

Marama Corlett

Sparkling on Stage and Screen

With a new show on Netflix and countless other film and TV successes under her belt, MARAMA CORLETT is easily one of Malta's most accomplished international actresses. In this exclusive interview with JO CARUANA, Marama shares her recent highlights, and her exciting plans for 2019 and beyond.

Styling: Sarah Micallef
Photography: Matthew B Spiteri
Make-up: Danilo Monforte for Roseberry
Hair: NEV Hair Salon, Naxxar
Nails: Daphne's Nails & Beauty
Clothing: Lulù Boutique
Jewellery: Uno De 50, Sliema
Shot on location at The Snop House, Senglea
(See full feature on pages 72-73)

Marama wears:
 UNO DE 50 MAN OJO earrings, €85,
 and UNO DE 50 ZEN bracelet, €95,
 available from Uno De 50, Sliema



“I went on to play the series-regular role of Rina in the television drama *Sinbad*... before taking part in other feature films like *Desert Dancer* alongside Freida Pinto, *Maleficent* with Angelina Jolie and *The Goob* with Sean Harris.”

Marama wears:

UNO DE 50 AURORA Borealis necklace, €179,
UNO DE 50 CROCO TEARS earrings, €85,
UNO DE 50 B12 bracelet, €95,
UNO DE 50 Zen bracelet, €95,
available from Uno De 50, Sliema

It's bright and early on a Thursday morning but Maltese actress Marama Corlett bounds into our shoot location with a wide smile on her face and infectious enthusiasm. As an international actress, I have no doubt that this is part of her appeal – she's a joy to work with and brings bags of energy and passion to the set, along with bucketloads of talent and a trademark style that makes her stand out, even in some of the most competitive acting markets around the world.

“I actually started out as a ballerina,” Marama explains, adding that she then transitioned from dancing into acting and moved to the UK. Her first role was in the West End production of *The Children's Hour*, directed by Ian Rickson (Jerusalem), opposite Ellen Burstyn and Keira Knightley.


“After that, I went on to play the series-regular role of Rina in the television drama *Sinbad* for Sky Atlantic and on SyFy in the US, before taking part in other feature films like *Desert Dancer* alongside Freida Pinto, *Maleficent* with Angelina Jolie and *The Goob* with Sean Harris.”

And her impressive list of credits goes on... there was the TV series *The Dovekeepers* for CBS, and *AD – The Bible Continues* on NBC, as well as the West End production of *The Crucible* at The Old Vic Theatre with Richard Armitage.

Now, her latest work includes BBC2's *The City and the City* with David Morrissey, playing AKI in *Blood Drive* on America's SyFy channel,

Seasons 1 and 2 of *Sick Note* for SkyOne alongside Rupert Grint and Nick Frost (which you can watch on Netflix), and – in the New Year – Season 7 of Cinemax and Sky One's *Strike Back*.

It's clear that there's no stopping her, but I decide to venture back to the beginning and ask Marama how she got started in the first place. “My grandparents always had Italian television on when I was growing up,” she says. “I remember being fascinated by the actor and comedian Totò, and I loved films by Antonioni, De Sica and Rossellini. I was intrigued by how the actors did what they did; how they made it look and feel so real. Little did I know at such a young age that I was watching some of the best work of neorealism that existed – all I knew was that it resonated with me.”



“One of my greatest ambitions is to own a property in my hometown, Valletta.”

Marama wears:
 UNO DE 50 BIS-A-DOS ring,
 €105, and UNO DE 50
 SCALES earrings, €85,
 available from Uno De 50, Sliema

Fast forwarding a few years and the love of cinema stayed with her, although she chose to train in classical ballet at the time and didn't want to go down the typical drama-training route. “That said, I knew I was still preparing myself for an acting career somehow, and the transition felt pretty organic when I moved into acting full-time seven years ago.” And, although she's had an extremely varied career across stage and TV so far, Marama pinpoints one of her highlights as her first West End experience in 2011. “I was in London transitioning from the ballet world to acting at the time,” she says. “I was waitressing, doing medical improv work, ushering at a cinema and cleaning a private home on the weekends to make ends meet. I was exhausted and all I could think of was how much I wanted to act. Then, just like magic, I booked my first ‘proper’ acting job as Louis Fisher in *The Children's Hour* by Lillian Hellman, alongside greats like Ellen Burstyn, Carol Kane, Keira Knightley and Elisabeth Moss. It was incredible, and I loved every moment of it.”

That said, there have been challenges too – such as playing Betty Paris in Arthur Miller's *The Crucible* at the Old Vic Theatre. “It was really intense to live as Betty for six months,” Marama continues. “The story plays out as a crisis that unfolds through the eyes of a child in 1692, having lost her mother, convulsing, and being afraid of being hanged. Miller's genius, timeless writing slowly drags you into this visceral, heart-rending story. I loved it, but the rehearsal process was very physically and emotionally demanding, and I actually lost a lot of my hair and weight as a result. My body reacted as though I really was going through the trauma myself.”

And beyond that, Marama explains that one of the hardest parts about working in acting is actually getting the work. “The industry is so saturated with hopeful actors, and no one can prepare you for the downtime in between jobs,” she says. “When it does occur, it's a constant struggle to stay motivated and to not give up; but what is really wonderful are the tight friendships you make and that

‘family feeling’ on set or on stage that's irreplaceable – as well as that those people you connect with tend to stick with you along the way. You find strength and support in each other and help each other along the way. I've been really blessed in that way.”

Asked to share any particular stories that stand out, Marama immediately brings up a ‘fantastic’ actress she met on *The Crucible* – Natalie Gavin. “We became very close friends very quickly and her family invited me to their home up north in Bradford once the show had ended. Meeting her dad, who is originally from Ireland, I couldn't help but mention that it felt as though I had met him before. His family just felt so incredibly familiar to me. I thought nothing of it but, four years on, after receiving a DNA test that I took to learn more about my heritage, I found out that Natalie's dad was in fact my fourth cousin! He had taken the same DNA test a year before me and the company we both used connected us. We were all indeed family. We couldn't believe it, especially after Natalie and I had worked together for six long months and were so drawn to each other.”

“Christmas in Malta is so nostalgic for me – just spending time with family and friends.”

Now, Marama looks forward to the other fantastic experiences, and is already gearing up for a busy new year – especially with the release of *Strike Back*, which will be out in a few weeks. “I am also so excited to be sharing a screen with the likes of Rupert Grint (of *Harry Potter* fame), Nick Frost and Lindsay Lohan on Netflix, as *Sick Note* was great fun to film. In the months to come, I am looking forward to working in the US for a while, and also potentially back here in Malta, which would be wonderful.”

In the meantime, though, the actress is gearing up for a relaxing Christmas – and was thrilled to be home for a few days to shoot our cover. “I actually spent Christmas in Malta last year,” she says. “It’s so nostalgic being here with the family and just eating, drinking and spending time at home. This year I’ll be spending Christmas with my 91-year-old granddad Ron, in New Zealand. Gramps lost our grandma last year after a very happy 65 years together. It’s heart-breaking. I can’t wait to just give him hugs and spend time with him over the holidays.”

Finally, I ask Marama to share her New Year’s resolutions and, as is her wont, they are so true to her personality. “I plan to spend more time with those who are close to me, while also taking a writing course and learning to play the trumpet,” she smiles. “When I think of my future, I am most concerned about spending time with the people I love. I want to be happy, healthy, with lots of work... and to own a house in my hometown, Valletta.” ■

Marama wears:

UNO DE 50 B12 necklace, €145,
UNO DE 50 B12 bracelet, €95,
and UNO DE 50 CROCO TEARS earrings, €85,
available from Uno De 50, Sliema

“Just like magic
I booked my first
‘proper’ acting job.”

Marama's favourites

Place in the world

Valletta

Accessory

Gold chains and trinkets

Film/TV Series

My childhood favourites were
Return to Oz and Umberto D

Book

Think and Grow Rich
by Napoleon Hill

Thing to do

Hanging out with the elderly

Artist

Caravaggio

Food

Oysters and chips

Drink

Lagavulin whisky

Place to shop

Thrift shops

Philanthropic cause

Celebrating Christmas Mass
with persons with disabilities
and the elderly at Dar tal-
Providenza through WFWP
Malta, and speaking up for
those seeking refuge in
collaboration with MOAS

Christmas tradition

Cold turkey toasties on
Christmas evening

Christmas song

Ninni la tibkix izjed

Marama wears:
UNO DE 50 LOOPING ring, €105, and
UNO DE 50 CROCO TEARS earrings, €85,
available from Uno De 50, Sliema

