



EPISODE 107

Vikki Carter | The Author's Librarian

Authors of the Pacific Northwest: Ep. 107: Erica Miner: Opera Mystery Series

Vikki : Welcome to the podcast authors of the Pacific Northwest, where I connect authors with their readers. We also talk all about the authors inspiration, their journey to publication, and the authors will educate me and you the listener all about the business of writing. I'm your host Vikki, J. Carter also known as the authors librarian. Hi there listeners. It's the host of producer. Vikki J. Carter of this podcast, the Authors of the Pacific Northwest. And before we jump into the episode, I wanted to stop real quickly and share with you the newest project that I'm working on. If you are an author, I think you might be interested in it. I have a YouTube channel that I just launched called the authors librarian on YouTube. And on that YouTube channel, I am going to share with you free, accessible resources that you can use to help you with researching. I'm going to give you tips. I'm also interviewing librarians and I'm writing a book to help authors with researching. So you hope you find me there on that YouTube channel. You can find the link in the show notes. Now let's get to the program.

Vikki: Hi there. Thank you so much for coming back to The Authors of the Pacific Northwest. And today I have the privilege of introducing you to an author. Who's the quickly be coming one of my friends. So I love her so much. I'm happy to introduce me to her. Her name is Erica Miner. So Erica is known everywhere.

Erica: Hello everyone. And thank you all for being here. I'm excited about doing this today.

Vikki: And so to see that Erica can be here because Erica has just a huge impact, knowledge of so many things that interest me a book in writing. What So Erica, why don't you share first off a little bit about yourself, starting out with what state in the Pacific Northwest you live in.

Erica: I live in Washington state in Edmonds, near Puget sound. And, I moved here from Southern California from San Diego five years ago, so that I could be close to my daughter and her family. And, I've been loving it ever since.

Vikki: Yeah, that's it. It's beautiful right now. We're hitting our work currently listeners, if you're listening to this, we are going to have our biggest record heat wave we've ever had. Like, I think we're going to hit in over 106, for a couple of days and be like, might be a little cooler.

Erica: I think we are. And well having lived in California, you know, I've got this. Yeah.

Vikki: If I had another chance to play outside, it's going to be a little hot. The interesting part for me is about your background. Before you came up here, you an incredible background in music. so share wit our listeners that, because that's what really I fell in love with you about, and you really incorporate that in your work a lot in your books. So tell us a little bit about that.

Erica: Well, it's funny that you should mention incorporating it in my books because I can't escape it. Music is just too much a part of my life and it all always has been since I was a kid. I actually played a violin at the Metropolitan Opera and the orchestra for 21 years. And that is really the biggest chunk of my life. And it meant a great deal to me to be able to perform with these great singers like Luciano, Pavarotti, and Placido Domingo, and to watch them and learn from them. As I learned so much about this opera. So opera has been a passion for me for a long time, but I actually started writing before I even started playing the violin. And that was back when I was growing up in Detroit. the public schools had, well, it was a wonderful system and they had afterschool programs and I was placed in one for creative writing when I was about seven or eight years old.

Erica: And I don't know why some teacher must've seen a spark of something in me, but, and of course I don't remember much of what I wrote, but I do remember loving the whole process of creating characters and plot lines and weaving them all together to tell a stories. I just love telling stories, but once I started playing the violin, as those of you who, who played instruments, you know, especially the violin, it's so difficult that everything else kind of fell by the wayside. but fortunately all of that violin playing eventually led me to the met. On the other hand, I never stopped writing. I kept writing in my journals. And in fact, my first two books before my mystery series were both based on my journals. And, I took writing classes when I was at the met, whenever I could fit them into my schedule. So that once I finally left the met and was looking for a new creative outlet, it seemed the perfect choice to go back to my lifelong love of writing. And, we moved out to California and I started studying with a writing teacher in Los Angeles, screenwriting. And then, I kind of migrated over to novels and that's been my passion ever since.

Vikki: Yes. And he has such a huge body of work. And, the ones that I, the book that I read it is very filled with opera. And I don't think you can pick a better stage for murder mystery in my opinion. And that's what the book that I read was your genre, the murder mystery, in the opera, which is so fantastic because, you know, for people that don't know a lot of history, there is some of that actually out in history very interesting drama around opera and plays and operahouses.

Erica: Absolutely. When you think about it, you know, the the opera stage is just filled with drama all the time. But what people don't know about is the drama that goes on behind the scenes. And that's why I decided to write these novels because I wanted to give people an inside of you of all the jealousies and the rivalries and, you know, the backstabbing that goes on there. And, it kind of reflects what goes on, on stage in these operas, but only more so it's, people don't have any idea, you know, what, what, you know, I mean, I like to say that I, I wrote my first one where during the pit, which takes place at the met, so that I could kill off all the people who made my life miserable.

Vikki: Well, I'm trying to lead into the question that I have, because I know you and I talked prior to this interview. and I think I asked you this at the time, are there people in your book that are inspirational people you actually played with and if so do they know that you've written books that have inspiration about like, I can see opera individual being a little bit dramatic, you know, and being like, okay I don't want to be in your book.

Erica: It's absolutely true. there, especially at the Met. Since I was there for such a long time, we all got to know each other too well. As a matter of fact, you see more of these people than you see of anybody else. I like to talk about The Met orchestra is 100 neurotic musicians thrown together in a hole in the ground with no light and no air seven days a week; days, nights, and weekends, sooner or later, someone's going to want to kill someone there. So there definitely were people at the Met who inspired a number of characters. One in particular who is pretty much exactly the same as he was in real life. The others are mostly combinations of different people. You know, I didn't want it to be too obvious on the other hand, people who really knew these people very well recognize them immediately. So, you know, but it's fiction . So, I certainly didn't use the same names and I made stuff up and, I had a lot of fun with it. Believe me.

Vikki: I was going to say that's to be just so much fun to work out all of those years because if you know musicians, they're also a lot of egos you're bumping into and around. And, so it's gonna be fun to work that out.

Erica: It's funny about the egos. When you compare musicians to writers, you know, your fellow musicians will always want you to mess up. No, they're just waiting for you to make a mistake and writers are so the opposite. They're so supportive and encouraging. And, the contrast just quite amazing.

Vikki: I agree. I'm so glad you brought that up because it's something I've been thinking about a lot because I come from a musical background, not me personally. I won't claim to sing or playing instrument, but my husband was a full-time musician. He was in a band and we traveled a good 11 years of our first part of our marriage, raise our kids on the road in a touring van. And so I know the musician egos very, very well. And all the players around it like the management and the stage managers and all of that. I never felt welcomed in that environment like I feel in the author community, you're a hundred percent right. It doesn't mean we don't bump into egos in the writing community. Cause there's plenty of them, but they can still be giving in a way it's, it's really nice.

Erica: They want you to succeed, you know, and musicians don't. What can I say I mean, let's face it, the Met Opera is very high stakes atmosphere. So you multiply anything else by a hundred. And plus you've got, you know, four or 500 people working there at any given time and they're all at odds with each other.

Vikki: Well, can you talk a little bit through your writing process? Is it different, cause you mentioned you have two kinds of books. You have your first few books that were based on your journal and then you have your mysteries, that are based on, you know, your life in the opera but it follows the characters' through her experiences. She ends up finding dead bodies. It's pretty funny, everywhere, which is classic writing mystery. Is the writing process different for those two types of genres?

Erica: Absolutely different. The first two, one was based on my high school journals. That's all about four female friends who did music together and stayed friends forever. The first one *Travels with My Lovers* is based on my journals over a number of years where I went through a divorce and my kids would spend time with their dad or my parents during the summer. And then I would go off on these adventures and it was pretty steamy stuff. I'm not afraid of anybody recognizing someone in those. In fact, my three best friends are still my best friends. And I wrote it very much as a love letter to them. But when it came to the mystery series that was a whole different thing because this was a way of working out.

Erica: my feelings, both positive and negative about the people I worked with and through this character who is like the young me, my alter ego, when I first started out in my twenties. She's very idealistic and you know, starry-eyed and excited about being there. And then she starts to find out about how people resent each other and how the people on the stage, even though they're a big opera stars, they're not necessarily the most savory characters and neither are some of the characters behind stage; the stage hands, the general manager, all these people. I exaggerated because that's what you do in fiction. But, it was based on my experiences in a part of my life that was all important for many, many years. And then once I wrote the first one, *Murder in the Pit*, and a lot of people I'm happy to say read it started asking me about a sequel.

Erica: And one of them suggested that I go to Santa Fe opera and write about that. And Santa Fe opera that was *Death by Opera*. The second novel is a unique place. It's in the middle of the desert in New Mexico. And, and there's nothing else like it in the world, but you have an atmosphere of mystery. First of all, because they say there are more ghosts in Santa Fe than anywhere else in the country or the world. And there are these mysterious mountain ranges surrounding it. And, the weather patterns like, you know, certain singer friends of mine would tell me, they're doing a really dramatic scene where a statue comes to life and boom, there's a thunder and lightning right in the middle of, you know, I mean that's unique. And then after that San Francisco opera approached me and asked if I would like to write the next one taking place there.

Erica: And I have, a very vast connection to San Francisco, the city and the opera company through various relatives and friends and spent a lot of time there and my son lives in San Francisco. So, that seemed the natural thing to do. So I was very lucky in that. I got to know some of the people in the management and they provided access to the backstage and to the people who worked there. And I got tours of the opera house and got a sense of just how mysterious that places it's really, really creepy when you get down to the basement and, you know, fascinating history, you know, the gold rush, it goes all the way back to that. So, I've had just a blast learning about these new places and writing about them. It's been fantastic really. And

Vikki: So then I hear you, right. When you did the book setting in the Santa Fe area, didn't you go and visit there and spend quite a bit of time there in opera house, right?

Erica: I absolutely did. And again, I was lucky because of my background in opera. I just know a lot of people who work in these various opera houses and one of them was a friend from way, way back from the met. And he got me into the entire theater, the campus, he told me stories that went back many, many decades about, opera stars from the past and in the present. And we got to go to performances. It was, I really was steeped in the atmosphere. So a lot of people who read that book *Death by Opera*, say that in reading it, they want to get on the next plane and just go to Santa Fe.

Vikki: Yeah. And you know, that's something I want to bring up because I did read your third book, the one centered in the San Francisco setting, and I know San Francisco area very, very well. I have spent plenty of time there. And that's the aspects about your book... Well, it was couple aspects that I liked, but I really liked that. I felt like I knew it. I felt you lived there and actually, you know, performed in that opera for years because there has such a great depth of being in the area. I think I asked you about that. And that's when you told me that you just said you visited. That's such a great example of what I tell people all the time, as a librarian that when you do research... research doesn't have to be online. You can actually do living research, which is going to be so much better for your writing. If you go to places and get to know people that are in that environment, you ask questions, you hear story, you actually put yourself in that culture. It can make a much better book. So you're a great example of that.

Erica: Thank you. And again, I was very lucky because one of my closest friends lives there and she drove me all around the city, looking for locations to write about, especially for the climax. And when you read the book you'll see that I really was there the way I describe every detail. And I don't want to tell too much about it, but

Erica: it gets pretty exciting at the end. And I think San Francisco is just even more than New York, the best setting. Absolutely. I've got so much history. You've got mystery, you've got intrigued, you've got everything there. It's wonderful.

Vikki: In general it's just wonderful, but wow, well, great. Good job on the living research. I mean, I have a whole section in my book of finding expert, if you aren't familiar with a particular area that you're writing about. And I have a whole section in my book about finding an expert to help you. And I did have this conversation with my writer's group because one of my writers in my group, he's doing police procedures and he really struggled with that. And I'm like, you need to get a hold of a detective, go on a car ride with them. And, you know, that's the fun part about being an author is that you can almost turn anything into research.

Erica: That's absolutely true. In fact, with *Murdering the Pit* I did have on my team a detective who had many, many years experience and she really told me what's right... what's not right. What can happen... What can't happen, you know, get really into the depth of it. And that makes a big difference when the climate of the book .

Vikki: The publication journey, please share with us that journey because I know you and I talked in the past and it hasn't always been pleasant. And I think it's so important for others to hear, how you've overcome that journey to be successful because I view you as a very successful author. Look at her website, you guys, she's got tons of great stuff going on.

Erica: Yeah. Because I also do lectures. And I also write as a journalist for musical groups like Seattle symphony. And, you know, there's a lot of stuff there, but as far as the journey to publication, I've never known of anyone who's had an easy journey. It's just, you know, in a way it's parallel to trying to get a job in it in a major orchestra, you have to do the auditions, you have to suffer rejection, you have to keep going. And that's kind of the way it worked. It's a difficult path, but personally I was impatient to get my first book out there. And so I decided that it was the first book *Travels with my Lovers*, that I would go, print on demand our POD. And there were several advantages to doing it that way. Because once you finished writing your book and editing it, then they provide certain services like they design a cover. And, you get to do the input on the cover. You can choose a format. You can decide to order as many or as few copies as you need. So that was really convenient to start out and to get my name out there and to start going out there and talking about the book. I learned that I had to do that, you know, it's not enough just to write and publish. You'd have to let people know about it. That's marketing. That's a whole other subject,

Vikki: It's a full time job.

Erica: There's a very famous, writer, expert on book marketing named Dan Poynter, he always said that writing is 5% writing and 95% marketing.

Vikki: That's absolutely true.

Erica: That's the hardest point. But in any case, happily that book *Travels with my Lovers* won the fiction prize in the Direct from the Author Book Awards. So that was on the positive side, but on the neck of that side, at least at that point, when it came to promotion at that time, there was a lot of bias against self published authors. And even though that's gotten better in recent years, I found it kind of discouraging. So I decided that I wanted the credibility of going with a traditional publisher. And fortunately I had a friend, also a violinist and a writer who referred me and recommended me to her publisher. So I was able a traditional publisher. I was able to go directly without getting an agent to publishing *Murder in the Pit* and the two novels that followed with this publisher. Unfortunately with the most recent one, *Staged for Murder*, you know, it's, it's, let's just say that publishing in the middle of a pandemic is not f for the faint of heart.

Erica: For some reason, which I still haven't gotten to the bottom of this, there was no print version. And so many of my readers really enjoy having a book in their hands and they kept asking, when is the print version? And I kept trying to get an answer out of this publisher. And finally, I got some help from some local and also national writers groups, Sisters in Crime, the local and natural chapters and the local Epic group writers here in Edmond. And somebody told me that there was an organization called, and this is good for your listeners to know about Washington Lawyers for the Arts. And they do pro bono work for you for artists, writers, musicians who are having legal problems and issues. And so I had a consult with one of their lawyers who advised me to get my rights back and look for another publisher. And in fact, that's most of what most of my writing friends also advised. So that's what I did. I got a letter together with his advice and guidance sent it to my publisher that I wanted my rights back. I got my rights back. And now, since I talked to you last, I actually have found a new publisher.

Vikki: Congratulations. It was really what you wanted to do.

Erica: And especially the one publisher I wanted the most because this publisher actually does mysteries. They specialize in mysteries and they have a number of other writers who write art mysteries.

Vikki: So that's the genre we're putting in, art? Because, I didn't think there was an opera murder mystery genre. Right?

Erica: I created it. Within the genre of art mysteries, they have someone who writes mysteries in the symphony. They have someone who writes mystery in the ballet. And so my opera mysteries fit right in. So I'm really, really excited about this. I have not yet signed the contracts, but the contracts are forthcoming. She's taken on all three of my books. She's going to republish all of them possibly with different titles. So I'll have to keep you posted on that. Yeah. So I'm really excited about making this happen. So I know that I did the right thing getting my rights back and finding someone else who has a much more active, shall we say, roster of authors and their all their authors support each other in the publishing company. So I'm really excited about that. And as I know more, I'll tell you more, but that's where I am in my path.

Vikki: I am happy to hear that. I know when we talked last, that was a definite concern and burden. I selected for independent authorship just because that's the journey I'm on right now. I have some good news too. I'm gonna share here in just a second because going, gonna come out right after we record. But I'm currently loving the journey of the independent author, you know, doing it all myself. But I wanted to learn it inside and out before I have the opportunity, if I choose to go public with a publishing company, because I've been burnt in the music industry work because I didn't know the insides and outs about everything. It's helped me to learn. But I'm so, so happy that you have gotten your rights and then you also got picked up with a company that sounds like a great fit.

Erica: I'm absolutely confident that it is. And I'm really excited about the journey ahead.

Vikki: Listen, everybody, you know, just get on my show notes. I'll have Erica's website there where she's going to probably update all of the information on how do you get her book. I'm in the middle of putting my Research Like a Librarian book out in print. I put it out of ebook first. I thought that would be easier. And it kind of was, and now I'm getting the print version out, hopefully by the end of this month, which is June and that's been a process learning that whole process, getting the whole thing down. I love independent author world and self publishing world so much. I will be coming on a super huge podcast, which will be out in the fall for independent authors, talking about my research book for writers. And I've also been at be within months...

Vikki: So my book came out, I'm going to be a speaker for this huge conference. It's for independent authors called [Self Publishing Con](#) #selfpubcon, they do it online. They're out of England. it's through ALLi the Alliance for Independent Authors. They only are taking 24 speakers. And I pitched, I ended up getting asked. You know, I'll pitch, like I'll never make it in. And they're like, we love your topic. Can you be a speaker for the conference? I'm so super excited because I feel like when you know you're going on the right path and you get these little bits of confirmations. It's been some time we talked, you were a little bit discouraged about getting your rights back. So it's so great that seeing the other side that you got it and almost immediately there was another place for you to find a home.

Erica: Yeah. It's, it's not easy, but when it works, it's really it's worth it.

Vikki: It really is. It is. So you talked little bit about before. I know I could not do anything without my support group. I have writers group and you you've mentioned a few that we'll definitely put on show notes. Are there some other ones that you would recommend for individuals that are starting out or they need to find a support group

Erica: I think, a great resource is Writer's Digest online classes. They have, resources that you can help that will help you to find writers groups. And also of course you can Google writers groups in your areas, Sisters in Crime, if you write in that genre is great. And Epic group writers as well because they're so local. It's much more intimate and personal. So, that's how I found out about the Washington Lawyers for the Arts. So they're a great resource, and great support the ones that I would suggest, but Writer's Digest is a great, overall resource for just about anything you can think of.

Vikki: We have kinda of touched base on the titles. Now I've read one book and you know, listeners, I don't endorse books unless I love them. And I really do love your work so you can take it for a meal. It's great writing. Very good. And the part that I loved without the book that I graduated, that I felt like not believe were you doing mystery, but you were getting those of us that have very little loud opera, almost like a, classical opera. Like we got to learn a lot about the functions of opera. You use a lot of words that are specific to classical music or opera music, which I thought was brilliant. It just was really well done. So your titles starting with the two, you know, the three that are not the mystery and then your mystery titles. And then share with us what you're going to read from, and then I'm going to let you set the stage for that reading. I'm going to go on mute because I don't know if you guys could hear... my husband is doing some work around me. So I better go on mute before it gets crazy.

Erica: All right, then I'm taking it away. I, the first two books, the first one was called *Travels with My Lovers*. And that was a POD. That one, the fiction prize in the, direct from the author book awards. The second one that was published with an independent publisher is called *Forever Friends*. And, that's another one based on my journals. It was a love letter to my high school best friends. Then *Murdering the Pit* that takes place at the Metropolitan Opera. That's all based on my own background. Having spent many years as a violinist there that was followed by *Death by Opera*, which takes place at Santa Fe opera, the land of ghosts. And then finally the most recent is *Staged for Murder*, which takes place at San Francisco opera. And I was so happy to find in all these three mystery opera books, that there are a lot of opera lovers out there who also love mysteries and mystery lovers who are delighted to learn about opera.

Erica: And I try to make it fun and really intriguing, you know, and I try to explain where it's that I think people might not be familiar with. And I was happy to know that a lot of people who know very little or even nothing about opera really enjoyed these books. And one of them came up with the phrase, "Erica Miner bringing murder and music together." which I like to think of it as my brand. I think it really works.

Erica: The novel that I'm going to read from for you is the most recent one *Staged for Murder*. And just a little bit of background. This is the third in the series. So the protagonist, a young violinist named Julia has already investigated murders at two previous opera houses. It kind of seems to follow her. So she has been hired by San Francisco opera as an interim first violinist for their summer season.

Erica: So she goes off to San Francisco. And in the meantime, there is nefarious stuff going on, which I'm about to start reading about it. Just a little bit of explanation. Each chapter heading in all of these three opera mystery novels begins with a quote from a different opera first in the original language and then the translation into English. So when I get to chapter one first, I'm going to read the prologue. Then very short, then chapter one, I'm going to start with the name of the character. And this book by the way, is all about the very famous ring operas of Wagner. So all of this is going to be in German, but not to worry. I will give you the translation. So I'll start with the prologue.

Erica: 1922, Beyond the vastness of a Northern California university stadium pulsating with opera music, the Bay Area fog covered in the night air above the hills, far off to the west. Overhead, a silver half- moon hung in the sky, unobstructed by clouds and uninterrupted by wind.

Erica: A realm unto itself, Opera Wonderland existed as if in its own universe, without intervention. For many worldly reality. The audience of thousands, their hearts wrenched by the plaintive tones of an anguish, long- suffering clown sat, mesmerized as streaks of mist began to obscure the moon's light.

Erica: In a remote corner of the stadium a lone figure lingered in the shadows: contemplating, considering, and waiting chapter one.

Erica: Present Day: The character Alberich .

Erica: Das Licht löscht euch aus,

Erica: entreiße dem Riff das Gold,

Erica: schmiede den rachenden Ring

Erica: I extinguish your light,

Erica: seize the gold from the rock,

Erica: and forge the vengeful ring. Wagner, Das Rheingold, Scene One .

Erica: They were crossing the street. Now he could see them so involved in their opera talk that they weren't paying attention.

Erica: Good.

Erica: Everyone knew that the corner of Franklin and McAllister, the nearest main crossing through the stage door of San Francisco's War Memorial Opera House was one of the busiest in the entire civic center district; especially at twilight, when people were leaving work.

Erica: Once the gilded California light began to wane, it was sometimes hard to see where one was going- or to perceive what and who might be in the immediate vicinity.

Erica: Performers from the Opera could not avoid crossing that intersection multiple times, day and night. Pedestrian accidents were not that common there, but they did happen.

Erica: Common enough.

Erica: With the driver's seat window open, he could hear fragments of their conversation. He despised that voice, the voice of an operatic tenor, who was so arrogant, so full of himself, that he showed about the stage as if he owned it, that he looked down on anyone who wasn't an opera star like himself,

Erica: Especially me.

Erica: Andres the tender spoke as he sang as if he were telling the world that he Andres was the god's gift to opera. He strutted around owning, claiming the stage and every other opera stage in the world for himself.

Erica: He doesn't deserve to be a star Maestro Mirella, our sainted founder, would never have put up with such egregious affectation.

Erica: But maestro Merola had been taken from the company much too soon.

Erica: The Maestro was a saint- a saint who didn't deserve to die before his time.

Erica: He wiped away a tear. Then, remembering that afternoon's rehearsal, he clenched his teeth. The repulsive behavior Andres exhibited that day proved he had not changed one whit since his previous engagement years ago with the company. Arguing with the stage director, the conductor. He still spoke as if he existed in some lofty echelon miles above everyone else in a Valhalla of his own, making.

Erica: That bastard. The world will be a better place without him.

Erica: The traffic signal changed to yellow, and he could see that Andres and Ben were only halfway across the intersection.

Erica: Perfect.

Erica: Their light turned red, and his turn green. It was time. Bearing down on the accelerator he hugged the right lane, trying to aim for Andres without hitting Ben. He had no gripe with Ben, but if he became collateral damage, well...

Erica: Peccato.

Erica: It would be a shame. But sometimes sacrifices must be made for the greater good: getting rid of Andres

Erica: The impact was swift and hard. He felt the thud of metal striking skin and muscle and bone. He didn't look back just race through the intersection, weaving through cars, heading straight north on Franklin. He wasn't concerned about onlookers looking up Franklin and his direction. The streets incline was relatively steep around Opera Plaza, and he knew any potential witnesses would not be able to see much further ahead. Once he had cleared their line of vision, he would be out of sight.

Erica: Bristling with tension, he wiped one clammy palm, then the other on his jacket. He quickly glanced around. No one seemed to be following him and traffic ahead was light. As he had hoped. He could slow down and act normal.

Erica: He was home free.

Erica: Would the accident be featured on KTVU Evening News? In the headlines, tomorrow morning?

Erica: He relished the thought that when he returned to the opera house, the next day, voices would be buzzing with theories about who could possibly have wanted to harm Andres Aaberg, the great Wagnerian Tenor.

Erica: Who indeed.

Vikki: Yeah, that's the part that hooked me, line and sinker. I had to find out who he was. Lovely, lovely, lovely. So everybody, makes sure you get this book. But the question I asked you while ago was, you wrote the these almost like a standalone so we could follow the character. She grows in the process of the three books, but if somebody picked up the third book, they wouldn't be missing out a whole lot. Is that correct?

Erica: That's correct. Any of these could be a standalone, but on the other hand, if you want to get the full impact, especially of the transformational arc of the character, it's really fun to start with Murder in the Pit where she's this neophyte that knows nothing. And then little by little becomes more sophisticated, but somehow murder keeps falling.

Vikki: So, Erica what is an inspirational thought or tip would you like to get somebody like me who's just generally starting out granted things that I'm starting out as good, but that doesn't mean everybody's going to have that kind of success when they start out writing book.

Erica: I think the key is to follow your passion, whatever it is. I mean, for me, I'm writing about opera. That's the art form that provides me with constant inspiration. It's really limitless. And so is my love for it. So whenever I'm looking for encouragement and inspiration, keep writing, I just go back to the operas that I've played or that I've researched or lectured about. That gives me continuing motivation to keep creating, to research, to move forward in my work also, because of course my protagonist is somewhat a reflection of myself, although I'm not nearly as brave as she is. I don't think I can possibly be that brave, but she's really really something. And the whole background is just so rich. And so that's my passion, my inspiration. So I would say follow your passion. Passion is the center of everything. If you love it and believe in it, then it will guide you in your journey.

Vikki: Yay. And I'm going to take that in myself too. Cause I love that and that's such great. And I, so listeners, on the show notes, you can also get the transcripts on my website because I'm actually to the point where we can do some transcripts. So you can download a whole PDF version of this entire podcast, take the notes from the transcripts, right. And, buy Erica's book, read it, write a review, because writing reviews are like the life blood for all of us. When you know, the particular book it's not out on Amazon or anything yet, right there, the one that you share?

Erica: That one was out in e-book for a while and it removed, waiting to be republished. The other two books are still available.

Vikki: Why not buy the other the two books and catch up, right?

Erica: While waiting for the next one. In the meantime, you can read all about my books and my journey and my lectures and all of my writing on my website, erica.minor.com. ERICAMINER.COM. You can also subscribe to my newsletter, which I'm going to start up again. Once the books are going to be republished. I have Facebook and Twitter and I have an author page on Amazon and on Goodreads . So there are lots of different places where you can find me.

Vikki: The newsletters are the best because we keep as authors you can get all that information in one newsletter once a month, generally to your inbox. So get on Erica's newsletter so you guys sneak in here when this book is published, it's so good. I want everyone to read it. But you catch up on the other two and get the other ones from the love letter series, which I think would be great t

Vikki: Erica, thank you so much for being here. Oh yes. I want to challenge my readers too, if they do, if you guys do read Erica's book email her and tell her that you found her on this podcast. It's so awesome for us to know where we've been connected with our readers. So make sure you do that for Erica. Thank you for being here.

Vikki: I'm going to do one more Indie plug here for the conference that I'm going to be doing here. Just so you guys know there should be a link in the show notes and that will link you directly to the website. And you're going to get a huge discount. There's three free days to that conference. It's going to be an October of 2021, but there's also a discount code that associated with me so that you can get all the recordings summit pass and any future conferences. And it's called SelfPubCon. So jump on show notes, get all of Erica's information, join her mailing list. And thank you Erica, for being here. I appreciate it.

Erica: Well, thank you, Vikki. It's been such a pleasure and I look forward to continuing our journey together. Yep. Me too.

Vikki : Thank you for listening to the podcast. I hope you enjoyed it as much as we did make sure you jump on the show notes and find the author by their books. Write a review. And most importantly, you can find out more about me and my projects at one of my two websites: www.squishpen.com or thauthorslibrarian.com . And until next time, this is Vikki J Carter, Tthe Authors Librarian signing off.



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