

Erika Alexander - BIO

ERIKA ALEXANDER has the kind of life story that seems like it could only happen in the movies. The child of two orphans, Erika grew up in the mountains of Arizona. Her father was an itinerant preacher who kept the family moving. Then an amazing series of "discoveries" by a who's who of film, theater and television propelled her into a remarkable career.

Famed producers Merchant and Ivory "discovered" her in a basement theater in Philadelphia and cast her as the lead in their film, *My Little Girl*. She was then "discovered" by theater legend Peter Brook for his epic Royal Shakespeare Company production, *The Mahabharata*. She created the role of "Madri/Hidimbi" and toured the world. Public Theater founder Joseph Papp "discovered" Erika and cast her in his last play, *The Forbidden City*. As if this weren't enough, TV icon Bill Cosby then "discovered" Erika, and created the role of "Cousin Pam" for her on *The Cosby Show*.

Alexander starred for five years as fan favorite "Maxine Shaw" in the hit series *Living Single*, winning two NAACP awards for Best Actress in a Comedy. She also won critical raves as parole officer-on-the-edge "Dee Mulhern" in Showtime's original series *Street Time*.

Erika's recent film work has been equally distinguished. She co-starred opposite Denzel Washington in Tony Scott's *Deja Vu* for Touchstone Pictures and in director Steven Soderbergh's independent feature, *Full Frontal* with Julia Roberts and Brad Pitt. She has been an indie film standout in films such as Sundance favorites *30 Years to Life* and *Love Liza*, which starred Philip Seymour Hoffman.

On stage, Erika has starred in six plays at New York's Public Theater, most recently garnering accolades in *The Story* opposite Tony-winner Phylicia Rashad. The New York Times called her work "a nervy, spot-on performance." Another highlight was her appearance in the Public's Shakespeare in the Park production of *The Taming of the Shrew*.

Erika was a national surrogate for Hillary Clinton in her 2008 presidential campaign, and a 2008 William J. Clinton Foundation delegate to Africa. She is also an activist/advocate for at-risk youth and for women and girls, speaking around the country and raising money on their behalf. She is married to painter and screenwriter Tony Puryear.

Erika recurs on the hit USA drama series *In Plain Sight* and recently starred in the film *La Mission* with Benjamin Bratt. She co-created the graphic novel *Concrete Park*, to be published by Dark Horse Comics in 2012. www.concretepark.com.