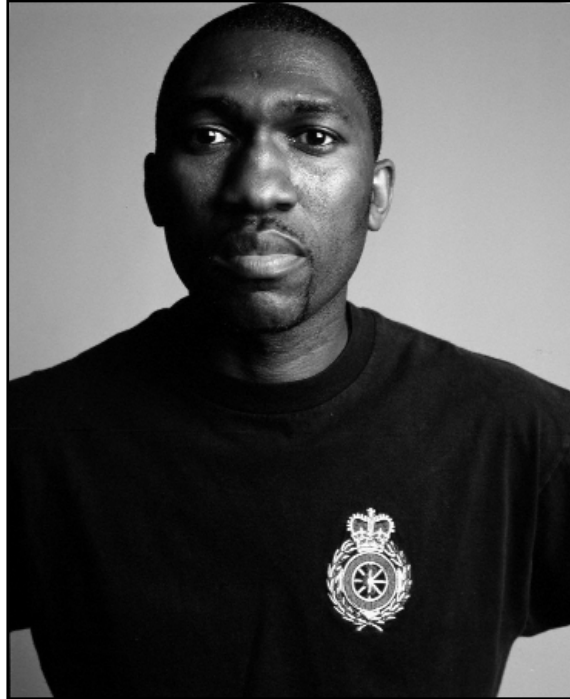


**Kwame Kwei-Armah  
plays Paramedic Finlay Newton**



“I actually got into acting thanks to my friend’s mother, who saw an advert in *The Stage* for a tall black guy who could sing for a show in the West End. It so happened that I could sing and I was tall, so I got the part.” It was in a play called *Clash Point* at the Westminster Theatre; Kwame was 20. He then got the lead in a show called *Class K* which also starred [fellow *Casualty* cast member] Judy Loe.

Prior to becoming an actor, Kwame planned to be a musician. “I don’t think I had the mad determination to be an actor as I had to be a musician, so if I hadn’t been handed the opportunity, I probably wouldn’t have ended up here.” After five years of rep theatre, Kwame moved on to West End shows. “I spent three or four years doing that and decided that I’d had enough of the West End and that I wanted to do television and films. Between each transition I had a bit of time out of work and realised that making decisions meant having to face unemployment for a while.”

The film offers did arrive though, including *Cut Throat Island*, *My West* with David Bowie and Harvey Keitel, *Daylight* with Sylvester Stallone, an action movie called *The Clown*, and *The Three Kings* with Vanessa Redgrave.

Kwame was originally asked to come in as a guest artist for a couple of episodes in *Casualty*: “I was asked to be a semi-regular. Then they came back and said that they wanted me to be a regular. This was at the end of 1999. I’ve been here two years, over which time my character has grown to the point where I’m enjoying some fantastic storylines.”

Kwame also writes plays and music and his latest production, *Hold On*, has just finished a national tour. “I’m writing the music for a new musical at the moment. I’m also just about to hand in my draft for a piece at the National.” Kwame admits that fitting numerous projects into a demanding schedule can be “fairly stressful.”

**Age :** 35

**Home town:** Tottenham, London.

**Similarities with Fin:** “A love for life and a professional attitude with an intolerance for those who don’t.”

**Fin’s best and worst traits:** “In the last series he stood up to his bosses and demanded to be treated properly. However, he also kept his daughter a secret, which wasn’t such a good move. I think he was ashamed of the circumstances in which he had had the child. He didn’t tell Comfort as he didn’t want to endanger their delicate relationship. He’s an idealist and he was disappointed in his situation. It was interesting to play as it is the antithesis to me – everyone knows about my children and that I am a full time father.”

**Kwame’s real-life *Casualty*:** “Soon after starting on *Casualty* I saw a road accident in which a woman’s foot was run over. I stopped to help and gave her first aid until the ambulance arrived. But I also had to calm down the driver, who wanted to fight this poor woman because he claimed she had just stepped out in front of him.”

**On-screen romance:** “After a passionate affair with Comfort, he is still holding out hope that they’ll get back together.”

**Kwame’s favourite food and music:** “West Indian and Thai food. I love jerk chicken and there’s a West Indian restaurant near the set which is where I get my lunch. I’m listening to a lot of Roberta Flack at the moment as well as contemporary gospel music and also to old skool dub from Massive Attack back through the years. But I like all kinds of music – from country and western to hip hop.”

**How do you keep in shape?** “I used to be a gym person but haven’t been for about seven months. I was on a really strict regime, but I just couldn’t squeeze it in due to my workload. I miss it, especially as my belly is getting big.”

**How do you relax?** “Watching a DVD with my kids.”

## Did you know?

- Kwame is embarking on a theatre project with Roni Size that will have a heavy drum and base garage feel.
- He is in the second year of his Masters in screen writing.