



Donna Rze Atten.

on her complex and enigmatic *Lorelei* role

On the cover

Credits.

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Interview. **Vanesa Miraglia**
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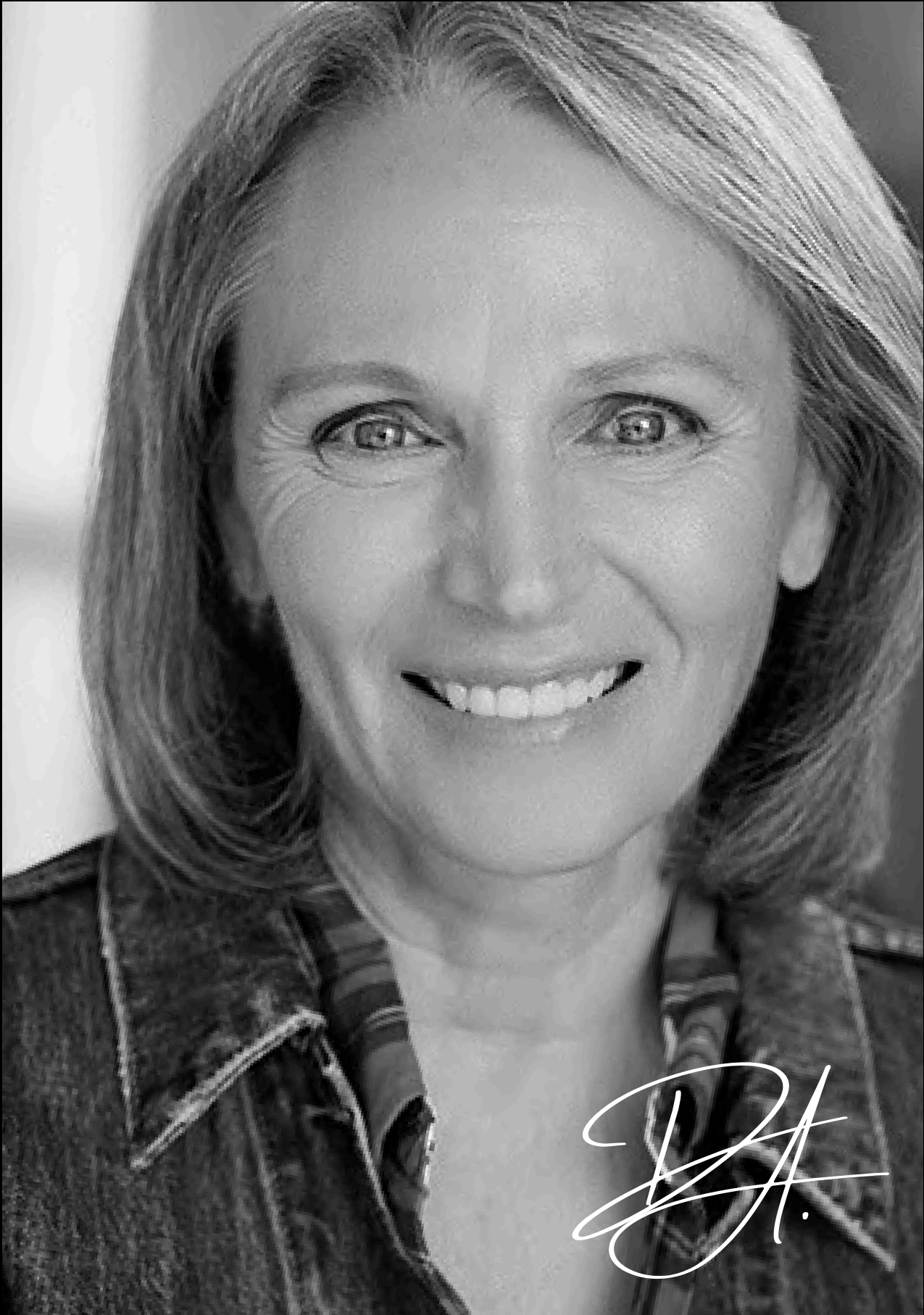
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Donna Rae Allen.

Donna Rae Allen, the actress behind the complex and enigmatic Lorelei in "Children of the Pines," offers a candid look into her character's psyche and the creative process behind her performance. In this revealing interview, she explores the themes of manipulation, identity, and family dynamics that underpin the film. With a keen understanding of her character and a passion for her craft, Donna provides a fascinating insight into the world of Lorelei and the challenges of bringing such a multifaceted character to life.



V: Donna, Lorelei is a character full of sinister motives yet filled with so much joyous passion about her mission. Could you share your internal journey in understanding her psyche? How did you manage to tackle those heavy emotions while adding so much complexity to the character?

D: As an actor, in understanding the psyche of the character Lorelei in "Children of the Pines" I looked toward the characteristics of a zealous personality in the dogged pursuit of her psychological need for complete self-fulfillment. The script called for a woman of power who is in perfect control of herself and her surroundings, with an ego to match. In the world that Lorelei and her husband, Leon, create in this film, the character's need for psychological safety, security, love, prestige, and belonging are being met through the environment they both designed and are in perfect control of. I did not view Lorelei as sinister or manipulative, nor would I believe that she would view herself as such. She is a woman on a mission, who knows what she wants and knows how to get it. I feel that in viewing Lorelei with this understanding it was easy to internally identify with her as a woman on her personal journey toward self-fulfillment...

V: The film delves into themes of manipulation, identity, and family dynamics. How did you personally connect with these themes, and how did they shape your portrayal of Lorelei?

D: From childhood we all learn to manipulate others to meet our personal needs. Babies cry when they need to be fed, mother's nature is to meet the needs of their offspring and families stick together during times of turmoil. It is not so difficult to understand how the cult-like behavior of blind following by lost souls will find a nurturing presence in their leadership.

Lorelei, as one of the figureheads of this cult-like group, offers a nurturing persona which, as a mother, is easy to identify with. Characteristics like a listening ear, a hug at the right moment, and the feeling that someone is taking care of you is enough of an incentive to develop trust with most of us. I leaned heavily into these thoughts when working in this film.

V: The film's haunting atmosphere is almost a character in itself, specifically in the flashback sequences. Can you describe your process of tapping into that energy, and how did it influence your physical and emotional performance? "Children of the Pines" walks a fine line between belief and delusion. As an actress, how did you navigate this ambiguity, and what challenges did it pose in bringing Lorelei to life?

D: I believe Lorelei's zealous personality and ultimate psychological needs drive the physical and emotional arcs as each scene unfolds. As an actor, I have to remember who Lorelei is and what she seeks from each individual character she interacts with. I use the physical and emotional response that is called for within that interaction.

I believe Josh's script "Children of the Pines" drives the surreal atmosphere of the film itself...It's kind of like "Follow the yellow brick road" in the Wizard of Oz. I had to allow myself as the character, Lorelei, to walk into it and walk on, if you will...

V: Joshua Morgan's vision for the film is undeniably unique. How did his directorial style complement your own artistic sensibilities, and in what ways did it push you as an actress?

D: Josh was very clear in his vision for each character that he created. I believe, in his selection of each actor, Josh was looking for the truth of his vision within the underlying essence of the actor chosen for a particular character. In my case, I believe through our interviews, audition, and discussion of the character Lorelei that Josh felt I could portray the essence that was needed for Lorelei. When a director has faith in you...that's magic.

V: Kathy and John are enigmatic figures in the film. What layers of complexity do you believe they add to Lorelei's character arc, and how does their dynamic influence the overall narrative?

D: I found myself empathetic to the character of Kathy. I can identify with a mother trying to mend a relationship with a child. As mothers, we all want our children's love and understanding as much as we hope they know how much we love and understand them. We strive for their wellbeing. Historically women are expected to be more nurturing in nature, therefore it makes sense that John would be more disconnected to his daughter. The father-daughter relationship and the mother's need to unify the family is the catalyst that drives the film in a way that allows Lorelei's character to meet her ultimate goal of self-fulfillment.

V: What do you hope audiences will carry with them after watching "Children of the Pines"? Beyond entertainment, what kind of impact do you aspire for the film to have?

D: I hope when people watch this film they come away with some thoughtful considerations when developing relationships.



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DONNA RAE ALLEN

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V: You've had your fair share of experience on screen over the years such as starring opposite of Lily Collins in *Inheritance* and a role on NBC's *South Beach*. What have been some of your favorite roles to play?

D: I am particularly attracted to nurturing and authoritative roles. I find these types of roles allow me to express myself in a variety of interesting ways. I can be straight up sensitive, caring, and concerned, while also being in charge of a situation in a way that is commanding, decisive, manipulative, vulnerable, guilty, and even larcenous. There is no end to the way in which these types of characters can be portrayed. However, I also love playing a down and out character...so many creative choices.

V: What or who inspired you to begin performing?

D: My fourth-grade teacher, Mrs. Lewis, selected me for the lead in a St. Patrick's Day musical and I still remember standing on stage, under the lights, in the auditorium singing "When Irish Eyes are Smiling" and I was hooked! My mom was so proud and I loved making my mom happy...

V: What projects do you feel most interested in now? Is there a role you haven't had the chance to play before?

D: I would love to play the part of a New Englander, as some type of mentor. It's something I feel that I could really lean into. At this stage in my life, that shoe would fit me well.

V: Acting is often seen as a journey of self-discovery. When did you personally feel a shift from aspiring actress to established artist? How did this transformation shape your approach to your craft?

D: Acting can be a tool we use for self-discovery but it can also be a study in human nature. It's an opportunity to understand the character's you play, who they are, what made them so, what motivates them and why. I per-

sonally like to step outside of myself when in character and enjoy the ride inside another's psyche. I feel that we are all actors on our own journey through life. I guess the shift from actor to artist entails the investigation of the "wants" of the characters I play, deciding what makes them "tick", how that motivates their actions and how that plays out emotionally in a scene.

V: Courage is essential for an actor. How have you cultivated courage in your career, and what role has it played in overcoming challenges and taking risks?

D: I don't know how courageous it is to be an actor. For me it's more about an internal need to express myself in my understanding of how a specific persona developed by the writer comes to life. It's an opportunity to understand human nature from the mind of someone else and interpret that through my character. The risk is taken when the character is internalized and exposed.

V: Donna, as we approach the conclusion of our conversation, I would love to hear your thoughts on what you believe earns an actor genuine respect within the industry. Respect is a cornerstone of any profession. In your view, what constitutes a truly respected actor? Is it based on awards and acclaim, the depth of their performances, or other qualities?

D: I see too many "paper" actors in film. By that I mean the dialogue is presented through a human body but there's no connection internally that shows me the actor understands the words or actions required to emote a performance that is "real" to me. In my mind a true actor will inhabit the character...be that character in the moment. That is believable acting and draws the audience in for more than just that moment. In my mind when an actor leaves an audience really thinking about the character, that's a respected actor.

Watch *Children of the Pines* globally
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