

## ARTS *in the City*

# Blindsided by life's twists and turns



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**D**idn't see that coming may be the name of Beverley Elliott's one-woman stage production running Nov. 12-21 at Richmond's Gateway Theatre. But it could very well describe the scene about five years ago when she became a cast member of *Once Upon a Time*, ABC's shot-in-Steveston, fairytale-based TV series.

Elliott, a veteran of 30 years in the performing business, plays Granny on the hit show that has fans spanning the globe.

The reach of the series wasn't immediately apparent for Elliott who has a recurring role in the story arc that splices classic, storybook characters into the action.

She said it's not uncommon for fan attention to come from just about anywhere the show draws an audience.

"It's astounding," Elliott said in a telephone interview with the *News*. "For me, I haven't been in a show that's had this much of an international success."

"I've worked 30 years in the (entertainment) business, doing more than 100 film and TV roles. But this is worldwide. It's kinda mind-blowing."

It's a welcome situation for the veteran performer, originally from rural Ontario, who enjoys the opportunity to go from being in front of the TV cameras and then performing on stage where she has taken her real life experiences and brought them to life in *Didn't See That Coming*.

"There's people from France, Germany, Austria, and Kuwait. They just travel so they can get a glimpse and a piece of Storybrooke (the name Steveston takes on in *Once Upon a Time*)," Elliott said.

When Elliott tweeted it was her birthday, she said that within 30 seconds she got responses.

"I literally heard from people around the world. It was, 'Happy birthday from Spain, congratulations from Paraguay.'

"I didn't see any of that coming."

It's the kind of life-changing event she presents on stage during *Didn't See That Coming* — a collection of nine, true-to-life stories she has gathered and scripted over the years.

"The intention is that they strike a universal chord," Elliott said. "So, even though it's through my lens and how I see the world, the stories are each pretty much about bumping into a stranger and then having my life change as a result."

And that creates those unexpected moments that tend to blindsides someone, she added.

"You think you're out for an ordinary day — going to a wedding, funeral or hot yoga class — and your heart gets knocked open."

And that usually draws both tears and laughter from the audience.

"I hate to have the audacity to say that if you come see the show you're gonna cry, but people usually shed a few tears," she said, adding it also stocks plenty of reflection in a self-deprecating manner.

"That's when people laugh because they recognize themselves," she said.

Elliott first started assembling her stories for the show several years ago during a playwright's workshop where participants had to read their work to the group.

The response was so positive that it encouraged her to continue compiling material and finally present it at the Fringe Festival in 2014.

"I have a whole bunch more stories, but these in the show all fall under the umbrella of having an unexpected epiphany," she said, adding that kind of experience almost seems

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— BEVERLEY ELLIOTT



■ Beverley Elliott presents a series of stories with personal epiphanies in *Didn't See That Coming* (above). TV fans of *Once Upon a Time* will recognize her as Granny in the Steveston-shot series (left). Photos submitted

like a regular occurrence for her when she's on set with *Once Upon a Time*.

"There's such a large and very talented cast that carries the show that when they tell me I'm in the next episode it's like, phew, I made it," she said. "It's a real privilege to be there. And it provides me with a real nice blend."

"I may not have a lot of dialogue on TV. But then I have a stage show where I am up there

for 75 minutes singing, telling stories and holding that energy for the entire performance — that's a whole different type of gratification for me because I am the only person there, with one black chair and a piano player."

*Didn't See That Coming* runs at Gateway Theatre Nov. 12-21. For show information and tickets, visit online at gatewaytheatre.com.

## Lansdowne Centre a perfect setting for Diamond



■ Children's entertainer Charlotte Diamond and her son Matt will be on stage at Lansdowne Centre Nov. 21 for her Holiday Delight Family Concert. Photo submitted

## Veteran children's entertainer marks three decades of performing

**O**ne of Richmond's annual delights, and a sure sign of the holiday season returns to Lansdowne Centre Nov. 21.

That's when veteran children's entertainer Charlotte Diamond presents her Holiday Delight Family Concert.

The music kicks off at 1 p.m. in the mall's Kiosk Court where Diamond, along with son Matt, will celebrate her three decades of entertaining youngsters and their families.

The event also marks the arrival of Santa at the mall for the holidays.

It was 1985 when Diamond debuted her Juno Award-winning album *10 Carrot Diamond*.

At the Lansdowne performance she will play a whole list of favourites including *Four Hugs a Day*, *Each of Us Is a Flower*, *The Hug Bug*, *I am a Pizza* (*Je suis une pizza*).

And she will also play songs from her recently released, 14th recording *Diamonds by the Sea* that she co-produced with Matt.

The CD introduces 19 new songs, such as, *Ottie the Ot-*

*ter*, *I Have Shoes and I Can Walk*, *Put the Beat in Your Feet*, and *The Moose on the Loose*, all of which will be premiered at the concert.

Diamond has also been busy with the recent release of her first, children's board book, *Slippery Fish in Hawai'i* based on her well-loved song, *Octopus (Slippery Fish)*.

She will be available to autograph her book and CDs — which are available in Steveston Village at Splash Toys and Beatmerchant Record — following the Lansdowne Centre concert.