

Karen Strassman reveals what it's like to be a voiceover artist, in-demand actor and quiet introvert

by Daniel Falconer | 6 November 2018

Actress, voiceover artist and dialect coach Karen Strassman is riding an incredible wave of success. Recently starring in the hit AMC series *Preacher*, based on the comic books of the same name, she's somebody who has made a name for herself both in front of the camera, and in the recording booth. Whether she's recording for television shows, or lending her voice to video game characters, she's someone you've likely come across at some point in your indulgement of entertainment!



Karen Strassman chats with Female First / Photographer: Birdie Thompson, Hair and Makeup: Allison Noelle, Clothing: Pinup Girl

Here, she talks all about her career so far; the highlights, how the industry has changed and more.

The world of voiceover is one that's quite mysterious to anyone who's not in it! Can you tell us a little bit about a typical day working in voiceover, and what you get up to? If indeed there are any 'typical' days!



- **7am** - Wake up and have warm lemon juice and honey (for my voice which is healing from an intense video game the previous day) and then coffee.
- **8am** - Go to nearby pool to swim laps (I swim or do some kind of exercise most every day - my body is my instrument and I need to keep in in tune).
- **9.45am** - Home for telephone interview for internet gaming publication.
- **10.20am** - Beautiful Iranian actress I've been working with arrives at my house for a coaching session (I'm helping her lose her accent in English).
- **11.30am** - Skype session with a brilliant Irish actor who lives and works in NYC (I'm helping him perfect his Standard American accent too).
- **12.30pm** - Record two last-minute voiceover auditions at my house and email them to my voiceover agency.
- **1pm** - Eat lunch in my car as I'm driving across town to my acting class.
- **1.45pm** - Arrive at my acting class with my amazing coach, Robert Colt (www.robertcolt.com). He does his best to fit me in to do a scene because he knows how important it is for working actors to keep training, even when it gets crazy busy.
- **3.15pm** - Run out to my car to record another quick last-minute voiceover audition on my iPad and send it out.

- **3.45pm** - Return a call about scheduling a new voiceover job I just booked from an audition the previous week.
- **4pm** - Arrive at a studio for a 2-hour cartoon session.
- **6pm** - Call my dad and work on some lines I need to learn while driving home.
- **7pm** - Get on Skype with an actress I'm coaching to help her prep for an on-camera audition the next day.
- **8.15pm** - Work more on my lines for an on-camera TV show I'll be working on the following day.
- **9pm** - Eat a little dinner and watch an episode of the TV show in preparation for the shoot.
- **10pm** - Return some emails and prepare my clothes and belongings for the next day.
- **11pm** - Get to bed because I have to wake up at 5:30 am the next morning to be on a TV set in Long Beach for makeup at 7am).

You recently guest-starred on *Preacher* as Dr. Slotnick; what was that whole experience like?

Working on *Preacher* was delightful and exhilarating. No matter how crazy and “out there” the world of this show might be, and how “characterly” most characters are, it's done so well that it still feels so deeply real, human, and grounded. As I watched the series, I just completely bought the whole reality and everyone's humanity within it, and got truly involved in their lives. As I was preparing for my episodes, it was exciting to create a character that was really fun, quirky, and out there, but also feel as real and believable as all the other characters on the show. That's such fun stuff for an actor.

You've also lent your voice to a number of different video games! Do you have any favourite titles you've worked on? Or any you'd love to work on in the future?

Yes, I've actually done several hundred video games! A few of my favourite experiences include playing Chromie for *World of Warcraft*, Rouge the Bat for many of the *Sonic* games, Mileena and Kitana in *Mortal Kombat*, Aigis and Nanako in the *Persona* series, Izsha in *Starcraft 2*, Poison in *Street Fighter*, Maria in *Wolfenstein*, and all the characters I have played in *Fire Emblem* games and in *League of Legends*.

The way in which we indulge in entertainment nowadays is constantly changing, with streaming services and the like. What do you make of all that's going on and the evolution of the industry?

It can be a bit overwhelming, but once you get past that, there are just so many more opportunities for people to tell their stories. So many possibilities for people to get their projects made, and so many opportunities to be part of such a variety of projects.

You've been in some great shows throughout your career, but are there any you've not yet been a part of that you'd love to in the future?

I'd love to be in *The Handmaid's Tale*, *American Horror Story*, *Godless*, *Stranger Things*, *Better Things*, *This is Us*, *The Good Doctor*, and *Orphan Black* to name a few.

What advice do you have for people out there who'd love to carve out their own career in the entertainment industry?

Make sure it's really what you love and yearn to do more than anything else because it is a ruthless business. Be prepared to be rejected over and over again and still find your love for what you do and life itself. You will need a vulnerable, beautiful, playful, empathetic heart of a child, but the discipline, persistence, endurance and maturity of an adult how has lived and sees the

bigger picture. Make sure to live the rest of your life fully: travel, experience as much as you can, and love. Find as many ways as possible to give to others and not make life too much about your little self. Find ways to live and experience live like an artist and not like a salesperson. So, follow your playfulness and inspiration, fail as often as possible, collect rejection, use each and every challenge to grow...step forward, listen for and then speak your own truth. And for goodness sake be a kind, decent human being.

Can you tell us about some of the biggest challenges you've faced in your career to-date?

I would say my biggest challenge revolves around caring too much about what other people think and learning to stop trying to be what I think others want me to be. In a world of ruthless criticism, commercialism, skepticism, and fear, one of the biggest challenges is to keep baring my heart and soul, humanity, and quiriness. In a business where you want people to like you, watch your show, and cast you in their project, I somehow have to find a way to not care too much about what people think in order to offer up something truly authentic, human, spontaneous, moving, and truly compelling. It's a huge paradox, and that in my mind, this is mastery. I am far from this, but aspire and work towards it every day...

Comparatively, what have been some of the biggest highlights you've experienced?

Highlights for me are often about climbing above a limitation of what I think I can do or already know I can do. Other highlights involve the chemistry and magic between people I end up working with. Some highlights for these reasons are *Preacher*, *Weeds*, *Silicon Valley*, and *The Onania Club*.

What do you like to do to entertain yourself when you get some free time?

As much as I love people and live in a whirlwind of activities, I am actually very much an introvert, so I find comfort, nourishment and rejuvenation in spending quiet time alone. I love being in the water, exercising, dancing, and horseback riding. I cherish intimate conversations and dinners with friends, and I love personal growth work. I have a mentor who I have worked with for over 25 years, Darrell Calkins (www.cobaltsaffron.com). He occasionally still gives challenging and exciting seminars in different parts of the world, and I will always try to make it to those rare events.

Finally, what's next for you in the coming weeks and months?

I have a new, bold feature film called *The Onania Club* by the brilliant and controversial director, Tom Six that will be coming out very soon. I have a new project that I can't talk about yet and two big video games coming out soon. There are also a few new exciting animated projects. I have quite a few cool auditions coming up, and you never know what all of that will bring, including more opportunities to fail, learn, grow... and be just a little bit more truthful, vulnerable, playful, and heartfelt in each unfolding moment.

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