

INSIDE THE BUBBLE

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Poor Best

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Thursday, 13 March 2008

As an explosion rocks the waterfront, Behrens hopes Marianna will continue to connect with Ric

On Friday, March 14, the Port Charles waterfront is nearly destroyed by an explosion on General Hospital. It occurs in the same warehouses that Marianna was to secure for Trevor by convincing Ric to sign over the deeds. But alas and alack, Marianna found she could not do Trevor's bidding even with his threats of importation hanging over her head.

"Rick and Marianna connected," shared Yeniffer Behrens who landed the role of Marianna after the first actress playing the role was deemed not quite right for the part. "She has now turned on Trevor, saying the deal is off, leave me alone."



As Marianna and Ric's friendship continues to grow, the town is ravaged by the impact of the explosion and everyone in Port Charles will somehow be affected. Then, as denizens sort through the rubble, Ric goes to great lengths to protect Marianna - but from what, or whom?

The busy and seasoned actress, Yeniffer (pronounced Jennifer) Behrens (Marianna), was on the phone with Soapdom as she was waiting to audition for a voice over for a 7-Up commercial. Born in Caracas, Venezuela she was four years old when her grandfather was an ambassador to Venezuela in the United States. Her father ended up here. He went to school in Oregon. Eventually, Behrens and her family moved to Washington, D.C where they lived until Behrens turned nine. "Then my parents got divorced and my mom, brother and I went to Miami where I grew up."

When asked about the unique spelling of her first name, Behrens explained that in the Spanish alphabet, the letter "J" makes an "H" sound. "Y" is more like a "J" sound. "The funny thing is that I grew up here, and always wrote it with a J. And that was my parent's intention as well. But when I went for my driver's license, my grandmother sent my birth certificate from Venezuela. On my birth certificate, Jennifer was spelled with a "Y" as "Yeniffer." So that's what they put on my driver's license. Meantime, everything I had was Jennifer with a J -- my cheerleading jacket, everything. I wanted to officially change it to Jennifer with a J, but would have had to go to court and have a judge change it, and finally decided against it - it was better to be unique."

A seasoned actor, Behrens has been auditioning for General Hospital on and off for some time. Landing the role of Marianna wasn't to be the first time around, but she sure did nail it the second time. Here's what happened:

The call went out for the character of Marianna. It was down to the wire between Behrens and another actress. Behrens did not get the role. She was crushed.



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"I loved Mark (Teschner, General Hospital's casting director) the minute I saw him," said Behrens. He is one of a kind. He is an amazing casting director. He makes you feel at home, let's you work your craft and be free. This time it was an amazing experience. This was in December. I got the call back, and felt the role was mine. Rick (Hearst, who plays Ric on GH) and I really connected from the first audition. When I didn't get it, I cried. I was like what am I gonna do? I really thought I'd nailed it."

A few weeks later the show decided they wanted to go another way with the character and called Behrens in once again to audition.

"A month later, I get another call, and I figured they were calling me in for something else, but the sides were the same sides – the call was for the same character. They just decided to go with another actor. The first actor and I are very different -- energy wise -- so they must have wanted something different. So, I had to go in and audition again – I didn't just get the part. After they had the second session, I went in there and I felt I owned it more. I sincerely went there and nailed it. I connected with Rick. It was so amazing. They called in an hour and told me I got the part. And I screamed! I was so happy!"

Behrens got the call on a Wednesday. She started work that Friday.

Although it's not a contract role, it is a "Lead Recurring Love Interest" role and for Behrens it's been a dream come true. "It's been amazing. The staff -- the actors. It's a family at GH. I feel really fortunate to be there." Basically, they welcomed Behrens with open arms and she fit right in. "I feel like I've been there for years."

Soapdom had to ask – what's it like working with Rick Hearst?

"He is a dream to work with. He has been such an angel to me on the set. He's such a giving actor. He is an amazing human being. I couldn't have asked for a better co-star."

By "giving actor" Behrens means that from her experience, Hearst is open to working through the scene before going onstage and taking the time to talk about where the characters are going to or coming from – what's not on the page. "Usually an actor does that alone," Behrens shared. "But he is very open to being collaborative about that. When we are in a scene – he is very organic. We work off each other. We are really in the moment -- as opposed to an actor who goes in with a pre-conceived notion of the scene and plays that and is not responding in the moment."



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In the Marianna/Ric story, Trevor hired Marianna originally to get Ric to sign over the deeds to the waterfront property. "Marianna was a waitress in Martha's Vineyard and worked for Trevor originally picking up the mail and house sitting, until Trevor came up with the idea of using me to get to his son," Behrens said, bringing us all up to speed. "First I agreed – also I had an ex named Randy, who abused me, beat me, and held me prisoner there because of my immigration status – so he also forced me to take the job. He forced me to do it to get the money. He also thought it was good for the clientele. He said you have to say yes."

But to everyone's surprise, Ric and Marianna connected. She has now turned on Trevor, saying the deal is off, leave me alone. But Trevor was quick to put two and two together and come up with the fact that now Marianna has fallen for his son. He confronts her saying "you are not good for him." The clincher is that Ric doesn't know how she feels about him –she is holding that secret.

"I would love to see Ric and Marianna work through this conflict that his dad has created and not give in to going back to the old pattern of what Ric was," shared Behrens of her wish list storyline. "Ric has been trying very hard to be a better man, and he has been making headway – with all of his old wounds it would be nice to see that he has finally healed and can be happy as opposed to living in the past and in Sonny's shadow – and wanting revenge and all those dark places which is why he went to Martha's Vineyard in the first place to get rid of all of that."

Behrens also hopes that once the secret comes out, that Marianna and Ric make it through and Marianna finds her place in Port Charles. "She is a really unique character – Marianna is also from Venezuela." How perfect a role is that for the Venezuelan born actress?

Aside from her recurring role on General Hospital, Behrens is the founder of True Form Films Production Company. "I am developing a couple of scripts and also a documentary on the importance of being bilingual at a young age. And also a few other scripts that are very personal to me -- I am collaborating with some friends."



Behrens is also working on Seven Pounds, a Will Smith movie. "I have a couple of scenes with Rosario Dawson and I am very excited about that. I also work internationally. I did a Spanish language action film in Mexico in December." Likewise, she does a lot of commercials. "I just did one for Pet Smart."

How did Behrens get the acting bug to begin with?

"I was five or six years old and I loved Wonder Woman. I was Wonder Woman for Halloween for three years in a row. I knew how to do the turn. Then I saw Grease and that was it. I loved John Travolta. I became Olivia Newton John. I knew all the songs. Then with TV, I didn't realize that they were real people in there, I just thought they were little people in that box and I would go up close to it and try to get in there with them, and I knew I wanted to be in that box. I just loved that world. Brady Bunch, Wonder Woman and Grease. Those were the three that influenced me."

Since she fell in love with Grease, did she also pursue a singing career? "I can carry a tune, but I don't sing professionally. That has always been my biggest fear. But I can dance. I would love to be on Dancing with the Stars. I love dancing salsa and doing all the tricks and stuff it's a lot of fun."

Although Behrens did get some formal training in acting, most of what she's learned about her craft has been from doing, not from schooling.

"I went to North Carolina School of the Arts on a summer scholarship, and had the opportunity to go there for the whole year, but due to personal family reasons, I couldn't go there, so I returned to Miami and went to Miami Dade Community College. Then, I went to an amazing private teacher and started studying privately. I started auditioning and got my agent in Miami. It would have been amazing to go to the Conservatory, but I guess I would have to just do real world and go to a studio and work. A lot of my friends that were able to go the college for acting, they ended up calling me

later to ask how to get in the business. I didn't go to school, but I advanced faster and learned about the business way faster through practical experience. So, immediately I started working and everything I learned at Miami Dade was the basis for theatre and creating a character, which is amazing. But when you get a job on a set, it's oh where's my mark, where's my prop. You have to learn to be more internal for the camera. And that's a school on its own. I booked my very first audition for a film. And I booked my third audition for commercials. It was for Pizza Hut. And that's when I realized – okay, I was in Miami Dade at that time and I said – okay, I am on the right track."

For her first feature film role, Behrens put herself on tape. It was in 1995 for a film called Angel Blue. "I booked my first lead role in that film, which also starred Karen Black and Sam Bottoms. It was basically the Spanish Lolita. I was playing a 15 year old. I put my scenes on tape – it was a six month process. A couple of months later, they called and sent me the script. There was a love scene, so I had to read it and see if I wanted to do it. It was my first opportunity to go to CA and I wanted to do it. So they flew me out to San Francisco and I did it – and all from auditioning with my scenes on tape."

After the movie, Behrens made contacts then returned to Miami, where she booked another film, Exit. "After that, I moved to California in the beginning of 1996. I was here for three years. Left for two and then returned in 2000 and have been here ever since." Lucky for General Hospital!

You can find out more about Yeniffer Behrens at Yenifferbehrens.com