

ACTING ON A

Dream
Dominik Garcia-Lorido

Working with Andy Garcia, the co-star, was a bit different than growing up with Andy Garcia, the father.

BY ELIZABETH RAHE

Andy Garcia, the father, is startled by his daughter's revelation. "Pole-dancing lessons? You couldn't have told a white lie and said you were at a yoga class?" he says, recalling the encounter. It's surely hyperbole, for there is no mistaking his pride in Dominik's dedication to acting – even if it does include hanging upside-down on a pole for her strip-club scenes in the new film *City Island*.

Garcia plays her father, Vince Rizzo, in *City Island*, a delightfully twisting tale of a family's secrets and unfulfilled dreams. It won the Audience Award at the Tribeca Film Festival and opens at select theaters in March. Vince, a prison guard, is surreptitiously taking acting lessons because he is afraid to tell his family about his dream of becoming an actor, among other deceptions.

"All our dreams begin as private dreams," Garcia says. He admits, however, that he does not share his character's trepidation. "I guess I've been more reckless than Rizzo...The only thing I can do is pursue my dreams."

All four Garcia children have been along for the ride, going on location and appearing in a film or two with their dad. Dominik, the oldest, began acting and ballet classes at age 5 and had her first film role at 12. She has seen the industry from the inside-out so she knows the tough road ahead, her father says, yet she still chooses to follow her passion. "It takes a lot of commitment, for the lack of jobs, if nothing else," he says.

Garcia learned about hard work and commitment from a young age. In 1961, when he was 5, he fled Cuba with his parents and older brother and sister, leaving behind a comfortable life – his father had been a prosperous attorney and farmer. The family

worked their way up from nothing, eventually building a highly successful fragrance business. Garcia was an aspiring athlete at Miami Beach Senior High School until mononucleosis and hepatitis sidelined him, and he turned to acting. After studying at Florida International University for a short time, he left for Los Angeles. He has always maintained his South Florida ties, however, eventually buying a home on Key Biscayne to be near extended family and friends, not to mention the bonefishing.

He met Maria Victoria "Marivi" Lorido in college, they married in 1982, and the first of their four children, Dominik, was born in Miami in 1983. At the time her father was landing some small TV and film roles. He worked odd jobs to support his family before hitting it big in the late '80s and '90s in films such as *The Untouchables*, *The Godfather, Part III* and later, the *Ocean's* series.

As his fame and influence have grown, he has pursued projects that resonate with his interests, including the revolution-era Havana tale, *The Lost City* (2005). When he first got G. Cabrera Infante's script for the film, he began to teach himself to play the piano for his role. He had plenty of time to practice and even to score *Lost City*, as it took 16 years to get it produced. His love of music also led him to projects on Cuban musicians Arturo Sandoval and Cachao López. Along the way, Garcia has added producer, director and composer titles to his credits.

His success has allowed him to share the dream, shining the light on other artists. Aaron J. Salgado, who directed Dominik in the upcoming *Magic City Memoirs*, calls Garcia the Godfather of Film. It seems fitting, given his role as the Don-apparent in *Godfather III* and his relationship with its legendary director, Francis Ford Coppola, whom he considers a mentor.

"ACTING IS THE ONLY THING THAT HAS MADE SENSE IN MY LIFE AND THE ONLY THING I HAVE WORKED HARD AT."

DOMINIK GARCIA-LORIDO

PHOTOGRAPHER MATTHEW JORDAN SMITH

Dominik Garcia-Lorido is the first of Andy Garcia's children to pursue a show business career, but her siblings are waiting in the wings. **Daniella Garcia-Lorido**, 22, who also wants to pursue an acting career, graduates this spring from California Institute of the Arts. **Alessandra Garcia-Lorido**, 18, studying communications at Emerson College, prefers a behind-the-scenes role, her father says. Eight-year-old **Andrés Garcia-Lorido**, who loves to fish, soon may have the chance to demonstrate his skill onscreen. His father co-wrote the screenplay *Hemingway & Fuentes* with Hilary Hemingway about the friendship between Ernest Hemingway and boat captain Gregorio Fuentes. Anthony Hopkins has signed to play Hemingway. Garcia plans to direct, compose the score and play Fuentes in the film, which is sure to call for some fisherman extras. "God willing, I'm going to give him [Andrés] the chance," Garcia says.

"ALL OUR DREAMS BEGIN
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ANDY GARCIA

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Garcia's star power played a role in getting the independent *City Island* produced - securing financing and drawing Emily Mortimer, Julianna Margulies and Alan Arkin to the project. However, he makes a point to say that his daughter won her role in the film through the audition process. "I told her I thought they were looking for a name for the part, but if not, there's no reason she shouldn't try."

Thus, she joined the cast depicting the dysfunctional Rizzo family and their lives of deception on quaint City Island, just off the Bronx. The story revolves around Vince, who discovers his long-lost son, Tony (Steven Strait), among the inmates he guards and brings him home - incognito - to live in his boathouse. Vince's wife, Joyce (Margulies), doesn't buy the poker-game alibi her husband gives for his acting classes and suspects he is having an affair. Her eye begins to wander...in young Tony's direction. Teen-aged Vinnie Jr. (Ezra Miller) hides an attraction to plus-sized women. Dominik's character, Vivian, has lost her college scholarship and is working in secret at the strip club to earn money for tuition.

The subterfuge is foreign to the 26-year-old actress. "That would give me so much anxiety. Even if I wanted to keep a secret, I couldn't," she says. However, she does relate deeply to Vivian's concern about what her parents think of her.

Dominik describes her own family, including sisters Daniella, 22, Alessandra, 18, and brother, Andrés, 8, as extremely close. Her parents have been married 28 years, and Garcia often speaks about the commitment that he and Marivi have to each other and to the children. When Dominik was growing up, he often would take the family with him on location, where the sisters learned to entertain one another. "We're like triplets," she says. Home base has always been Los Angeles, where the children have gone to school, but the family often spends summers and holidays in the Key Biscayne home. It's the site of many fond memories for Dominik. "I loved life on the island, walking to parties, rollerblading. We spent a lot of time on the water - Dad likes to fish," she says.

When asked if she grew up in a strict household, she answers, "My dad was strict...I remember having the earliest curfew. My dad wouldn't give me a key to the house. He wanted to see my face when I came in the door." She paved the way for her siblings, she says, who have an easier time of it, in her view. "Now our house is the party house."

Garcia doesn't argue with his daughter's perspective. "That's the way she relates to it, and it's certainly true to her. But we weren't running a concentration camp here. We were certainly strict, but you have to be when kids want to go to Miami Beach and come home at four in the morning...Wait a second, time out. You're not going," he says. His voice sounds deep, gentle, but undeniably convicted. "I don't think my daughter's going to be complaining about the way she grew up."

Indeed, she does not, describing her relationship with her parents as open and trusting. "I have no regrets. My parents instilled a lot of good morals and values in me," she says. Dominik lives at home with her family. "I still have some growing up to do...but that's OK."

School was always a struggle for her. "I was very ADD. If I wasn't interested in it, I wasn't going to do it. But when it came to ballet and acting, I was the most focused one in the room." She remembers staying up until 2 a.m. when she was a young child, playing Shirley Temple movies and teaching herself tap-dance moves. When she got older, play rehearsals gave her a reason to go to school. "Acting is the only thing that has made sense in my life and the only thing I have worked hard at. I feel at peace and happiest when I'm on the set."

Steven Strait, Dominik Garcia-Lorido, Andy Garcia, Julianna Margulies and Ezra Miller in a scene from Anchor Bay Films' *City Island*.



City Island (www.cityislandmovie.com) is opening in select cities nationwide in March, including the Regal South Beach Cinema 18 (1120 Lincoln Road, Miami Beach), on March 26, with wider release anticipated afterward.

“REJECTION’S VERY HARD, BRUTAL...BRUTAL. IT’S SO PERSONAL. YOU GET ATTACHED TO A ROLE AND THINK IT’S YOURS.”

DOMINIK GARCIA-LORIDO

Dominik Garcia-Lorido in a scene from Enlight Films' *Magic City Memoirs*.

She studied at UCLA's School of Theater, Film and Television for two years and now works with an acting coach. In between roles, she goes on auditions and learns to deal with rejection.

“Rejection’s very hard, brutal...brutal. It’s so personal. You get attached to a role and think it’s yours. That’s the challenging part – having a thick skin and looking to the next audition, knowing it’s not ultimately in your hands.”

She made her film debut in *Steal Big Steal Little* with her dad in 1995 and also played in *The Lost City* as well as a half-dozen other films, including *La Linea*, directed by James Cotten, and *Reflections*, by Bryan Goeres. She recently completed *Magic City Memoirs*, a film about growing up rich and Latin in Miami from young local filmmakers Aaron J. Salgado and Jaydee Freixas. Shot in Miami, it is expected to debut at film festivals this year.

Dominik plays the daughter of the Coral Gables mayor, Veronica Suarez, who has been attending boarding school in Spain. As in life, her character has local ties, but she is somewhat removed from the Miami high school scene. Writer/director Salgado, who connected with Dominik through mutual friends, describes her performance as very natural. “She understood the story and the backdrop and elements of each character. Her performance is dead on.”

Andy Garcia recently signed on as executive producer, and he has assisted in the editing process, inviting the filmmakers to his home and offering his thoughts on the storytelling – an experience that Salgado calls surreal. “We were outside in Andy’s back yard, smoking a cigar, talking about films and ideas and future projects. If you’re Latin in Miami and interested in film, he’s the first person you go to...He’s the Godfather of Film.”

Dominik certainly has benefited from her father’s stature in the industry, yet at the same time, she seeks to separate herself. “I want to be looked at as an actor in my own right. I don’t want anyone to look at me as...the daughter of, the daughter of, the daughter of. At the same time I’m very proud to be the daughter of my father. It’s always going to be a double-edged sword.”

During the filming of the pole-dancing scene for *City Island*, she asked her dad to stay away from the set. Even without him there, she says she felt awkward. “The crew and director were friends of my dad. It would have been different if it had been my own film with a crew that had never met my dad. It felt degrading. But I’m sure Vivian felt that way, so it was valid to feel degraded.”

Andy Garcia, the Godfather of Film, says he had no problem with Dominik’s strip club performance in *City Island*. He did note, however, that the scene was tastefully done. Andy Garcia, the father, wouldn’t have it any other way. ■