

EXCLUSIVE : PREACHER Scoop: Shining The Spotlight On Karen Strassman

By [Tiffany Vogt](#) August 19, 2018

Hollywood careers are built on tenacity, talent and each role leading to the next opportunity. It takes the heart of a warrior to face the daily challenges to pursue and persevere such a career with success. Bringing her heart and soul to her work, as well as talent in spades, is [Karen Strassman](#). In an exclusive interview, Karen talks about her role as Dr. Slotnick in PREACHER and a few lessons she has learned through her career on and off screen.

What was the initial appeal for you about portraying Dr. Slotnick and working on AMC's PREACHER?

KAREN: Susan Tolar Walters at STW Talent Agency got me the audition. Apparently, they had already seen men for the role, and they were now looking at women instead. The breakdown for the character basically said she was a passionate scientist, with no mention of any accent or nationality, so I did a self-taped audition corresponding to that. But it just didn't feel quite right, and I said to my friend who was taping me and said "I don't know why, but really I have this crazy urge to do it with a German accent. It's stronger than me. Let's just try a take like that at least to get this weird idea out of my system..." We had so much more fun with that take, and we liked it so much, we sent it in. Then later that week we heard back from the Casting Director Ryan Glorioso, asking me to tape a callback audition, saying that they actually really liked the German accent, and could I retake it with some adjustments. And there you go. A huge reminder how important it is to trust one's instincts.

How would you describe who Dr. Slotnick is in the series?

KAREN: She's a passionate, highly intelligent scientist...perhaps even a freak of nature. She works for the Grail, and is obsessed with creating a DNA cocktail that will help put Genesis, the voice of God that has been residing in Jesse, in its "rightful place" in the real Messiah. She really wants to please The Allfather.

What do you most admire about her?

KAREN: Her brilliant, creative, obsessive mind. A crazy-scientist, almost on the edge of insanity...

What is it like working alongside such a talented ensemble on PREACHER?

KAREN: I worked mostly with Dominic [Cooper], Pip [Torrens] and Jonny [Coyne]. What an honor. These guys are so committed and so real, no matter how wacky the material becomes. You completely believe them every second. One of the things that so struck me when I was watching the series and preparing for my role was no matter how crazy and "out there" a script might be, and how "characterly" most characters in the show are, all the actors make their characters so very real, human, and grounded. So, you feel they are completely real and get truly involved in their lives. You feel for them and with them. As I was preparing for my episodes, I wanted to create a character that was really fun and out there, but also feel as real and believable as all the other characters on the show.

How would you describe the dynamic between Dr. Slotnick and Jesse, Cassidy [Joseph Gilgun] and Tulip [Ruth Negga]?

KAREN: I think Dr. Slotnick is fascinated with Jesse. He is a specimen that she has never experienced before. And as much as she is focused on getting Genesis out of him and into the Humperdoo, there is another part of her that is fascinated to be in the same room with him and experience him in person.

To her, Jesse is miraculous freak of Nature and endlessly fascinating.

Any favorite scenes that you can share from working on the series?

KAREN: I loved shooting episode 308, the episode where Dr. Slotnick meets Jesse and expounds with passion and precision on her research involving the Genesis DNA cocktail. It felt both dangerous and exciting.

What challenges did you face working on the series and how did you overcome them?

KAREN: The biggest challenge was that of creating a fun and fascinating character that is out there, but still completely believable, so that the audience will feel she is just as real and multi-dimensional as all the other wonderful, wild and yet still deeply human characters in the [Preacher](#) world. I created a pretty specific backstory for myself so that I would have real needs, desires and human yearnings to draw on.

As an actor, what has been the one thing you haven taken away from the experience of working on PREACHER?

KAREN: Over and over again these days my biggest lesson is to trust my imagination and sense of play. As soon as I get too in my head about any role, it loses the excitement and the magic that can happen in any given moment. This magic is catnip to audiences, and is just so much more fun for everyone. All the creators, cast and crew involved in this wonderful series rally set to have this sense of play, that is just contagious and leaves you on the edge of your seat when you are watching the show.

You have also done a fair amount of voice actor work. What is the appeal of voice actors work versus appearing on screen in a role?

KAREN: In voiceover, more often than not, you are usually alone in the booth. You're working with the director, the engineer, and maybe some of the clients on the other side of the booth (unless you are doing a group record for

original animation), and you have to imagine all of the other characters interacting with you. You have to imagine everything, really — the location, the temperature, the atmosphere, the other characters emotions, etc. Since the audience can't see you, you have to let everything come through the voice. When you dive fully into any character, you can make a whole world come to life, just through voices. It's magical.

Then what has been the biggest challenge working as a voice actor?

KAREN: My biggest challenge as a voiceover artist is vocal strain and fatigue. A lot of video game dialogue is very intense and demands a lot of battle cries and screaming. A lot of cartoons also really demand you to stretch your voice as well. The vocal chords are muscles and can become sore and over-used, just like any other muscles in the body. A day of speaking and yelling non-stop is like a small marathon for the vocal chords. Sometimes there's not enough time to rest the voice between jobs. I just recorded 4 hours of a very deep, scratchy dragon-like voice the other day, and had to wake up the next morning and sound like a 10 year-old girl for another role. I had to do a lot of vocal warm-ups and drink a lot of hot water. After so many years of screaming, zombie and dragon voices, or even little boys that yell a lot, the voice takes a little longer to recover.

What has surprised you most about your career so far?

KAREN: I'm just simply grateful to have been making my living for so many years doing what I love.

At this stage of your career, what do you think you have learned from the roles and projects you have worked on?

KAREN: More than ever, amidst the craziness of this business, all the competition, all the pressure, I keep being reminded to keep going back to why I fell in love with acting in the first place. To tell deeply human stories, to travel inside myself and help others to travel into the corners of the human

soul. To play like a child, adventure into the world of my imagination, and dive into the collective unconscious of humanity. Daring to “not know,” to not have all the answers, but to actually be a deeply curious and playful adventurer, following where my heart (or the heart of a character I am playing) tugs me to go.

Then what are the perks of where you are in your career right now?

KAREN: As I get a bit older, contrary to popular belief, there are actually so many more interesting roles available to me. Edgier, more character-y, more complex, deeper, and more out-there than when I was younger. I am actually really excited about what lies ahead. Also, I am also a dialect coach and acting coach, and a lot of agents and managers send their actors to me to coach them for auditions or to prepare a role. It’s such an honor to be able to call on everything that I have learned over the years to help others achieve their dreams.

What has been your proudest achievement as a working actor at this point in your career?

KAREN: I have many small milestones that I’m really proud of for different reasons, but not one big one.

Has there been any great advice you have gotten about working as an actor?

KAREN: Don’t take anything personally. In a world of ruthless criticism, commercialism, skepticism and fear, keep baring your heart and soul, humanity, and quiriness. In a business where you want people to like you, watch your show, cast you in their project, etc... you somehow have to find a way to not care what people think in order to offer something truly authentic, human, spontaneous, moving, and truly compelling. It’s a huge paradox, and in my mind, this is mastery. I am far from this, but aspire and work towards it

every day...I would also add to take not take oneself or what we are doing too seriously either. And for God's sake be a kind, decent human being.

What advice would you offer to other upcoming and aspiring actors?

KAREN: 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 who 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 life like an artist and not like a salesperson.

At a time when women's voices are rising to be heard and respected around the country and world, what do you recommend your fans do to lend support in that endeavor?

KAREN: I think this all can start really close to home in each one of our personal lives. Really support the women close to you. And don't backstab your friends, men or women. Cut that out. Empower your daughters, sisters, nieces, and women friends. Where in our own lives can we move beyond cultural conditioning and closed-mindedness? Listen more to what people in your life really have to say. And then listen even just a little more.

From your view point, what lessons can be gleaned from the "MeToo" era?

KAREN: This is complex, because I have my own personal #MeToo horror stories. I will say that those experiences have made me stronger. I would encourage all women including myself to stand up for what we know is right, and not to be afraid to lose an important opportunity or people's opinions by

doing the right thing. The other side of this coin, is that we need to be careful not to get too closed up and resentful about this whole thing that we lose our connection to the beauty of sensuality and the beauty of the dance between masculine and feminine that is so much part of art and life itself. Having been brought up and lived in Europe so long, I really appreciate a freedom to live in and express a life-filled sensuality and healthy relationship to sexuality that exists in that part of the world that America risks to lose if we allow these issues to make us too angry or hold onto resentment in a way that closes us up too tightly.

Do you have any other upcoming projects that you can share that fans should keep an eye out for?

KAREN: I can't speak about anything I'm currently working on because of all the NDA's I've signed on various projects!! But I can announce that I have a lead in Tom Six's new film, "The Onania Club," an exciting new bold and controversial feature. Stay tuned for more information on that.

All new episodes of PREACHER air Sunday nights at 10:00 p.m. on AMC. For sneak peeks and information, about the show, you can follow the show on Twitter [@PreacherAMC](https://twitter.com/PreacherAMC). Then to see what the next chapter is in Karen's journey, you can follow her on Twitter [@karenstrassman](https://twitter.com/karenstrassman).

"The Onania Club" preview:

THE ONANIA CLUB TEASER

