

**Oral History Interview of  
Jonathan Marks**

**Interviewed by: Andy Wilkinson  
July 31, 2017  
Lubbock, Texas**

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## Transcript Overview:

This interview features Jonathan Marks as he discusses his career in drama. Marks describes his interest in theater and his encounters with notable actors and singers.

**Length of Interview:** 02:54:02

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### Keywords

Art, Theater, Texas Tech, acting, public schools, education

**Andy Wilkinson (AW):**

On that note topics are problematic for me and—

**Jonathan Marks (JM):**

It's an oral history of what?

AW:

Well, so an oral history of two things. Although for most of us we think of them as the same thing, the oral history is of you, but I'm very much interested in your work as much as I am in your biography. But the biography and the work are interrelated so we will probably do both of them. Plus the biography, particularly the details we get like where you born, when, all that kind of things are important. Again, in the future there might be more than one Jonathan Marks and that sort of stuff helps distinguish, and it also sort of provides context. I as you might gather from our interactions in the past and the things that I do, I'm really very much interested in your creative process and the way you work. That is my particular interest. Other people seem to be interested, I guess there's a general interest in what kinds of things that you've done, were big deals and who you know that's famous and that kind of thing. But I'm a little more interested in how you work. With that said this is the last day of July, 2017 in the afternoon with Jonathan Marks and Thelma and Louise, not the actresses but two chiweenies—is that?

JM:

They're chiweenies.

AW:

We're at your very nice home with your nice little table. It's always important when a person's house has an important thing as one of the main fixtures such as a pool table or a musical instrument.

JM:

It's a handsome object.

AW:

It is. It looks like an older one am I right?

JM:

It's not terribly old, no.

AW:

Really? The pockets are what made me think it was older.

JM:

Yeah. You have options and that's the option that we chose.

AW:

Yeah I like it. The very last interview I did, which was last week was in a brilliant hardware store in Lazbuddie, Texas. Kind of hardware store of Americano dreams where you go back and it winds around forever and there's things from tractor parts, to groceries to rain slickers, for the cowboys, and then in the back room where we did the interview they had a snooker table.

JM:

Oh my.

AW:

Yeah but they also had with it a set of snooker eight balls, which are eight ball sets but smaller so they'll fit into the snooker pockets. Which it was an option that I got to admit as many of pool halls that I was in as a youngster, I've never seen or heard of a snooker eight ball set. Anyway, just a matter of trivia.

JM:

I don't know if I've seen a snooker table, I must've.

AW:

Well they're a little larger and the pockets are smaller. All the balls are red except for the que ball, and they have a similar set of rules but they're harder.

Woman:

Howdy, how are you?

AW:

How are you? It's good to see you.

Woman:

Nice to see you, just bring you some nibbles.

AW:

How pleasant, thank you very much.

JM:

Thank you very much.



Woman:

Have a nice meeting.

AW:

You can pop in at any moment, there's no—

Woman:

Okay thank you, no restrictions.

AW:

No restrictions, whatsoever.

JM:

Do you want something to drink Andy?

AW:

A glass of water might be—

JM:

Glass of water Do you want ice?

AW:

No just water will be great.

JM:

Okay.

AW:

Well, thank you very much. [JM gets up and gets AW a glass of water]

JM:

There's more where this came from.

AW:

Oh well yeah we had a good rain last night. Thank you. So any case that's kind of the gist of things, we can range far and wide, and we don't have to do everything in one sitting. It actually gets to be more tiresome, I mean not tiresome but in the sense of laborious but it will tire you out doing all this thinking and talking so—

JM:

Oh I won't do the thinking.

AW:

Okay that'll make it a better interview. But we can also come back and finish up if we decide we don't have enough time.

JM:

Okay.

AW:

So let's do get a little of that bio information out like date of birth and where.

JM:

August 23, 1946 in Cincinnati, Ohio.

AW:

Nineteen forty-six in Cincinnati. And you grew up there?

JM:

Grew up there entirely until I went off to college. One foot though was at my grandparents' house, which was in Lexington, Kentucky.

AW:

Yeah right across.

JM:

About a hundred miles away but—you can walk from Cincinnati to Kentucky but not to Lexington.

AW:

In fact I think the last time I flew to Cincinnati I landed in Kentucky, is that right?

JM:

Yes, that's where the airport is.

AW:

I take it that you spent a good part of the time—



JM:

Visited very frequently my grandparents' house.

AW:

What did your folks do in Cincinnati?

JM:

My father was a lawyer, and my mother had been a laboratory technician but mostly was at home.

AW:

You had brothers and sisters?

JM:

Yes, I grew up with three sisters and a brother. My mother passed away when I was eleven in Lexington, and we got—within a few years we got a stepmother who brought with her a couple of kids, and another came along.

AW:

So then three, four, two step and one as we'd say half?

JM:

Half.

AW:

That was a large family.

JM:

Yes it was. [Pause] Yes.

AW:

My familiarity with Cincinnati, and for that matter the adjacent part of Kentucky is really not very deep. I've spent some time in Cincinnati, very little time in Kentucky and most of that in the eighties so I don't really have, other than what one would read about or such, I don't really have a good sense except, I know when I was in Cincinnati I liked it, in the eighties, I like the town. It had a little bit of an energy to it.

JM:

It's got an even more likeable sense.

AW:

Really? Even better.

JM:

Yeah, areas that I would not or should not dare to go into because they were back then dangerous, are now very fashionable, and very safe, and very lively and it's kind of amazing. It's kind of amazing to see. My family came over, I think on both sides as early as the 1840s.

AW:

So they've been in the US quite a while?

JM:

Yes.

AW:

Where do they come from?

JM:

They come from Germany and Auzas.

AW:

Is M-a-r-k-s an anglicized spelling of M-a-r-x?

JM:

I don't think particularly because I don't think—well I don't know where either of them came from exactly. It's the same name. It was never—it's the same name just spelled differently. It was the Marks family, the Grauman family, and the Dreyfoos that I'm most familiar with.

AW:

Dreyfoos as in D-r-e-y—?

JM:

D-r-e-y-f-o-o-s is how they spelt it.

AW:

F-o-o-s okay.

JM:

But its again, it's all the same thing.

AW:

And Grauman, G-r-a-u-m-a-n?

JM:

Yes.

AW:

And the Grauman's we were talking about that day at lunch of the Grauman of Grauman's Chinese and—

JM:

Yes.

AW:

We can get to that, that was quite interesting. Did they all come to Cincinnati or Ohio or start off—?

JM:

No it was mostly in the swath of the Midwest, Ohio, Kentucky, and they went out from there. I think they were mostly dry goods merchants and different relatives had different territories where they sold. Parts of the family could be found in Arkansas, they were in New Orleans for a while and then up to Montana.

AW:

That is a swath.

JM:

That is a swath. So I think the Helena, Montana schoolboard, one of its founders was a Marks. I think it was cousin Leopold.

AW:

Cool. What was Cincinnati like growing up? What was the community like, other than these places that weren't good to— [phone ringing 00:11:42]

JM:

Excuse me a moment I guess that's— that must be a pause time.

AW:

All right I will do that.

JM:  
Hello.

[Pause recording]

JM:  
These were Jewish families and I guess we grew up in a largely Jewish neighborhood, and the neighborhood itself is worth talking about. There was just—within a three minute walking distance were kids who would become the musical director—the artistic director of the Metropolitan Opera, Academy Award nominee, a winner of several Tony awards, I mean within a three minute walk, it was an extraordinary neighborhood.

AW:  
Yeah and an extraordinary time it sounds like.

JM:  
You know my cohort nationally—I don't think this fact has been brought out yet but the class of 1968 in college—we are now in the seventeenth year of a 1968 president.

AW:  
I had not thought about that.

JM:  
It was a kind of peak of the test score years but its true, we've had three presidents born in 1946. I kind of doubt that's ever happened before.

AW:  
I think you're right. Probably won't happen again although let's not jump to a conclusion.

JM:  
We're probably giving history a reason to avoid that.

AW:  
I think you might be right, although I was born not long after '48 and I really do, when I'm especially looking at our students on the campus and the young people we interact in, I realize that those of us who came about in that early part of the baby boom generation, we really—there are some interesting aspects of our generation, and I suspect it has to do with being on the cusp as we were but maybe every generation's on a cusp. I just think of ours as being interesting.

JM:

I think it was a particularly special time. If you notice in the music, in the popular music the kids know everything from that era. Everything we grew up with they know, and they probably don't know anything from fifteen years ago.

AW:

No, they also know, largely know the cultural events. They might not be so sharp on the history but they certainly know the Peace Movement, the Civil Rights movement, they know LSD [Lysergic acid diethylamide], they know all kinds of things that were all our contemporary news and current events. Was there something other than this age, the time, the baby boom time, was there something about this particular neighborhood that fostered that achievement—

JM:

I don't know what it was. There was just an article in a Cincinnati paper a year or two ago about that phenomenon, I don't think it really was very enlightened or enlightening. I don't know what it was but then we went on to high school and I think most of us went to a place called Walnut Hills High School.

AW:

Walnut Hills?

JM:

Walnut Hills. It's a beautiful place modeled along Jefferson's design for the University of Virginia. It's peculiar in that it's an all college preparatory school.

AW:

Was it a public school?

JM:

Yes a public school. Drew also largely from its neighborhood, which was black, and whereas all the other schools were district schools, this was non-district, it was the whole city. It and the vocational high school drew from the whole city, they were the only two.

AW:

Did you have to audition?

JM:

No but there were tests, there was an entrance test. My class was about one-third Jewish, one-third black, and one-third the rest.

AW:

That's pretty remarkable for that time period.

JM:

It's extraordinary, it's extraordinarily remarkable. We still had little vestiges of racism, and certainly to those most affected they were not little in that, in the musicals you would always have an even number of black students because they could only be paired together.

AW:

Oh right, you can't have the white and the black dancing together.

JM:

Right, that was not acceptable, until we made it acceptable. It was a show that I directed—

AW:

In high school?

JM:

Yes.

AW:

Oh we'll have to get to that. We can do it right now or—

JM:

It was just there were at that time two sets of musical reviews for the year, one was the varsity, and the other was the junior class. The varsity had faculty directors, the choir director was in charge of the choruses. The junior class one was all students with a distant figurehead advisor, the students were in charge. So when I was co-director of our junior musical, we got rid of that rule.

AW:

Did you have difficulty getting rid of the rule?

JM:

No, none because it happened before they knew about it, before they were really aware of it, I guess. We didn't make a big deal of it, we just did it. I find out at a reunion a few years ago, I mentioned that it had happened, and most of the white kids were unaware that this had happened, the black kids all knew that this had happened, that this was a big deal. It was particularly gratifying.



AW:

This is a—

JM:

The white kids were not even aware that it was a rule that there was a pair—it's like the sea you swim in, you don't notice the water.

AW:

Yeah, exactly and in fact that's particularly true about racism of the non-personal variety. It's easy for us to say, "Well I don't have anything against black people," but yet you're part of a system that very much has something against black people or Jewish people or whatever the group might be. It's interesting—I think of you as a director, a writer, whatever requires being done in the world of theater, that is an early age to discover that while you're in high school. How'd you get to it?

JM:

I didn't know that was—that'd what I would do in life, it was one of the things I thought I did.

AW:

Yeah but not *the* thing.

JM:

Not *the* thing, no. It did not become the thing until college graduation bloomed.

AW:

So but even saying that, it's one thing to get to play the lead or get to dance, or sing but to direct, that is a—seems like a bit grander commitment to the idea of theater.

JM:

Yes, I hadn't really focused on that either because I was still acting and would continue to act, but it eventually got around to—it wasn't really until I was here that it focused on directing.

AW:

Oh really?

JM:

Oh, yes.

AW:

Cool. What then made you interested in the theater and of what galaxy of things was it a part?

JM:

Well, again there was this rumor that was true that there was a member of the family who had built theaters, owned theaters, and whose name was enshrined in a theater. That was cousin Sid Grauman, who was my grandmother's first cousin.

AW:

Did you have a reasonable interaction with him?

JM:

No, he was dead when I was born.

AW:

What about his part of the family? Were they so far removed and distanced—?

JM:

I don't think he had children. His wife was Rosa I think, he did not have children. He became a Christian scientist, but at his funeral George Jessel spoke kaddish, which is the Jewish prayer for the dead, so it was kind of mixed, kind of mixed thing. You know it's like they say in Haiti that it's 98 percent catholic and 100 percent voodoo.

AW:

That's right. But the Grauman name was one that you were familiar with growing up.

JM:

Yes and it was sort of a legendary thing because it's a legendary place. But my father was Grauman Marks.

AW:

So that was his given name?

JM:

That was his given name. It was actually his middle name but that was a secret and he had decided very early on that he did not like his first name, like when he was a child. So he was Grauman Marks growing up and through school and everything.

AW:

Did the notoriety of this, and I mean that in the positive sense of notoriety and not the other, of Sid Grauman, was that something that propelled you or gave you permission?

JM:

It was just something that lingered in my mind. The first play I ever saw was at this high school, my older sister who was eight years older, so that's a huge gap, my older sister appeared in a small part in *Cyrano de Bergerac* with Marty \_\_\_\_\_ [00:24:50] as Cyrano. Now you may not know the name Marty \_\_\_\_\_ [00:24:54].

AW:

No.

JM:

But let's say I remembered after sixty odd years because I was so struck with my sister's friend Marty \_\_\_\_\_ [00:25:11] playing Cyrano, it was—this theater thing seemed remarkable, and my sister was involved in it. She was small, so she and her friend Lester [?] [00:25:26] lead a procession at one point, she was not otherwise, I think, prominent in this particular play. But the play marked me. I saw this play and I was—

AW:

So you would've been ten or so, maybe a little younger?

JM:

I think I would say younger. I think I would say younger. Let's say that—yeah I would've been about eight.

AW:

When you say it marked you, what about it was this singular impression?

JM:

Well, part of the thing—one of the things—the least noticed, I think, aspect of the theater that is the most insidious is the light. People seldom come away talking about the lighting and yet that is what enters us, that's what comes in—well the sound does too but it permeates us, and you can just see that glow when you remember a moment that struck you in the theater, but remembering it, you still may not be conscience of it. It was that, it was the harnessing of so much human energy. All the people in this procession going in the same direction and knowing where they're going, and the magnificent costumes. And I seem to remember there was a lot of about language, and also the last word of *Cyrano de Bergerac* is “panache.”

AW:

There was a lot of that.

JM:

It's about flair. I did have to go look up the word panache, I was a little surprised by that word, what the heck does that mean.

AW:

Well, at eight years old you should be surprised by panache, if not the concept certainly the word.

JM:

You know another one of my favorite moments in the theater—this is—in *Aida*, the aria “Celeste Aida” that comes right at the start, and that's what, everyone who knows anything about the opera is looking for, and it happens right at the start. It's the end of *Cyrano de Bergerac*. It's his panache. And I saw it at the Comédie-Française, and one of the things I remember is that the great curtain began to fall well before the line, well before the line. It just came down slowly, and you could not help noticing that the play was ending. It came down slowly. Then the line came, boom right at the right moment, and it was done. It was just—there are few perfect moments of stage craft, and I guess that one struck me immediately and kept with me. Could be that I look for such moments.

AW:

Yeah well, I love what you just said. Lighting to me, you just cannot take that away. That is such a fundamental part of it, and if the lightings bad you can't overcome it, really.

JM:

But you don't always know what it is that made it such an unsatisfying experience.

AW:

I think that's right for a lot of people, I mean a lot of audiences, and perhaps people in the theater.

JM:

It creates so much of what stays with you about a play.

AW:

What other things did you enjoy doing besides going to the theatre, acting?

JM:

I was coeditor of the high school paper as well, and involved in student government and involved in kind of everything.

AW:

Were you a sports person?

JM:

No.

AW:

What was the name of your high school newspaper?

JM:

The Chatterbox.

AW:

I love it. Today I was doing some other research at the archive and found the 1939 Dun Texas public schools newspaper which was the Owl's Hoot, which that name right now was one of my favorites until I heard Chatterbox, I kind of like that.

JM:

Our high school class has—excuse me, my voice is strange today. It's the weather.

AW:

Yeah exactly, I hacked and coughed all the way to the office this morning.

JM:

I was just terrible this morning. Our high school class has remained remarkably coherent, or become more remarkably coherent. We have a sort of online ongoing reunion.

AW:

That's interesting.

JM:

Which has broken up a little bit because some people were unhappy with some of the political statements being posted, so there's an offshoot that is basically people grumbling about Trump.

AW:

Yeah I need an offshoot for my class of '66, so I don't feel like I have somebody—

JM:

But they have posted on the reunion site all of the newspapers from our senior year.

AW:

Oh that's cool.

JM:

Now, I actually haven't looked at it very closely, I don't know why—I guess because it's so much me. But I've noticed that there are the few of the inner views, the column was called Inner Views—no “t” in it. It was a series of interviews that I did with passing celebrities. J Edgar Day, the postmaster general of the United States—I believe it was Bayard Rustin, the civil rights leader, Benny Goodman, it was a thing.

AW:

Could a non-Walnut Hills alum view this as well? Could I look these up and read them?

JM:

I might be able to arrange for a special dissemination I don't know.

AW:

Yeah I'd like to read them.

JM:

It's a fun series.

AW:

Yeah well look into that and see if it's possible, I really would—I'm serious I would like to read them. I say that with the experience of going back and reading things that I have wrote when I was much younger and being surprised to see there was actually, I wasn't just a teenager I was a human being. You know, it's interesting to see that. I think when we think back, we tend to not dwell on that, we think about other things. But you can really see the shape of the person already, so I think it'd be fun to read. It was not at the very beginning but it was early on in the Cultural Revolution that was going on the US, how did that affect particularly with that incredibly interesting student body distribution that you had?

JM:

It was not until one of our recent reunions where the extraordinary, and extraordinarily successful nature of that became kind of impressed upon us all. That this was a social mix unlike any to be found in the country and to reflect on how successful it had been, which is—what can I say, extraordinary. That was the first year where there was something called a Presidential Scholar, which is the White House designates extraordinary high school students to come to the White House and be honored by the president. Most states have two, two students come to the white house. Our high school had two, one white and one black. The black guy became the



Unitarian pope or whatever the leader of the Unitarians is. We used to tease him that he would become the Unitarian pope, knowing that there was no such thing, but he actually became the number one, the head of the Unitarian conference.

AW:

That's interesting.

JM:

So in fact again, extraordinary and extraordinarily successful mix.

AW:

It also sounds like this would've been a great—since it was a prep school but also because of this environment and your colleagues, your fellow students that it would've been a great precursor to college.

JM:

Well, it was a college preparatory school, but it was not a prep school, because prep school at that time meant private school. I guess there's a big difference in our lexicon between prep and college prep.

AW:

Because a prep school was, at least back in those years we tended—we didn't have one in Lubbock for one thing, but we thought of those things as prep for taking your place in the upper echelons of the socioeconomic order.

JM:

Right, and when I got to college, which was I guess at that time, less than half prep. It was extraordinary to me what a different mix of students there were, and how few black people there were.

AW:

Where did you go to college?

JM:

I went to Yale.

AW:

Why Yale? I mean obviously Yale's a great school but why pick that school? If you're able to go to Yale you can go to a lot of places.

JM:

Well, I don't know. I guess it was—I would like to be able to say that there was a really good reason, but it was probably just sheer, sort of, hierocracy and what seemed to be the best thing. My father had gone from the University of Kentucky to Harvard Law School. So he was very [dog barking]—Thelma, you're ruining history.

AW:

Do you need to come up here and visit? Is that what you're complaining about Thelma?

JM:

Yeah not enough attention. So I went with this Unitarian guy on a college tour and we went to Harvard, and Yale and Princeton, I think there may have been another but I don't recall what it was, I think there was a fourth. But we went driving away together, it was very exciting. It might've just been faith that I ended up at Yale, at my backup school, because I think it was when I told the Harvard interviewer when he asked me what I wanted to be and I said, "a little red fire engine." It didn't bother the Yale guy when I said that, I'm sure I said the same thing. So I didn't get into Harvard and I got into Yale. I remember someone telling me, "Yale is not a backup school."

AW:

Yeah, I wouldn't think of that either.

JM:

But what did I know? I know that it seemed like a very nice place, the people there I really liked, and the clam chowder they served at dinner was really good.

AW:

That's about as good of a reason as I can think of to pick a school.

JM:

Having sub sequentially been at Harvard, taught at Harvard I'm really glad I went to Yale.

AW:

Yeah, why?

JM:

It was a bigger mix of the unexpected. Harvard was a little too focused on being Harvard, and on being above the rest. Yale seemed a little more free-willing. When I went to Yale I was in a program called directed studies, which was—I guess now it's characterized—I was just reading an article on it, it's characterized as sort of a read books program.

AW:

Did you attend lectures—that sort of European model?

JM:

It was lectures, it was also a lot—it was heavy seminar work. Heavy seminar work with professors.

AW:

Yeah I really like that approach myself. I don't know why there's not more of it—well I know why there's not more of it, it takes a lot of work on the part of the professors for one thing.

JM:

Yeah oh yeah.

AW:

And more of them for fewer students.

JM:

Right. It was a two year program then, and it was very heavy on synthesizing. I guess that's kind of what I do, which is, whether coincidentally, or in part influenced by me, that's what Texas Tech does a lot now in its theater program. It's very much a more generalized and more synthesizing program than most of them, which admit you in a specialty and keep you to that specialty.

AW:

Yeah, my experience as a student and then when I was in one of my other careers, when I was in police work, and we were in the vanguard of, in our department was in hiring people only with a college degrees. It was quite interesting, we found that the more specialized their degree in topics like police science or police administration or criminal justice systems, whatever that means, they almost across the board were not as effective as police. They were more trouble, not just for management but with the public. The ones that we had the most success with came to us through history and English literature, and education. That was the time when I was committed as a professional in my career to specialization and here we ran right into a whole other set of facts that generalist were much better at the work. I've not forgotten that lesson you know, it was quite interesting.

JM:

I guess I'm drawn to people who do more than one thing.

AW:

In your directed studies, you said it was a two year, so it was two years of your four year program?

JM:

Yes.

AW:

And the first two years, was it?

JM:

Right.

AW:

So in that, I would assume a directed studies meant that you directed it, you decided the things you were interested in.

JM:

To some extent yes, that's true. I don't know exactly why it was called that. It was about twenty years old at that time—

AW:

So not experimental.

JM:

Not but it's been evolving, nobody was ever entirely satisfied with it. But it took you in different directions and made you synthesize. There was some regret in this article that I read that they don't have a science aspect into it anymore, that it's become strictly humanities. They had challenging science courses but with an understanding that these courses were—that there was some relation to other things. It was not for the hard scientists, it was for the—oh, I guess that—

AW:

My phone going off.

JM:

Your phone going off. I thought I heard a little buzz. It was for the liberal arts person to get a feel for what a hard science was like. So it was more philosophical. I was extraordinary.

AW:

Yeah. So at the end of that two years they made you pick a path?

JM:

Right, you filtered into the general population but you would've already taken some courses that were not in direct studies because—I knew that was part of what they were doing, which was we don't monopolize you. You should have your own interests and follow them.

AW:

So what kinds of things struck your interest in college?

JM:

You know, I'll tell you one thing that, one course that meant something to me. It was French 56 and I knew because a girlfriend's, sister's boyfriend back in Cincinnati was a Yale student, and he told me about this course and said you must take it.

AW:

French 56?

JM:

French 56. It was French literature in translation.

AW:

Oh in translation.

JM:

I guess, was it in the twentieth century or—yeah I guess it was mostly twentieth century.

AW:

So would it to include French poets?

JM:

Yes.

AW:

Gosh I would—you know, this is in aside but I just finished re-reading Bachelard's *Poetics of Space*, and I'd read it sometime back and it didn't sink into me like it did this time. One of the things I was struck by were the numbers of French poets that he quoted, none of whom I'd ever heard of. It made me realize that there's more in French poetry than Baudelaire you know, there's a lot of stuff going on. This was just like in the spring that I read this, and I've been thinking even at my advanced age I think I would like to learn French so I could go back and read those poets. I always did like—did you get the translations where they, extent translations or did you have people in the class who translated them.

JM:

It was extent translations. I think one of the remarkable things about it was—oh it's where I first read *Waiting for Godot*, which is like one of the two greatest plays of the twentieth century. I'm forgetting whether *Three Sisters* was nineteen or twentieth, it was on the cusp there, I think it was twentieth. A special thing about it was professor Henrie Pierre [?] [00:50:19] gave the course, and he was just an extraordinary lecturer who had known most of these figures, I mean known many of these figures. He was just a wonderful man and a wonderful lecturer and a giant of the French department, which was I think the top French department in the country at the time, or recognized as such. I went to the first meeting, at which he announced that the course was only for upperclassman. That was disheartening, but I decided to go up at the end of the class anyhow and ask him if I could stay in. It happened that there was one other freshman that was doing the same thing, doing exactly the same thing, tried to argue the way, and says, "Well, no, it's for upperclassmen, and you can take it some other year." Finally, I think we persuaded him that if we could write something to submit to him and then he'd consider whether to let us in. Well number one he did let us both in, number two he never taught the course again.

AW:

It's a good thing you took it.

JM:

Yeah. Later on in the semester, in the year, we were at Proust and we wrote a Proust paper. He announced, somewhere along the way, that there was going to be a special issue of Yale French Studies on Proust, and that he was going to give them the best paper—submit the best papers in the class. Well, the end of the story is that the issue was published, and there are two essays from that class by the freshman.

AW:

The two freshman.

JM:

The two freshman.

AW:

[Laughs] That's a great story.

JM:

Which I haven't told much before.

AW:

It speaks a lot to interest in commitment.



JM:

Maybe so, maybe so yeah.

AW:

Among other things, I'm sure, well—

JM:

I guess that kind of—that moment kind of cemented that French was going to be part of my life in some way.

AW:

So did you speak French at that time?

JM:

Yes—

AW:

From high school?

JM:

I don't know if I spoke it, I had several years of high school French. I guess freshman year at Yale was a challenge. They had a thing, it was a palpable phenomenon that freshman were going to get bad grades, freshmen were going to be challenged, freshmen were going to be weeded out.

AW:

That's very interesting because I've friends who have gone to other—Harvard who said really the hardest part was getting in. Once they got there, there was almost like this institutional inertia to make sure that you winded your way through the—[knocks recorder] oops.

JM:

Yeah, I felt that freshman year was meant to be the hardest. I got grades that I was not familiar with getting, and I began to wonder about myself. So the fact that I seem to excel, and that this professor began calling me a genius, that kind of attracted me in that direction, I guess maybe I'm not so dumb. Whereas in these other courses—

AW:

Classes they don't recognize me yet.

JM:

Getting a 71 on a history of art paper, what—it was chastening.

AW:

So did you continue to take French as a language at the university?

JM:

No, literature.

AW:

Just literature. So you've had enough French that you were able to read—

JM:

Yeah, that I was supposed to be able to read. And that's where it got interesting. I'm going to bring a—get a pit bowl. [JM walks into another room]

AW:

Sure.

JM:

Because I'm going to have a cherry or two. [cabinet door opens then closes, JM returns]

AW:

Well, I mentioned my bizarre interest in the language so I can read these poets [Glass hits table]. I had one semester of French at Texas Tech, and it terrified me, I had taken Latin. So I thought I would be able to, not coast through it, but I would at least have a facility maybe with the structure having had that background, but as a kid growing up in West Texas, the pronunciation of French was daunting.

JM:

I didn't realize you went to Texas Tech.

AW:

Yeah I did undergraduate work here. I did graduate work at the University of Denver but didn't take any French.

JM:

By the way we had three years required Latin in high school.

AW:

Yeah—

JM:

Three years required Latin, and I took another one too.

AW:

I only took the three, this is embarrassing to say, it wasn't required, but the summer before I started high school here in Lubbock, they had a—small town relatively speaking. They had a photograph of the new Latin teacher and she was a knockout, and so I signed up for Latin and I don't regret it, it was a very useful thing to take. But I didn't have enough sense to take something else with it.

JM:

It's useful in ways that are not recognized as valuable. I'm really glad I took that Latin.

AW:

Yeah the way the language works for one thing, the only thing that would've been, I think equally valuable but there's no way in Lubbock, Texas at that time would have been Greek. I think it would've been of value too.

JM:

I don't know if Greek was still taught in our high school, I know it had been but I don't know if it still was.

AW:

Another thing is the Greek that you took in school would be a Greek far removed from Heraclitus, and Pythagoras, and whomever else you might be interested in reading.

JM:

You mean it would be Modern Greek?

AW:

Yeah.

JM:

Oh well, I'm sure that that was classical at our high school previously.

AW:

Oh, previously, got it. I don't mean to short circuit, but back to Yale, so you did the directed studies, it wasn't all you did—you were talking these French course at the same time, so you took other things along with the directed studies?

JM:

Yes, I don't remember precisely what those were, but I can tell you this—I guess directed studies did not leave room for too many elective courses then but I know that French 56 was one of them. What with the trying nature of freshman year, it strikes me that there were three areas in which I found some success. One is they had a news reading contest.

AW:

A news reading contest?

JM:

Yes—

AW:

As to, saying you do radio?

JM:

The radio station did that. I think as a way of recruiting members. I won this contest, but I did not follow up on that one because it was a time consuming organization and I just had to—at this point I had to choose, I had to start choosing. I didn't want to but I had to start choosing. Also, there was a series of freshman one act plays that I auditioned for, I got the role, the play was like a success. In fact, it was a freshman play that was eventually published in a book of Yale play writes, which mostly meant drama school but this was the one undergraduate play. Then got a role on the main stage with the dramatic association, which freshman didn't do. Freshman did not usually get cast, but I got cast. In fact, I just got, like last week, photographs from that play.

AW:

Really?

JM:

Yes, from that play in 1965. Which by some reckoning's is a long time ago.

AW:

Well, that's others reckoning's, it seems rather fresh to me. So those things are time consuming?

JM:

Those are time consuming, and since I was already being consumed over here, I didn't go the radio route. But it strikes me that out of those three areas of success, two of them I kind of followed up on. One of them kind of started to determine what my career would be, well actually it did, but I didn't know that yet.

AW:

Now, at the outset one would say that was the acting, but was it the acting or the literature, French?

JM:

Ask the question again.

AW:

When you said one of them was—

JM:

Oh, yeah, it was the acting that determined what my career would be and the French was—the theater was the noun and the French was the adjective.

AW:

Yeah, got it. When you graduated what was the degree?

JM:

It was an honors major in English and French. It was a made up major.

AW:

Did you get to make it up or someone else?

JM:

Yeah, yeah. I got to make it up, and they accommodated that, willingly. I had to have like a comprehensive exam on it, an oral exam. One of my examiners was Bartlett Giamatti, you know this name?

AW:

It's awfully familiar, tell me more.

JM:

He became president of Yale and the commissioner of baseball.

AW:

That's where I know him from, not from Yale. You couldn't have made up your own major at Harvard.

JM:

That's what I'm saying. He banned Pete Rose, that was a bad thing, and his son is a big actor now. His son who I met when he was like eight, Paul Giamatti.

AW:

I don't know anything about him.

JM:

He's a big actor, you'd recognize him if you've see him.

AW:

Probably would, yeah. That's quite interesting.

JM:

Bart shouldn't have banned Pete Rose, well maybe he should've but it should be over turned now.

AW:

Well, it's one thing to ban for a time but you know, one wonders the damage to baseball, the greater damage, whether it was Pete Roses' locker room attitudes about the gambling or people pumping themselves full of steroids, you know.

JM:

Yeah, if you write a list on people who has damaged baseball, you know its pretty much everybody who owned a team, the players who went on strike for—

AW:

Yeah and the White Sox team that threw the series. You can make—

JM:

Well, I was just talking about since. Every commissioner of baseball has been worse than Pete Rose, since Bart Giamatti. Yeah we had this—I'm embarrassed by the answer I gave on fables [?] [01:06:22] but I guess it was Lagasnerie Foucault [?] [01:06:26] but otherwise I passed.

AW:

So with a degree, an honors degree in English and French, by the time you get to that you're ending your undergraduate and you have a plan or some kind of decision to make, do I continue to go to school? Do I take a job? Do I—what were you pointing towards when you got out at the end of your first four years?



JM:

Well, I'll tell you what happened. It went in two directions at once. Once on York Street I met a graduate who had been in the same dramatic society but a year or two ahead, he told me that he was coming back to Yale, to the drama school, to a program in dramatic literature and criticism. "Okay," and he said, "But you know one of the things you can do is be a dramaturg. I said, "What's that?" He told me his understanding of what that was, something that can combined the literature and the thinking about theater with the doing of theater. I said, "Well that sounds interesting, that sounds like me." You can be interested both in the literature and in the jumping around on stage. So I thought that would be a good dodge before having to choose anything.

AW:

Because once again, it was a little more like being a generalist.

JM:

Yeah, a synthesizer. But I also applied for a full ride in France, which I got. So I went to France.

AW:

That's what we call a no brainer.

JM:

Yep.

AW:

How long were you— how long was the—

JM:

It was a year.

AW:

What did you do when you were there?

JM:

Well, that's interesting. It was a program that was very interesting to me because it combined, in some way, French dramatic literature and doing stuff. So I went to—it was in the town of Nancy The institute was called the CUIFERD, the *Centre universitaire international de formation et de recherché dramatique*. Looked interesting. Looked like an interesting program. So I got the full ride, went to the orientation week in Paris and they gave us a date to go out to our regional centers and just make contacts and arrange for lodging and so forth, figure out how things worked. So I went to Nancy and I said, "Here I am you full ride student." Then they say, "Our what?" I said my name, and they said, "Who?" I said "I'm here for that program, that

synthesizing program.” “Oh we don’t have that anymore, what we’ve got is an experimental acting program based on the techniques of Jerzy Grotowski, a polish director of whom I had never heard, taught by a woman Michelle Kokosowski who had just spent two years with him in Wrocław Poland. Well, I thought, That sounds crazy, maybe I’ll do it. They said, “But of course, you have to audition, it’s by audition only.” I said, “Oh well,” [glass hits table] —whoops— “Okay I guess I’ll come back and audition.” So I turned around and went back to Paris and it happened that one of my extraordinary college roommates was in Paris, and he and I had had the leads in the *Rhinoceros* and so when I went back to Nancy he came with me and we did the scene. Then I also, I had done *Waiting for Godot*, I had done the *Par de Patos* [?] [01:12:21], and back in Paris I learned it in French and so I used that too. I met with Madame Kokosowski, she said, “Well that was interesting, and what is your friend doing? Would your friend like—?” Well, he was actually set in what he was doing. But she took me anyhow. So I stayed a year in what turned out to be a very influential, important theater technique working in that realm, was very physical, a great deal of sweating, a great deal of all my training sessions. It was quite an extraordinary experience, which I’ve never quite replicated.

AW:

You mean in trying to create that for students? Or finding yourself in that same—?

JM:

Finding myself in that. Also, it seemed to me such an intensive technical set of skills that I didn’t know it. I could just take who I had become and work with students or work with other people without teaching that technique.

AW:

Talk about the technique a little more for someone listening to this who has not a clue with your—?

JM:

Right, the Grotowski technique, we did roughly seven hours of gymnastics every day.

AW:

That’s physical.

JM:

It transformed me—I became quite thin, which I am not again now. It’s the kind of movement, it’s a distinctive kind of movement program. Now the training techniques, some of them are still taught. In a sense, the theatrical techniques are still reflected in the devised theater movement, which has become tremendously important in the American theater. There are people who became Grotowski actors.

AW:

Would you spell Grotowski?

JM:

G-r-o-t-o-w-s-k-i. That was actually, it was kind of a dead end to become a Grotowski actor. But the skills and the approaches turned out to be very influential, very helpful. The approach to plays was not really text based. It was movement based, it was, I want to say emotional states. but it was almost trance like in a way. The effect of a Grotowski production was quite phantasmagorical. He would take established texts and transform them in ways where sound and movement and what comes from trance became the most palpable things but they were enchanting pieces. He took a Calderón play called *The Constant Prince*, plays by \_\_\_\_\_ [01:17:23]. I think there was a \_\_\_\_\_ [1:17:28]. Made them unrecognizable in a sense, but works of art in their own right, the theater piece became the work of art. We worked that year, we worked on a play by Bigner [?] [01:17:51] called *Lance and Lana* [01:17:52], I played the king.

AW:

What year was that year?

JM:

Sixty-eight, '69.

AW:

Is there a connection to your knowledge between that movement and what was going on in French philosophy at the time, [Giles] Deleuze and Guattari and the idea of you know, the re-semantic theory, the notion of taking things apart and transforming them? As much political as it was anything else but it seems like your description of this way of transforming theater has a lot in common.

JM:

We did not make that connection. We did have a number of visitors who worked with us, and one of them was an intellectual by the name of Hobert \_\_\_\_\_ [?] [01:18:50], but he was more in the realm of niche and older German philosophers than of current French philosophers as I recall. We had another fellow who worked with us a lot on the physical stuff, an actor named Serge Merlin. A student lent me a copy of—oh, and now I'm blanking on the name, but it's like a French cult film that—reflections—it's a known quantity now, it's based on a girl's name, the title is a girl's name, I can't think of what it is right now.<sup>1</sup> But there was this man in it whom I said, "I know this guy, I know this guy," and finally the creds came up, and it was Serge Merlin.

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<sup>1</sup> Likely referring to the 2001 film *Amélie* (*Le Fabuleux Destin d'Amélie Poulain*).

AW:

Spell Merlin's last name.

JM:

Merlin, the wizard.

AW:

This sounds really interesting. I mean you've already said something about what you took from it, or how it—maybe not what you took from it but how it affected you. What did you take from it in terms of what is my, where does that move me to my next step, my next thing to do?

JM:

It felt like a very fertile digression. And what I did was I reapplied to that dramaturgy or that dramatic literature and criticism program. I didn't really have to apply, they said I was in, they were waiting for me. That was nice. So I went back to Newhaven. On my first day there, I got a telegram from Nancy saying, "We have accepted you into the second year of our program." I sent back a telegram saying, "You're crazy, I'm here."

AW:

How could I endure another year of that?

JM:

It wasn't so much that, it was, How am I going to change my life? Am I going to be a French, Polish actor or is it maybe something in America. Life would've been different. I had certain ties to this country, the most important of which, I am married to.

AW:

Did you meet in college?

JM:

Yes, at that time, yeah, it was coeducational, and it was not coeducational, it was an all middle school. So for the—the drama school was mixed but not the undergraduates. So we got actresses from either the drama school or Newhaven. Tova auditioned for *Threepenny Opera* at the same time I auditioned for *Threepenny Opera*, that's when we met and we both got the parts. That would've been more than ten years ago, that would've been, let's see, more than a half century ago. [AW Laughs]

AW:

So while you were in France, she was still in the United States?

JM:

Yes.

AW:

So you're not married yet?

JM:

We were not married for a while, and then suddenly we were married.

AW:

When did you marry?

JM:

March 28, 1981 or two, better check on that, better know that.

AW:

You knew each other a long time before.

JM:

Right.

AW:

That seems like a really deliberate decision, I kind of like it.

JM:

We thought about it a while.

AW:

This is not to be personal but it's biographical, so did you live together for that length of time or were you--

JM:

No.

AW:

--Separate but connected and all that, because that's even more interesting really to me. How one meets someone that early and then sometime later comes back.

JM:

Let me pause while I think about this.



AW:

Oh let me click pause on here, while I uncurl.

[Pause recording]

AW:

Well, that was great, so after I paused you're back in drama school now at Yale.

JM:

Yes.

AW:

Is that a—and I use the word traditional very loosely, but a two year program the master's level is that the sort of—?

JM:

It's a three year program. However the program for the master of fine arts—however the program I was in was the doctoral program. It was indeterminate, and there was no degree along the way. At a certain point, I made an agitation and they instituted a MFA [**Master of Fine Arts**] at the end of three years.

AW:

You know, I don't know how many other places—when I started at the University of Denver in '73 it was the same thing. I started as an—I was undergraduate but it was a doctoral program and you were to—I didn't, it was too much work. I was working full time, and finally just literally burned out. I really liked the concept at the time because it allowed you to—you didn't have that intermediate step but on the other hand you could really think about a larger arch for your graduate work, whatever it was that you intended to do.

JM:

But as it happened, fewer—it was taking people a while to do a dissertation.

AW:

It can—and there are places to fall off the-- like it happened to me.

JM:

Oh yeah, it happened to lots of people. So I agitated that really they needed an MFA for their lives. We needed MFAs so we got them.

AW:

Did you go on to the doctorate at Yale?



JM:

I did, over a long period of time, it took me quite a while.

AW:

Did you stay there or did you move on to—you mentioned that you taught at Harvard.

JM:

At the end of my three years, I was invited to stay on and work with the repertory theater as assistant literary manager and rather quickly as literary manager, which was—they used that term more frequently than they used dramaturg back then because nobody knew what a dramaturg was.

AW:

Yeah I've got to admit that when I first saw the term I had a very different concept of what it was. It's a little bit accurate, not completely accurate.

JM:

Well, I teach a course in dramaturgy, which is all about the question what does a dramaturg do, what is a dramaturg? There is no accepted definition at this point.

AW:

So it's a bit synthesized itself.

JM:

Yes, yes. Well, I had something to do with it because—we were among the first if not the first to trend dramaturgs.

AW:

When's the need for having that line of inquiry, that line of thinking?

JM:

The situation was and still is to some extent, that there was a wall between those who thought, wrote, and taught theater, and those who did it.

AW:

And the idea of the dramaturg is to reach that wall.

JM:

Um-hm, kind of synthesizing two discourse. Now as it's developed over the decades, I think more and more people who are skilled only in the first part I mentioned, the teaching, writing

and thinking, many of them have thought that's sufficient to calling themselves dramaturgs, and have been recognized as such.

AW:

Probably universities are tolerant of that, are they not?

JM:

Oh yeah. So they come and talk to the cast or something, they would have the dramaturgs and they'd write an essay for the program or something. I'm no doubt simplifying and caricaturing but I think that's true. I was of the opinion that you should be versed in both areas and even practicing in both areas. While I was being a dramaturg, I was also being an actor. Starting my first year as a student, I was acting in the professional theater company there.

AW:

In Newhaven, not just on the university campus.

JM:

Right.

AW:

This was a professional company? Not a community theater?

JM:

Yes, the idea that Robert Brustein had when he founded the repertory theater was that it should be a—symbiotic with the school of drama so that the people that worked there should be teaching in the school drama, and the drama students should be working on the productions, that sort of thing. An idea which has caught on and which continues to this day. So it is a professional repertory theater with professional actors that also has students involved. I was there for the second year of the repertory theater, I think this is true—no, no, no maybe the third year, the first year in its new home, and I was already working in the company. Doing his program notes and appearing on the stage. I continued to do that throughout my career as a dramaturg there—okay, then Bart Giamatti fired Bob Brustein or did not rehire him, hired Lloyd Richards. I continued working with Lloyd Richards, I think it boils down to he saw me as part of the old regime, he did not trust me, and he got rid of me. So I went to Harvard because Brustein—

AW:

Spell Brustein's name.

JM:

B-r-u-s-t-e-i-n. Our library has several of his books.

AW:

Yeah, I just wanted to make—when they transcribe this, they'll ask me. So was Brustein at Harvard?

JM:

Got to tell you another story.

AW:

Good.

JM:

Drama instruction [?] usually traces it's way in America back to George Pierce Baker. A professor of English at Harvard, he made a laboratory out of his English 47 class. It was basically a play rights lab but they had actors and directors. It became famous—one of its students, I think was Robert S. Sherwood who was a noted dramatist of the day, Eugene O'Neill came and though not an enrolled student, did some work there because he wanted to learn about drama. He wanted to expand it, he wanted to have his own department, Harvard said, no way it's immoral. Well, I mean it's always been immoral, there were laws against it at the start of our—but they didn't think it was an academic discipline. So Yale said, we'll build you a building, and give you a department, and that's how the Yale drama school started. Brustein reversed it, he got fired by Yale, he went to Harvard saying wouldn't you like a theater major and a professional reparatory theater. They said yes, and so he reversed that trend. He founded the American Reparatory Theater, which though it was not a theater major, they would not approve of a theater major, but he gave theater instruction. So I eventually went from Yale to Harvard too, became part of their reparatory theater, and was teaching.

AW:

So this would've been about the three year mark that you left?

JM:

Oh no, I had stayed on as the faculty.

AW:

At Yale? So when did you go to Harvard?

JM:

So I was at Yale for seventeen out of eighteen years, which by some standards is a long time. I went to Harvard around 1980. [Pause] I was there for about seven years, eight years. [Pause]

AW:

Then to here?

JM:

Hm?

AW:

And then to here?

JM:

Nope, then to the American Conservatory Theater in San Francisco.

AW:

Now, is that affiliated with a university?

JM:

No, however it has a master of fine arts program, freestanding that is part of the company. So it's accredited by the Southern Association of—by the Western Association of Schools and Colleges as an educational institution.

AW:

That's interesting.

JM:

Well, it became interesting enough that I was head of accreditation when it needed to be re-accredited. Our self-study was used by WASC as a model self-study for small institutions. Used by WASC

AW:

That's really very interesting. Is there a parallel to that anywhere else in the US?

JM:

I think in Denver. I think the Denver—what's it called? The reparatory theater there also has a master's program, I think, not many places.

AW:

Yeah, very interesting. I mean one—

JM:

Denver Center, I think. Denver Center?

AW:

You know I don't remember when I was there in the seventies I was too busy to really get to do much of anything except work and do what I was doing in school. One thinks of a different model where things, and I think particularly in music and art, that begin as independent entities, as institutes, and then are brought into the fold of the university later on. How did you go about getting students?

JM:

That happened in Cincinnati with the College Conservatory, which began as two independent institutions that eventually merged, and then got swallowed into the university.

AW:

Was the MFA and the educational part, that kind of education of the American Conservatory Theater, did it serve the theater itself? In other words people came to be a part of the theater and then could also do this, or did they come to get the MFA and could also be part of the theater?

JM:

It was sort of sui generis, it was a—basically a two year MFA program with a third year by invitation, and that third year consisted mostly of working at the theater. Otherwise, I don't think they even did extra work at the theater, I think it was more separated.

AW:

Very interesting. How did, just out of curious—it's such an interesting idea, how did it support itself? The program, not part of a state government, not part of a large private university, how did it go about supporting itself?

JM:

I guess it's part of the theater—within the theater budget. People would—most of the teachers worked with the theater in some way or another. So it was—

AW:

So it didn't have a lot of water to carry on its own?

JM:

It had less, yeah.

AW:

Yeah, cool. How long were you there?

JM:

It did not do—it did only workshop productions, it did not do—it had no main stage.

AW:

So that would raise the question of how to—gate receipts.

JM:

There were no gate receipts, but there was also no scenery, and it was the theaters costume stock, to some extent. The separation became such that the theater would not let the—would only on certain occasions let the conservatory use its costumes and the props.

AW:

Curious.

JM:

Curious, it was a really strange institution. It too, like the other institutions I was involved in, was organized around a charismatic figure. He had just departed when I got there.

AW:

Who was that?

JM:

His name was Bill Ball, like a ball. He was apparently raped, and he eventually became highly drugged and erratic. The institution followed him wherever he went. When he gave up smoking the institution gave up smoking. It was—

AW:

Almost a cult.

JM:

Gary Street in San Francisco becomes Gary Avenue. Jim Jones was on Gary Avenue, Bill Ball was on Gary Street. You know Jim Jones was a brilliant, charismatic figure.

AW:

Really? Well, I certainly knew it was charismatic I didn't know much about whether he was brilliant or not.

JM:

He was—well, you know charisma and brilliance kind of go hand in hand. He was on a city civil right commission, he was a well-known figure there. He was larger than life and about that size.



AW:

You know I've got to say I am so ignorant about him. I mean I know the end of the story but not anything leading up to it, and I'm not even sure I know the end of the story actually but—

JM:

We did a play, we did it several times, an opera called the *Rise and Fall of the City of Mahagonny*, Jonestown happened during one of those productions and I did a whole collage, montage, about the parallels between the cities of Mahagonny, it's an opera by Kurt Weill and Bertolt Brecht, and Jonestown. The cities built upon ideals that were ideals that were really built upon greed, and that collapsed in death and destruction.

AW:

Did you publish this?

JM:

Never been too involved in publishing unfortunately.

AW:

Do you have that where a person could read it?

JM:

No.

AW:

Too bad.

JM:

It really was fabulous. I bet I kept—oh I don't know, I'll have to go through my files. This one I will not find soon.

AW:

Well, if you do find it I would be interested to read that because the whole notion of the Jonestownness if you could generalize it to any other sort of debacle like that. It's such a bizarre and demanding idea even when it actually happens is, to think how in the world does this occurs.

JM:

You know I asked that question very recently but about something else. How in the world does this occur?

AW:

Yeah, and there is something about it in the cosmic scheme of things that come up as I suppose. Particularly in our country we think—we look at the Germans and say, guys how did y'all let that happen and then you know the Hitler, and the whole thing.

JM:

I thought of Mussolini too. Mussolini is almost closer because I used to look at pictures of him and say, "This guy is strutting and posing, and they're absurd poses. How did anyone ever fall for that?"

AW:

Yeah and in comparison, Hitler and his crew were almost policy wonks.

JM:

Right.

AW:

Compared to Mussolini. Well, and also, I mean if you think about other figures who developed that, maybe not the strut of Mussolini but certainly the public persona including—well you could just name a whole host of those kinds of demagogues that—yeah. Well if you do uncover it, it would be—

JM:

It was actually, I thought it was an extraordinary piece. But I was modest about my reach, I think my boss wanted me to be modest.

AW:

As sort of a practical aside, those kinds of things are really important in an archive to go along with—I mean we're doing an oral history interview, but there are lots of things that support that over the years. Photographs, pieces of writing, the ephemera of posters, and booklets, and all the other kinds of things that come about, correspondence of course, journalists diaries, those are all of value of people who get to look at not just the life of the person but the work of the person, how do these things connect. So it would be worth digging around if you have it. Wherever you want to put it, I'd like to have it here but you may have other ideas.

JM:

No other ideas.

AW:

Before I ask how long in San Francisco, it also strikes me that you had to be particularly adroit while you were there in navigating that sort of landscape.

JM:

Yes, yes. I don't know that I was but I lasted a certain amount of time. I started out strictly on the theater side, and ended up strictly on the conservatory side.

AW:

How long is how long?

JM:

About seven or eight years you know. I'm actually going back next month to—my boss's daughter is getting married and— my boss then.

AW:

[Talking at once] And who was the successor? Yeah, who was the successor to Bill Ball?

JM:

His name was Ed Hastings. He had been at that theater and elsewhere for quite a while. A Yale graduate, a gentleman.

AW:

Is that your boss? Is that the one you're talking about?

JM:

No, he was, but I was interviewed by John Sullivan, who was the managing director. They had a sort of had do over it.

AW:

Well that must've also required some adroitness.

JM:

Yes. The part I was not adroit at all about was the eventual successor, who was kind of a liar, and sociopath, and I didn't get along with her very well, and she's still in charge.

AW:

So that would take us to not that long ago.

JM:

Nineteen ninety-five is when I came here.

AW:

Why Texas Tech?

JM:

I will tell you. First off it was a job search that I think lasted a couple of years—

AW:

On your part?

JM:

On my part. We were living in a—there's a fly up there—a thirty story high-rise in Emeryville, which is at the foot of the Bay Bridge. It was clad in the same sort of material that was—you remember that London building that went up like a match stick, it was clad in that. And we had had—

AW:

Did you know at the time that it was dangerous?

JM:

No. I knew that we were able to afford it because the prices were depressed, because there was a suit against the developer, but I didn't know what that was. That suit went on, and on, and on, and Tova got on the board and—let's see, she, I think she was involved in firing the lawyer. Then I got on the board, and then I became president, and then within a month we had settled the law suit for like twenty-one million, which at that time was the largest settlement in California condominium history. We bought a lot of steel from Germany and it was affixed by helicopter on top of the bad stuff. By this time I had moved on, I was here supporting two households and I sold before the prices really shot up. I had to sell, I just couldn't see baring that cost. Alas.

AW:

I was in the finance world for ten years after I got out of the police work, I can tell you my observations on that is that luck is a whole lot larger factor than pressings. It could look good or bad depending on how you—

JM:

Well, I thought that our fix would make things better, I did not realize how much better. So that's an experience that I've had that has nothing to do with any of all this, but it was a good experience.

AW:

Well, I don't know, there's a lot of synthesis there as well. So you're looking for a couple of years to find a place to like. This seems like—although I dearly love this part of the country and I'm a Texas Tech fan, I mean for a lot of reasons, the things that we're doing, but still it's a pretty unlikely destination for a Yale guy.

JM:

I had a choice, I had two simultaneous job offers.

AW:

Really? Ain't that the way to go, can't find one then you find two.

JM:

One here where I would—this is the academic side of me. The other in Houston as associate director of the Alley Theater, which would be the other side.

AW:

Quite a nice theater too.

JM:

Yeah, oh yeah. So I decided on Lubbock, and the reasons are as follows. Let's see one was the possibility of tenure versus once again serving at the pleasure of a brilliant but capricious artistic director. I had never been in a tenure granting institution before.

AW:

Even when you were at Harvard, because you were affiliated with the repertory center?

JM:

Yes, I was with the repertory—I was not a member of the faculty of Arts and Sciences. I sat on one of their committees or was delegated to one of their committees, but was not a member of the faculty of Arts and Sciences. So there was no tenure and there was no tenure at the Yale drama school either. Except for the history professor who I had added previously, and whom I succeeded in teaching history but without the tenure track.

AW:

Yeah I've been teaching at Tech for fifteen years without tenure so—

JM:

So there was that possibility. Again I had to choose—what else was there. Well, what finally decided it was dry heat versus humidity. Living in a swamp was not for my nose.



AW:

No, I love the city of Houston if they could just pick it up and move it somewhere. I was just looking at the time, what it is now, a little after five? I would like to spend a little more time on Texas Tech, which might take very little time, might take a lot more time. But I really am interested in getting you to talk a little bit more about this idea of synthesis and dramaturgy. How when you—in any work in which you put things together, where one begins is kind of interesting, you know in the putting together, so I'm just laying this out that these are the things that might require a little more time.

JM:

Yeah you know, I just thought of this today. Early on and when you mentioned the creative process, just a vignette of watching and helping a true genius work. By true genius, I mean someone recognized around the world as the best. There aren't many fields in which there is such a person, but I think Meryl Streep is that person in acting.

AW:

Oh yeah, I mean who would argue with that.

JM:

There was—working on *A Midsummer Night's Dream* there was a line that I did not think she was delivering right. It just didn't seem to make sense, which is unusual with her. I thought, Okay well I better find out what this line means. I went to what was called the variorum of Shakespeare. Now we have a modern version of this, it's called the internet, but what this was, was a huge book, a huge volume for each play. As in the Talmud the text is in the center and the commentaries are all around the side. So I went and looked up this line, and what you saw was centuries of scholars arguing about what this line meant. So I went to Meryl and just gave her a kind of brief summary that showed the gamut of what the lines had been taken to mean. She listened for a while, and then I saw her sort of glaze over, but not glaze over in I wonder where I'll go to dinner, but I wonder what I can make of this. And she came out of it, and she said "I got it. Watch what I do." She thanked me and went away and then she did it. I can't tell you exactly what she did, but I said, "Oh I get it now." And that's a vignette. But it's one I kind of hung on to.

AW:

Yeah it's a wonderful vignette as near to looking at creative processes I can imagine.

JM:

Yeah to watch it. She was still a student at this point, but from the first time I saw her I treated her like—I thought she was—first time I saw her act was in a basement production of *Major Barbara*.



AW:

Where was this?

JM:

At Yale.

AW:

Yale. When you were in the drama school?

JM:

Yes. No I was—was I in the drama school? I guess I was still. I was two or three years ahead of her. I remember my mouth fell open, I mean literally. My thought was, here's one thought I thought, I can't believe that Shaw ever seen it done better. Then I thought, That is really stupid. I mean, if she is as good as I think she is, that everybody would notice it, but they didn't.

AW:

Well, we all know the reasons for that. I mean because there's so many of them, putting product in a process in other words, we expect to see it this way, and if you don't do it this way then it may take us a while to—

JM:

I don't know what it is, I don't know, you know acting is a little mysterious.

AW:

Oh, yeah.

JM:

So people—some people caught on, and most people didn't. I was at a faculty meeting where we voted on whether to put her on probation for lack of development of her talent.

AW:

I hope she prevailed.

JM:

No.

AW:

No?

JM:

I think I was the only one who voted for her. She was on probation. It's ridiculous but it's true. It's true. I really think I was the only one that voted for her, I mean voted not to put her on probation. Now people don't always recognize it. When I was at ACT one of the heads of acting expressed his displeasure to me that I was using her as an example of good acting.

AW:

Really?

JM:

Yes, whereas he was using her as an example of bad acting. So she was not always universally recognized as a genius. I say with confidence that I was right about her from the start.

AW:

I'm shocked to think that she wasn't universally acclaimed at the onset.

JM:

No she was not. I can think of—I know of two people who recognized—one was an acting teacher named Bobby [Robert] Lewis who was more legendary than most of his students knew going back to the thirties. He said, [Impersonates Bobby Lewis] "Meryl is going to be a very big star." That's the way he spoke. Among his stories are the day when Katherine Hepburn went to a meeting of the group theater as it was forming. She was an unknown actress, and standing up to say that she was leaving because she didn't believe in any of this, she was going to be a star and she walked out. That was one of his memories. Another memory was going to the Oscars with Charlie Chaplin and at dinner, because he was in a film with Chaplin, at dinner Chaplin got up and began doing a routine on the floor and everyone looked the other way, because this old man was—this has been was still acting like he knew something about comedy. Those are his stories.

AW:

Those are great stories.

JM:

Yeah and then another actor named Jerry [Jerome] Dempsey who was teaching at the school, first time he had ever taught, but I remember talking to him at a bar in new York, and he was saying, "Now what am I going to teach Meryl Streep?" I thought, That makes sense, he gets it.

AW:

Yeah and that brings up a question that's of interest to me and especially as someone like me who writes but doesn't act. And yet I write something and I watch somebody acting those words, you know those things that I've written and whatever, and I watch—I can see the thing come, is

a whole new thing now, of which—and I know this is a thing that most writers degrade saying, but of which I only play a little part in the writing. In another lighting, I can understand that, I can understand that, I can understand a lot of other things but the acting part, how the actor inhabits that with something, some life, some anime, some spirit that transcends all the rest of that. You know, it's the old I know it when I see it, but I wouldn't have a clue as to tell someone how you go about and do that. Is there a way to do that, or do you just have to recognize the Meryl Streep's and encourage them?

JM:

I was very unpopular among acting teachers at Yale for saying, "We will be doing well when we're sure that we picked the best actors and don't ruin them."

AW:

I got to agree with you.

JM:

You've got to give them an arena where they can try stuff without triggering that defensiveness that kills them. There was a lot of triggering going on. So we were as never forgiven, the people of Yale for how oppressed she felt all the time, and how she was never cast, or seldom cast. That's another one where I was arguing for casting her.

AW:

Quite different than Meryl Streep to me just watching, I really mainly know them both from movies and not from stage, but very different presences. But Sigourney Weaver the thing that really impresses me about her is that she can do this role that if I looked at the role on paper I would've said, "I would never watch that, I would never be interested in it," and she takes it on and there you are, you're transfixed. That is a very special thing, you know, how do you take something that's on its face but maybe not be what it becomes.

JM:

That's just what they do those actors, that's what they do. I think she's gotten very good at it, I think she was always good at it but she's gotten better. There was the comparison with Ms. Meryl always, that she always lost and will continue to lose, but she's still very good. When we were casting the Tempest I thought it was a no-brainer to cast her as Miranda.

AW:

Meryl?

JM:

No, Sigourney. The director said, I don't think she can handle it. You can't go wrong with Miranda, you can't go too far wrong. He said, "She's one of god's most beautiful creations, but I don't think she can do the role." I think he was wrong, he hired someone from New York to do it. She was okay, it was Miranda she couldn't go wrong.

AW:

So recognizing—I mean in the very tiny experience I've had directing and all that thrust on me not anything I ever sought out, I learned early on that if my biggest ability was if I had the right people, and if I had the right people then I really—

JM:

Absolutely right. Casting is 50 percent of directing. What I like to do is get the right people, get them pointed in the right direction, and let them go.

AW:

Yeah, there was a little bit of hall monitoring that went on.

JM:

Yeah. Oh, yeah you got to watch them. You got to watch them and step in and redo it totally.

AW:

Settle the disputes but—

JM:

I start off by being very unassertive by saying, "I don't know what do you think, you do it." Lately, I've gotten to—I kind of shock them when I say, "Okay just do the blocking." They say, "Well, this is our first rehearsal, we don't have blocking." I said, "Well do it."

AW:

Right, you'll figure it out.

JM:

Yeah and I don't necessarily take what they do, but it teaches me to recognize when they're right, and what to do when they're not.

AW:

Well, and of equal importance, it teaches them when to recognize they're right.

JM:

Sorry?

AW:

Of equal importance, it teaches them when to recognize they're right. I mean teaches—it reinforces instincts.

JM:

It gives them a kind of confidence you know, sometimes they get it right. Or if I arrange it, it's not because they did anything wrong, it's because I have something better for some reason.

AW:

The other thing that I found, and I do this more in music in production you know, in fact there's a great joke about producers in recording studios its very much like, because you're essentially a director. And the joke is, "How many producers does it take to make a decision?" And the answer is "Well, I don't know what do you think?" There is that aspect of it though that when you do—when you start out that way, when you do raise a point almost inevitably the musician or the actor says, you know that's been bothering me too. That we—and to find that common ground at the beginning is much easier than saying, this isn't working. At least in music and I don't have that much experience with acting, with actors, but so that lack of assertiveness at the beginning is almost the Zen, you know advance by retreating sort of notion. Is it also fair to characterize that idea, that approach that you just outlined—that's also part of synthesis isn't it?

JM:

Yes, because those who specialize in their own ideas will automatically come in with the right way to do it. Here's my idea, this is the best way to do it. One guy, I remember from talking with \_\_\_\_\_ [02:16:58], who was for a while recognized as the greatest director in the world. He said, "I've had actors show me their ideas, but usually they're not as good as mine, almost always." So I've written a piece, and this is one I have published, which sort of posits a polarity, a male and female polarity. Not necessarily tied to gender but just like magnets, plus and minus, or like batteries. Male and female, not to say that the male's side is the good side and the female's—so the male director is—you know the first director in the modern world recognized as such was Saxe-Meiningen who was the duke of his own country, so he had a sword, he was in charge, he was the guy in charge, the guy with the boots. The ushers were army personnel, he was in charge, that's the male side. The female side is, okay so what do you think, what should we do? Let's decide, let's get in a circle and decide. Most directors exist somewhere along that pole or they work along that pole. Some productions is one side—



AW:

Well, in the notion of creative process that we've been talking about in our group and various other places, that female side is the, we don't know yet what the best way is to do it, and the product side is that I know the best way. The problem is, at least I know in my own experience what I think is the best way is a poor imaginative substitute for what turns out to be the real way, the better way to do it. Usually you find it by, in my experience at least, you find it with other people and not in spite of other people.

JM:

Well, I think that's true in any—I'm saying this, I have my objections immediately. Any collaborative adventure and some that are not, but I don't know about dance.

AW:

Dance?

JM:

Dance.

AW:

I don't know enough about it at all.

JM:

They seem to have a different standard. A choreographer can go to a company and set a dance upon them. that's what they call it "set the dance upon them." That seems like there's an active agent and a passive agents, and I think that's more the norm.

AW:

So it'd have to do with the number of moving parts?

JM:

Could be. It's often considered in the virtue that they're moving in the same direction—

AW:

Right and not colliding and not injuring one another. That's what I mean, whereas there's a little—I mean there is certainly some of that in theater—

JM:

Yes, there's some dancing in theater.

AW:

Um-hm. And fight scenes and stunts, all that sort of thing.



JM:

Yeah, you want the knife to be the same place every time.

AW:

Right. How do you look at—think about this idea of the dramaturg as the synthesizer, do you start with text?

JM:

Well, usually yeah. I draw two circles that intersect.

AW:

A Venn diagram we like to think about from our math years.

JM:

Okay and one of the circles can be called drama, and the other theater. Now, though those terms are, they can be interchangeable, more and more I think it is happening that the drama refers to the stuff you can find in the library and take down off the shelf, dramatic literature. Theater refers to stuff that happens in theaters or analogous venues, moving stuff, sounding and being the scene stuff, not just being read stuff. In our tradition, in our lifetimes, most of what we see produced comes from the intersection area, where theater and drama intersect. So that people get confused as to whether they're seeing one or the other or both, in fact, they don't even think about it, it just all seems to be the same thing. But there is drama that happens with no theater involved. In fact, it happens every time you hand a play script to a director, that's what you're handing over. Then there's stuff that is theater but it has nothing to do with dramatic literature, which is now earning a pretty penny in Las Vegas in the Cirque du Soleil shows.

AW:

Well, and if you think about it, this you could take your really cool illustration and apply it straight away to cinema. You know that—

JM:

Yes, in cinema, however, mostly the script is treated sort of like a found object.

AW:

Yeah the most basic of outlines.

JM:

Right. And the play right, the writer is treated like the caterer, but not as important.

AW:

But on the other hand in cinema you also have the— all drama side you would have just all that plot and we see how many successful movies seem to operate really without a whole lot of regard to that because they're so well done, at least from the audience point of view on that your action, what goes on in the movie side.

JM:

And there's not much of a market for film scripts in book stores.

AW:

Except on the part of people who want to write film scripts.

JM:

Yeah. There aren't too many film script reading courses. So it's—the thing itself is not the script, it's the DVD. Oh, you know I remember now, in French 56 the book of poetry was called *The Poem Itself*.

AW:

*The Poem Itself*.

JM:

And Mr. Peyre was one of the authors of the film itself—*The Poem Itself*, as I recall.

AW:

Spell his name.

JM:

P-e-y-r-e. It had the English on a facing page with the French.

AW:

Oh great, and as you could read French, were they translations with which you were comfortable?

JM:

I was comfortable—well, I'd say I was kind of new to the idea of thinking about translation. It's easy to look at a translation and say, "Well that's not right, that's not what that word means," because they're capturing more than just a word by word translation. Poems translated by Google are not going to be good poems. So this was a time to make good poems out of—

AW:

Sure, which is what I think is a good translation, is to get the spirit of it more than the literal.

JM:

So I don't know if I was comfortable with that concept yet or not. [Talking to his dog] Does that feel better Thelma? I know we were neglecting you. She's got the weirdest expressions.

AW:

She does, she looked very wise just now.

JM:

Louise is the philosopher of the two. Here go see Andy.

AW:

Yeah, you're welcome to come over here since you don't mind my cat odors, not that I would disagree if you did mind them. It's my lot in life, I'm sorry, can't help it. Well, let's see its getting now to six, let's put stop on it today, and let's think a little bit—I'd like to think about this a bit more and start off with that, but I'd also like for in our next session to talk about the university and the community here in terms of the arts. One of the things where I got to know you was perhaps more through the arts alliance and other things like that than through the university, although certainly there, but day to day interactions maybe more so the other end. Of course, there's always the big story, maybe we like to make it bigger than the rest of the world does but for our community of this size the extent in variety of creative people and creative things that go on. And I don't know—to me it's less of an issue saying wave the guide on the banner and the rah rah, but much more of—to me it gives us an opportunity to explore why that would be because really there's not a difference in people from place to place. So whether it's true or not, how does it become to be thought to be true, and how does it appear in that way. What are the communities of the systems or the fortunes that arise you know in a place. You were talking already about the brilliant, charismatic leader and one is hard-pressed to find a great, charismatic teacher in our circles here that stands out unless their dead of course and we make them into that like a Buddy Holly.

JM:

Well, just—off the bat I would say first of all when I got here the reputation for the community as in an arts magnet seemed kind of wishful thinking. Sometimes wishful thinking pays off. Now it's not quite so much—now there's some reality to it. So I would locate it in an uncharismatic, genius of a sorts, in Louise Underwood because she just plugged at it with such belief, and she was a smart lady, which Ms. Moneybags is usually not.

AW:

Let me offer—and you may already have this insight but I did interviews with Louise over the last couple of years and one of the things I assume, because I was there at her house the very first meeting we had for what became the regional arts alliance and the underwood center, etcetera. I just assumed, Harris Underwood was long gone and I knew Jane well, I didn't know really the other kids all that well, but looking around the house, the art and everything, I just had this assumption that Louis had had a long passion for the arts. It turns out that that's not exactly right. She had a passion for community and family, and in fact it was Harris, her business man, oil man, cotton compress man, husband who first introduced her to the Baker Company, which at the time was the gallery of—really the only gallery in Lubbock for art in the fifties and sixties. And it was his—

JM:

The Baker Company?

AW:

The Baker Company, the office supply company had a phenomenal gallery and represented some really top notch artists and they would have openings and shows. It was a very interesting and unique sort of thing that happened but I was really—and Louise was—she wasn't like this was something I got into first, she said, "Oh well Harris—what I like to do is get people together" and we had—she talked about these events that she would organize and help others organize. So it put a whole new cast on the work that she has done in the arts, which is—she certainly loves the arts, loved the arts, but she also saw the value and the synthesis with the community and it was not a thing—I thought that this was because she was able she could follow a passion she had. Well, yes, but it was a different passion, so your observation I think is right on the money.

JM:

When Harry Belafonte was here I got to meet him, and I think we had some good—we had a few good moments.

AW:

Well, I'm a huge fan of him. So did he live up to the adulation of people like me would—

JM:

Oh, I would say more because he—I think he was quite serious in saying all of this was about working for the black community, and in an integrated America—in a segregated America. Working to make changes in the system. The acting, the singing, the shirts, it was all about that. I believed him, and I saw, I could see in this person that that was true.

AW:

You know my admiration comes as much from the music side and not the performance, but from his musicology. His approach to *bajan* music, the music's of the Caribbean is the same way that an ethnomusicologist would approach it, one who could sing and perform. I mean he is true to the origins, to the culture, to the texts as they were presented to him. As he learned—and he became a self-directed student of that where all that came from. That stands out among the popular entertainers, to me at least.

JM:

I—see I hadn't really thought about it so much, but I would've thought that he was a popularizer of it. But if he can be a popularizer and stay true to it, that's a neat trick.

AW:

And he did both. When you—and there are other examples, I just recently been working up to performing my own act, *The Music of My People*—my people being those of us from the sixties. So one of the things that I have found is that a number of the songs that we relished, pop music, and we didn't know anything about them other than listen to them on the radio for instance, the Beach Boys did a song they called Sloop John B, which is a song that was first transcribed, it's a collected song, first transcribed in 1916 and—

JM:

Didn't the Kingston Trio do it too?

AW:

Oh yeah. The Weavers did it, the Kingston Trio—it was—Sandburg printed it in his American song bag in Lomax in one of his collections. It's in all these various—including Bruce Springsteen, Johnny Cash, you just name the list. But what is interesting is that here's this pop group who stayed close, the melodies the same, the few changes in lyrics instead of the original song said "I feel so break up, I want to go home", which was a patois sort of a language, they said, "I feel so broke up", which was more Southern California. When you find those examples—and they're interesting because they're unusual and here's an example of how that persist, but Belafonte every time he did those songs—

JM:

Banana Boat song.

AW:

Yeah and the Zombie Jamboree song, which was a huge popular hit and very, very interesting because it took into the mainstream of America, a whole notion that was pretty far out there with all the sexual innuendos and such that one would get from that kind of music in Caribbean. But



he took that and made it—and he did popularize it, but he popularized the real thing, he was that good at it. That's a thing to me that's just really admirable.

JM:

But one of the things he wanted to talk about was the march on Washington. I told him that for some reason or the other, I was at home watching it, I watched the whole thing. I said it was remarkable how they got the involvement of so many celebrities that was important for it because it was built as—we were told it was going to be a riot, that it was going to be scary. You got all sorts of white faces that were attractive and not scary. I said, I remember Burt Lancaster, and strangely enough I remember Charlton Heston doing this, and he started laughing. He said, "There's a story behind that. We wanted to get all—" He said "I wanted to" because this was his part of the deal, "I wanted to get a spectrum of familiar faces marching in and in front of the cameras. Heston was already kind of who he ended up being, but I called him up and I said Marlon Brando was going to be there. And he was a great admirer of Brando, he wanted to know him, he wanted to be like him, he wanted to hang out with him. I kept pressing Brando and it was Brando that got him to do it because he wanted to be doing something Marlon Brando was doing."

AW:

I'm pretty intrigued by the notion that Heston was an admirer of Brando's. That in itself is kind of—well you know of course, those people like all the rest of us people have—they're not all black or white, and not really all gray either, there's so many nuances of things that they believe in one arena but don't necessarily—they would seem consistent but don't carry through to others.

JM:

You know—

AW:

Not that I'm defending Charlton Heston.

JM:

At that time it could've been simply yes but he wanted to be known as an actor, and at that time Brando was actor, was American actor. He probably didn't think of being Lawrence Oliver, didn't think that was—that was not where—he wanted to be a movie actor and Brando was it.

AW:

Yeah a machismo movie actor.



JM:

Yeah, yeah, true, true. But you know, Brando's debut—the only thing like it in theater history, that I can think of, was Garrick's debut which would've been 1731, something like that.

AW:

So tell me about that debut, what was the—what marked—?

JM:

The thing—in acting there's always been a—the polarity has always been stylization, realism. Realism has always been a pole, it's been different things over the years because it too is stylized. But the reigning actor was James Quinn and he was the teapot school of acting.

AW:

Yes, posing and—

JM:

Yes, very conscious poses and vocal power, and dignity. There had been an actor called Macklin, Charles Macklin, who was known as the wild Irishman, who had had notions of realism. He was the first actor who came up with the laughable notion of doing Macbeth in kilts. They just thought that was hilarious and laughed him off the stage. He was a fighter, and he was a drinker, and he eventually burned himself out. But he was kind of Garrick's inspiration, and Garrick was a level headed—he was both intellectual and talented, and he could stay the course. His realism was astonishing, and captivating. What Quinn said was, "If that young fellow is right then I and my fellows have all been wrong".

AW:

Yeah I remember reading that quote.

JM:

Until Brando, nothing else marked such a firm dividing line because most experts on acting did not think of him as an actor. The people who—in his first play he was a delivery boy, and people actually thought he walked in off the street by accident, onto the set of a Broadway play. It was a terrible mistake because he came from another world, a totally different reality from everyone else, and one they had only seen in delis. So he did more to acting than anyone remembered, and so that's why Heston would go to that. I would say—oh, now I'm free to associate him. The closest thing we've seen to that is really Henry Winkler.

AW:

Really? In the *Happy Days*?

JM:

In *Happy Days*, yes. Because most of television acting was pleasant people, and good looking models. The executive were not interested in actors, they were interested in spokesperson models.

AW:

Well if we look at reality TV we see they're still not interested in actors.

JM:

Right. But Henry came on and did his Sylvester Stallone imitation, which is what Fonzie is, and he could get away with it because nobody had heard of Sylvester Stallone, but he just blew everyone away. He was a minor character, and they noticed that every time he came on the meters went up, they had their meters on people and every time—so they made him a major figure in the show. That's when Hollywood discovered—television discovered you can make money off actors. There've been a lot of actors on television too, since then, not before then.

AW:

Yeah you know when I think about *The Honeymooners* or I think about *I Love Lucy* or even a show like *The Andy Griffith Show*, which I've always really liked the writing. But they were either—the remains, the remnants, the flotsam and jetsam of vaudeville, nightclub acts and things that carry—well *I Love Lucy* here you have Fred and Ethel, both, him in particular vaudevillians, who—

JM:

And Ricky.

AW:

And Ricky who was the non-Belafronte Cuban. So yeah that's—

JM:

His father was mayor of Havanah, I think.

AW:

Oh yeah he was in the elite and frankly as a musician I don't think many musicians are—he put together a band. He was like a Bob Wills. You know Bob Wills was—his father Uncle John Wills was a terrific fiddle player, Bob not so much but Bob put together a great band and so did—

JM:

Desi.

AW:

Yeah the Ricky Ricardo character but Desi. Well, I know I need to go, I've got a lot of other things I've got to do, but there is—

JM:

Henry's another one that I got right, or I think I did.

AW:

How did you know him?

JM:

Well, I originally met him when we were undergraduates and we were—our guys organized a drama festival, and he came in from Emerson College. He came in twice, I think we had the festival two years and—no we had it more than that, but he was there twice. I think it was Voetsek [?] [02:51:18] and *Mother Courage*, and he's a gregarious sort so I got to know him then. When I came back to the drama school he was at the drama school ahead of me, so we were in stuff together.

AW:

Yeah, there seems to be a fundamental difference between a Brando or a Winkler, and we can name a number of other people who—Streep—who create characters anew versus the—and some people I dearly like, I love to watch John Stewart. You know the actors that would come on particularly in movies, and they essentially were just themselves, they always played the role the way they played the role. In fact in the Westerns the hats were the same, they always had the same hat it didn't matter the period, you know they had their hat. A different cult personality more than James Stuart, you know his stuttering, which is charming and you know what you're going to get, but—

JM:

By the way it's not easy to play yourself on film.

AW:

No, I wouldn't think so. I find it difficult to play myself even in real life much less on film. But you know what I mean they have a "here's my shtick" you know and no matter what it is.

JM:

I had this notion that I saw so many good actors or what I thought were good actors not get work. So I said okay, when Henry graduated I said, "If this guy doesn't get work then I know nothing."

AW:

All right, let's leave it there I've got to run. What—I'm going to say thank you again, and I'm going to stop this recording for today, and then I'd like to get you to sign one of our releases saying that we can let people listen to this. But then let's—can we look a little bit ahead.

JM:

I'm not going to sign that.

AW:

Yeah.

JM:

I just wanted to see the look on your face, then I couldn't bare it.

AW:

Good, well thank you again.

***[End recording]***

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