Transcontinental

Created and Written by:
Christia Crocker

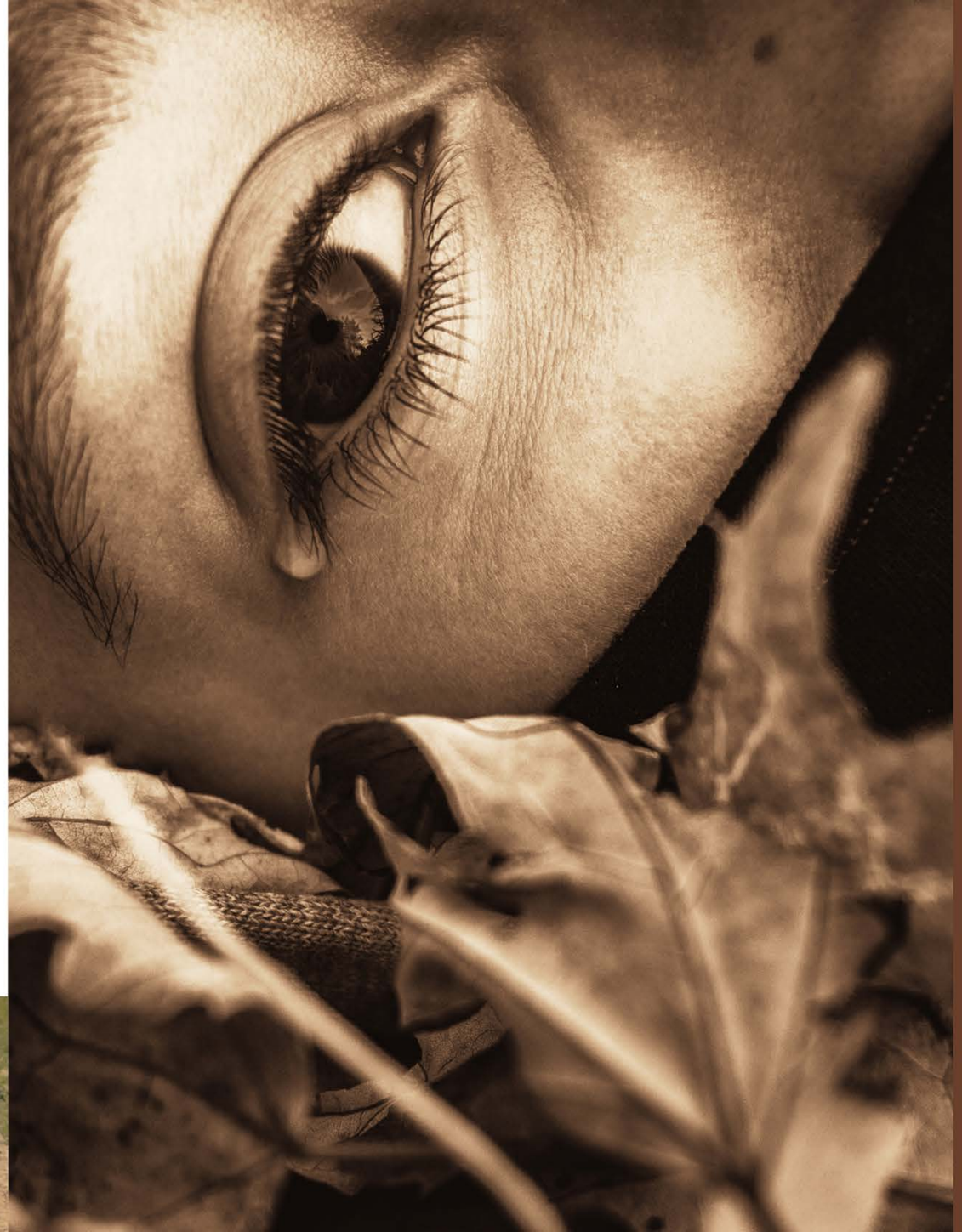
Format, Genre, Logline

TRANSCONTINENTAL is a one-hour dramatic television series about Anna Judah, a self-taught engineer in 1855 who contributes to the innovations of the growing US railroad by funneling her ideas through her kindred spirit husband. When Theodore is hired and sent to California, it seems the perfect next step. But Anna's talent and drive can't stay hidden forever, revealing powerful enemies.

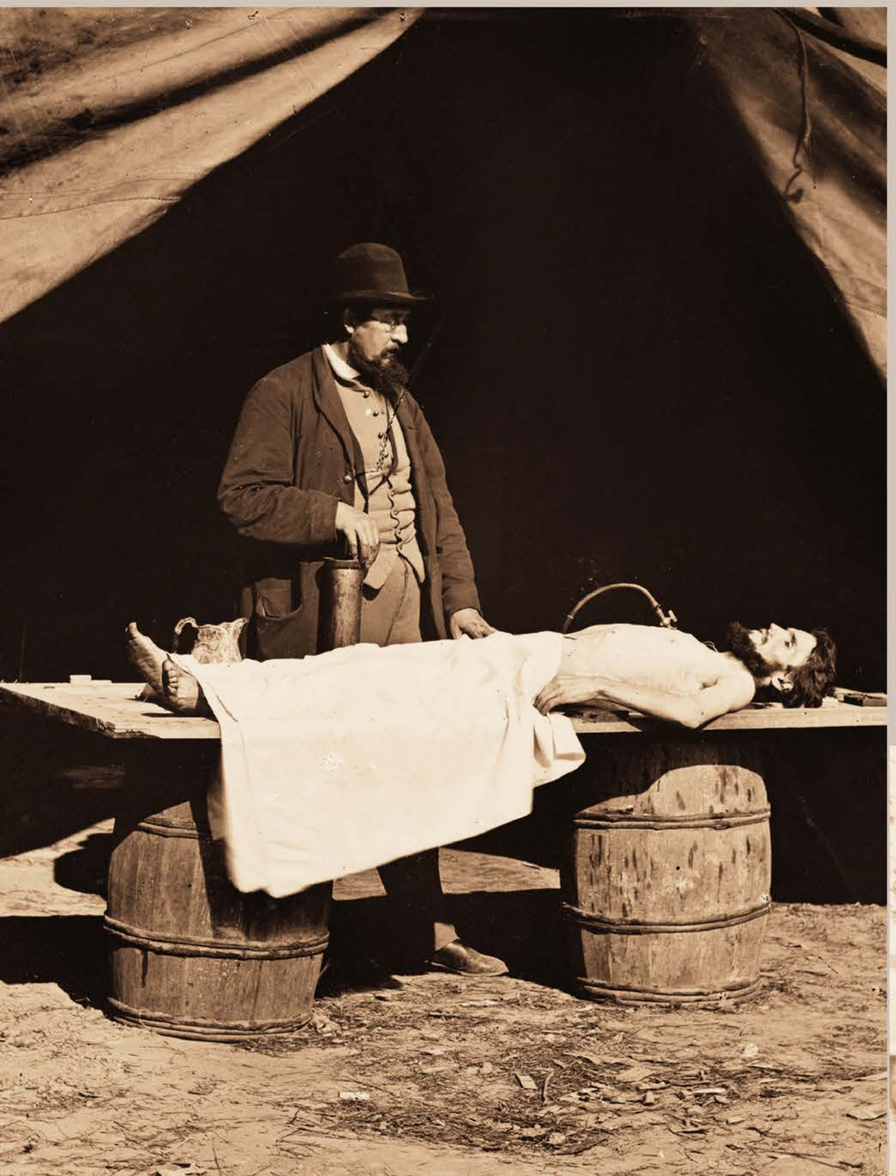
TRANSCONTINENTAL

About

TRANSCONTINENTAL is a show about the courage to live one's purpose, even if it is not acceptable or understood by society around us. This series also captures the cost of bringing ambitious dreams to life - including the widespread toll of the U.S. transcontinental railroad.

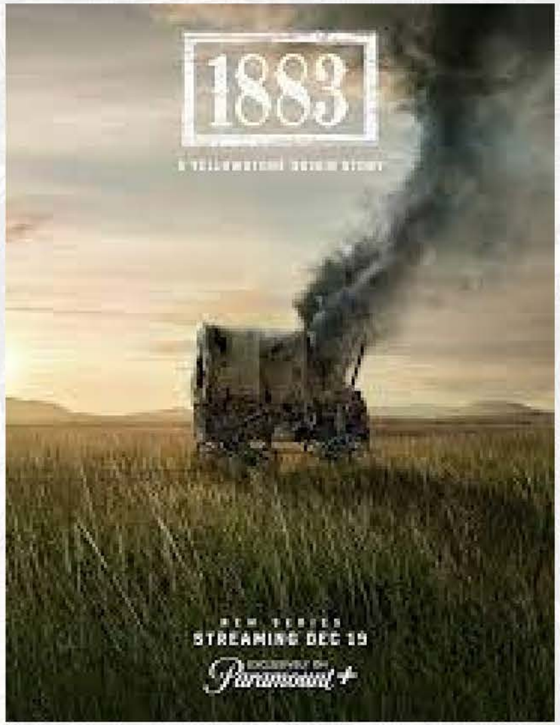


Themes



TRANSCONTINENTAL explores whether dreams of progress, innovation and expansion are worth their cost – both from a personal and societal standpoint. In each episode, Anna's ideas and talents result in the progress toward her dream of becoming a significant player in the development of the railroad. But each step forward entangles her in dangerous politics, secrets, division, and even death. As with Anna's personal journey, the journey of the transcontinental railroad is born from the desire for unity, safer travel, and opportunity for all. But the execution of the railroad becomes marred with the greed of investors, displacement of indigenous peoples, and exploitation of immigrant workers.

World, Tone and Comps



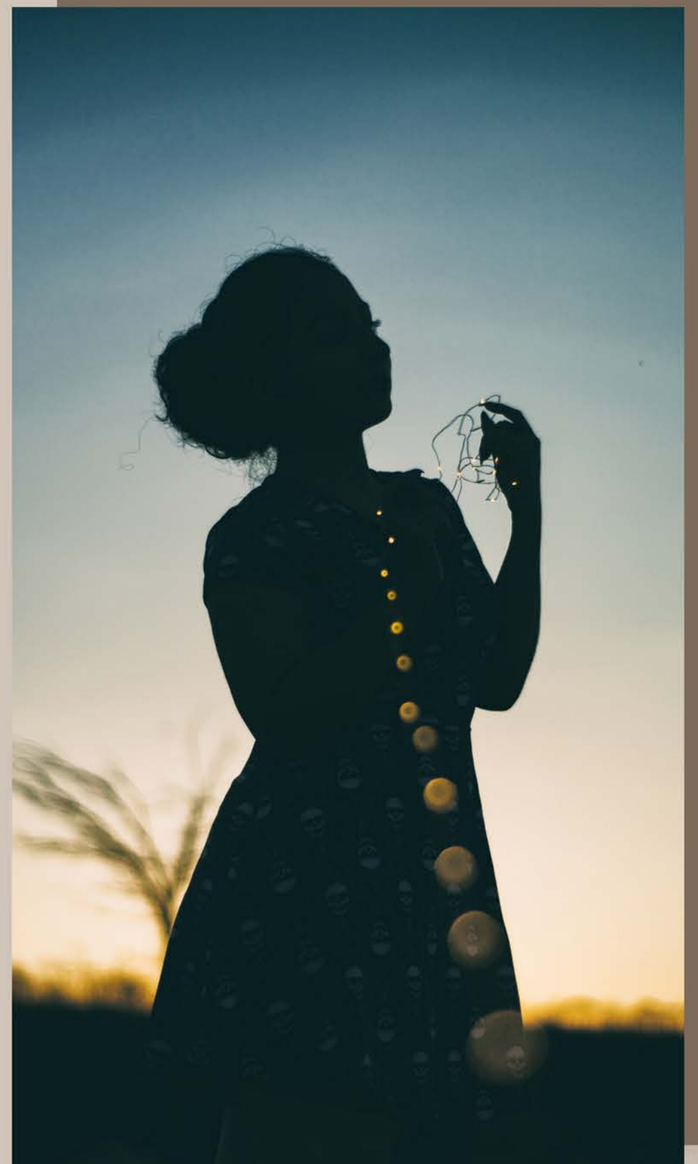
TRANSCONTINENTAL brings us into a world of dichotomies where fresh hope meets steely ambition, nature meets industry, and inspiration, possibility and freedom meet constriction, displacement, and remorse.

A visual feast of oceans, rivers, gorges, and plains, TRANSCONTINENTAL offers the 21st audience a epic view of the natural world, and the opportunity to view a past era through new perspectives.

Why this show, now?

Much like our world today, TRANSCONTINENTAL reflects a time in the U.S. of deep division but incredible innovation and opportunity. Exploring this era through the stories of those less told provides not only a fresh approach, but an opportunity to reflect, re-imagine and find meaningful connections to the characters that can provide a bridge to our present day.

TRANSCONTINENTAL is a series that can remind us that there is a way through severe division, and we have an opportunity to repair and improve upon past choices.



Main Characters

Anna

24, self-taught engineer with a free, tenacious spirit who has always loved railroads both for their engineering, and for the promise of adventure that they hold. Anna grew up on a farm with four brothers and can fix nearly anything, knows how to survey, climb, camp, sail, ride and make almost anyone feel at ease. Anna's drive/want for the series is to pursue her purpose and talents and to be a significant contributor to the US railroads, but specifically the engineering necessary to create a transcontinental railroad.

Theodore

26, civil engineer who has a talent for connecting with people from all walks of life and building consensus towards a quality work and a job well done. Theodore advances quickly and steadily from senior crew, to foreman, and eventually to chief engineer in California. Theodore's sole mission is to build the first transcontinental railroad.

Key Supporting Characters

Cornelius

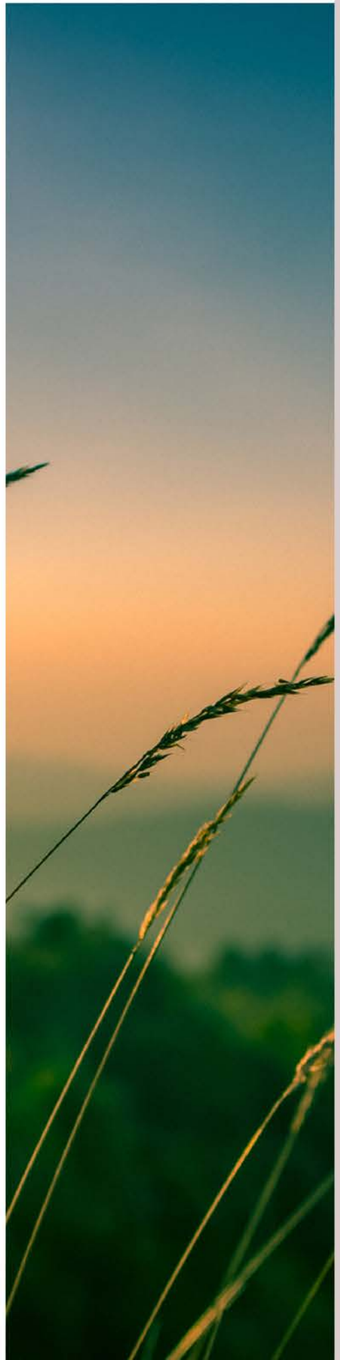
40s, first-time railroad owner who made his money building boats and managing steamships in St. Louis and Panama. He thought railroading would be a similar business with big profits and others handling the labor. Cornelius is counting on Theodore and Anna to help him win the race against the San Jose railroad for government funds.

Miguel

30s, Miguel is a former lieutenant on the losing side of the Spanish-American war. Miguel needs to support his mother and sisters without relocating them, so Miguel became an American citizen on the false promise that he could keep his family's lands. Miguel wants to beat the railroad men at their own game and is looking for allies in this fight.

Will

14, newly immigrated to the US. His greatest want is to is become successful and bring his parents out to California so that they can leave out their days in ease. Will's mother is Jewish, his dad is Irish, and Will has an amazing ability to see many points of view and to learn from and adapt to his surroundings.



Pilot Overview

It's 1855. Anna and Theodore Judah are a young, tightly bonded married couple who have been leapfrogging through railway camps around the Northeast, united by their passion for the railroad, and the secret of Anna's self-taught engineering talents. After an assignment in Niagara Gorge as a foreman, Theodore's observations (originating from Anna) get him tapped to be the new chief engineer of the Sacramento Valley Railroad, and Theodore is whisked away without accommodations or a plan for Anna.

Anna decides to go to California on her own, disguised as a boy. She will find Theodore and reunite with him before Theodore begins his post as chief engineer in Sacramento. Anna finds work as a galley prep cook on a ship going through Panama to San Francisco, but her adventure turns to danger when Perritt, a surly engineer, discovers that Anna is a woman and a fellow engineer.

Once in California, Anna must find Theodore without inciting further suspicion. With no leads, and little money, Anna ends up staying in a bathhouse which turns out to be a brothel. She sees Theodore and her heart breaks, assuming he is being unfaithful.Perritt enters, drunk and looking for a fight after losing his role as chief engineer to some Easterner. Discovering the new engineer is Theodore, Perritt draws his pistol, and Anna reveals herself to stop the fight.

In the Stagecoach to Sacramento, Anna and Theodore reconnect. He assuages her worries – he has never been unfaithful. Anna explains the history with Perritt and that he is aware of her engineering skills. Theodore wants to eschew Perritt's threats and proudly include Anna in the new railroad. New place, new rules!But Anna swears Theodore to silence to preserve his opportunity with the notorious owner, Cornelius.

Cornelius soon provides a new challenge – a race against the San Jose railroad for government funds and survival of the railroad. But the land is so marshy even Perritt is glad he's not in charge of this losing battle. Theodore poses the problem to Anna in private. After a clandestine night-survey witnessed by Perritt, Anna proposes a solution. Together, they plan the steps necessary to complete the line on time. Perritt, who has followed them, watches Anna guiding Theodore through the mechanics.

As Theodore executes his plan, he bonds and builds trust with the railmen. Perritt grows ever more jealous and belligerent. Cornelius reassigns Perritt to a menial job to avoid interference. The railway ground is then drained and filled. Once the first leg of the railway is complete, the townsfolk and newspapers gather to celebrate the first run. But as the crowd cheers Cornelius and Theodore's success, Perritt attacks Anna in the engine shed, and Anna kills him in self-defense.

Unaware of the attack, and enjoying his turn as a hero, Theodore looks for Anna while fielding questions from reporters and introductions from the Sacramento and San Francisco elite while Anna buries her cacophony of feelings along with the spike maul and Perritt.

Series One Guide - Part 1

Pilot (Overview on page 9): Anna's self-taught engineering skills and imaginative solutions are funneled through Theodore, who has just been hired as the chief engineer of the Sacramento Valley Railroad (SVRR). Excluded from joining Theodore in California, Anna hops a steamer through Panama to San Francisco disguised as a boy to reunite with him, creating enemies with a competing rail team along the way. Faced with marshland and a reluctant crew, Theodore and Anna successfully run a pilot of the SVRR before the San Jose Railroad, much to the chagrin of crooked politicians and competing railroad owners who were backing a bet for the San Jose Railroad.

Episode 2: Impressed railroad investors take Theodore and Anna on a tour of Sacramento where they meet goldrush merchants Leland Stanford and Mark Hopkins while competing engineers and investors hatch a plan to steal Theodore's survey buy up track supply to delay SVRR. Anna is introduced to the wives and new society of Sacramento. A fish-out-of-water she does her best to make a good impression.

Episode 3:Theodore, Anna, Will and Miguel survey the next leg of the route. But SVRR is losing money and blocked from getting land grants despite political connections. In search of a way forward, Anna devises a bridge and tunnel solution that requires trying a new approach.

Episode 4: As word of the new SVRR line spreads, merchant investors Crocker and Huntington become interested, but think a transcontinental railroad is too ambitious. Meanwhile, the SVRR track crew is on fire, laying 600 feet of track per day as they compete against the antagonist engineers of San Jose. Success! The SVRR wins.

Series One Guide - Part 2

Episode 5: Anna researches and sketches out possible routes for the transcontinental railroad, publishing her proposal under Theodore's name. In a flurry of momentum and enthusiasm, Anna and Theodore go to Washington D.C. to lobby for the Pacific Railroad, but the Civil War is brewing, and their efforts fail.

Episode 6:Anna and Theodore take it upon themselves to find a specific route through the Sierra Nevada mountains and private investors for the Pacific Railroad in San Francisco. Every single investor turns them down. Close to giving up, Anna and Theodore return to Sacramento to ask Crocker, Huntington, Stanford, and Hopkins for investment, striking an uncomfortable deal. They form the Central Pacific Railroad and send Theodore back to D.C.

Episode 7: In the Capital, Anna and Theodore, pitch endlessly, fielding doubters and enthusiasts alike. Unexpectedly, President Lincoln signs the Pacific Railroad Act!

Episode 8: Despite Anna and Theodore's success, the investors begin taking over. Heading back to New York to find capital to buy the investors out, Theodore contracts yellow fever in Panama and dies. Anna, distraught, vows to guide the completion of the transcontinental railroad.

Future Seasons: TRANSCONTINENTAL is imagined as a long-running dramatic series that follows Anna into subsequent seasons exploring the completion of the transcontinental railroad by the "Big Four" investors: Collis Huntington, Leland Stanford, Mark Hopkins and Charles Crocker, and the continuation of Anna's legacy through the many colorful characters of this time in history and the rapidly changing American landscape.

TRANSCONTINENTAL

Meet the Creator

Christia Crocker is a Los Angeles based writer and attorney who started her career in entertainment as a modern dancer and musical theater performer. After gravitating to film and television production and working her way up the New York production ranks, she came to Los Angeles and became an attorney while continuing to write and produce independent projects.

Christia most enjoys exploring characters with persistent spirits and resolve. Whether heartbroken or emboldened, hit hard by life, or inspired to self-discovery, she loves digging into the stories of those who continue the quest to find their path and succeed in their mission, whether or not they ultimately triumph. Christia's recent experience includes writing multiple television pilots such as TRANSCONTINENTAL, short film and music video production, and network legal positions at DreamWorks, Starz, Netflix and Apple TV+.

On certain nights, she has also been known to spin fire.

IN HER WORDS:

TRANSCONTINENTAL began as a search for my own identity. My family immigrated to the United States in the mid-1800s, and my great-grandfather worked in coal mines fueling the railroads until his early death which left his 12-year-old son to follow in his footsteps until he became an engineer.

A daughter of an industrial engineer, myself, I have graphed the fictitious victories of my childhood imagination and the close relationship of my parents onto Anna and Theodore while taking liberties with the scope and depth of Anna's involvement of the engineering aspects of Theodore's success. I loved the idea of bringing a self-taught female engineer to life and shining light on the untold stories of American industry and Westward expansion.

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THANK YOU!

CONTACT

www.ideaunitinc.com

CHRISTIA CROCKER

Founder / Executive Producer

CHRISTIA@IDEAUNITINC.COM
(310) 989-4661
WWW.IDEAUNITINC.COM/transcontinental