

Ballet, academe and the theater were this writer's stops on the way to *Maid*, a story of a strong-willed young woman.

Her Will and Her Way

Molly Smith Metzler loves to solve "big, elaborate and difficult" jigsaw puzzles — a Zen pastime that aids her writing process. "I make people nervous when I'm doing puzzles because it doesn't look like I'm writing," the playwright and screenwriter says. "But I'm breaking story, thinking about things, and suddenly I'll turn in a script."

As creator, showrunner and executive producer of Netflix's *Maid*, Metzler embraced the tricky task of adapting Stephanie Land's bestselling 2019 memoir, *Maid: Hard Work, Low Pay, and a Mother's Will to Survive*. Margaret Qualley stars as Alex, a young mother who flees an abusive relationship and cleans houses to make ends meet.

"What was very hard about adapting *Maid* is that the narrator speaks to no one," Metzler says. "I wanted to preserve her sense of loneliness but also make it must-see TV."

To achieve the necessary dramatic effect, she and her fellow writers created fantasy sequences that allow Alex to express her feelings.

"I like a challenge," says the Kingston, New York, native, who trained as a ballet dancer before embarking on a decade of study. At SUNY Geneseo, she earned a bachelor's degree in English, followed by a master's in creative writing from Boston University, an MFA in dramatic writing from NYU's Tisch School of the Arts and an artist diploma from Juilliard.

In 2010, her breakout play about class conflict, *Elemeno Pea*, launched her theater career. Over the next five years, she wrote plays, became a mom and taught.

Shortly after she decided in 2015 that she wanted to work in TV, producer-director Steve McQueen hired her to write for his HBO miniseries, *Codes of Conduct*. The show never aired, but Metzler soon landed a job writing for Hulu's *Casual*. That led her to Netflix's *Orange Is the New Black* and Showtime's *Shameless*, where she worked with executive producer John Wells; he subsequently optioned *Maid* with Margot Robbie.

"I'd written a play called *Cry It Out* about motherhood and socioeconomics, and everyone in John's office had just seen it," Metzler recalls. "I happened to be in the room and top of mind when they were discussing writers for *Maid*. The themes in the show are very much my 'stuff.'"

Metzler's "stuff" hit a chord with viewers, making *Maid* one of Netflix's all-time top ten series. She signed a three-year deal with Netflix to "keep the party going" and plans to mix things up for her next project.

"It would be fun to write something a little sunnier," she says.
—Hilary Hattenbach



Margaret Qualley and Rylea Nevaeh in *Maid*



Molly Smith Metzler

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