

A PINWOOD DIALOGUE WITH LAURA LINNEY, TAMARA JENKINS, AND PHILIP BOSCO

The independent film *The Savages* is a remarkable collaboration between writer/director Tamara Jenkins and a cast including Laura Linney and Philip Seymour Hoffman as a brother and sister forced to care for their father—played by Philip Bosco—as he descends into dementia. With sharp humor, surprising warmth, and brilliant performances and dialogue, *The Savages* confronts the messy reality of aging and reveals the bonds between a brother and sister who—to say the least—have serious emotional issues. Tamara Jenkins, Laura Linney, and Philip Bosco took part in a lively conversation following a preview screening of the film.

A Pinwood Dialogue following a preview screening of *The Savages*, moderated by Chief Curator David Schwartz (November 20, 2007):

DAVID SCHWARTZ: Well, congratulations everybody. It's a great piece of writing and directing, and you wrote amazing parts for these actors. The film is doing a number of things. It's a film that's about dealing with death, the messiness. You open right away with this toilet scene, sort of letting us know what death is all about. And then it's about this incredible brother/sister relationship. So could you talk about how these things kind of came together for you?

TAMARA JENKINS: I can't exactly explain precisely how—I mean, individually, sort of how it emerged... So I had my own experience with two family members who were in nursing homes and had dementia at the end of their lives—one was my father and one was my grandmother. So I had had this personal experience many years ago, and it was sort of re-stimulated in a way, oddly, in that I live around the corner from a nursing home in the East Village, and I walk by this nursing home many times a day, because I have a Jack Russell terrier that needs a lot of exercise. I think this kind of like daily meditation from walking past this nursing home, you know, three or four times a day, just started working on me. Simultaneously, I've always had an interest in writing about a brother/sister relationship. I have three brothers in real life, and I was interested in exploring those dynamics. So it all kind of was happening simultaneously, those interests merging.

SCHWARTZ: And [like your characters] did you ever apply for a Guggenheim [Fellowship]?

JENKINS: Yes. Yes, I have.

LAURA LINNEY: And she won it.

JENKINS: It's true. No, it is true; that is true, I did. I sort of took aspects of my own life and almost inverted [them]. My brother actually won a Guggenheim in real life, too. So I did make a trick for myself at one point, when I was messing around with a sibling. I mean, in my own personal life, I do not... the reason I say that is because people often ask about the autobiographical content of the movie. It's very personal, and it's sort of...at the heart, there's this autobiographical element, but it's also wildly fictionalized.

In terms of the siblings, I actually don't have a particularly combative or, artistically competitive relationship with my brother, or any of my brothers (although they are all professors; I have three professors). But we, in fact, individually received these Guggenheim things, and at one point when I was messing around with figuring out what this relationship would be, I remember turning them inside out and sort of taking aspects, sort of the superficial aspects of my brothers and myself, and literally inverting it and turning them into these competitive siblings, which was really the opposite of what my own thing was. But anyway, it's a weird trick. I mean, it's like a writing exercise or something. (Laughter) "Invert family members, turn them into, you know, antagonists, and see what you come up with."

SCHWARTZ: (Quoting line from *The Savages*)
Sounds like “A subversive, semiautobiographical work”

JENKINS: Yes, very subversive and semiautobiographical.

SCHWARTZ: Can you talk about what drew you—I’ll start with you, Laura—to this character? There are so many things about Wendy that are fascinating. But what drew you to this script and a chance to play this character?

LINNEY: Well, first of all, because it was so obviously actable. I mean, when you get scripts, a lot of times you’ll get a script and it’s not actable. There are ideas on the page; the dialogue is all the same; the voices are all similar; and you know you’re going to have to slug through the material to try and execute it into something.

This script was in pristine, perfect condition, and by page three, my mind was already going. You know you really have to pay attention when you already start working on something before you’ve finished reading it. You know, your actor brain just turns on. You can’t help yourself. You just start making connections and seeing the architecture of the piece and all of that. So it was really more my attraction to the entire thing, other than just Wendy—who was delicious to play, and complicated and bottomless, you know. Bottomless things to investigate there with her.

SCHWARTZ: Okay, and how about you? What drew you to this?

PHILIP BOSCO: Well, I was drawn to the project initially—

SCHWARTZ: Speak into the microphone.

JENKINS: He doesn’t need a microphone! (Laughs)

SCHWARTZ: I know, he’s a theater person. But still, we’re...

BOSCO: I was drawn to the project initially by discovering [it] through my agent. I didn’t know Tamara prior to this. I didn’t know about her first

film or any of the other documentaries she had made, so she was a question mark for me.

JENKINS: And she remains, to this day a question mark! (Laughter)

BOSCO: She’s a lovely, very talented lady. But I was a little uneasy when I discovered, through my agent (I hadn’t read the script yet) and he said, “It’s a low budget film.” I said, “Oh, you know, I really don’t... I’m not up to doing another low budget film. I’ve done my share.” There really is not a great deal of money to them, and it takes a lot of time, and it was just after... Anyway, he said, “Let me send you the script to read it.” I said, “Don’t bother, because I really don’t want to do a low budget film.” (Laughter)

And then he said, “Well, it’s a pity, because I’ve read it, and I think you’ll enjoy reading it... and it’s got some very good people connected with it.” I said, “I don’t know the director.” He said, “Yes, but you know Laura Linney and Phil Hoffman.” I said, “Laura Linney and Phil Hoffman are doing this?” He said, “Yes.” I said, “You ought to send me the script. (Laughter) I know that if they’ve chosen to appear in this, then certainly themselves, and their agents, must have approved it. It must be a dynamite script.” (Laughter) That’s how it all turned out.

SCHWARTZ: And were you hooked by page three of the script, when you were smearing feces on the wall?

JENKINS: “I’ve got to do that!”

BOSCO: No, no, no! No, I didn’t feel that way. (Laughs) No, I wasn’t hooked; but I was hooked after we began to read the play. We had a number of days reading it...

JENKINS: Yes, so in other words, he’s saying that he wasn’t convinced at that point, either. But he—Can I add something? Can I say that...?

BOSCO: Yes, yes.

JENKINS: Because Phil came in and he auditioned for the part—and even then, he was suspicious. You know? You were a little suspicious! (Laughter)

BOSCO: Yes, unsure. (Laughter) But I don't read scripts very well. I mean, I can read well, but I don't look at them—I'm afraid I'm afflicted with that—I don't think you have it, because you do so many wonderful things. I don't know, do you choose your own scripts?

LINNEY: I do; I do.

BOSCO: Yes, so I trust my wife, because she reads scripts much better than I. I have a very kind of cloistered and narrow view of it. I look and see how many lines I've got and whether I have a good speech or something of that nature. (Laughter)

JENKINS: So you just want your size. Just give your size.

BOSCO: Indeed, right, that's what I look at. So I wasn't really convinced of it until my wife read it and said, "Oh, this is very good."

SCHWARTZ: You didn't think there were enough lines for you...?

BOSCO: No, no, no; I realize that. (Laughter)

SCHWARTZ: So talk about what's so actable about the film; there are so many scenes that stick out. I guess let's start with the one in the diner, when you're realizing that they're putting you in a nursing home. That's such a strong scene in the film. So could I maybe hear from both of you about that?

BOSCO: Well, I hate to sound like I'm polishing the apple here, but it really boils down to two things: the text—it's very well written, and it's motivated, it makes a point... It's very effective in its economy—and it was well directed. Let's face it.

LINNEY: You also, with this script, you learned something every single scene. With every single scene, there's another layer that's added; you learn something, either about one of the characters, about their past, about their future, about the history. So the story keeps unfolding as it goes on, so that it moves forward. And a lot of times you just don't get that, you know. Also, Tamara understands story and how to tell a story, and then also how to then take it and then execute it into another medium. [That] is a whole other step that a lot of

times even if you have a great script, is not able to transfer onto film, become cinematic. Just like a play with a script sometimes isn't theatrical. It might be good on the page, but it just doesn't translate. So it's a rare sort of gem, this one.

SCHWARTZ: Could you talk a little bit, Tamara, about how you built some of these scenes? In a way, the plot is fairly simple, but every scene has these moments of anguish, humiliation, embarrassment. There's so many layers going on, and it really comes down to capturing the tension and strangeness of each of these scenes.

JENKINS: Well, I'm not a very linear person, in terms of writing. You know, I think some people really start writing something from the beginning, and have a real sense of... I'm more almost collage-like in the accumulation of scenes, and I start just making them—or at least in the case of this script, that's what I did. I had many notebooks, and I started accumulating all these ideas for scenes, and consequently, the first draft was 250 pages; it was this kind of wild weed of a thing.

The character development and sort of the dynamics of scenes is almost easier for me than an overall sense of structure. And because it is character-driven material, and it is not a plot-driven movie, I find that to be almost—that's where I really feel like the difference between a sort of male mind and a female mind, in a certain sort of sense. I always think, "Oh, that's why boys always—they like, you know, cars and building sets and erector sets, and they have just a better sense of structure." I always feel like I'm missing some... that it's just harder for me, that I have to reach a little harder to kind of build a sense of architecture, in terms of a screenplay.

SCHWARTZ: And could you talk about building the character? I just want to pick up on what you said before about your mind kind of ran with the script, about how you going to play the scenes and how you were going to build this character. What do you use to build Wendy, or what were going for?

LINNEY: Well, it really started with the script, and everything I needed was there. But it took—and this is what I love, I love doing this sort of stuff—because when you have a script like this that has

so many avenues down, you can track one thought all the way through and it will answer so many questions for you.

So I went through the script with a fine-toothed comb, and [I] would flesh out every single reference; would ask myself, "Why?" at every opportunity that there was a why question connected to anything. It would lead me to another thought, which would lead me to another thought, which would lead me to a discovery about character, family, place, person, thing... You gather this mountain of stuff, as all the connections all begin to form—and then you throw it all away. You go on set and you hope that all of that work that you've done will bleed through and inform all the instinctive responses that you have by listening, by watching, by feeling, by smelling, by... you know, all that sort of stuff.

It's fun to figure out how a person will behave differently with different people in their lives. You act, you behave differently with a brother as you do with a boss, as you do with a lover, as you do with a father, as you do with...you know. There was so much in the language, just the rhythm of—I don't even know if you were aware that you did this—the rhythm of the language would tell you a lot. So there's...

BOSCO: All of those relationships that you had did, in fact, work. The one with the Nigerian—I'm sorry, I can't remember his name...

JENKINS AND LINNEY: Gbenga [Akinagbe].

BOSCO: ...It worked beautifully! And all of the stuff, of course, with Phil[ip Seymour Hoffman] and with Peter Friedman; they worked like a charm.

LINNEY: There was so much there within the script that would then move it forward. It was just very ripe, it was just really full.

SCHWARTZ: In terms of "Why?" questions, one question is "Why is your character in this affair?" Could you talk about that, like how you sort of explain that to yourself? Did you have this whole idea about your father, the relationship your character had with her father?

LINNEY: Well, certainly, the relationship that the three of them have with each other is core and elemental to the entire thing. What's interesting is to see—or at least what was interesting to me—was to see how my behavior would reflect my past with him, and Phil's behavior... Our approaches to this man were very different. Clearly, there are references to his being abused and (I assumed) me being just neglected—because Wendy's still trying so desperately to have a relationship with a man who just does not love her. He just—he doesn't love them. What do you do with a parent who doesn't love you? Wendy's still desperately trying to connect in some way; to please in some way; to get something—you know, the pillow, and the things, and the drama about, "He's in trouble and we've got to go get him!"—the drama that she creates so that she is then connected to something, or she has the opportunity to connect to something.

SCHWARTZ: It seems to be the only thing she can enjoy, when there's some kind of drama. She seems so happy to find that her brother is taking antidepressants. (Laughter)

LINNEY: Absolutely, yes. Also, what was so interesting to me was she would create these situations; she would create this chaos; and she would either lie or cheat or steal to watch someone do the right thing. She would do it because she wanted to see some act of kindness, so she would create an opportunity for someone to behave well, which I found very—it's very touching, in a way. It's so odd that you go with her, even though she's a lying, cheating, stealing, fraudulent adulterous, (Laughter) sort of petulant.... I loved her petulance. I loved the sort of defiance, that she would defend herself when she was absolutely lying through her teeth like a five-year-old, you know?

SCHWARTZ: Or ripping a pillow away from...

LINNEY: Yes.

SCHWARTZ: That great moment when you say, out in the parking lot, "We're horrible people." Could you talk about that scene, because that sums up [so much]? It raises this question about how we treat our parents, and also about the character.

LINNEY: Well, for anyone who has been through that experience—I had a grandmother who I moved into a nursing home—and that’s probably the one moment in the whole script where I did completely exploit my own past (which I try not to do, but it was almost impossible in that one not to). Because you do, you do feel that way. You walk away, you leave them there, and it *just* is a killer!

A lot of people have been challenging the content of this movie. “Why would I want to see it? Why would I want to go? And why was it made?” It drives me crazy that people can’t understand that this is what connects everybody. It’s these experiences that connect all of us as human beings. I mean, it’s the inevitable that we all have to tackle, no matter where you are on the scale of economics, or status, or development or, you know, anything.

SCHWARTZ: Well, there’s such a sweetness in the relationships, particularly between the brother and sister.

LINNEY: What happens is that they get to a point where they have the realization that they belong to each other. I mean, they don’t have that at the beginning of the movie. There is a sense all of a sudden like, “Oh, I belong to you... and that’s not so bad; that’s okay. You belong to me. Well, okay.”

BOSCO: It was lovely to see the difference in their characters and how they were two peas in the same pod, eventually. That was really exciting to watch. He has a kind of gruff and dismissive nature; and she’s pleading, very excitable. She’s: “What’s the matter with you?” He’s relaxed. I found that very, very interesting to watch.

SCHWARTZ: Tamara, your naming of the characters seems to indicate some thought: the family name; Wendy and John... Could you talk about just coming to those names?

JENKINS: Yes, I mean, it’s always such a... I didn’t self-consciously name them John and Wendy after *Peter Pan*. But when I realized what I had done, I liked it. So I had Wendy first and then sort of came... you know, I think for a long time it was Brother/Sister, Brother/Sister—when it was in its kind of Pinter stage. (Laughter) You know, pre-

like... whatever that is; then obviously, I was sort of messing around. Sometimes you feel like you’re wasting time. Like, “You’re supposed to be writing, you’re not supposed to be sitting there coming up with names! What are you doing?” You feel like you’re doing something sort of frivolous, but you really do have to sort of connect to that. Anyway, I remember coming on to Wendy, finding the name Wendy, or thinking that that felt right; and then to John, and then going, “Oh, look what I’ve done. I’ve made them Darlings.” And then I was like, “Oh, but that’s okay; that sort of works.” So it was an accident, but [one] that I then liked. The Savages... what were you going to say?

BOSCO: I hope you’re going to address the ‘Savages’. That’s what I’m wondering: Why were we named Savages? Was it...

JENKINS: Because you’re like, “What the hell were you thinking?” (Laughter) What do *you* think, Phil?

BOSCO: I don’t know, I’m asking you!

JENKINS: Geez!

BOSCO: Are we savage to each other?

JENKINS: Well, there’s a little bit of it... I mean, don’t you think?

BOSCO: Well, I certainly would be considered savage. But certainly not [Linney’s character]...

JENKINS: (Laughs) He’s so protective. “Certainly not!”

BOSCO: No, no, no... Well, no. She wasn’t savage to me, and her behavior in the film isn’t savage at all.

JENKINS: Well, I think that the name has resonance in lots of different ways. But certainly, there was a kind of...

LINNEY: She’s also savage because she has no tools.

BOSCO: Did I blow your cover? I’m sorry.

JENKINS: No, not at all! I like it. This is like what it was like! (Laughs) This is *live*. No; no, it was a whole series of things. The savagery of old age; the fact that the members of this family were...

BOSCO: Savagely treated?

JENKINS: Well, yes; and that they had so little in terms of resources growing up that they're desperate and sort of greedy, and steal...

SCHWARTZ: And primal, too.

JENKINS: ...and primal, and you know, kind of grabbing things—in Wendy's case, with these sort of spasms of need and desperation that are not particularly civilized; and the fact that we don't really have any... sort of the treatment of the elderly.... I mean, there are a billion riffs one could do if they were writing a thesis. (Laughter)

SCHWARTZ: I'll just ask one thing and then open up to the audience. But since you brought up the treatment of the elderly: You filmed in real nursing homes. Could you talk about that experience? I mean, going out to Arizona, and I guess there were a number of places...

JENKINS: Retirement communities, Sun City and stuff. Yes, we did. I mean, we weren't shooting—a journalist was asking something about that—you know, the extras are actors. We're not like, grabbing people in nursing homes and tossing them in front of a camera. All the people that inhabit—the people in the nursing home are actors playing residents of a nursing home—just for the record. The Valley View, for instance, it was an abandoned space that we production designed and kind of re-set dressed and sort of turned into the Valley View. Although one floor of it, the very bottom floor, was a working nursing home. You know, when you see Wendy sort of carrying her Urban Outfitters shopping bags, she's sort of in a real nursing home; and then that fancy nursing home, when they go to Green Hill Manor, that was a real, very high end nursing home.

LINNEY: That one's really nice! (Laughter) We should all remember it, because it's not far from the city... (Laughs) and it's really nice!

JENKINS: Quite beautiful.

BOSCO: Was it White Plains?

JENKINS: It's so funny... Was it Riverdale? It was not in Buffalo, it was in...

LINNEY: Yes, it's Riverdale, right up the river. So if you don't get into the Actor's Home—which is where I'm going—I'm going to the other one. (Laughter)

BOSCO: Well, I'm going there, too!

LINNEY: Well, I'll see you there!

BOSCO: I'm going to go if you're there. (Laughter)

LINNEY: Oh, I'm there. (Answers audience question) There've been so many times when I've seen actors and they are crying and screaming and emoting, and tears are coming, and they're sweating, and they're red in the face—and I feel absolutely nothing. I feel nothing. I think about this a lot, and I believe the reason why I feel nothing is that what they're doing is not knitted organically to the material; they are sort of using their own... they're using a sense/memory thing, and they just are exploring, and exploding, and using. But if it doesn't connect to the material, then it doesn't affect the audience.

What I tend to think is that that sense memory stuff is the first step, is just step one. Then you have to take it forward and knit it right into the material. Fortunately, I'm at the place now where I'm able to do these big emotional scenes and I can go home and I'm fine. Fortunately; that's just with experience, you learn how to do that; otherwise, you will... I couldn't do it, you know. But with that scene, it was just very easy to hook into because it was still so—for me—so raw. I mean, I'm so haunted by that, still.

If the writing is good, if your co-actor's good, if you've asked yourself all the right questions, if you put yourself in that situation, there's no other way it will go. It will... you will just go there. If you've done all that preparatory work, something will happen. You'll hear something, you'll see something, and the emotion then will follow, because emotion is a

result of something. You can't go and say, "I'm going to play this emotion." You can't play an emotion. So as long as you don't skip a step leading up to the emotion, the emotion will then come there, it will be there.

SCHWARTZ: Can you add anything to that, Tamara, because I think you allow, in your directing, just these moments where we watch facial reactions register? Like the way that when your character opens the door and we see, like, the look on your face...

JENKINS: When Larry's there?

SCHWARTZ: When Larry's there. So just...

JENKINS: Well, I mean, some of that is the selections that you make in the editing room. It was very clear to me in the writing of the script, and also—the most important thing, in terms of the movie, was you know, these performances and these... I remember sitting in the kitchen at one point with my cinematographer when we were preparing the movie. We had thirty days to shoot the movie, and you know, we had big plans, big dreams. "Oh, we're going to do this, and then we're going to bring the camera and we're going to do this and this and this." Then I remember just turning to Mott [W. Mott Hupfel III], who's our cinematographer, at one point, and I said, "You know, when the shit hits the fan and we don't get to do this stuff—these big dreams in the kitchen; this whole, elaborate shot list—you know, the most important thing is these guys, and nailing it, and capturing it, and you know, underlining their expression. Really, that was the primary thing. When everything fails, the only thing that really matters are the performances.

Obviously, you want it all when you're making a movie. You want everything. You want the stunning cinematography; you want this; you want everything perfect; and you want to get da-da-da-da.... You know, sometimes you can't get it all. So that being said, I knew that the heart of the movie had to do with the behavior of these people—because that's really what it was; it was a study in behavior and dynamics. On top of it, I had these pretty brilliant actors doing it, so there was just all this delicious stuff going on.

That's when you're on the set and you're sort of registering what's happening. Then you have this whole other experience, where you go into the edit room. What often happens is there's a kind of compression of time in scenes, you know, which you see many movies. What ends up happening is you're sort of... it's almost like squeezing the juice out. You're killing it, you know? So much is happening between the lines, in terms of the behaviour with the characters and the players, so a lot of it has to do with respecting the organic work that they were doing live, and not squeezing it out; spending the time there editorially. So that's one thing.

SCHWARTZ: Could you talk about sense memory? *The Jazz Singer* scene; your character there—you know, it seems like memories are coming back. How do you play a scene like that?

BOSCO: I didn't have any particular point of view of doing that. I was just kind of responding. It was due to Tamara's suggestions, you know, how I reacted to it.

I would like to make one point, though. I was captivated with the talk about emotion and how you show it as an actor. I learned very early on in college—I won't mention the part; it doesn't matter—but playing a part, I was crying so much I thought, "My God, I'm moving this audience!" (Laughter) I couldn't quite understand the people turning pages and coughing and scraping stuff. When the scene was over, I felt so badly. "What is the matter with this dumb audience?" What I'm trying to get to is the way to play scenes like that is, is the act of your trying *not* to cry that moves people very much.

A perfect example of that was Robert Kennedy's assassination. In St. Patrick's Cathedral—it was on television, because that's how I saw it. Teddy Kennedy was giving a speech, I guess eulogizing about his brother, and he was on the verge of tears almost all the way through. But he was *fighting*! If anybody saw it, you'll understand what I'm saying. He was fighting desperately not to break up, and only every now and again would his voice crack. That effort not to cry was absolutely devastating, and I was a basket case over that.

One further thing. Excuse me for going on like this, but... A friend of mine died. It turns out it was—Frances Sternhagen, the actress—her husband Tom Carlin, whom you probably knew. When he died; I had gone to school with him, so I knew him very well. I don't think it's betraying a confidence to suggest that he had very sad life, because he was an alcoholic his whole life, and he fought desperately against it, but he was just overcome by it. Anyway, he passed away and we went to his funeral. Frannie and Tom had, I think, seven or eight children, I'm not sure; a large family. The church where it was, in New Rochelle where they lived—I think it was there. The place was mobbed, and every one of those children got up to the dais and spoke about their dad—with not a tear. Not a tear in any of their voices; every one of them, all seven or eight, and Frannie came out at the end and did the same thing: spoke lovingly and warmly, of course, about their dad about her husband and all the wonderful things about him—and the audience was absolutely awash in tears. I can't tell you, it was one of the most thrilling and moving experiences I've ever endured in my whole life. That effort to go beyond indulgence in emotion was—oh, so moving. So terribly moving.

JENKINS: That's so interesting, your ongoing study of human behavior, in terms of how it is applied to your work as an actor at all times.

LINNEY: Oh, we're obsessed all the time. I mean, we're constantly—you know, we are obsessed all the time. The thing that was interesting about that scene when we leave him is that for Wendy, it's been an extremely long day. I mean, I remember we had really plotted out that day. She starts in Arizona; she's got to pack him; she's got to get him on the plane; the whole thing on the plane; and then they move him in; then they leave him; and then they go back to the house. So it was also fitting in, what would be an appropriate emotional journey within that big, long day.

JENKINS: Yes, and how vulnerable you'd be at that point.

LINNEY: How vulnerable you would be, or just was it exhaustion? Was it—what was feeding the emotion? What was it that made the dam break?

JENKINS: Yes, plus Wendy had to carry the load. I mean, not only pack up the house, and all of his stuff, and then fly him on the plane, and all of that kind of keeping face. Then suddenly in the dark, in the parking lot, gets to...

BOSCO: And at least as a viewer—and I keep talking as a viewer now, having seen the scene—the very fact that Phil Hoffman was terribly unconcerned. (Laughs) I mean, there was concern, but he was just cruising through, and she had all of the burden of doing all that stuff.

SCHWARTZ: Until that plate of eggs makes him [cry]... (Laughter)

BOSCO: Yes.... Yes.

SCHWARTZ: (Repeats audience question) Could you talk about that very lyrical opening scene, with the dancing women?

JENKINS: All of the people that you meet at the top of the film... I remember thinking it was like a brochure, a living brochure of the offerings of Sun City—and in fact, they are all residents of Sun City. There are a variety of clubs—the water aerobics club—and they allowed us to shoot them. The women in blue, they're called the Sun City West Dancers. They're citizens of Sun City, and they have this troupe and they perform. When I was working on the script, I bumped into Sun City. I had never been there in my life. I came upon it in the writing process, and sort of fell in love with this idea that that's where Lenny is at the beginning of the movie; he's in this incredibly heightened place, this Sun City. So I had done a lot of reading about Sun City; discovered that it was one of America's premiere, very first retirement communities in the United States—it's actually the second. The first one's called Youngville, (Laughter) in Arizona; and the second one is Sun City. And it was developed by this guy named Del Webb in the late 1960s. He's, like, on the cover of *Time* magazine.

BOSCO: He used to own the Yankees. He was a co-owner of the Yankees.

JENKINS: Did—Oh, he might've; yes, he did! He was like the—who's the guy that owns McDonald's... Krok?

SCHWARTZ: Ray Krok, yes.

JENKINS: He's the Ray Krok of retirement communities, because now there's Sun Cities all over the country. There are Sun Cities in Denver, there's Sun Cities in—he's no longer alive, but he was on the cover of *Time* magazine, and I think it was like, "A great way, a new way of life for the old!" or some kind of a great slogan like that... But anyway; those are the Sun City West Dancers, and that is their costumes; that's all the stuff that they provided. I went to a rehearsal. They're tappers. We pulled the sound out, and it's slowed down, so... they're tap dancers. They're actually doing *42nd Street*; that's their costume. I went and watched one of their rehearsals. You know, the only thing that I did was set them up behind the hedge. They usually have a more dignified space, probably, but we liked the hedge.

SCHWARTZ: Okay; just time for a few more, I think. Over here. (Repeats audience question) Which do you prefer, theatre or film?

BOSCO: Well, I hope I don't ruffle any feathers here, but my first love is the stage, and it probably always will be. I love movies. I love—I'm a wonderful movie buff. I watch movies endlessly at home. And I love working in them, and I admire people who work in them and all of that. But as an actor, from purely an actor's point of view (at least from my point of view as an actor) there's no comparison in—what am I trying to say?—in self-satisfaction and appreciation.

When the actor (or the actress, of course; when I say actor, I mean...) when the actor goes through four weeks of rehearsal... that's a big difference, too. You hardly ever get very long rehearsal in a movie, if at all. Some now, I think, do a little rehearsal. I did one Sidney Lumet film (which is the worst film I think he's ever made; I was not very lucky in my choice) in which we did rehearse for a week... but it didn't help the movie at all. (Laughter)

But in essence, what I'm trying to say is, after the rehearsal period and after the play, when that curtain goes up in the theatre, it's you and the audience. You are the king or queen in the theatre. In the movies, I always felt like a kind of cog in a large wheel. Now, I admittedly have not played very prominent roles in most of the movies I've made;

and I've made a lot of them, very small roles. I've played a few leading roles in some low-budget films. But essentially, I'm kind of an after-ran in movies. I didn't start making movies until I was in my fifties; I wouldn't go to Hollywood in the early days. There's a huge difference in your self-satisfaction. I don't really feel as if I'm doing terribly much in movies, because I'm only a cog in this gigantic wheel, which involves music, and editing, and lighting, and my God knows what else. So no comparison at all, although I love films.

LINNEY: There's also something about the theatre that film does not have—and it's sort of what makes film challenging and exciting, when you have a big part (like this one or any other) that you sort of have to somehow negotiate through. With theatre, there's just time for connections to be made. In three months—you know, my favorite time to go see a play is three months in, because time has knitted the people together; has knitted the actor's brain to the thoughts; has knitted their relaxation on stage. That's something you can not rush. You just can't. That's something that only comes with time. It's something that... it has to stew. And you can't rush it; you can't! So when you have film, you have to somehow get to that same place of intimacy and relaxation; but it's sort of like instant pudding. So there's the challenge of, "How do I make this seem like a slow cooked meal, when it's really instant pudding?"

SCHWARTZ: Well, you must have found a way to do it, because even in little scenes like the office scene at the beginning, the way you're kind of hunched over and suspicious of being caught typing your application, we just can tell so much about what's going on in your mind.

LINNEY: Yay! (Laughter)

JENKINS: It seems like a film director's dream, which is—it's a very hard thing to pull off—but would be to really work with a rep of actors, a group of actors that you return to. That's why Mike Leigh's movies... I mean, he has a whole very unique process, but you understand that desire. I mean, I feel like I just got to know them when we finished the movie. I was like, "Shit! If I only knew them at the top, we would've had a *really* great time." You know what I mean?

LINNEY: You always feel like you're ready to make the movie the day you wrap it. I mean, yes. You know all the things you missed and all the things you...

JENKINS: Yes. Then you're like, Ah! It's such, you know, a crash course in intimacy, and there's so much pressure, and it's such a heightened environment. And then you're like, "Ah, I wish we could do it again, because now we all know each other."

LINNEY: It's why actors like to work with each other again, and it's exactly why directors like to work with the same actors—like I've had three troubled marriages with Gabriel Byrne. (Laughter) And they get better. They get more troubled as our relationships go on. (Laughter) But we couldn't be that complicated and troubled at our first marriage, it took the third. You know, I've been married to Liam Neeson twice. I've been married to Paul Giamatti twice.

BOSCO: That's an ordeal.

LINNEY: I know, poor me... But there is something about—it's that time thing.

BOSCO: I'll be a little sacrilegious now; picking up on what you said, that was one of the beauties of the studio system in the old days. I mean, you had stock companies, essentially—particularly my favorite, which was Warner Brothers. You know, the gritty kind of city stuff that we all knew so well in the East here. You remember, they acted with each

other time and time again, that same bunch of actors. Occasionally, a star from another studio would make a guest shot. But in the Warner Brothers... how many movies did you see Claude Rains, and Sydney Greenstreet, and Peter Lorre, and Humphrey Bogart, and John Garfield? They were all acting with each other, and they did the things that you were talking about, Laura, that kind of... how would you phrase that?

LINNEY: They knew how to play with each other. Yes, it's great.

BOSCO: Yes, right.

LINNEY: (Responds to audience question) Phil and I just [snaps fingers] got along like a house on fire. I adore him, and I *loved* working with him. It's one of the best working relationships I've ever had, and I missed him terribly when he wasn't on set. His choices are perfection. His priority of story first is solidly in place. You know, he's giving, and funny, and fun, and creative, and we got to a place where we felt so safe with each other that there was enormous freedom. And when there's freedom, then you can be really precise. So it was just great fun. I mean, it was like, you know, playing tennis with a great, great, great tennis partner.

BOSCO: Ditto! (Laughter)

SCHWARTZ: Okay; well, next time we'll invite him. (Laughter) Thank you and congratulations. You talked about how hard it was, but you guys really pulled it off! You did a great job. (Applause)

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