



Sofia Helin and Kyle MacLachlan star in "Atlantic Crossing on Masterpiece" beginning Sunday on PBS (check local listings).

A special political relationship fuels 'Atlantic Crossing' on 'Masterpiece'

If war can make for strange bedfellows, that doesn't go only for soldiers, but also sometimes for world leaders.

A true example from World War II is dramatized in the "Masterpiece" series "Atlantic Crossing," which begins its eight-part run on the PBS anthology during its 50th-anniversary season Sunday, April 4 (check local listings). President Franklin D. Roosevelt — played, with a notable assist from the makeup department, by Kyle MacLachlan — offers safe harbor to Crown Princess Martha of Norway (Sofia Helin, "The Bridge") and her children when her country is invaded by Nazi officers, generating a variety of opinions from other politicians and the two leaders' constituents.

"It all has to do with the gray hair," muses "Twin Peaks" and "Sex and the City" alum MacLachlan about taking on the part of FDR. "I'm just grateful to still be in the game and to have wonderful opportunities like playing Roosevelt in 'Atlantic

Crossing,' with such amazing people guiding me. As an actor, I think it's always about the challenge, and in some ways the uncertainty as to the ability to pull something off. I love that fear. It drives me ... and the idea of playing Roosevelt was a pretty monumental consideration. He stands tall, certainly in American history and among all American presidents."

"Atlantic Crossing" co-writer Linda May Kallestein explains, "We started out by looking into the Roosevelt Library at the National Archives, and we found some letters between the crown princess and the president where she asks him to remember her little country when she presents some problems that she hopes he can help solve. And that was the starting point.

"We wanted to dive deep down as far as we could get to primary sources," Kallestein adds, "so little by little, we pieced together this story that even in Norway is not known. The

crown princess sadly died in the '50s, so everything she did during the war is more or less forgotten. It was quite the journey."

Co-star Helin admits that she "had never heard of" Crown Princess Martha, "even though she's Swedish and all this happened. I guess that's a result of telling the story from the male perspective for 80 years, and now it's time to tell another perspective. When Alexander (Eik, executive producer, co-writer and director of 'Atlantic Crossing') pitched this to me, I knew instantly that I needed to tell this story about this woman.

"Heroes who don't take any credit for what they do (are) the most interesting heroes," Helin notes, "so the character just instantly came to me, and I wanted to do it. No one in Sweden knew about her, either ... but in Norway, she's more famous."

Guide to the TV grids

TV Ratings:

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- '14': Children over 14
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- N: Program is new

- PA: Parental advisory
- DVS: Descriptive video service
- EI: Educational/instructional
- D: Dialogue
- L: Language
- S: Sexual situations
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