOICES



If there's one lesson Lorna Luft learned early, it's that the show must always go on. The singer-actress and her sister Liza Minnelli share more in common than just stage and screen talents which have endeared them to generations of fans; their well-established survival skills rival only that of their famous mother, Judy Garland.

Still, it's hard not to take pause when Luft, 60, says that she maintained that steadfast, neo-vaudevillian mindset even after learning she had **breast cancer** in January. In fact, she still views the entire experience as only a show business veteran can.

"I knew that it meant I was going to go to intermission," she recalls. "I never said Act I or Act II -- I was at an intermission." That doesn't mean she took her initial diagnosis entirely in stride, however: "It was like being punched in the face by Muhammad Ali, George Foreman and Mike Tyson all at once. I know everything about the theater and I know everything about singing and all of that...but all of a sudden, *cancer*?"

Fortunately, Luft had supportive family members and friends around during treatment and the subsequent recovery period -- several of which, in fact, she's opted to bring together next month for "**Lorna's Pink Party**," a pair of celebratory concerts to commemorate **National Breast Cancer Awareness Month** at New York's **Birdland**.

"I thought to myself, 'How do I pay this [experience] forward? How do I make a difference?' Every single person I asked had a relationship, of some sort, with breast cancer," Luft, who had five weeks of radiation remaining when she spoke to The Huffington Post in early September, says. "It isn't even six degrees of separation with this disease; it's one degree."

The intimate event will offer fans an opportunity to witness another milestone: the first onstage reunion of Luft and Minnelli in 20 years. Also set to take the stage during the Oct. 14 and 21 performances -- which benefit the Actors Fund's **Phyllis Newman Women's Health Initiative** and the Dr. Philomena McAndrew Fund of Tower Cancer Research Foundation -- are Broadway performers Ann Hampton Callaway, Liz Callaway, Brian Stokes Mitchell, Nick Adams, Phyllis Newman and Marcia Strassman, though the Luft-Minnelli sister act will undoubtedly be one of the evening's highlights.