

Writers Who Have Inspired Me

By Karla Williams

I grew up watching television. My whole family loved it. We would watch TV as we ate our dinner every night of the week. As an adult, I watch three to four hours a day. And that was before, during and after the pandemic. After a few years trying my hand at playwriting, it's no surprise I ended up as a TV screenwriter.

I'm most inspired by TV drama series and the brilliant minds who create them. Kerry Ehrin is one such writer and her Emmy-winning *The Morning Show* (launched 2019) on Apple TV explores the consequences when a TV news anchor is fired after years of sexual misconduct. In a post #MeToo world, what I admired most was how the show examined a familiar topic from a nuanced point of view. It explored the multiple reasons that allowed the misconduct to continue for so long. It looked at the TV execs who knew what was going on, but stayed silent because the anchor was making them too much money. And at the entitlement of the perpetrator who thought his salary and fame gave him untouchable status. But it also examined the role women played, and was the first time I had seen the culpability of women explored on TV.

Another favourite of mine is the HBO drama *Succession* (launched 2018) and its creator Jesse Armstrong. I admire how he writes characters with each one being complicated, flawed, self-serving and brilliantly nuanced. I both empathise with them and dislike them, at the same time. My favourite character is Kendall Roy who, under all his bravado, drug issues and billionaire lifestyle, is just a little boy who craves his father's love and attention. The stakes are sky high, creating constant tension and drama. Plot lines and character wants are expertly woven together, producing complex storylines which keep me hooked, episode after episode. I have watched the show three times and each time I pick up a new nugget of information that I somehow missed previously.

And the dialogue is first class, written with a razor-sharp wit and remarkable dark humour. I have never heard one line that sounds out of place or character. Upon re-watching the show for the second and third times, I realised that much of the dialogue reveals plot, character and story all at the same time. The BAFTA-, Emmy- and Golden Globe-winning series is set among the billion-dollar lives of the world's richest 1%. And while I love watching TV that feels familiar and relatable, I equally enjoy shows that open my mind and teach me things I would never personally experience. *Succession* is an education in the lifestyles of the absurdly rich, and I see locations, practices, and displays of wealth that blow my mind.

Kerry Ehrin and Jesse Armstrong have left a big impression on me as a writer. I want to take the same nuanced, complex, character-driven, approaches to my own work of telling stories and creating characters that have a global impact.

Karla Williams

Karla Williams is a writer and executive producer, and founder and creative director of the production company MsMono.

Karla wrote on season 8 of the ITV/PBS drama *Grantchester*, due for broadcast in spring 2023. Her audio drama *Famous* is broadcast on Audible. She is co-writer and executive producer on comedy/thriller audio series *Fast Food* and is one of the executive producers on the short film *The Ride*, written and directed by Tara Aghdashloo.

Karla has written two monologues for the anthology *Hear Me Now: Audition Monologues for Actors of Colour*, published by Oberon Books. Her plays have been performed at Soho Theatre, Arcola Theatre, Kiln Theatre and St James Theatre. Her short film *Pretty Bitch* has been screened at festivals internationally. She has an original TV drama in development and is represented by Curtis Brown Agency.

A recording of this talk can be found at **writersmosaic.org.uk**

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