

## [The Bill Walton Show](#)

What Acting Teaches You About You with Leigh Wilson Smiley

Bill Walton:

It's interesting for me how I've been so goal oriented to realize that you get the goal and then, okay.

Leigh W. Smiley:

Right, now what?

Bill Walton:

What do we do next?

Crew:

Maury, let me just confirm you can hear me.

Crew:

[inaudible 00:00:18]

Crew:

One, two, two, two, two, two. Yeah, okay.

Crew:

Yeah, I can hear you.

Crew:

Okay.

Crew:

Okay, so this goes about 35 or 40 minutes and forget about the cameras. It's just a conversation between you two. They'll do the same thing except perhaps for the introduction or the close where you might look at the camera.

Bill Walton:

Well this may be a little different.

Crew:

Yeah, this could be different.

Bill Walton:

'Cause you may cut to her 'cause she's gonna be in the shot at the very beginning.

Crew:

Yeah.

Leigh W. Smiley:

Mm-hmm (affirmative).

Bill Walton:

Then I'm gonna T-up to the camera, so this will be different.

Crew:

Right. Remember that in the nose room that way 'cause he'll be ... all right. The Bill Walton Show. That's our sync. Okay, and I probably don't have to tell you this, but have fun with it. It's informal.

Leigh W. Smiley:

Okay, thank you.

Crew:

Good. All right. So, like I said ... so what we'll do here is out of blue, we'll just come out of the open, it'll be on you, you'll be looking at him.

Leigh W. Smiley:

Mm-hmm (affirmative).

Crew:

And just go into your thing, okay?

Leigh W. Smiley:

Okay.

Bill Walton:

Well, I'm gonna T it up a little differently.

Crew:

Yeah, go ahead. What?

Bill Walton:

I'm gonna start it out saying, "Leigh, you're my guru in all things vocal in performance."

Crew:

I think you come right out in the open on her and she goes, "Bill, it's time to warm up."

Bill Walton:

That's better.

Leigh W. Smiley:

Okay.

Bill Walton:

Okay.

Leigh W. Smiley:

All right.

Bill Walton:

Good.

Leigh W. Smiley:

Great, okay.

Crew:

Okay, I'll tell you when to begin.

Leigh W. Smiley:

Right.

Crew:

And so you'll do your thing and when you feel the appropriate amount of time has passed, then you just transition.

Bill Walton:

And you'll come back for-

Crew:

And then intro-

Bill Walton:

Both of us.

Crew:

Yeah.

Bill Walton:

Doing the warmup.

Crew:

Yeah, and then when you're done, then you transition and introduce her.

Bill Walton:

Love it.

Crew:

Okay?

Bill Walton:

Love it.

Crew:

All right, okay, Leigh, you're looking at him and ready?

Leigh W. Smiley:

Yep.

Crew:

Nice, good energy and when you're ready.

Leigh W. Smiley:

Okay, Bill, so this is what I want you to do is take a deep, true blue, fully real sigh of relief. Just close your eyes, really take it. Ah.

Bill Walton:

Ah.

Leigh W. Smiley:

Good and notice what shifts in your body and now just lick your lips, take a little burble with your lips, "Bbbph."

Bill Walton:

"Bbbph."

Leigh W. Smiley:

"Bbbph."

Bill Walton:

"Bbbph."

Leigh W. Smiley:

"Bbbph." And come into the chest, just, "Haa."

Bill Walton:

"Haa."

Leigh W. Smiley:

"Haa."

Bill Walton:

"Haa."

Leigh W. Smiley:

Feel the warmth of that.

Bill Walton:

"Haa."

Leigh W. Smiley:

And there you go.

Bill Walton:

"Haa." So am I ready?

Leigh W. Smiley:

You're ready.

Bill Walton:

I'm ready, thank you.

Leigh W. Smiley:

You're ready.

Bill Walton:

I'm joined today by good friend Leigh Wilson Smiley. Leigh is the Director of the School of Theater Dance and Performance Studies at University of Maryland, College Park.

Bill Walton:

She's also a professional voice dialect, acting, and presentation coach. Leigh has worked with artistic teams at Center Stage, Everyman Theater, Round House Theater, Ford's Theater, Arena Stage, John F. Kennedy Center and Folger Shakespeare Theater.

Bill Walton:

She has coached NBC on-camera news spokespeople, Cirque du Soleil performers, lawyers, doctors, scientists, and numerous professionals in performance and presentation skills and I think as the opening may have revealed, she's also teaching me some things about voice and performance.

Bill Walton:

Leigh is also helping me out with some voice lessons. Since I started this show, I thought I might learn how to talk finally. Leigh, thank you for being here and it's really an honor to have you here. I look at your list of achievements and they're stellar. How did you get into acting and performing? What brought you to this?

Leigh W. Smiley:

I was a professional horse rider in high school. I don't think I ever told you that.

Bill Walton:

No, [inaudible 00:04:15]

Leigh W. Smiley:

I learned that I could act like a winner and then I got tired of the horses 'cause I grew up doing it for-

Bill Walton:

You could act like a winner because you were a winner?

Leigh W. Smiley:

Well, that was how I became a winner. Yes, I was but it was an act because I'm very silly most of the time, but I would act very serious and very professional.

Leigh W. Smiley:

So when I had the opportunity to start acting in high school I did. I loved it. I went to college. I studied it, moved to New York City, I studied it more. I auditioned, I worked in television onstage and eventually went to Philadelphia, which is a smaller city and gave me more opportunity to perform and once there I got a lot more experience and a lot more union cards, et cetera.

Leigh W. Smiley:

When I was in my early 30s, I went to an intensive up at Shakespeare & Company to really go into my work.

Bill Walton:

That's up in Massachusetts?

Leigh W. Smiley:

It's up in Lenox, Massachusetts.

Bill Walton:

Yeah.

Leigh W. Smiley:

It gives you month to really be indulgent about working and I discovered the voice work that I teach, which is called The Linklater Voice work.

Bill Walton:

Mm-hmm (affirmative).

Leigh W. Smiley:

It transformed my acting, but it transformed my direction in life also. I really wanted to teach it, so I spent the next five years learning to teach it with Kristin Linklater.

Bill Walton:

And Kristin Linklater brought sort of the whole body into the voice?

Leigh W. Smiley:

Yes, the whole body. It's the mind, the breath, the heart, the voice.

Bill Walton:

Yeah, I don't know if you remember the movie "Singin' and the Rain" with Gene Kelly.

Leigh W. Smiley:

Of course I do, yeah.

Bill Walton:

When I first gave you a call to talk about voice coaches, I thought I'd be doing that, you know, "The rain in Spain stayed mainly on the plain."

Leigh W. Smiley:

The rain in Spain-

Bill Walton:

And then you come in, we start working and all of a sudden all I'm doing is breathing and burbling.

Leigh W. Smiley:

Mm-hmm (affirmative), yeah, you really have to get over any kind of self-consciousness when you're doing and being an actor.

Bill Walton:

One of things we want to talk about on this show is that in working with you I've come to appreciate what it takes as an actor or performer to build a character and how the links between building a character in your own character become very interesting because you discover a lot about yourself in that process.

Leigh W. Smiley:

Mm-hmm (affirmative).

Bill Walton:

I thought it'd be interesting for the people who watch this show to understand how an actor does go about building a role, building a performance and so whether you decide to become an actor or a performer or speaker, you can take a look at what people are doing on TV or film and say, "Gee, I understand a little bit more about how that works."

Leigh W. Smiley:

Sure, mm-hmm (affirmative).

Bill Walton:

Where would we begin?

Leigh W. Smiley:

I think we would want to start with saying that the actor's instrument is the whole body. Some of the palette for creating art with that whole body is the actor's experience in life and the actor's imagination. So the first thing any actor, when he plays a character needs to know is what's my objective? What do I want? And we can't kind of want it, we have to want it with all of our being, so there's an urgency in that.

Leigh W. Smiley:

When I was thinking about doing this show with you, Bill, I called it the burning desire because that's what we have to feel as an actor when we're approaching a character, a deep, deep, life or death need to get the objective.

Leigh W. Smiley:

Then there's actions that are chosen. How am I going to get what I want? Then there's obstacles. How am I going to get around the obstacles, that's a strategy. So those of some of the steps the actor would take thinking through a role.

Leigh W. Smiley:

There's also the what if? What if I ... What if something happened? What if I could fly? What if I were 12 years old, like Juliet? What if ... so those are really important questions for the actor. The other thing is wondering. I wonder if ... I wonder if ...

Leigh W. Smiley:

Then there's the given circumstances, right? So if we're doing "Singn' in the Rain" the time is the '40s or the '50s. Those are given circumstances. So all of that is there. That's some of how we approach it.

Leigh W. Smiley:

Now, if the actor's instrument is the body then we have to know this instrument really well, the way that any musician would know his or her violin, tuning the strings, all of that. Anything that's held in the body is going to be held in the voice and held in the imagination. So actor training is serious because you're working through all these parts of your instrument, so your mind, your emotions, your breath, your voice, your body.

Bill Walton:



Well, you've talked to me about the fact you see actors as emotional athletes?

Leigh W. Smiley:

Mm-hmm (affirmative), absolutely.

Bill Walton:

And so all of these things ... I come from old business and you don't exactly wear your emotions out there.

Leigh W. Smiley:

Right. So I use a palette of about five emotions and then there's many degrees to all of them. I use happy, sad, fearful, angry, and lustful, and that's something I got from my psychologist who studied actors and worked with actors at Yale and many other institutions, but we have to know our feeling.

Leigh W. Smiley:

So I just saw Michael Conn's "Hamlet" at-

Bill Walton:

Michael Conn and Shakespeare in DC?

Leigh W. Smiley:

Yes.

Bill Walton:

Yeah.

Leigh W. Smiley:

So this was his final show. I wanted to honor him and honor the theater and see it and of course in "Hamlet," there's Hamlet who dies. Everybody dies almost, but I was watching the woman who plays Gertrude, Hamlet's mother and the expense of spirit, there's a sonnet that says, "The expense of spirit is a waste of shame."

Leigh W. Smiley:

The expense of the emotions for that actress playing Gertrude, who's lost her husband, married her brother-in-law, and now her son has gone crazy and killed her advisor. To really allow an audience to experience ... we go to theater because we're storytelling animals. We watch movies because we're storytelling animals. So there's a certain satisfaction of a way we figure out our world by listening to story, that's why we read to children and that's why we become addicted to "Superman." on television.

Leigh W. Smiley:

So ... where was I going with this-

Bill Walton:

Well, Gertrude, she was Hamlet's mother.

Leigh W. Smiley:

Mother, yes.

Bill Walton:

The thing that's striking about acting the stage, with film you do a few rehearsals, you do the take, you're done, you move onto something else, you never do it again.

Leigh W. Smiley:

Mm-hmm (affirmative).

Bill Walton:

A stage actor, maybe seven or eight times a week has gotta go repeat the same emotions, the same things-

Leigh W. Smiley:

Yes, it's called creating and recreating.

Bill Walton:

Night after night after night after night-

Leigh W. Smiley:

Yes.

Bill Walton:

Which is how you talk to me about being able, as an actor, to access this emotions and part of the craft is being able to draw into, okay, where's my anger, where's the fear, where's the lust and do it night after night.

Leigh W. Smiley:

Yes, and where is it in the body?

Bill Walton:

Yeah.

Leigh W. Smiley:

And how does my breath feel when I feel that? So we're not acting like we feel, we are feeling as actors. The director might say, "I don't want you to feel that way," or "I don't want you to cry at this point, but I want you to feel it inside," and that will give the audience a whole different emotion.

Leigh W. Smiley:

On film or in television you'll see the emotion, it's like energy coming off an actor's face, in their eyes, in the way their breathing, we pick it up. On stage, it's bigger, we just have to amplify it.

Bill Walton:

Let's go through some of the things that you and I have been working on. You've been teaching me, with great patience, Shakespeare and how an actor approaches a role.

Leigh W. Smiley:

Mm-hmm (affirmative).

Bill Walton:

Maybe to jump right into this we oughta talk about an actor, a role, some lines, and make this concrete about how you'd approach a particularly thing.

Leigh W. Smiley:

Okay, great.

Bill Walton:

You've brought some things in here that are sort of-

Leigh W. Smiley:

I did.

Bill Walton:

Intimidating to me. This young man from Indiana.

Leigh W. Smiley:

Bill, you should just let people know that you haven't seen this monologues yet.

Bill Walton:

I've not seen these monologues.

Leigh W. Smiley:

Okay, so what I'm gonna have you read is-

Bill Walton:

This is a cold reading?

Leigh W. Smiley:

Yes, it's a cold reading.

Bill Walton:

Yeah.

Leigh W. Smiley:

And this is a really important technique that actors have to have meaning often times they get ... it's changed a lot in the last 10 years, but they get a ... they get their script and they go up and audition, so

they've got to make a lot of choices right away. What is your character wants. So right now we're gonna read "Macbeth." You're gonna read "Macbeth," which, if we were in the theater, I would say, "You can't say that out loud. We call him the Scottish king 'cause there-

Bill Walton:

It's bad luck.

Leigh W. Smiley:

It's bad luck, yes.

Bill Walton:

To say Macbeth is bad luck?

Leigh W. Smiley:

In the theater, yes.

Bill Walton:

Why is that?

Leigh W. Smiley:

It's just an old myth.

Bill Walton:

Okay.

Leigh W. Smiley:

You've gotta read some of the old myths around it. What am I reading right now? Not Harold Bloom, but somebody else about it. Anyway-

Bill Walton:

Okay, but you can say it on TV?

Leigh W. Smiley:

You can.

Bill Walton:

You can't say it in the theaters. We're okay here.

Leigh W. Smiley:

Yeah, we're fine here, we're fine here. Okay.

Bill Walton:

Okay.

Leigh W. Smiley:

So this is after Macbeth has gotten back from the war and his wife, Lady M has said-

Bill Walton:

Lady Macbeth.

Leigh W. Smiley:

Yes, "Duncan, the king is coming-

Bill Walton:

Yeah.

Leigh W. Smiley:

And sweetheart you're going to kill him when he comes because it was predicted by the three witches that you are going to be the king. So you need-

Bill Walton:

So this was in his honey-do jar?

Leigh W. Smiley:

Yes, in his honey-do jar.

Bill Walton:

After you mow the lawn, go kill Duncan.

Leigh W. Smiley:

Yes, who happens to be a cousin, but oh well ... and is honoring your house.

Bill Walton:

So going through the list that we started out with-

Leigh W. Smiley:

Yeah.

Bill Walton:

Who am I?

Leigh W. Smiley:

You are a warrior.

Bill Walton:

Yeah.

Leigh W. Smiley:

It's been predicted that you're going to become what would be comparable to a Senator and then comparable to the President of the United States, so you can think of-

Bill Walton:

And that's a good thing?

Leigh W. Smiley:

I don't know.

Bill Walton:

Okay.

Leigh W. Smiley:

It's something that you really want. You want it, you are ambitious.

Bill Walton:

Okay, I really want to be president?

Leigh W. Smiley:

Yes.

Bill Walton:

That's my burning desire?

Leigh W. Smiley:

Yes, that is your burning.

Bill Walton:

Okay.

Leigh W. Smiley:

But you also want to be liked.

Bill Walton:

Yeah.

Leigh W. Smiley:

You want to be liked. You have a big heart and you love your wife who wants it more than you.

Bill Walton:

Yeah.

Leigh W. Smiley:

Okay, so you are alone in the castle and you are talking to the audience, trying to figure out what to do.

Bill Walton:

So in Shakespeare monologue I've heard you're either talking to the audience like it's your best friend-

Leigh W. Smiley:

Mm-hmm (affirmative).

Bill Walton:

Or you're talking to God.

Leigh W. Smiley:

Yes, yes.

Bill Walton:

So, in this case, I'm talking to the audience?

Leigh W. Smiley:

Yes, you're going to figure something out with your best friend, the audience.

Bill Walton:

All right.

Leigh W. Smiley:

All right?

Bill Walton:

Okay.

Leigh W. Smiley:

Okay, so just start and I may stop you and just make some suggestions, okay?

Bill Walton:

You've been known to do that.

Leigh W. Smiley:

Yes, I have been known to do that.

Bill Walton:

Okay, just to be clear, I have ... I've heard this before-

Leigh W. Smiley:

He hasn't spoken this-

Bill Walton:

I haven't spoken it.

Leigh W. Smiley:

Mm-hmm (affirmative).

Bill Walton:

Okay. Okay.

Bill Walton:

If it were done when 'tis done, then 'twere well

Bill Walton:

It were done quickly. If th'assassination

Bill Walton:

Could trammel up the consequence, and catch

Bill Walton:

With his surcease success.

Leigh W. Smiley:

Good. Stop, great. How'd that feel?

Bill Walton:

It felt pretty good. I'm trying to find the line. One of the interesting things about Shakespeare is that the sentences, the line up as poetry, not as one thing, so you're chasing the line, the words down the page a bit.

Leigh W. Smiley:

Yeah, a little bit. So I'm gonna give you some given circumstances for reading Shakespeare anyway.

Bill Walton:

My paraphrase is if I'm gonna kill him I'd better do it quickly.

Leigh W. Smiley:

Yeah.

Bill Walton:

Okay.



Leigh W. Smiley:

Yeah, yeah, for the first sentence.

Bill Walton:

Okay.

Leigh W. Smiley:

And then the second ... but this what ... it's gonna come through. You know it.

Bill Walton:

Yeah.

Leigh W. Smiley:

If is a huge word in Shakespeare, as is but.

Bill Walton:

Yeah.

Leigh W. Smiley:

All right? The other thing I want you to notice is that the word murder is never said in the first line. What is it called?

Bill Walton:

It.

Leigh W. Smiley:

Yes.

Bill Walton:

It. If it were done when 'tis done.

Leigh W. Smiley:

When it is, right? So it's-

Bill Walton:

Then 'twere well it were done quickly.

Leigh W. Smiley:

'Twere. Yeah, so take that again and realize that you can't even put your mouth around what you're about to do.

Kenny Reff:

And speak this to the audience, Bill, not the camera.

Bill Walton:

All right.

Leigh W. Smiley:

Yeah.

Bill Walton:

That disembodied ... is that Hamlet's ghost back here? No, this Manco's ghost.

Leigh W. Smiley:

No, not yet, not yet.

Bill Walton:

No this is Kenny the director.

Leigh W. Smiley:

Oh, Kenny the director, yeah. Yeah.

Kenny Reff:

Yes, speak to your audience.

Bill Walton:

Thank you Kenny. Speak to my ... okay, my audience is out here, okay.

Leigh W. Smiley:

Yeah, but just take a moment. Really, you can't wrap your mouth around it.

Bill Walton:

If it were done when 'tis done, then 'twere well

Bill Walton:

It were done quickly. If th'assassination

Bill Walton:

Could trammel up the consequence, and catch

Bill Walton:

With his surcease success: that but this blow

Bill Walton:

Might be the be-all and the end-all, here,

Bill Walton:

But here upon this bank and shoal of time,

Bill Walton:

We'd jump the life to come. But in these cases

Bill Walton:

We still have judgement here, that we but teach

Bill Walton:

Bloody instructions which, being taught, return

Bill Walton:

To plague th'inventor. This even-handed justice

Bill Walton:

Commends th'ingredience of our poisoned chalice

Bill Walton:

To our own lips.

Leigh W. Smiley:

Hmm.

Bill Walton:

This even-handed justice commends. This even-handed justice Commends th'ingredience of our poisoned chalice to our own lips.

Leigh W. Smiley:

Yeah, discovery.

Bill Walton:

Okay.

Leigh W. Smiley:

You just discovered something.

Bill Walton:

So you're talking about is the character doesn't know what he's gonna say next.

Leigh W. Smiley:

No, he doesn't, he doesn't.

Bill Walton:

So he's truly out there inventing this as he goes?

Leigh W. Smiley:

Yes, and that's what the actor does, he discovers every night. He doesn't know what he's gonna say next, he discovers.

Bill Walton:

So in the emotion world, there's fear here.

Leigh W. Smiley:

The important thing is not necessarily what you think the character feels, it's what you feel.

Bill Walton:

What I feel.

Leigh W. Smiley:

Right?

Bill Walton:

Yeah.

Leigh W. Smiley:

I mean you could take the whole thing laughing, but I guarantee you if you started it laughing you would change. I mean you could just start it. I've seen, "To be or not to be" done hysterically laughing, by the end it's in tears.

Bill Walton:

Really?

Leigh W. Smiley:

Yeah. The words will lead you. They just did, Bill. I got it, "The poisoned chalice to your own lips." You just talked yourself into drinking poison and then what happens next in this monologue is something changes. Go on from where you stopped. Sorry.

Bill Walton:

He's here in double trust.

Leigh W. Smiley:

Yeah, you can't even say his name.

Bill Walton:

He's here in double trust:

Bill Walton:

First, as I am his kinsman and his subject,

Bill Walton:

Strong both against the deed; then, as his host,

Bill Walton:

Who should against his murderer shut the door,

Bill Walton:

Not bear the knife myself. Besides, this Duncan

Bill Walton:

Hath borne his faculties so meek, hath been

Bill Walton:

So clear-

Leigh W. Smiley:

So you just say his name for the first time.

Bill Walton:

This Duncan?

Leigh W. Smiley:

Yeah.

Bill Walton:

Yeah.

Leigh W. Smiley:

It's interesting the structure that Shakespeare has given you.

Bill Walton:

Yeah.

Leigh W. Smiley:

I mean these are all the clues that an actor ... Once you say his name something shifts too.

Bill Walton:

Okay, so you want me to explore that?

Leigh W. Smiley:

Keep going that, yeah.

Bill Walton:

All right. So I hope you all like this.

Leigh W. Smiley:

It's fabulous. You're doing ...

Bill Walton:

This is really, you're just saying-

Leigh W. Smiley:

Bill is a natural actor. It's really lovely.

Bill Walton:

Yeah, this is good. Okay.

Bill Walton:

Besides, this Duncan

Bill Walton:

Hath borne his faculties so meek, hath been

Bill Walton:

So clear in his great office, that his virtues

Bill Walton:

Will plead like angels, trumpet-tongued against

Bill Walton:

The deep damnation of his taking-off,

Bill Walton:

And pity, like a naked new-born babe,

Bill Walton:

Striding the blast, or heaven's cherubin, horsed

Bill Walton:

Upon the sightless couriers of the air,

Bill Walton:

Shall blow the horrid deed in every eye

Bill Walton:

That tears shall drown the wind.

Leigh W. Smiley:

That's one of the most beautiful lines. Keep going.

Bill Walton:

Upon the sightless couriers of the air,

Bill Walton:

Shall blow the horrid deed in every eye

Bill Walton:

That tears shall drown the wind.

Leigh W. Smiley:

Yes.

Bill Walton:

I have no spur

Bill Walton:

To prick the sides of my intent, but only

Bill Walton:

Vaulting ambition which o'erleaps itself

Bill Walton:

And falls on th'other.

Leigh W. Smiley:

Great, and then Lady Macbeth comes in and says, and you say,

Bill Walton:

How now, what news?

Leigh W. Smiley:

And he has almost supped. Why have you left the chamber?

Bill Walton:

He asked for me.

Leigh W. Smiley:

No, you not he has.

Bill Walton:

We will proceed no further in this business. He hath honored me of late and I have bought golden opinions from all sorts of people, which will be worn now, in their newest cloths, not cast aside so soon.

Leigh W. Smiley:

Great, okay, so we'll stop there.

Bill Walton:

Okay.

Leigh W. Smiley:

You see how you talked yourself out of killing him?

Bill Walton:

Right.

Leigh W. Smiley:

If it were done when 'tis done, then 'twere well

Leigh W. Smiley:

It were done quickly.

Leigh W. Smiley:

I'm about to go in and do it and then you talk yourself out of it.

Bill Walton:

And when I say Duncan-

Leigh W. Smiley:

Yeah.

Bill Walton:

That's the turning point.

Leigh W. Smiley:

Well, there's a number of turning points in this.

Bill Walton:

Yeah.

Leigh W. Smiley:

But you slowly talk yourself out of it and it comes instead of it, becomes something about cherubims howling in the wind, you know the tears.



Bill Walton:

Mm-hmm (affirmative).

Leigh W. Smiley:

The pity.

Bill Walton:

Yeah, may I turn the tables.

Leigh W. Smiley:

Yes.

Bill Walton:

May I have you play MacBeth?

Leigh W. Smiley:

Yes, but don't expect anything, okay?

Bill Walton:

Wow.

Leigh W. Smiley:

I wouldn't want to disappoint. Okay. Do you want me to-

Bill Walton:

I want you to play what I just played.

Leigh W. Smiley:

Okay.

Bill Walton:

I'm interested in that and you can what you did earlier, one of our set, you played it as a Southern bell?

Leigh W. Smiley:

No, I don't want to play it as Southern. [inaudible 00:24:28]

Bill Walton:

Play it straight.

Leigh W. Smiley:

Twere well

Leigh W. Smiley:

It were done quickly.

Kenny Reff:

Come on [crosstalk 00:24:32]

Bill Walton:

You can egg her on, Kenny. Egg her on, come on. No, 'cause then I want to talk about the words and how this is handled, which is ...

Leigh W. Smiley:

Yeah.

Leigh W. Smiley:

If it were done when 'tis done, then 'twere well

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Leigh W. Smiley:

To our own lips. He's here in double trust:

Leigh W. Smiley:

First, as I am his kinsman and his subject,

Leigh W. Smiley:

Both strong against the deed; then, as his host,

Leigh W. Smiley:

Who should against his murderer shut the door,

Leigh W. Smiley:

Not bear the knife myself. Besides, this Duncan

Leigh W. Smiley:

Hath borne his faculties so meek, hath been

Leigh W. Smiley:

So clear in his great office, that his virtues

Leigh W. Smiley:

Will plead like angels, trumpet-tongued against

Leigh W. Smiley:

The deep damnation of his taking-off,

Leigh W. Smiley:

And pity, like a naked new-born babe,

Leigh W. Smiley:

Striding the blast, or heaven's cherubin, horsed

Leigh W. Smiley:

Upon the sightless couriers of the air,

Leigh W. Smiley:

Shall blow the horrid deed in every eye

Leigh W. Smiley:

That tears shall drown the wind. I have no spur

Leigh W. Smiley:

To prick the sides of my intent, but only

Leigh W. Smiley:

Vaulting ambition which o'erleaps itself

Bill Walton:

Wow.

Leigh W. Smiley:

Thank you. Thank you. That is the word. That is the word and that's an instrument that has been trained, right?

Bill Walton:

I think you got the part.

Leigh W. Smiley:

Oh no.

Bill Walton:

You don't want to play Beth?

Leigh W. Smiley:

But, Bill, your first read of this was stunning. Just through ... I mean the words and the rhythm within the words, you were telling the story so beautifully.

Bill Walton:

Mm-hmm (affirmative). Well I think I've got some help. His name is William Shakespeare.

Leigh W. Smiley:

And for me, mine would be too much ... Yeah, brilliant yes, brilliant.

Leigh W. Smiley:

So that's one and then he gets into the argument. I want you to look at another one if you're ready for it.

Bill Walton:

Sure, why not.

Leigh W. Smiley:

This Angelo from "Measure for Measure."

Bill Walton:

I'm deep into this.

Leigh W. Smiley:

Good, and you've never looked at this. Have you-

Bill Walton:

No, I didn't know the play. I never read the play.

Leigh W. Smiley:

Okay, so it's one of the problem plays. Angelo has taken over for the Duke.

Bill Walton:

Yeah.

Leigh W. Smiley:

And what he's doing, he's kind of putting Draconian law on the city and he's decided that this nun in training, Isabel, her brother has got to be put to death because he got a girl pregnant out of wedlock.

Leigh W. Smiley:

So Isabel has gone to Angelo, who's the interim ruler and said, "Please don't. Please. He made a mistake, I understand. Please, please have mercy." So she's just left and Angelo says this to the audience:

Bill Walton:

So she's come to him, pleading to be-

Leigh W. Smiley:

For her brother to-

Bill Walton:

Pleading for her-

Leigh W. Smiley:

Brother's life.

Bill Walton:

Brother to be spared.

Leigh W. Smiley:

Yes.

Bill Walton:

And what's his relationship with the brother?

Leigh W. Smiley:

He's just the interim Duke, so he's just enforcing the law because the law has not been enforced.

Bill Walton:

So what's Angelo's stake in this? Is he wants to just-

Leigh W. Smiley:

He wants to be right.

Bill Walton:

Okay.

Leigh W. Smiley:

If the law says A, you do A. If the law says B, you do B.

Bill Walton:

Okay.

Leigh W. Smiley:

So she's just left after pleading for her brother's life and he has said, "Probably not, but come back tomorrow."

Bill Walton:

What's this? what's this? is this her fault or mine?

Bill Walton:

The tempter, or the tempted, who sins most?

Bill Walton:

Ha! Not she, nor doth she tempt; but it is I

Bill Walton:

That, lying by the violet in the sun,

Bill Walton:

Do as the carrion does, not as the flower,

Bill Walton:

Corrupt with virtuous season. Can it be

Bill Walton:

That modesty may more betray our sense

Bill Walton:

Than woman's lightness? Having wasteground enough,

Bill Walton:

Shall we desire to raze the sanctuary

Bill Walton:

And pitch our evils there? O fie, fie, fie!

Bill Walton:

What dost thou? or what are thou, Angelo?

Bill Walton:

Dost thou desire her foully for those things

Bill Walton:

That make her good? O, let her brother live:

Bill Walton:

Thieves for their robbery have authority

Bill Walton:

When judges steal themselves. What, do I love her,

Bill Walton:

That I desire to hear her speak again,

Bill Walton:

And feast upon her eyes? what is't I dream on?

Bill Walton:

O cunning enemy that, to catch a saint,

Bill Walton:

With saints dost bait thy hook: most dangerous

Bill Walton:

Is that temptation that doth goad us on

Bill Walton:

To sin in loving virtue. Never could the strumpet

Bill Walton:

With all her double vigor, art and nature,

Bill Walton:

Once stir my temper; but this virtuous maid

Bill Walton:

Subdues me quite. Ever till now,

Bill Walton:

When men were fond, I smiled and wondered how.

Leigh W. Smiley:

Good, good. So do you see what I ... I didn't really explain it all to you, so do you see what has happened to him?

Bill Walton:

He's fallen in love.

Leigh W. Smiley:

Yeah.

Bill Walton:

Yeah.

Leigh W. Smiley:

And he's not a man who falls in love. He is chased.

Bill Walton:

He has gotten pulled into something. He doesn't want to ...

Leigh W. Smiley:

Yeah, yeah.

Bill Walton:

So, as an actor, stepping back-

Leigh W. Smiley:

Mm-hmm (affirmative).

Bill Walton:

Let's say somebody comes and says, "All right, Bill, you'll be Angelo in "Measure for Measure.""

Leigh W. Smiley:



Which would be a great role for you.

Bill Walton:

Okay, Sarah is here. Sarah, may I play Angelo.

Sarah:

Yes, please do.

Bill Walton:

Is that-

Leigh W. Smiley:

You are redeemed at the end.

Bill Walton:

I am?

Leigh W. Smiley:

Yeah, which is part of the reason it's a problem play. Right.

Bill Walton:

Okay.

Leigh W. Smiley:

Okay?

Bill Walton:

All right.

Leigh W. Smiley:

All right.

Bill Walton:

So I play this ... Wondering back to where we started, how does an actor attack this kind of role? Do you-

Leigh W. Smiley:

What does he want?

Bill Walton:

Okay.

Leigh W. Smiley:

What does he want more than anything in the world?

Bill Walton:

Yeah.

Leigh W. Smiley:

Can you guess?

Bill Walton:

I think Angelo wants love.

Leigh W. Smiley:

Okay, I think that that is something he discovers in this monologue, but I think even more than that he wants to be clean.

Bill Walton:

Yeah.

Leigh W. Smiley:

No dirt, no sin, no passion, no lust, which during Elizabethan times was thought of as very lowly.

Bill Walton:

Mm-hmm (affirmative).

Leigh W. Smiley:

Reason was high. So if he wants more than anything not to feel what he's feeling in his loins and in his heart right now.

Bill Walton:

In this scene? This is Act II, Scene II.

Leigh W. Smiley:

In this Scene. Yes.

Bill Walton:

All right.

Leigh W. Smiley:

So then Act II, Scene IV, she comes back upon his command hoping that he's gonna change her mind. She's gonna be able to change his mind and her brother will live. His name is Claudio.

Bill Walton:

Well, he doesn't seem to have made a decision in this early passage.

Leigh W. Smiley:

He comes to a realization.

Bill Walton:

Yeah.

Leigh W. Smiley:

So ... where am I on this? Certainly when he says, "Never could the strumpet," meaning any whore, "With all her double vigor, art and nature, Once stir my temper; but ..." But is like if.

Bill Walton:

Yeah.

Leigh W. Smiley:

When this virtue is made, she's a nun, she's not come and tempted him with her body.

Bill Walton:

Okay.

Leigh W. Smiley:

She just came and begged for her brother's life.

Bill Walton:

Okay, all right.

Leigh W. Smiley:

So before you take that again, which we may or may not have time for it, I want you to look at the last monologue that I've given you, which is Act II, Scene IV.

Bill Walton:

Okay, Act II, Scene IV, bear with me everyone.

Leigh W. Smiley:

Okay.

Bill Walton:

Okay.

Leigh W. Smiley:

Start with, "Believe me ..."

Bill Walton:

Believe me, on mine honour,

Bill Walton:

My words express my purpose.

Leigh W. Smiley:

Ha! little honour to be much believed,

Leigh W. Smiley:

And most pernicious purpose! Seeming, seeming!

Leigh W. Smiley:

I will proclaim thee, Angelo; look for't:

Leigh W. Smiley:

Sign me a present pardon for my brother,

Leigh W. Smiley:

Or with an outstretch'd throat I'll tell the world aloud

Leigh W. Smiley:

What man thou art.

Bill Walton:

Who will believe thee, Isabel?

Bill Walton:

My unsoil'd name, the austereness of my life,

Bill Walton:

My vouch against you, and my place i' the state,

Bill Walton:

Will so your accusation outweigh,

Bill Walton:

That you shall stifle in your own report

Bill Walton:

And smell of calumny. I have begun,

Bill Walton:

And now I give my sensual race the rein:

Bill Walton:

Fit thy consent to my sharp appetite;

Bill Walton:

Lay by all nicety and prolixious blushes,

Bill Walton:

That banish what they sue for; redeem thy brother

Bill Walton:

By yielding up thy body to my will;

Bill Walton:

Or else he must not only die the death,

Bill Walton:

But thy unkindness shall his death draw out

Bill Walton:

To lingering sufferance. Answer me to-morrow,

Bill Walton:

Or, by the affection that now guides me most,

Bill Walton:

I'll prove a tyrant to him.

Leigh W. Smiley:

Tyrant, yes.

Bill Walton:

As for you,

Bill Walton:

Say what you can, my false o'erweighs your true.

Bill Walton:

Okay, well, that was Bill's acting class, thank you.

Leigh W. Smiley:

That's a tough monologue.

Bill Walton:

Yeah, I can see that.

Leigh W. Smiley:

I gave you something extremely hard, Bill, but you got it. So when you get a role like this, this is totally opposite from your personality,

Bill Walton:

Yeah.

Leigh W. Smiley:

How do you play it? How do you play it? That's the hard thing for any actor.

Bill Walton:

There was a film, I think about 20 years ago that Al Pacino did about find Richard III. Didn't he go through all sorts of tortuous things to get to be the villain?

Leigh W. Smiley:

I don't know what his preparation. I did see that movie. The thing about acting is you can't judge the character.

Bill Walton:

Yeah.

Leigh W. Smiley:

So certainly we want to know human psychology really well as actors but you can't judge it.

Bill Walton:

Mm-hmm (affirmative).

Leigh W. Smiley:

So the most compelling Richard III I've seen was at the Royal Shakespeare Company in 1980 and it was with a quite ugly man playing ... I won't say who because he's beautiful, but he's not movie star handsome, playing Richard and he helped the audience understand how women fell in love with him 'cause all these women in Richard III fall in love with him, and you don't understand it.

Leigh W. Smiley:

First of all, he's physically deformed, but this actor really helped us understand that he could be so alluring to women. So the same with ... so whenever we play a character who in any drama they're gonna be flawed, right? We play human flaws, that's what we do as actors. How do we fall in love with a character, how do we not judge that character?

Bill Walton:

Mm-hmm (affirmative). Well, I think on that note, we'll wind up Act I, Scene I of our Shakespearian drama here. It's been really wonderful having you on. Let's have you back and talk some more about all of this. Parting words?

Leigh W. Smiley:

No. Thank you Bill. It's lovely. You are a true champion of the human instrument as an actor so I really appreciate being on here with you. Thank you.

Bill Walton:

Well, thank you. Thanks to everybody for joining us. This was quite an episode. Thank you, thank you. Thank you, Leigh, this was great.

Leigh W. Smiley:

Your welcome.

Bill Walton:

Thanks.

Crew:

Good, excellent.

Kenny Reff:

Good, very good,

Leigh W. Smiley:

I shouldn't have given you that really hard one.

Bill Walton:

That was really hard.

Sarah:

That was good.

Leigh W. Smiley:

Wasn't it. It's scary.

Sarah:

Yeah.

Leigh W. Smiley:

I mean right now-

Bill Walton:

Did it remain interesting. It dragged a little bit, right?

Crew:

That's why [inaudible 00:38:03] can you edit it. Maybe we can. I don't know. [inaudible 00:38:09] it down.

Bill Walton:

We'll see if we can. But it was, overall it was ...

Crew:

Oh yeah. Yeah. I just thought it was time to move onto another. [crosstalk 00:38:17]

Leigh W. Smiley:

He wasn't happy with it but he did a great job with it.

Sarah:

He did a great job.

Leigh W. Smiley:

I mean that would be a challenging role for him 'cause he doesn't like to play the bad man.

Bill Walton:

[crosstalk 00:38:23] desire to keep it open ended.

Leigh W. Smiley:

But it's a really interesting role to play and right now would be a great one to play.

Sarah:

[crosstalk 00:38:31]

Crew:

No, it was good. It was good. I just chimed in there about it's time to move on [crosstalk 00:38:37]

Leigh W. Smiley:

[crosstalk 00:38:40] and she says, "To whom should I complain? If I tell this, who would believe me?"

Crew:

So I'm thinking if you want to talk.

Bill Walton:

What's that?

Crew:

If you want to talk a little bit more. Is there more that you want to talk about?

Bill Walton:



Leigh, what should we have talked about that we didn't get a chance to talk about 'cause we can do another [coda 00:38:56] here.

Bill Walton:

'Cause you know that outline you gave me?

Leigh W. Smiley:

Yeah.

Bill Walton:

I left it upstairs.

Leigh W. Smiley:

Oh that's fine.

Bill Walton:

I lost track of where we were going.

Sarah:

Yeah, the dog ate it.

Crew:

Yeah, in the moment.

Bill Walton:

What's that?

Sarah:

The dog ate it.

Bill Walton:

The dog ate it.

Leigh W. Smiley:

Yeah, right.

Crew:

We could do another 10 minutes if there's something.

Leigh W. Smiley:

Let me just think for a second of how to round it out so ... I guess what I would want to ask you, Bill, is what it's like for you to speak these words and why Shakespeare is so popular today because I think they're connected. There's such a pleasure in this language.

Bill Walton:

Sure, let's do that.

Crew:

Okay, mm-hmm (affirmative), yeah, okay.

Crew:

Good. All right.

Crew:

[inaudible 00:40:03] we'll just roll the camera. We'll just roll everything.

Bill Walton:

So we're just rolling it from here. Are we gone? Are we good now?

Crew:

No, no, no, not yet. [inaudible 00:40:12] let's see ... so the last thing before you closed, you complimented him.

Bill Walton:

Why don't I just come back on and say, "We thought a bit and we realized there's more we wanted to ...

Crew:

No, you know what? Right before that, you asked her for closing words.

Bill Walton:

Yeah.

Leigh W. Smiley:

Mm-hmm (affirmative).

Crew:

Let's pick it up there.

Bill Walton:

And then you'll edit it.

Crew:

And then you go into this thing and-

Leigh W. Smiley:

Okay.

Crew:

And then if you want to close again about complimenting him, you can do that 'cause we probably will have cut that out.

Leigh W. Smiley:

Yeah, great, okay.

Crew:

So the closing words won't they'll be closing words. It'll just give you an opportunity to ...

Leigh W. Smiley:

Okay.

Crew:

Yeah.

Bill Walton:

So should I T it up?

Crew:

Yeah, you'll T it up.

Bill Walton:

What do you want me to say?

Crew:

And you're looking at her.

Bill Walton:

Okay.

Crew:

You know what? Start with when you say, "Well, that's enough of my acting class."

Bill Walton:

Yeah.

Crew:

You remember that?

Bill Walton:

Sure.

Crew:

That was your transition.

Bill Walton:

Yeah.

Leigh W. Smiley:

Mm-hmm (affirmative).

Crew:

Yeah, do it that way. So you're looking at her ... hang on ... okay, that looks good. Okay, good, yeah, so just start with that and when you're ready. No, look at her. No, look at her now. Look at her when you say this.

Bill Walton:

Well, I think we'll bring my acting class for today to a close. This has been extraordinary.

Leigh W. Smiley:

Well, you did an extraordinary job with that, for having never read the play, never read that monologue before, so thank you. I have a question for you though, Bill. What is it you feel when you read these words, not just "Measure for Measure," Angelo, or MacBeth. What is it that draws you to speaking this out loud, to learning to embody this characters and these words?

Bill Walton:

Well, in the first place you can feel the thought and getting drawn along and the vowels and the consonants, they're just so perfectly place. I think you call it plosives or things like that.

Leigh W. Smiley:

Plosives, yes.

Bill Walton:

When there's something coming that's really needs to emphasized, "Pah, pah, pah, pah, pah, pum, pah, pum," and you get drawn into it. So the language draws you into it and then it brings out an emotion.

Leigh W. Smiley:

Mm-hmm (affirmative).

Bill Walton:

Then the other thing we talked earlier about, the character doesn't know what he or she is gonna say next.

Leigh W. Smiley:

No, no.

Bill Walton:

So you find yourself getting really surprised by what this next sentence is.

Leigh W. Smiley:

Yeah, yeah.

Bill Walton:

You and I have had this conversation, when I spend some time with Shakespeare I begin think, "Well, maybe I shouldn't do anything else except read Shakespeare."

Leigh W. Smiley:

Yeah, it's a great book on a desert island.

Bill Walton:

Then a line, "Shall blow the horrid deed in every eye that tears shall drown the wind."

Leigh W. Smiley:

Yeah.

Bill Walton:

You all of sudden just are right there, it's so vivid.

Leigh W. Smiley:

Mm-hmm (affirmative).

Bill Walton:

We're brought up in movies, TV largely, not so much stage, and what he does here, for me anyway, is the images that come up make you feel like you're in a movie.

Leigh W. Smiley:

Yes.

Bill Walton:

Where you're in this space.

Leigh W. Smiley:

Right, mm-hmm (affirmative).

Bill Walton:

That's conjured up completely by the words.

Leigh W. Smiley:

Yes, yes. Yeah, so this human imagination, it's like an appetite.

Bill Walton:

Mm-hmm (affirmative).

Leigh W. Smiley:

That it can be satisfied by great art and speaking these words actually releases energy, I think, and helps human beings become more human.

Bill Walton:

We've had this conversation before because as an actor learns about the character, the character is also learning about himself.

Leigh W. Smiley:

Yes, yes.

Bill Walton:

And you're finding emotions. In order to find ... in this case, it's something where the emotions come from the Shakespeare and then you begin finding him in yourself.

Leigh W. Smiley:

Yes. Yeah, they tap into you.

Bill Walton:

You could also almost use Shakespeare as therapy.

Leigh W. Smiley:

Yep, and I think that they do. It's brought into prisons, it's brought into many, many places.

Bill Walton:

So go find MacBeth and find out what you learn about yourself.

Leigh W. Smiley:

Right, right, exactly, and again, I think that as actors get, or people who approach acting because we can anyone an actor, we're all performers.

Bill Walton:

Mm-hmm (affirmative).

Leigh W. Smiley:

We're all performing a role. All the world's a stage and all men and women players. I know I just butchered that but-

Bill Walton:

Pretty good.

Leigh W. Smiley:

That's Jaques in "As You Like It."

Bill Walton:

Okay.

Leigh W. Smiley:

I think that we're all performing and the better we know ourselves, the better we know the depth of our feeling, more comfortable we are with all of that, then the more we're gonna receive from other people. So it has to do with listening, breathing, being aware of where you are in space, being aware of your voice and how it affects others. All of that helps your presence and helps you to inspire other people's presence.

Bill Walton:

Hmm. Thank you.

Leigh W. Smiley:

Your welcome.

Bill Walton:

This was great. So more to come?

Leigh W. Smiley:

More to come.

Bill Walton:

Next show?

Leigh W. Smiley:

Absolutely.

Bill Walton:

Okay, I'll see you soon.

Leigh W. Smiley:

Okay, thanks, Bill.

Bill Walton:

Okay, bye.

Leigh W. Smiley:

Bye.

Crew:

Very nice. That was good. That really rounds it out

Bill Walton:

Okay.

Leigh W. Smiley:

Good. Lovely. Two more characters for you to look at MacBeth is a good one for you too.

Bill Walton:

Well, I wasn't exaggerating. I've said this several times. When you leave I think I'm not gonna do anything else the rest of the week except read Shakespeare.

Leigh W. Smiley:

Yeah.

Bill Walton:

So Sarah, what'd you think?

Sarah:

I thought you were amazing for having just read it first time.

Leigh W. Smiley:

I know.

Crew:

[crosstalk 00:46:10]

Sarah:

And you're amazing.

Leigh W. Smiley:

But that's my instrument, so I don't have to do that, that happens.

Sarah:

But it was very different when you were doing Shakespeare [crosstalk 00:46:26]

Leigh W. Smiley:

Yeah, yeah.

Sarah:

You were a different person.



Leigh W. Smiley:

Yeah.

Bill Walton:

I'd like to do something where we could do this fairly regularly, once every four, five, six weeks and dig into more, maybe a little more structure.

Leigh W. Smiley:

Yeah, sure.

Bill Walton:

And maybe another actor or something like that?

Leigh W. Smiley:

That would be great. We can get Bill Jarrell here ... or not Bill Jarrell.

Bill Walton:

Ed Jarrell.

Leigh W. Smiley:

Ed Jarrell, yeah. I'm trying to think if there's another ...

Bill Walton:

You mentioned somebody else too that you liked.

Leigh W. Smiley:

Erin Posner maybe?

Bill Walton:

Yes.

Leigh W. Smiley:

Okay.

Bill Walton:

Yeah, you mentioned Erin Posner.

Leigh W. Smiley:

Yep. He would be really interesting because he takes plays, like Chekhov's plays and he adapts them to contemporary language and contemporary situations, and he also directs Shakespeare all the time.

Bill Walton:

Mm-hmm (affirmative).

Leigh W. Smiley:

He and I met 25, 30 years ago in Philadelphia and we've been working with each other ever since, so I could run it by him sometime and see if he does want to 'cause he's softened but you might not like him. So we'll see.

Bill Walton:

Why would I not like him?

Leigh W. Smiley:

I find him cocky.

Bill Walton:

Okay.

Leigh W. Smiley:

And so for about 15 years we weren't friends and then we started working together and-

Bill Walton:

Okay, I think I'd rather have Ed on.

Leigh W. Smiley:

Yeah, I mean, if you know Ed then I think that's good.

Bill Walton:

Ed and I hit it off.

Leigh W. Smiley:

Yeah, he's great.

Bill Walton:

He's available, he's a golfer, we play golf together.

Leigh W. Smiley:

He's a great guy.

Bill Walton:

Yeah.

Leigh W. Smiley:

He's a great guy.

Bill Walton:

So the thing that's fascinating about it, I really do feel like if I could spend the rest of my life doing [inaudible 00:48:24], the first thing it would be Shakespeare and I don't know that I've conveyed everything that you feel when do this, like take well and dredge it all up, but isn't it interesting that Shakespeare is considered no longer even relevant to today? Not by you.

Leigh W. Smiley:

No.

Bill Walton:

Not by me.

Leigh W. Smiley:

I was gonna say ... Right.

Bill Walton:

But anybody, the regular person.

Leigh W. Smiley:

If you and Sarah can possibly get to "Hamlet" before it closes.

Bill Walton:

Yeah.

Leigh W. Smiley:

It's the best production I've ever seen and it's completely understandable. It's in a contemporary setting and what was funny, the words, behind me because they knew ...