

## HOW DINA NINA MARTINEZ WENT FROM HOME CHURCH TO HOLLYWOOD

The short answer?  
She rules the world.

BY MEGAN ROESSLER

**DINA NINA MARTINEZ** speaks thoughtfully, with the slightest Texas twang. “The seasons change here,” she says, “I love the fall, I love going up to Baraboo for lunch and getting a pumpkin from a farm, not the back of a truck in someone’s parking lot.” It’s a comment typical of Martinez’s sense of humor. Smart. Authentic. Insightful. Spirited. A comedian and entrepreneur, Martinez works to build connections and community through humor, and teaches others how to refine their comedic skills.

To really get Martinez, you need to understand the winding road she took to comedy—one that led her from Dallas to Los Angeles, and finally to Madison. “People always told me I was funny,” she says, recalling what she considers her first stand-up performance—it was done in front of some friends and family at a home church when she was in middle school. That was the kind of place she grew up, she explains. The first time Martinez did actual stand-up was later, after she had moved to Los Angeles. At the insistence of a friend, she agreed to perform. “I did a three minute set,” she says, adding, “it was supposed to be five minutes.” Bombed jokes and unfilled time aside, something had clicked: “That was what I loved doing.”

# MAY 10

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at Martinez’s keynote presentation,  
“The Power of Funny Women!” at the  
**BRAVA THRIVE Conference**  
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PHOTOGRAPHED BY HILLARY SCHAVE

## CONNECT | PERSPECTIVE

After moving to Madison, she worked at Monty's Blue Plate Diner, and things continued to fall into place. "My life here is full of funny, smart, entrepreneurial women," she gushes. And she means it. For Martinez, the Isthmus has truly become home—few people speak as lovingly about Madison as she does. Madison is also where she really hit her stride professionally, as a comedian and businesswoman. "Humor is smart," she says, "it's attractive." It's also a skill that she wants more people to hone. While "situational funny" is an instinct, stand-up, Martinez assures me, is a skill that can be taught and practiced.

Christine Ameigh, Martinez's bestie and an entrepreneur herself, describes Martinez as hilarious, kind, a good friend and a great dog mom. "Her humor is contagious and can put you in a better mood." Ameigh adds that Martinez works hard for equity and understanding in both her life and her business. When asked what motivates her, Martinez doesn't hesitate. "First of all, I love the attention." She smiles and laughs, "More broadly, building awareness and community."

This comes as no surprise—presence, awareness and community are values at the heart of her company, Lady Laughs Comedy. Lady Laughs grew out of the Lady Laughs Comedy Festival. In the straight, white male dominated world of comedy, Lady Laughs is an organization that focuses on creating inclusive spaces and empowering women and people in the queer community. It's something that is completely in her wheelhouse. "I'm a woman first, then a trans woman second, then a funny woman third," she says.

A long way from where she started, Martinez has big things on the horizon. She's booked a movie, which stars Dermot Mulroney, and continues to organize monthly Lady Laughs comedy showcases (held monthly on Thursday nights at The Crucible). She's excited to see where it takes her, and she doesn't know how much longer she'll live in Madison. Happily, she's here to preach the power of comedy for at least a little while longer. 🌸

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