

= Ro Laren =

Ro Laren is a fictional character who appears on a recurring basis in the fifth , sixth and seventh series of the American science fiction television series *Star Trek : The Next Generation* . Portrayed by Michelle Forbes , she is a member of the Bajoran race who joins the crew of the USS Enterprise @-@ D at the invitation of Captain Jean @-@ Luc Picard (Patrick Stewart) . The character was intended to both be at odds with the series regulars , as well as to replace Wesley Crusher at the conn officer post on the bridge . Forbes was cast to portray Ro , after previously appearing in the series as Dara in the episode " Half a Life " .

The character first appears in the fifth season episode " Ensign Ro " , which reveals elements of Ro 's backstory . She continued to appear throughout that season , and made a further appearance in each of the sixth and seventh seasons . Starfleet sought her aid to help the Cardassians apprehend a Bajoran terrorist . After joining the Enterprise crew , she wants to abandon the engineering section of the vessel following a series of power failures in " Disaster " . Alongside Geordi La Forge (LeVar Burton) , she is affected by a Romulan experiment in " The Next Phase " and must help prevent the aliens from destroying the Enterprise . In " Rascals " , she is one of the crew who are transformed into children and helps prevent a Ferengi plot . When making her final appearance in " Preemptive Strike " , she is tasked by Starfleet to infiltrate the Maquis , eventually defecting and joining them permanently .

Ro was also planned to be a main character in *Star Trek : Deep Space Nine* . However , Forbes turned down the role , so Kira Nerys was created to replace her . In the non @-@ canonical novels , Ro eventually joins the Bajoran militia and is posted onto Deep Space Nine . She re @-@ joins Starfleet when Bajor joins the Federation , and eventually becomes captain of the station . Reviewers discussed the religious views of Ro , comparing her views to those of Kira . Ro has been received positively by both critics and fans alike . Critics have praised the performances of Forbes , and the interaction of Ro with the existing characters . She has been placed in several polls listing the most popular characters , with Jordan Hoffman calling her the second strongest female character in the franchise .

= = Concept and development = =

During the course of planning out the fifth season of *Star Trek : The Next Generation* , the producers were looking to add a recurring character who could conflict with the regular cast at times as well as a new conn officer to replace Wesley Crusher . With that in mind , the episode " Ensign Ro " was written by Michael Piller , from a story idea created in conjunction with Rick Berman , to specifically introduce the character of Ensign Ro Laren . The episode was designed to show a backstory for the character , who would be at odds with series creator Gene Roddenberry 's ideal that Starfleet officers should all work together seamlessly . One of her major character traits was that she would be a member of an oppressed people , whose homeworld had been conquered by another . Supervising producer Jeri Taylor explained that they had sought to add some " fresh life " using a darker character .

Michelle Forbes was asked to return to the series , after impressing the producers with her performance as Dara in the episode " Half a Life " . The character was the daughter of Timicin , played by David Ogden Stiers , and supported the tradition that her father should commit ritual suicide upon reaching a certain age . The Bajoran make @-@ up was created on her , with Michael Westmore seeking to make her look different from the rest of the crew but in a way that would not detract from her appearance . Westmore created an appliance over Forbes ' nose , before adding a row of ridges while it was on her face . It was designed to be as thin and weightless as possible , as he wanted the piece to move with Forbes ' facial expressions . Her version of the make @-@ up had seven ridges , while other actors in " Ensign Ro " had different numbers , between five and nine , with the male actors wearing larger pieces .

Piller described the addition of Ro to the cast as one of that season 's biggest accomplishments , and was pleased that it was well received . He added that in " Ensign Ro " , they made a deliberate

decision to have Ro embraced by Guinan in order to ensure that the fans warmed to the new addition . Piller felt that when Guinan took Ro to meet Captain Jean @-@ Luc Picard in that episode , the character was effectively presenting Ro to the fans of the series and endorsing her . During the writing process , he felt that once he came across the friendship between Guinan and Ro that he believed " we had really done something magnificent " . Forbes , meanwhile , praised the writing and the cast of the series , saying that she had " become very attached to Star Trek " .

Piller was disappointed with the following Ro episode , " Disaster " , as it put her in the position of disbelieving Councillor Deanna Troi without having had the weight of " victories " in the past to convince the viewer of the power of her convictions . But he enjoyed her sudden relationship with Commander William Riker in " Conundrum " . Forbes shared the view of that episode , later saying " When you have amnesia , you wonder if that brings out a side of you that 's always wanted to come out . Would you really be comfortable with that ? It 's an interesting thing . I had a really good time with that episode . " Later in the season , " The Next Phase " was written with the idea of being a vehicle for Geordi La Forge and Troi , but it was decided to include Ro instead as one of the lead characters . Ro had been included as one of three lead characters in Morgan Gendel 's original pitch for the episode " The Inner Light " . This would have seen her in a love triangle with Picard and Riker . Instead , the concept was redeveloped to focus solely on Picard .

Forbes made a single appearance in the sixth season , in the episode " Rascals " . In the plot of the episode , a transporter accidentally turns Ro , among others , in a child . There was some consideration after the episode about whether or not to keep Ro as a child , as her return to adulthood was never shown on screen . Taylor said that the change would have been " too drastic for us " , and the idea was abandoned . Her final appearance , in the penultimate episode of the series , " Preemptive Strike " , had been considered a long shot by the producers . After the failure to agree her appearances on Star Trek : Deep Space Nine , Forbes ' agent had warned them to stay away from her . A week prior to filming , there was no story created for the episode other than the idea it would follow on from the Deep Space Nine episode " The Maquis " , and no agreement had been reached with Forbes to appear . Her agent indicated that Forbes wanted to talk directly to the producers , so she made the phone call , making up a story for the episode as the conversation went on . Forbes agreed , making her final appearance in the franchise . The character was promoted to Lieutenant , and Forbes wore updated Bajoran makeup developed by Westmore for Deep Space Nine .

= = = Star Trek : Deep Space Nine = = =

" Ensign Ro " proved influential on the creation of Deep Space Nine , with the Bajorans and Cardassians taken directly from the episode . The character was included in the original series description , stationed on the Bajor @-@ based Starfleet station and the producers had planned for her to be promoted to Lieutenant in an episode of The Next Generation prior to the start of Deep Space Nine . Taylor had expected Ro to be written out of The Next Generation , and so had taken some steps to see that the character was replaced . She said that " We all just love Michelle Forbes " , but the plans to replace Ro would not seek to add someone with the type of fire shown by the character in such episodes as " The Next Phase " . She also said that if Ro to remain on The Next Generation , then the character would have naturally evolved away from that conflicted position anyway .

The intention was that Ro would be one of a handful of The Next Generation characters moving over to the new series , alongside Miles and Keiko O 'Brien . At this stage , the other characters were only described as a wheelchair @-@ bound science officer , a brash doctor , a civilian law enforcer , a bar owner and the station commander and his son . Ro 's position on the station would have been to act as the liaison between the station and the Bajoran government . As described in the series bible , the producers had planned for Ro to be a point of conflict with " by @-@ the @-@ book Starfleet officers " . Regarding the other main characters , she was planned to have a friendship with Odo and be mentored by Jadzia Dax .

Both Berman and Piller sought to have Forbes sign on to portray Ro as a main character in the

series , but she turned them down . She liked making occasional appearances on The Next Generation , but did not want to tie herself down to a five to six year main cast contract at that point in her career . She was also apprehensive about the types of demands fan appearances made on the stars of that series , and did not want to undertake the level of appearances that would be expected of a main cast member in Deep Space Nine . The producers of Deep Space Nine decided create a new character to fit a similar mould , which resulted in the creation of Kira Nerys , who was played by Nana Visitor . This was designed to require as minimal a change as possible in the premise of the pilot at that time , which was already under production . During the course of the series , Forbes told interviewers that she was interested in making one @-@ off appearances in the series if she liked the story and role .

= = Appearances = =

= = = Background = = =

In accordance with Bajoran tradition , her family name precedes her personal name . When she first joins the crew of the Enterprise @-@ D during the course of " Ensign Ro " , Captain Picard (Patrick Stewart) addresses her as " Ensign Laren " . She corrects him , saying that Laren is her given name and Ro is her family name . She is then referred to as " Ensign Ro " . Over the course of her several appearances in The Next Generation , information is revealed about her backstory . Bajor had been under the occupation of the Cardassians during her early life , and at the age of seven she watched as one of the occupiers tortured her father to death . This led to a life @-@ long hatred of Cardassians .

Ro joined Starfleet , and after being posted to the USS Wellington , she formed part of an away team . During that mission , she disobeyed orders , resulting in the death of eight crewmen . She was subsequently court @-@ martialled , and was imprisoned on Jaros II . Admiral Kennelly (Cliff Potts) later gave her a pardon and allowed her to return to Starfleet service , in return for convincing the Bajoran terrorist Orta (Jeffrey Hayenga) to call off his attacks after a raid on a Federation colony . He brings her to the USS Enterprise for the purpose of completing this mission .

= = = Star Trek : The Next Generation = = =

As shown in " Ensign Ro " , during an away team mission to capture Orta , Ro manages to get the team taken hostage . As a result , Picard confines her to her quarters . But Picard discovers that the Bajorans were not responsible for the attack on the Federation colony , and Guinan (Whoopi Goldberg) convinces Ro to tell Picard of Kennelly 's plan . Ro was under orders to offer arms to Orta , to trick him to revealing his presence so the Cardassians can destroy his vessel . At that point , Kennelly would intervene and order Picard not to intervene to keep the peace treaty with the Cardassians . Picard allows the plan to proceed , but the Cardassians destroy an empty ship before revealing that the Cardassians had staged the attack in order to enlist aid against the Bajorans . At the conclusion of the episode , Picard offers Ro a position on the crew of the Enterprise , which she accepts .

In " Disaster " , Ro is one of the crew trapped on the bridge of the Enterprise when it undergoes a series of power failures . The ship is placed at risk of destruction because of the potential failure of the containment fields on the antimatter pods . Ro argues that they need to separate the saucer section to save those on @-@ board it as they have no way knowing if anyone is still alive on the engineering part of the vessel . When the crew undergo group amnesia in " Conundrum " , Ro and Riker act on a mutual attraction until their memories are restored . In " The Next Phase " , Ro and La Forge apparently die after a transporter accident after returning from a Romulan Warbird . But they have suffered the side effects of a Romulan cloaking experiment . Ro initial questions whether or not she has died and is now in the afterlife . But together with La Forge they discover a Romulan plot and defeating a similarly cloaked Romulan operative , Ro and La Forge alert the crew and return to

normal , warning Picard and averting disaster .

In the episode " Rascals " , Ro , Picard , Guinan and Keiko O 'Brien (Rosalind Chao) are transformed into adolescent versions of themselves while retaining their adult intelligence . As children , they foil a Ferengi plot to steal the Enterprise and sell the crew as slave labor . In her final episode , " Preemptive Strike " , Ro returns to the Enterprise as a Lieutenant after spending a year at Starfleet Advanced Tactical Training . During the course of the training , her commanding officer , Lieutenant Commander Chakotay , resigned from Starfleet to join the Maquis when his father is killed by the Cardassians . She is asked by Starfleet to infiltrate the rebel Maquis , who are undermining the Federation treaty with Cardassia . During the mission , she finds her loyalties in conflict with her duties as she becomes increasingly sympathetic to the plight of the Maquis . Despite Picard 's effort to force her to do her duty , she joins the rebel group . Riker says she seemed pretty sure she was doing the right thing , though she regretted disappointing Picard .

= = Non @-@ canonical appearances = = =

Ro makes a series of appearances in the non @-@ canonical novel series based on The Next Generation . These include an expansion on her background and early life in the book Night of the Wolves by S. D. Perry and Britta Dennison . The events of the away mission while she was serving on the USS Wellington were shown in the second special issue of DC Comics ' The Next Generation series . Ro 's career with the Maquis is also chronicled in the novels . In Rogue Saucer , she is responsible for planning out the attack on the Enterprise in which the Maquis steal a prototype saucer section . Ro appears in the novel Tunnel Through the Stars , set during the events of the Dominion War , Ro and the remaining Maquis join forces with Picard and the USS Enterprise @-@ E to defeat the Dominion forces that are attempting to build an artificial wormhole to bypass the one near Deep Space Nine .

She began to appear in the Deep Space Nine relaunch novels beginning with the two @-@ part Avatar by Perry . The relaunch novels show the events that occur after the final episode of the television series . In Avatar , Ro enlists in the Bajoran Militia with the rank of Lieutenant , and is assigned to Deep Space Nine as the new Security Chief under the command of Colonel Kira . This move for Ro is also chronicled in the background to the massively multiplayer online role @-@ playing game Star Trek Online .

In Twilight by David R. George III , the first part of the Mission : Gamma mini @-@ series , Quark and Ro start to develop romantic feelings for each other . In Perry 's Unity , Ro re @-@ joins Starfleet after Bajor joins the Federation and it 's military forces are merged . She is initially apprehensive about the prospect , but is convinced to accept a pardon for her time with the Maquis by Picard . Over time , Ro was promoted to Captain and as of the Star Trek : The Fall series of books , is in command of the new Deep Space Nine following the destruction of the original at the hands of a rogue element of the Typhon Pact . Ro was also one of the characters included at launch in the strategy video game Star Trek Timelines by Disruptor Beam .

= = Themes = =

The Bajorans have been described as analogues for a variety of displaced peoples , with Star Trek novelist Keith DeCandido comparing them to " Palestinians , Jews , Kurds , Haitians ; the sad reality is that you can pretty much pick and choose . History is full of people who have had their homes taken from them , forced to become refugees . " The Cardassian occupation of Bajor (the Bajoran homeworld) has been compared to the Holocaust , with Ro singled out as a Holocaust survivor . In his chapter " Speakers for the Dead : Star Trek , the Holocaust , and the Representation of Atrocity " within the book Star Trek as Myth , writer Matthew Wilhelm Kapell compared the experiences and reactions of Ro Laren and Kira Nerys following the Cardassian occupation of Bajor . He said that the impact on Ro represented the " non @-@ american view of the holocaust " in that she does not fully recover from the trauma and continues to affect in , for example preventing her from connecting with her religious beliefs in " The Next Phase " . He explains that Kira is a far more " Americanize [d] "

character , acting as a " resister and even liberator " during the occupation . As a result , unlike Ro , Kira retains her religious beliefs and does not typically show any ongoing emotional trauma . Further commentary of Ro 's relationship to religion have been made . In The Literary Galaxy of Star Trek , James F. Broderick compared the situation in which Ro and La Forge are trapped out of phase in " The Next Phase " to that of the purgatory dweller in Dante Alighieri 's Inferno .

= = Reception = =

When reviewing " Ensign Ro " for Tor.com , DeCandido described Michelle Forbes as " stellar " and called Ro " one of TNG 's best recurring characters " . He also added the the character was " a bit of piss and vinegar to add to the syrupy mix of homogeneity that the TNG cast tends to be " . In his review of " Preemptive Strike " , he said that the Ro character arc " comes full circle : once again making a decision that puts her on the outs with Starfleet . " He praised Forbes again , saying that she " inhabits the character so completely , from her awkwardness at the reception in her honor to her playing the role of rebel , to her pain at thinking about her father ... to her decision to betray Starfleet and the Enterprise . " He did criticise the episode for not wrapping up the Riker @-@ Ro relationship in the same way that closure had been given to her friendship with Picard . Zack Handlen reviewed " Ensign Ro " for The A.V. Club , and described Ro as " terrific " and said that the role represented " one of the rare times that TNG has managed to have a frustrated character who doesn 't immediately seem overly hateful or falsely confrontational " . But he criticized the manner in which her opinion changed to be more favourable of Picard and the Enterprise , as he felt that Guinan 's intervention was detrimental to the plot .

Ro Laren has placed in several polls featuring the characters of the franchise over the course of several years . In a list of the strongest female characters on the official Star Trek website by Jordan Hoffman in 2012 , Ro Laren was placed second behind Edith Keeler from the Star Trek : The Original Series episode " The City on the Edge of Forever " . He said that Ro was one of the " richest figures in Trek " , and wished to be able to see an alternative timeline where Forbes had accepted the main cast position on Deep Space Nine . A poll at the Creation Entertainment official Star Trek convention in 2013 , conducted by Hoffman , placed Ro Laren as the fifth most popular recurring character among fans , behind Elim Garak , Q , Gul Dukat and General Martok . Hoffman expressed a view that he had expected her to place higher in the rankings , due to the number of her vocal supporters , however she also had many booing her . On a poll run on the official Star Trek website in 2014 regarding the fans ' favourite supporting character , Ro came eighth out of ten . In 2015 , she was included in a list of the 21 " most interesting " supporting characters in the franchise by Lisa Granshaw at Blastr . Granshaw called Ro " a complicated , strong character " , and said her " different layers and motivations made her a great character to watch interact with the loyal crew of the Enterprise . "

= = Annotations = =