

by Marilyn Beck & Stacy Jenel Smi

Lynda Carter is savoring the latest chapter in her career with the kind of appreciation that can only come after experiencing years of life's ups and downs. With singing engagements coming up at New York's Lincoln Center, Washington's Kennedy Center and elsewhere, the performer still remembered as Wonder Woman is looking radiant.

"I'm really taking care of myself, just doing the best I can to stay healthy. I lost a little bit of weight," says Lynda, who disclosed her long years of struggle with alcoholism last year.

She says now, "Alcoholism gets up there and bites you on the ass before you know it." She credits her family with being there for her as she dealt with the addiction that, she notes, "spans all socio-economic levels. You go to AA meetings, and you see a biker guy, someone you've seen in Congress, a reporter anyone." She adds, "Being in recovery for all these years now, I know I couldn't do it alone."

Her return to the limelight coincides with her son and daughter growing up. "I never really wanted to stop singing, but I just didn't see taking my kids on the road," says Carter, who's been wed to Washington, D.C. attorney Robert Altman since 1984. "When my son was about to go to college, I got this offer to do 'Chicago' in London. It totally reignited those fires."

Lynda also tells us she's been getting some edgier sorts of acting offers of late, but right now, she's focused on singing. Mounting a show "is a huge, expensive undertaking," she notes. "Now my daughter is a senior in high school. She'll be going off to college, and I just decided to go for it."

She's doing a March 5-7 engagement at L.A.'s Catalina Jazz Club on the Sunset Strip, fine-tuning before her March Lincoln Center gig. She's already booking fall dates.

"The Latin phrase *carpe diem* comes to mind. Seize the day, enjoy the hell out of your life," says Lynda. "Things happen. You're taking a flight, and then it's over. All I want to do is just hug and squeeze the people I love and be the best person I can."

THE VIDEOLAND VIEW: "Rules of Engagement" star Bianca Kajlich says she feels confident viewers will see a more cohesive show when it returns for its third season March 2. "Even after three years of doing this, this is the first time where we really get our characters now. Everyone seems to be going in a more specific direction. You get the script and you're like, 'Oh, now I know who I am!' We get to have a lot more fun with it as a result," claims Kajlich, who plays Oliver Hudson's fiance, Jennifer. "I think the difference people will see is we've gotten away from it being about the idea that this is what the married couple does, this is

what the engaged couple does, and this is what the single guy does. We're able to explore normal everyday occurrences and what these characters do. That's been so freeing for all of us because we get to do some sillier storylines."

Kajlich admits having guest stars Orlando Jones and Adhir Kalayan has also been helpful. "Adhir plays Timmy, David Spade's assistant, and we have this joke that our show is going to be pulled, and they'll have their own spin-off called 'Timmy and Me.' They are so great together," she adds.

MEANWHILE: When not working, Kajlich tells us she's been busy traveling the world with her husband, Los Angeles Galaxy soccer star Landon Donovan. "The Galaxy had a rough couple of years, but I think everyone's getting it back under control. Landon just loves to play soccer, so it's nice people are interested," she says about last year's addition of David Beckham. However, even she doesn't know if the English soccer star plans to return. "Who knows what's happening there? I try to stay out of that part of it because you never know what's going to happen."

BUILDING: "Friday the 13th's Arlen Escarpeta admits response to the horror flick " which opened with a \$42-million-plus weekend earlier this month " has "been a little overwhelming. I'm more than excited. It's been so much fun," he says. Not only is the former "American Dreams" actor finding himself recognized wherever he goes, "There was a cast party the other night, and paparazzi and TMZ people were there outside taking pictures of us. It's hilarious to me. I guess it's all a part of it, you know what I mean?"

It's definitely hectic time for the appealing 28-year-old actor, who stars as a promising young man fraught with distractions and friends making bad choices in the inner city in the movie "Dough Boys," soon to be seen on BET. He also is getting ready to produce his own film, "818." He tells us it will show darker sides of L.A.'s suburban San Fernando Valley and will star him as a rookie cop. It draws from Arlen's own experiences as an African-American kid who lived in Inglewood and got bussed to school out in the Valley every day. Plus, he's awaiting word on a new TV series.

"I think TV now has gotten very, very smart and very, very edgy," he says. "Especially with the recession and the box office numbers declining from theaters, TV is trying to keep people tuned in with some really great shows."

With reports by Emily Feimster.

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Hollywood Exclusive - Having tasted highs and lows, Carter Savors latest chapter - 'Friday The 13th', a bonanza of attention for Escarpeta by Marilyn Beck