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ISSUE 21

QUARTERLY

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Successful!

*Hürrem*

**+**  
**MUCH  
MORE!**





EXCLUSIVE!

# MERYEM UZERLI



Photography: Urban Ruths  
Hair + Make Up Petra Hansen

EXCLUSIVE!

# MERYEM UZERLI

*Meryem Uzerli is a Turkish-German actress who rose to prominence by playing Hürrem Sultan in the Turkish TV series Muhtemem Yüzyıl (Mera Sultan).*

*Meryem Uzerli was born on 12th August 1982 in Germany. Her father Hüseyin is Turkish while her mother Ursula is German.*

*Following, Meryem speaks exclusively to Ink about her role as Hürrem Sultan, her acting career and much more.*

**1. When did you first realize you wanted to be an actress?**

My realization didn't just come to life on one morning, waking up and thinking "oh, I want to be an actress!" It happened rather naturally because I was going to a special school (Waldorfschule) since kindergarten, where they support children in their individual talents, and it included a lot of artistic activities. We were painting and singing a lot, everyone had to play an instrument; we were also taught how to make furniture and clothes, work in the garden, write poetry, act in small plays along with subjects like mathematics, physics, biology... It was a very creative place and I was a part of this concept since the age of 3! From all these options, I could choose to be a painter or a doctor, however acting was what felt the most comfortable and exciting to me. I didn't think of acting as a job to have when grown up, it was simply a part of my daily life from the early years of childhood on. During my teenage years, I was already surrounded by a world of acting because the father of a very close friend was the owner of the biggest theatre in my town, I had a very natural contact with actors, directors, scriptwriters and the stage. I was growing up with it!

**2. You have done a lot of theatre work – is it something you would go back to now that you have worked on TV?**

Yes for sure, because acting in front of a live audience is another work from acting in front of a camera! In theatre for example the reaction of the audience is immediate, whereas in front of the camera we sometimes have to produce emotions unchronologically and out of their context; you may play a scene after a big fight, before the actual fight. You work with your emotions differently, it

is more instant. In theatre then, once you start your play it goes on almost non-stop for around one and a half hours. They are so different from each other and I find them both very exciting! I think when I'm too much in front of the camera, I miss the theatre and if I was in theatre for a long time I would definitely miss the camera. Currently, I am looking forward to play in a good theatre work again! I would never choose one over the other, I think my acting requires both. Perhaps after my new project, in two or three years I would have to chance to go back to theatre again.

**3. You won the "Best Actress" Golden Butterfly award in 2012, among prestigious awards, for your**



**role as Hürrem in Muhtemem Yüzyıl. Do such awards offer you validation for your acting ability?**

I never feel certain about my talent and I don't really have a feeling of success. Doing it since many years, of course I am confident in what I am

doing and I don't get nervous about doing things wrong. If my job is to show emotions, I am not afraid of mine and I think as long as you feel these emotions and have a good psychological background nothing can go wrong. I trust that my feelings are true and this is why I am comfortable with them. However, this doesn't make me feel more safe or successful. When I receive an award I am very thankful and I feel so honoured that there are people who watch and like my work and respect my style. This is a great present for me.

**4. Are there similarities between your own personality and that of the character Hürrem?**



I think we all as human beings share a lot of similarities. When in pain, you're not happy and me neither! When jealous or in love we can understand each other. Then again, sometimes your character is closer to one than another person. Hürrem and I, we share some characteristics but not the most important ones. Of

course, if I fall in love I'd be as happy as her or if I get sad I'd be unhappy like Hürrem. However, I don't live back in her time, and fight for the things she did, in 2014. I am not living in a harem either, the motivations are very different. Therefore I don't think we are too similar actually.

**5. What is the one quality of Hürrem that you personally admire?**

The point I admire the most in Hürrem's personality is that whatever happens she never gives up. Whatever happens, even if the world is crushing down around her, step after another step she continues and follows her own way. It is great to continue in one's way—hopefully for other people a better one than Hürrem's, who killed many on the way—and to still go on and on!

**6. How did you prepare for your character Hürrem in Muhtemem Yüzyıl? Did you do any research regarding that era or the real Hürrem?**

When I went for the audition and got the role, I didn't know much about Hürrem or Sultan Süleyman or the Ottoman Empire... I haven't even heard the name Hürrem in my life! I don't know, maybe when we were studying this at school I was ill or at the cafeteria eating ice-cream? It was all very new for me, and I had to work through it. I studied the period with some books and thanks to the internet, one can easily get perfectly prepared these days. But for me, the most important point was that whatever was written down in historical records whether in books or online, I'd first have to connect myself with her soul and build up a character which is comprised of my free emotional creativity, and not based on history alone. Can you imagine yourself to be told truthfully in a book written by someone centuries later? I think only Hürrem knew exactly what kind of a person she was. With respect to her, I did what I thought to be the best, I build up a character for her through my own interpretation, my own emotions and my personal connection with her soul.

**7. How was the experience of working with Halit Ergenc? How much do you feel a co-star helps in terms of your acting out a specific role?**

I worked with many actors in my life and perhaps some actors were not very popular and some were more popular but what I can say for Halit



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Ergenc is that working with him was my biggest experience, because I think he is one of the greatest and the most talented actors I have ever met. He is not just perfectly prepared everytime, but more importantly he also has this ocean inside of him full of these emotions, creativity, life and spirituality. If you are working with him it is impossible not to be inspired! His energy is felt even when he is not talking. The energy between us also fit each other just amazingly—it was like a jackpot! Because sometimes you have a partner for whom you have to work more to create this sparkie between you two. I think by chance it worked out great, the people who arranged Halit and me to work together did a really good job. Working with him created a happiness for me everyday, because you are in a dialogue and not in a monologue, therefore having the right co-actor is the best support one can have.

**8. You studied acting at the Schauspielstudio Frese in Hamburg from the ages of 17 to 20. How much did that help you as an actress? Do you think acting is something that can be learnt or is it innate?**

I think acting is about being connected with your emotional system. It is a process that is never over. It's not like you go to school for three years and become an actor, then you never ever have to work on your acting and the emotions in your system again. I think acting is profession which, because it's about the psychology of yourself, is like you are growing with it. Your acting grows with you for a lifetime. So since I am always growing like everyone else, my emotional system is not the same when I was 15 or 20 years old, I have to adapt my work and reflect on my system everytime and over and over again. This is not something that you are taught at school. If you are studying acting at school, you are just learning about some technics and it's only the base of your education. You have to improve it with practice and experience through a lifetime. I don't think someone has to study acting at school to be good at acting, I just can say for myself that it was a perfect combination with the basis from the acting school and knowing that it wasn't the end, continuing to work with this through my whole life.

**9. Besides being an actress, you are also a very popular model. How different do you find the two professions? Which one requires more hard work in your opinion?**

That's very funny because I hear it the first time that I'm a model! I am not a model and if this was meant as a profession, it was never my job! Of course, sometimes I have photoshoots for a magazine or a cover, but I am doing this because of my job as an actress. I feel very honoured that you see me like a model, because I've never seen myself as one. I hope this was compliment and thank you for that but that is also funny because actually I am not a model!

**10. How do you pick your work assignments? Are there specific types of characters you would rather play as an actress? As a model, is important for you to believe in brand you are endorsing?**

The thing is that, I don't look into characters trying to choose the ones which are more attractive than the others. It is always worth it to look a little bit deeper into the characters because you can always find very interesting points in each of them. Of course then, certainly some characters are deeper and more complex in comparison to others. For example if there were a nice project even if it's not a big one, and there were a small supporting act for me, like ten sentences or so, I can fall in love with this

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A woman with long, wavy red hair is standing in a stone-walled corridor. She is wearing a teal-colored gown with a deep V-neckline and long sleeves. The bodice of the gown is heavily embellished with silver sequins and crystals. She is also wearing a headpiece with a large circular lens or gem on her forehead and a small flame or light source on top. The background is a stone wall with a dark doorway or alcove to the right.

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script and the character. I would choose this character because it is fascinating me, and not because it has the biggest part or the leading role.

**11. What was your reaction when you faced the camera for the first time? Do you still get nervous every time you are about to shoot a scene?**

Years ago after working in theatre when I first saw the camera, I was for sure nervous at the beginning but it flew away in a short time, because I was surrounded by a very supporting team at this time. Hours later that day everything was relaxed already. I still get a little bit nervous from time to time, because every new character is a new birth for me. Maybe it is similar to what some women say, "When I first gave birth to my baby I was very excited and nervous and I thought the next ones would be easier after this one, but it is still a miracle and a magical thing, the excitement and anxiety never goes away." It is like

this with a new role when you give birth to your character and start a new project. It takes a few days for me to get used to my new character and to feel safe and comfortable with it, then all the nervousness goes away. Sometimes I feel the same during a dramatic scene too, but I like this feeling because it gives me a push and a healthy motivation.

**12. How do you manage to deal with controversies surrounding you – does it anger you when media publishes wrong information?**

No it doesn't really bother me. I just don't google myself and most of the time I have no idea what has been written about me. I have never tried to look myself up online and I think this is a good plan and I will stick to it! Some people of course come up to me sometimes and tell me they've heard this and that written somewhere, and if it's true or not. My mom also calls me and asks "What!

What does this mean?" and so I hear about some of the news this way. And yes, almost whenever I learn about these they make me laugh a lot! I also think that people who read the newspapers, especially the yellow press, are too intelligent to believe everything that's written.

**13. What is your daily wear fashion style off-screen? Are there any specific brands you love wearing?**

I have some brands that I like to wear more often than others of course, but for me the popularity of the brand, or the fact that it is an expensive one or not, is not very important. I also like to visit second-hand shops and can find very special things even if they have no brands. I mix in different clothes but 90% of the time I choose what to wear simply according to the weather. I am not going to wear a dress in cold winter or jeans on a hot summer day. For me, it is important to feel comfortable. I almost never wear

high-heeled shoes except sometimes in the evening if there's something special, and my style is a bit more casual and sportive in general. I like to feel relaxed and good in what I wear.

**14. How do you stay fit? Do you follow a specific exercise or diet regime?**

If I have fun in what I'm doing then I can do my exercises even for a whole day. I regularly do sports but not a very specific one. I like to go around with my bicycle, and I work on my cardio sometimes, and in the summertime I like to exercise outdoors. There is also no special diet that I follow, I can eat whatever I like to. I just try to balance it, if I eat a lot of chocolates for three days—sometimes it happens—then I try to have a break from chocolates for the next three days!

**15. How do you like to spend your days off?**

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When I'm not working I like to have a nap in the afternoon for one or two hours, and to meet friends, or to walk through the city and lose my way and discover new things. I like to be surprised by a day, just to be in the moment, not to think too much and to observe what the day brings.

**16. What keeps you busy in Berlin these days? Will we be seeing you make a comeback in Turkish TV shows or films anytime soon?**

I recently signed a new contract with O3, a company in Istanbul, Turkey. And our main company is called MBC from Dubai. We will produce a new TV-series for Turkey along with some other countries. We are starting to a shoot it from January on in Istanbul, perhaps it will be aired during the Spring 2015. I am very excited about it, it is a really great script, there are great directors and actors in it that make an amazing team. So these days I am mostly busy to get prepared for this new project and to move to Istanbul with my babygirl. This needs a lot of organization to be done in advance. Right now I am trying to choose a house in Istanbul and the furnitures in it and to prepare

for my new life that will start from January on. Of course, the first thing that occupies is my daughter, and taking care of her is the best job I ever had, and then these new plans follow her.

**17. You have recently become a mother. How has motherhood changed you?**

I hear this question very often. "Okay, you are a mother now, is there a new Meryem?" I wake up in the morning and I still think to myself, "Oh my god, I am a mom!" That is a great thing to be a mother, but this at the same time feels so natural to me that I can't really point to something that changed in me. Of course, I can't be too spontaneous in doing things anymore, there is a lot more planning done in my life beforehand than earlier, and I have to organize my days better now. Being less flexible is a small point that actually changed but mostly for me, from a personality point of view if you're asking "Has Meryem changed?" than I'd say no, and that I am pretty much the same person still. Except that this time there is this big love I have by my side. And I am so thankful, this is my biggest present. I am a much happier person with her, because now I know

what happiness and real love means.

**18. If not acting, what profession would you have chosen for yourself?**

If I wasn't an actress I'd like to be a doctor. I am very interested in medicine and in the health system. Being a doctor and working with patients face to face would be my second choice definitely.

**19. Ever since Muhteşem Yüzyıl aired on a local TV channel here, you have built a very strong fan base for yourself in Pakistan. Would you like to visit Pakistan in the near future, or perhaps even work here?**

I was just in Istanbul two days ago, and in the hotel I met four Pakistani people. I was sitting at a table and having breakfast and they came over to say "hello". They were so happy to see me there by chance, and seeing that I was eating they were so kind and said "Oh, please have your breakfast and enjoy it first, then maybe we can talk after your breakfast if you don't mind." It was so respectful and I imagine Pakistan to

have the same atmosphere. I think you have this huge human respect in your culture, and this deep intuition and empathy for situations. I was very amazed by these four people, and I think it wasn't just by chance but it was because they were from Pakistan. I'd be very interested in going to Pakistan, hopefully I will have the opportunity to spend some time in the future there. And in general, I would work everywhere, if the project attracts me, the script and the people are nice and right for me. I'd go anywhere in these circumstances, and I'd be very happy if it would be in Pakistan because I am so interested in the country and the culture.

**20. How do you juggle between your professional and personal life, considering the demanding profession that you have? Have you had to compromise either of the two at times?**

In my past working experience there wasn't so much free time left for me. I was working and working and working and didn't have any time for my private life. I had to compromise my personal life many times in the past.

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I'd like to be a doctor.





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UZERLI**



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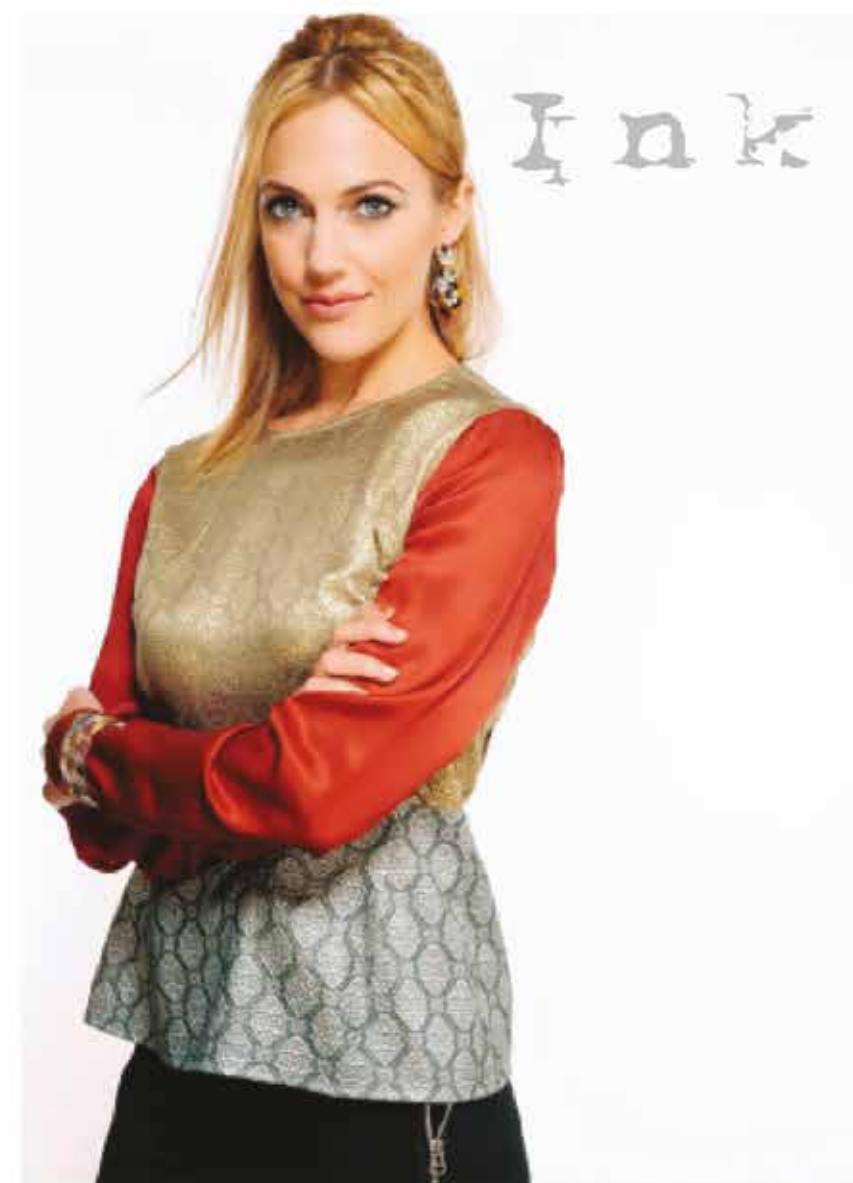
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*Now for the future plans I try to balance these better and healthier, because otherwise you can't breathe, everyone needs a bit of time sometimes only for themselves. We can have a lot of appointments with other people but still shouldn't forget about making appointments also with our best friends, that is ourselves. I know that you always have to compromise things a bit from time to time in this sector and also in other jobs. For example, a doctor similarly compromises his private life sometimes, too. So I see it as something that comes with the job, but not as a negative thing generally.*

**21. What message would you like to give for the readers of Ink and your fans in Pakistan?**

*I am looking forward to meet you one day! I am also looking forward to learn more about your country and your culture. I am very grateful and happy that you are enjoying our show and that you like my work. I feel very honoured and blessed. I hope the best and the happiest for all of you because life is short. You support me everyday with your great messages and I hope to be a support for you through my work. If someone reading this feels sad, please feel hugged by me and know that everything will become better, I am by your side and hopefully we will meet someday!*

Photography: Urban Ruths  
Hair + Make Up Petra Hansen



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“ I know that you always have to compromise things a bit from time to time in this sector and also in other jobs. ”