



INTERVIEWS

# Cara Gee – The Carmilla Movie

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By: Lisa Steinberg

**Q) When you read the script for *The Carmilla Movie*, what really stood out to you?**

A) Well, first of all I was floored to be asked to play Emily Bronte. I never in a million years would have dreamed that I would get the chance to play this iconic writer. So, the fact that they were asking me to play that role and to have Grace Lynn Kung playing my sister is just so outside of the norm. It was fantastic that they are seeing me as an individual human first and to see Grace as an individual human first. To be able to try to embody the essence of this version of Emily Bronte is just an unexpected thrill. So, what I really loved about the script (of course) is that Emily is sweet, kind and warm. I don't often get to play those kinds of characters. [laughs] So, to get to embody that essence was so delightful. I think this version of Emily Bronte is just so kind. It was joyful to be able to step into that.

**Q) I often watched the episodes of “Carmilla” the web series multiple times because you miss some of the layers and subtext to the writing with just one viewing because so much happens in such small periods of time.**

A) Absolutely. I think the writing is extremely clever. I think we are subverting a lot of tropes with this genre. It’s fab to be a part of that! I won’t give too much away, but even the fact that Emily is being particularly kind in the situation she finds herself in is unexpected. [squeals] I’m so excited!

**Q) We see the core “Carmilla” cast come to this mysterious house. It’s kind of like *Ghostbusters* mixed with *Beauty and the Beast*. That’s such a great juxtaposition.**

A) Yes! And the core cast gets to go on this absolutely fantastic adventure. It’s really an adventure story. Of course, unlike with the web series we have a camera that can move around. It’s going to be incredible to explore that depth and movement. I think that certainly the team made the most of it. Between the writing, directing and producing there is a real sense of adventure.

**Q) One of the things I loved about the web series is the cinematography and the way the camera angles made you feel like a fly on the wall. It gives such a unique perspective when you watch and it can almost be a character in itself. Will we still have that same experience through the movie?**

A) Our director of photography, James, did magical things in a very short amount of time and with a really, really incredible set. Our art department were just really successful in capturing that spooky vibe. It’s a perfect Halloween movie because of the visual quality that we’re going to have. The director of photography and art department are total rock stars. I haven’t seen it yet. I have only seen the bits online that everyone else can see, but it’s a huge part of it that I’m looking forward to it. I think because we experienced the web series as a fly on the wall you will get the sense of walking with the characters. That’s going to be infinite in a different way.

**Q) I like that the series is always evolving and growing.**

A) And I think that point of view is always justified. From the very, very beginning of having it being Laura’s blog – you understand why you are seeing what you’re seeing. I think that’s why it stands out as to such a successful web series. You have to justify that perspective and I think that the movie just takes it to the next level. Oh! It’s going to be such a good time!

**Q) Can you talk about working with the cast and becoming a part of this special series?**

A) I adore each and every single person. We were so fortunate to have this group of people. It was amazing to work with Grace. I've known her for years now. She actually was on an episode of "The Expanse" as well. Of course, we were in completely different areas of the universe so I wasn't ever on set with her. She and I also shot a film together ages ago called *Birdland*, but we weren't in any of the same scenes. So, I've worked with her on two different projects, but finally I get to have scenes with her. We just did so much giggling and had the best, best time! And Katilyn Alexander makes me laugh like no one else on this planet. They are brutally funny and they have the most hysterical facial expressions. I couldn't look at them while we were shooting. Steph and Mel as producers are two of the most inspiring people in the universe. Mel is just so driven and so powerful. She has not only created a company around her that supports her...She was supporting during this time, too. To see that actually working was incredibly inspiring and how it should be everywhere for women working.

**Q) What has it been like for you through social media getting this instant feedback and interactions from Creampuffs?**

A) The social media aspect of this whole production I must admit I find it a little overwhelming. I'm not terribly active on social media. I don't have Instagram or Snapchat. I figured out Twitter like two seconds ago. [laughs] It doesn't come easily to me. I really admire when people can put their personality through and have themselves be clear on social media. The love and support that this series gets from the fans I feel it so strongly and it's such a beautiful thing. There is a rock star energy to the whole thing that makes it thrilling. And it makes sense! What I love about *Carmilla* is that yes, Carmilla (Natasha Negovanlis) and Laura (Elise Bauman) happen to be lesbians in a relationship, but the story is not about identity issues. It's about an adventure and it just so happens that they are lesbians. Thank God we have a world where we get to just go on a cool adventure with these women and it's not a soul-wrenching heart-wrenching drama about their deepest, darkest secrets. People of all sexual identities and gender identities can go on an adventure. There is power in that. There is great, great power in that. For me, can I please be in a vampire adventure story?! I don't want every single project I do to be about the issues surrounding my oppression. I'm really happy to work on a vampire adventure story. Let's go on an adventure! We can have fun, also. That's not to trivialize the important work that needs to be done to advocate for ending oppression. It's all important work, too. But for God's sake let's celebrate! I think that's what a big part of the fan love is about. It's about seeing a mirror of yourselves in an adventure world.

**Q) How do the costumes add to the tone and element of the film?**

A) Well, Jessica Clayton was our costume designer and she was actually the costume designer for “Inhuman Condition” as well. She is so talented and so stylish and so extremely cool. So, I feel like in doing a period piece like this, there is some different time periods covered within the film. I’m wearing a gown and, for me, I immediately clicked into character as soon as I put the gown on and as soon as I had my hair down. That is not a time period that I would have ever expected to be cast in. You don’t see a lot of first nation’s people in Victorian ball gowns. And it was awesome to get to do that and I’m so grateful that it is a world that Stephanie and Melanie have created where it is possible.

**Q) I can only imagine how overwhelming and invigorating certain moments were to film.**

A) Yeah! We got to shoot in a mansion and I got to dance with Matt [Connor!] Secretly, don’t tell anyone else, but he was the best one! He was the best dancer of everyone – by far! The dancing was comically difficult. Also, we were wearing dresses and it was extremely challenging. But, I got to dance with Matt and it was wicked!

**Q) Kirsch has a huge heart and has a lot of bravery. He’s almost a classic storybook character where he has a bounty of bravery but yet doesn’t know not to run off right into battle.**

A) I have a soft spot in my heart for Kirsch, no doubt about it. It was only heightened when I got to meet Matt because he is so dear, sweet and talented. He’s actually very sharp in real life. [laughs]

**Q) I’m excited to be able to explore more from all of the characters. I’m excited to see how these small bursts of time we are used to with the web series have turned into a full-length film.**

A) Fans of the web series, this is going to be a fully immersive experience. It’s this epic adventure and you’re with us every step of the way. It won’t be interrupted every seven minutes. [laughs] It’s such a gift. It really is! It is a love letter to the fans, really. It’s because of the fans that it was able to be made. There is so much good stuff in it – so much steamy stuff and fantasy. There is so much magic! It’s a dream! And it’s spooky. And it’s Halloween. And their vampires. [laughs]

**Q) You have played so many diverse and fierce females in all of your projects. What have you taken away or held on to from your time playing so many powerful poignant women who also have this rich vulnerability underlying in them?**

A) Thank you for asking that and I take it as a huge compliment. I feel extremely grateful to have been tasked with embodying these fierce characters. I think to do that as an actor you have to just summon every last drop of strength and courage and be willing to put it all out there – every last drop of my own strength. I think that especially in “Strange Empire” and “The Expanse,” each of those characters are actually quite a bit stronger even than me. Imagine drawing every last drop of my own strength from my reservoir and then throwing it as far as I can...It’s such an exercise in imagination. It’s not just summoning all of my strength. It sounds so strange, but it’s summoning it from even beyond myself. I try to soak it up from my feet – from the core of the Earth even – to add on top of the strength that I have. I need that extra dose to honor the strength that character has who is stronger than me. It’s an amazing task and I’m very grateful. Because you can’t help but feel an adrenaline rush after you’ve shot a really strong and powerful scene. It’s the best job ever! I feel very grateful.

**Q) Why is it so important (more now so than ever) during the present political climate to see these type of women represented on screen?**

A) Oh my goodness! I hope that the answer is contained in the question. Strong women exist all around us and also it’s okay to support each other in our weakness as well and our flaws. When I get to play a complex layered character it is a reminder that women are human and that we have our own experiences and hopes and dreams and desires and likes and dislikes and that we are not ornamental. It’s not our soul purpose. To be able to play characters with a point of view and an emotional arc is fantastic. I feel very, very, very lucky to be a part of the projects I’ve been asked to be a part of. I feel like I’m carving a really fabulous career playing fantastic roles. I feel very grateful for that. I work really, really hard at portraying those characters to the best of my abilities. I do not take that opportunity lightly. I try my very best to be as creative as I can and to hopefully make those characters leap off the page and leap through the screen. That’s my goal – that audiences (no matter what the project or format) are able to identify with the character I’m trying to portray and to walk in her shoes.

**Q) At the end of the movie, what do you want fans to take away or remember from watching the film?**

A) I think that at the end of the film my main hope would be that everyone has really felt like they have gone on an adventure with us and that everyone feels joyful for that adventure. I hope that people really, really have fun going on an adventure with us.

**Q) Is there anything else you want to be sure fans know about what is to come for you?**

A) We're in the middle of shooting Season Three of "The Expanse" now and it's going to be so good. The season premieres in February and it is a really complex continuous story. So, if people want to start watching from season one now they'll be ready to watch it when it comes out. It's a pretty complex storyline so it takes some time. Some shows are a slice of pizza and some shows are a chicken wing. This show is like a seven course menu. [laughs] You've got to be ready to sit down and eat. It's so cool getting to do new things. I can't spoil anything, but it's so good!