

THE PRODUCTION COMPANY  
TRIFORCE PRODUCTIONS



*Jimmy Akingbola (left), Fraser Ayres (centre), and Minnie Ayres (right)*



*TriForce Productions was launched in 2015 with the support of Red Planet Pictures who run the Red Planet Prize. They share the same office space and provide the team with advice and support. They also receive support from Creative Skillset and are about to give six writers a paid development commission.*

*'We'll be holding a series of workshops with people in the industry. There will be executive producers and talented script editors coming in to talk about things like structure and dialogue, says Minnie Ayres, one of the directors of Tri Force Productions.*

*Triforce productions have recently completed their first commission, an ITV2 panel show called Sorry I Didn't Know About Black History.*

Founder Jimmy Akingbola created TriForce Creative Network with Fraser Ayres. He is an actor, producer and mentor.

Fraser is CEO and Managing Director. As an

actor he has starred in a range of prime time dramas such as the Smoking Room and Casualty. Over the past five years, he has been doing more writing and directing – he has written for the BBC and ITV2, he also Exec Produced on Sorry, I Didn't Know.

Director of Operations Minnie Ayres (nee Crowe) is best known for playing Robyn in BBC Three's Coming of Age. She has also appeared in Doctors and MI High. On stage, she has worked with National Theatre and RSC. She's been Director of Operations at TriForce since 2012. Minnie also Exec Produced on Sorry, I Didn't Know.

TriForce Creative Network

Email: [info@thetcn.com](mailto:info@thetcn.com)

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# MINNIE AYRES

TriForce Creative Network

*If you haven't heard of TriForce Creative Network, then hotfoot your way over to their website as they are opening doors for emerging writers. They run regular competitions and several of their winners and finalists are now working as paid writers in television. They have an impressive group of patrons that includes David Harewood, Kathy Burke and Roy Williams. We got the low down on Triforce Creative Network from company director Minnie Ayres, an actress and script editor who has helped grow the organization since she joined in 2008.*

## **How did TriForce come about?**

It was founded in 2003 by Fraser Ayres and Jimmy Akingbola who are both actors. They were up in Edinburgh at the festival and loved the feel of it, the way everybody was networking and forming partnerships. They thought it would be lovely if that kind of thing was available in London. It started off as a series of networking events. Diversity at the time was a whisper in the wind and they were thinking about ways to get black actors on the screen – Jimmy is of Nigerian heritage and Fraser is mixed race, so it was a natural focus.

## **What happened at these networking events?**

There were actors, casting directors, producers, commissioners and writers. A lot of serious networking was done for the first few hours and then they had a proper party and dancing followed. Jimmy and Fraser then started to think about how they could serve this network better and they started doing rehearsed readings for writers with actors they knew. Then, just before I met them, they

started doing Monologue Slam, which is an event we now run for actors. It's nationwide and Channel 4 are involved. We then launched Writer Slam.

## **How did you get involved with Triforce?**

I am an actor. I met them in 2008 when I did a theatre job with Jimmy. I met Fraser through TriForce. To cut a long story short, I married him this year. I am now the operation director and I am helping the organization to grow.

## **How is TriForce funded?**

Initially, Fraser and Jimmy did everything for free and the events paid for themselves, but four years ago we got a grant

from the Paul Hamlyn Foundation. Which helped us expand.

## **Tell us about Writer Slam**

It is for writers who want to break into writing for TV. Maybe they're a playwright, or maybe they've written a short film, or maybe they've just written loads of script in their bedroom and never dared show them to anyone. We're trying to get people to get their first steps into the TV industry. We launched that last year and it's been enormously successful.

## **What are writers asked to submit?**

We looked at the criteria for The Writersroom and similar initiatives. Most of them asked for a 60-page script. We thought if we're trying to get a more diverse range of writers and they're working three jobs to pay the rent, they don't have the time to sit down at their leisure and write a 60-page script on spec hoping that somebody might pick it up, or just for a competition on the off chance. To be honest



Minnie Ayres

*TriForce MonologueSlam*

most of these competitions and most of the people and production companies only read 10-15 pages anyway. So, we decided to ask writers to submit 15 pages – the best 15 pages of their idea.

### **When is the next one?**

It's in the spring and will be comedy focused. The last one we did was for drama – we were looking for TV drama ideas.. We had more than 1,000 submissions. We have a team of readers who whittle that down to 20. After that, the main sponsor helps us get it down to five. We then have a staged reading event with the final five and invited industry people – we have support from broadcasters like Channel 4, Sky, BBC and ITV plus the indies like Hat Trick and Tiger Aspect. The last event we did was Sky, Channel 4 and the BBC. They're all scouting for new talent.

### **What does the winner get out of it?**

The first event we ran, the first prize was a paid development commission with ITV and the runners-up prizes were mentoring with Tiger Aspect. From that event, three writers got literary agents and Lee Coan, the winner, got an ITV commission. He's a music journalist who lives down in Devon and used to write for NME. He'd been trying to get his foot in the door for a long time. And our third runner-up Michael Wiafe was commissioned to write a shadow script for Fortitude. Another

finalist, Tom Mackay got a commission for Casualty this year.

### **Were there any female finalists?**

We had a lot more women in the finals for the comedy initiative. The winner Halida Abbato is currently working with Tiger Aspect on a new idea. And in our latest drama contest, the winner was a woman called Katrina Smith-Jackson; she wrote a script called Tilbury Rush about the Windrush Generation. She now has a paid development commission with TriForce Productions and Sky.

### **Do you get a real range of ideas coming in?**

Yes, the one that won the Radio 4 prize was about a girl who can talk to electrical appliances. We had a piece about a teenaged mixed race girl in care, another about the troubles in Northern Ireland and a one set in the future set in a human vivarium. Also the writers are all different ages and from a range of backgrounds.

### **What do you see too much of?**

If I read one more thing about a flawed cop or lawyer who has one last chance to redeem themselves...

### **Do you personally read all the scripts?**

Yes, I do and what I am looking for is good dialogue. Do the characters leap off the page?



We don't need lots of description. If the structure isn't right, that's something we can help with. Our five finalists do a workshop before the staged reading with an experienced executive and any major problems are addressed.

### **How big is your longlist?**

We work on a traffic light system and ask readers to green light the scripts they really like. We end up with about 50 on the longlist. Then, we look at those and see if any are similar, which we prefer etc. It is really hard and there are arguments.

### **What makes you sit up and take notice in a script?**

If I am still struggling by page eight to get a handle on who's who and what their motivations are, then the script isn't going to work for me. What really grabs me are great characters. If I really care about them, that's good, if I don't, I lose interest.

### **How do writers find out about your initiatives?**

All they have to do is sign up to our newsletter, which goes out every month.

### **What advice would you give to newer writers?**

Write from experience. It is far more interesting to see a unique perspective as opposed to what you think ITV wants. However, if you're writing for TV, watch more because you need to know what is already out there. Sign up for BBC's Writersroom, got to ITV and Channel 4 and look at their talent hub.

Don't lose heart. Keep entering things. You have to get out there – nobody is going to come to your bedroom to read your scripts. Look for networking events and join as many writing networks as you can.

Think about producing your own stuff. Be as proactive as possible.

*See the article on TriForce in this issue for contact details.*



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# DIARY

## DEC 6TH

BAFTA Roccliffe New Writing Showcase: Film. Industry guests critique three winning scripts chosen by a panel of experts. BAFTA, Princess Anne Theatre, 195 Picadilly.  
[bafta.ticketsolve.com/shows/873566267/events](http://bafta.ticketsolve.com/shows/873566267/events)

## DEC 6TH

The RTS Yorkshire Christmas Quiz. Royal Television Society invites TV types to test their knowledge of all things festive. Free event at Arts Trinity, Holy Trinity Church, Boar Lane, Leeds, West Yorks.

## DEC 7TH

Mince Pies and VR/360. Royal Television Society at Pincents Manor Hotel, Pincents Lane, Calcot, Reading. RG31 4UQ. Free.  
[rts.org.uk/event/mince-pies-and-vr360](http://rts.org.uk/event/mince-pies-and-vr360)

## DEC 9TH

A Celebration of Sherlock. A conversation with Steven Moffat, Mark Gatiss, Sue Vertue and Amanda Abbington, hosted by Boyd Hilton. 7.30pm – 8.30pm. Tickets £20. Princess Anne Theatre, BAFTA, 195 Piccadilly. [www.bafta.org/whats-on/a-celebration-of-sherlock](http://www.bafta.org/whats-on/a-celebration-of-sherlock)

## DEC 12TH

The London Film School Annual Graduate Show 2016 Annual event to showcase students' work. A screening of short films followed by a drinks reception.  
[fs.org.uk/events/2740/london-film-school-annual-graduate-show-2016](http://fs.org.uk/events/2740/london-film-school-annual-graduate-show-2016)

## DEC 12TH

Triforce MonologueSlam. See performers battle it out in the finals of national monologue competition. 8:00 pm - 10:00 pm Theatre Royal Stratford East, Gerry Raffles Square, Stratford, London, E15 1BN. £12.  
[monologueslamuk.com/event/london-6/](http://monologueslamuk.com/event/london-6/)

## DEC 20TH

London Screenwriters' Festival Christmas Party At Phoenix Arts Club, 1 Phoenix Street, WC2H 8BU. Tickets £3.  
[www.londonscreenwritersfestival.com/whats-on/sessions/london-screenwriters-festival-christmas-party-2016](http://www.londonscreenwritersfestival.com/whats-on/sessions/london-screenwriters-festival-christmas-party-2016)

## Transmissions

# TRANSMISSIONS

Dear Phil,

In your interviews, creative people often criticize newer writers for screenplay character voices that sound the same. I use several dialogue methods to avoid this, but some are probably recognizable as gimmicks.

In fact, I find the criticism a bit faulty, since characters will automatically sound distinct on-screen, based on gender, age and education, not to mention the actor's unique portrayal/interpretation. Think of the unscripted stutter that Benicio Del Toro

brought to his role in *The Usual Suspects*.

So what can we do to help our characters 'sound' different so as to not frustrate the gate-keeping reader of our spec screenplays?"

**Steve Garry, Ontario, Canada**

*That's a really interesting question Steve,*

*I'm not going to lie. There was one police show I worked on many years ago that had so many episodes going out that we would be triple-banking very often. That was a self-imposed state of perpetual nightmare*