

Monterey County Theatre Alliance Oral History Project

The Reminiscences of

Jane Press

Zoom

Session One

Interviewee : Jane Press

Location: Salinas, Ca

Interviewer: Marilyn Gonzalez

Date: April 16, 2020

00:00:26.550 Q: Hello Jane.

00:00:31.560 Press: Hi, nice to see you

00:00:34.350 Q: Nice to see you too. How are you?

00:00:36.570 Press: I'm good, How are you?

00:00:38.820 Q: I'm great, thank you.

00:00:41.010 Press: Good. Very nice to meet you hun.

00:00:44.610 Q: Nice to meet you too. Thank you so much for joining me.

Press: Oh ya.

00:01:04.590 Q: Today is April 20 sorry April 16 2,020 and this is Marilyn Gonzalez, and I'm at home in Salinas, California and I'm going to be interviewing Jane press. She is an actress playwright business owner and I'm sorry theatre, theatrical producer, correct. You are in Monterey California, and this recording is over zoom. Thank you so much for joining me today.

Press: It's my pressure.

Q: So Jane, can you um describe where you were born and when and tell me a little bit of your early life?

Press: I was born in Brooklyn, New York. And umm a little bit about my life. Most of my family is still in New York of the most of them moved to the city. I just have one cousin that stayed in Brooklyn, but most of most of them are in New York City and Los Angeles. I spent most of my life in in in Los Angeles. And uh I come from a show business family. My um my mother was a

stage actress very uh wonderful stage actor. She did a little bit of TV, but not much mostly it was on stage and that's what I do. Um, her brother, my uncle was a very accomplished writer and producer and director from the golden age of television in New York and Los Angeles. Um, so he's an Emmy award winning director. He was and um just and the, just a brilliant way creative man and had a real impact upon me creatively um and then their mother my grandmother was uh comedian. Yeah, yeah. So my cousin was uh is as a soap opera star. (Laughs). Yeah.

Q: 00:03:16.740: Oh wow, it's definitely lots of backgrounds back on there. And definitely, you're definitely an inspiration, because it's amazing that you have so much history and your family does too and That's what's incredible. Could you describe me um someone that um definitely influenced you, besides um your uncle and your mother. Is there anybody else that might um have been inspired you?

Press: Uh Lauren Nero. I don't know if you're um if you're familiar with Lauren Nero. Uh, yeah. Well, you could um greatly enhance anybody could greatly enhance their lives by listening to Lauren Nero's music. She was an absolute genius and um I was uh I was a musician. I've been acting on stage, since I was 13, but I was a musician, since I since I'm I think uh seven I was trained classically on the violin and um I played in orchestras and um music has had more of an impact on me than anything I think When, when I was I can't remember how old I was maybe, maybe 14 my mother took me to a uh, a uh live performance of Dang Judith Anderson playing Madea and it was it just blew me away, it just completely blew me away. It was so powerful. Uh when I grew up, I was born in 1950 so when I was growing up I was lucky enough to see either on stage, but certainly in the movies, uh the great actresses, you know, Katharine Hepburn, Uh Geraldine Fitzgerald, Betty Davis. Just phenomenal actresses who had the opportunity to act their whole lives. So as they aged they played women who were their age. It's not like it is now

everybody's so obsessed with being young, you know, and um that's one of the reasons I know I'm jumping around, but that's one of the reasons why I formed my production company. Uh, was to uh; to give voice to onstage and off. Um, to give voice to women uh over the age of 50 whose voices are much too often trivialize or ignored or um (laughs) discounted you know you reach a certain age and, and you become invisible unless you don't (laughs) and you know, being uh in the theater uh being on stage I wanted to produce uh works that would give women over the age of 50 um onstage and often when I say off I mean, the crew, too. So my, my director is a very accomplished woman. And, you know, we try to give all the to make sure that all of the roles are filled by women, wherever possible. So I wrote um a um I wrote a play called My mother's keeper. Can you see this?

Q: I can thank you. Wow.

Press: This is my mother's mother and her mother. So it's my grandmother and her mother and the story is uh it's four generations of women in a show business family and it, it tells the story of what happened um and it addresses a lot of a lot of things that were it, it addresses the intergenerational wounding that exists from mother to daughter. And the intergenerational bonding between granddaughter and grandmother Yeah. And so I've produced the play um three times twice in Carmel, and once in Los Angeles, and I do a five week run each time. Um we had all equity actresses that it's all women it's, it's seven women over the age of 50 and an 11 year old girl. Yeah, actually one of the women is plays a younger she, the actress was actually over the age of 50 but she reads much younger and um and she played someone who was in her late 30s. So, yeah, yeah. So I played my own mother. In this last production and as she had just died as we went into rehearsal and it was an amazing process for me uh because everything that came out of my mouth as, as my mother was, was said in real life. So whereas I wrote the whole play her

that, you know, her, her speech was everything that she said, and she had just died and I was portraying her so it was amazing, it was an amazing experience and uh the theater is amazing the way the stage.

Q: Um, Can you tell me one of your earliest childhood memories.

Press: Oh yeah, I remember being in the crib. And, you know, in the summers in New York. It's it gets very hot and very humid and there's mosquitoes and um a lot of people leave the city and they go into the they go to the country and we had a little house that we used to go to in the city. I mean, in the country. And it was it was at night there was no air conditioning. This was like 1951 and a half. I was still in the crib and it was at night and all the adults were sitting outside. It was dark and I could hear them talking and there was a great big tree and I could hear they had lemonade, and I could hear the ice cubes clinking and I was standing up uh next to my bed, and there was still the screen and it had one of those little hooks. Know where you hook it in. You can unhook it and push it over, but I didn't know that I was just a baby. I, I always think about I don't always but if that memory is just as fresh to me as ever, as ever, you know. And when you think it was 69 years ago. I'll be 70 in May, you know. Yeah.

00:11:21.000 Q: You know, no you don't. Well, you have an amazing collection. Oh my God.
(laughs)

00:11:24.510 Press: Thank you. Thank you. Yeah. Yeah, late bloomers in my family. Yeah.

00:11:40.050 Q: Oh my goodness, lets see, Can you tell me a story about your mother illustrates who she is to you.

00:11:51.300 Press: (Silence). You should come see my play. Um, Yeah, my mother was an amazing actress and um I remember going with her to rehearsal once and I was a little girl and she was appearing in a it was a one act that was written by Elaine May, Elaine May and it's

called *Not Enough Rope* and it's about a woman who's gonna hang herself, and there was my mother sitting, standing up on a chair with a noose around her neck and they were rehearsing and she was a very good actress and I just, it made such an impression on me. I was like, What is she doing both. But I had never heard her, you know, she was saying words and she was expressing things that I hadn't heard her so I at a very early age, I was impacted as an as an audience member and it's hard for me to this day to sit in the audience, it's it's worked for me to sit there. I want to be up on that stage. You know it's, it', it's, it's infinitely easier for me to be up on the stage that it is for me to sit in an audience. So that's one that's, that's, that's one memory about my mom.

00:13:36.840 Q: That's amazing. Um, how about your grandmother. Is there any comedies that you remember her being in or possibly any joke you could remember her saying.

Press: (Laughs) You have to come see my play the next time we do it because um you know, somebody play's me I played my mother somebody play's my grandmother and my grandmother had a plastic bag full of punch lines all of her jokes. She didn't write the stories just the punch line. She said this way, nobody could steal her material. In the, in the play. I have the actual plastic bag. First of all, the set is almost all her or my mother's furniture and, and all the props belong to her, or my mother and um the little girl, place me as a little girl um and in the drawer there's a scene where I used to sleep over. I used to have sleepovers at my grandmother's house. And so she used to all of her jokes were they were about the foibles of human nature. And they were always instructive she going the moral of the story is, you know, and that's the in the whole scene, but the bag that she takes out Of the of the nightstand drawer is the actual bag and then little pieces of paper or the actual pieces of paper with her with her writing on it. So, yeah. Yeah, she was a real character she was amazing. And it's very, it's excuse me for interrupting. I just

wanted to say it's so gratifying to hear the actress tell the little girl, the jokes and the audience laughs I mean, it's so wonderful that all these years. I mean, she died in I think 1982 And all these years later, from when I was a little girl audiences are still laughing at her jokes, it's, it's really wonderful. Yeah.

Q: That's great to hear and I'm sure she. I mean, I, I'm definitely going to love to see your play, hopefully when once this whole pandemic thing is over. Has this definitely affected you in any way.

Press: : Of course it has. I was in rehearsal to hear. This is what I, I was in my her saw. I don't know if you can see this. It's called The Testament of Mary and it's the story the story from Jesus's mother's perspective. You hardly ever hear her. Here's another woman who you don't hear from her. But a wonderful author and poet and playwright and calm toibin wrote The Testament of Mary it played in London. It played in Dublin it played on Broadway was booked into Broadway for 12 weeks, but it was shut down after two weeks. Um the Catholic League got all up in arms that saying that it was blasphemous, but it's not. It's a beautiful piece, but the thing they objected to was that it doesn't treat her as A deity an icon um our divine it treats her as a woman. A mother and it takes place about 18 years after her son's death and just before her death, and she's having her say she's telling the story from her perspective and it's a wonderful piece so I um I had caught I had contacted the author and I got the right the exclusive rights for the Central Coast, they had done it um at in San Francisco. Uh I think in 2014 and there was a production um in Chicago, but it's hardly ever been done it's a 27 page script and it's one woman so I, I, I memorized 27 pages of dialogue. I had never done that, even though I had been acting since I was, you know, uh 13 or 12 .Uh this was really something and we were in rehearsal. I was going to open on my birthday. I was um we were going to open on May 8 my birthdays May

seven, so we were going to have the preview, then I usually do a preview before opening and we do it as a benefit you know for with my other play. We did it a benefit for the homeless women, older women um and so I just had to stop. You know, I just had to stop everything's frozen. Yeah, so I'm sure we'll get back to it in a couple of years. Yeah. No better safe than sorry. That is true. Yeah, yeah.

Q: That is true, Could you tell me a little bit about your uncle, if you don't mind me asking.

Press: Oh, he was just such a wonderful He's still alive. He's just very old is And but he is He was the one who you know that that that TV show The munsters.

Q: I have not seen that.

Press: Wow, he created that show. Yeah, and he was a in New York he was you wouldn't know the Dave Galloway show, but it was the original um Today Show um and uh and it Stargate Dave caraway he was the producer. My uncle was the producer on that and then they all moved out to LA and he wrote and produced and directed and I remember we used to go to the studio to visit him and we go out and sat or, you know, we'd go in the commissary and we'd see people like you wouldn't know Cary Grant, who was a very big movie star and um we'd see these people that were like we were just used to seeing in films, you know, and um you know the twilight zone. Yes. Yeah, well that was that was Rod Serling and he was a friend of my uncles and I would that was I thought I was gonna die. I was 12 years old and I went with my uncle. He was delivering a script to Rod Serling at his house and he took me with him. And I remember I was just like, Oh my god. There was run through again kidnap me and he and he I asked him to autograph a picture for me. And he did. And it was I just couldn't believe it. Um, when the Beatles first came to America in 1964, uh they were playing in Los Angeles at the Hollywood Bowl and they stayed at my, my uncle was sharing a house um with a man named Roy Gerber,

who was a very big, you know, agent and they were um, their other friend, was in that there are other friend was a you won't know any of these people. But Neil Simon is a very he was a phenomenally successful playwright and Neil's brother used to come he was visit was visiting with the three of them, and then Neil came to visit and he saw their household because they were all divorced man and he wrote the play. Sorry, he wrote the play um *The odd couple*. Based on my uncle and Roy and his brother Danny, Simon. So that was based on You know them. Um, the odd couple is like what ran on Broadway forever ever they eventually made it into a you know a TV. Series. But, and then when the Beatles came they stayed at their house they the guys moved out and they stayed at their the Beatles stayed at their house and so the, the I'll never forget because we were all Just had Beatlemania they call that I mean nobody was phenomenal. The Beatles were here and we're gonna go see them. We got my uncle took us to see them. We were 11 rose up in a box seat, but The Beatles had their chauffeur dropped they dropped them off for soundcheck at the Hollywood Bowl and they came back and they picked us up.

in the limo. My uncle and all of us kids my cousins his kids and my sisters and my brother. And we were in the limo with the Beatles had just been my sister was screaming and she was emptying the ashtrays and you know taking all the budds that Paul McCartney that just smoke that was like We had an end, you know, it was so glamorous and it was so exciting. It was, it was really something you know it was really something in those days, so it added a real touch of glamour. You know my uncle's granddaughter is the one who's a soap opera star. I'm not going to say who she is because I you know I like to respect her anonymity, but I like to see her on the red carpet and everything. It's really, it's, it's, it's, lovely. It really is lovely.

00:24:28.200 Q: You just mentioned you had a sister. Um, how's your relationship with her?

00:24:28.530 --> 00:24:29.580 Press: I have two sisters.

00:24:31.950 --> 00:24:35.160 Q: Oh my goodness, how are your relationship with them?

00:24:35.460 --> 00:24:41.160 Press: Why um one. I couldn't be closer to and the other one doesn't speak to me so I don't, I haven't seen her in about 10 years Okay, yeah.

00:24:48.450 --> 00:24:59.190 Q: Yeah. You are amazing. Like, oh my goodness, your stories are just so interesting. So Happy to hear. I'm just so happy that my and my professor and Chose. I don't know. I'm just happy that I'm that I'm learning so much from you, even if it's just like hearing these stories over through zoom. It's just so interesting, like...

00:25:09.690 --> 00:25:10.830 Press: Yeah, yeah.

00:25:11.820 --> 00:25:16.890 Q: Um, can you tell me you've experienced in living in this local area.

00:25:18.990 --> 00:25:23.610 Press: In living in this local area when I moved here 20 years ago. Um I, I started working with the magic circle theater in Carmel Valley. Um, it was run by Elsa Con, and I, I, when I heard about this project I wanted to talk about the Magic Circle Theater. I did seven shows there. Um, I was cast in another one, but I took myself out of it because I had other things I needed to be attending to at the time. But um, Elsa Con was a psychologist. And, And she always wants, she was always fascinated with the intersection between this psychology and theater. And so she always wanted to have her own theater. So when she retired from her practice. She, she had a theater and it had 60 seats and it was just perfect. It was beautiful. It was wonderful and also didn't always direct but she uh she directed quite a number of the shows that I was in. Um, And it was fascinating. It was really fascinating her choice of shows because of her interest and I've kind of I, I, I see where why it was so interesting to me because I'm interested in that to. That cross section between. I mean, it's human nature on display.

You know, and one of the things that I have done in in this area is I was the lead instructor for at the Children's experimental theatre, which no longer exists, but it was in existence for 50 years under the auspices of Marcia HoleVic and Marsha and um Marsha, she became very old and there was a certain amount, she started becoming more and more, you know, unable to keep up with stuff. So she came in saw me in a play. And um, and she kind of recruited me to do what she was doing and I ended up being there for five years and in training. Really formulating my own program. Um, including what she had done and folding into it my, my own experience. Uh and so I taught children ages five to 12 and for a couple of those years it was girls only five to 12 and my course was called Acting for The Stage. The art of being, the art of playing the part of being a human being. And to this day, I have some of my girls who were 12, 11 or 12 they're all married ladies now and it's so beautiful you know, they, they, some of them live in other countries, and I still hear from them. It's really a beautiful thing. It really is.

Um, I just received one kind of long message from, From one of the girls and we Know, she's a woman now, you know, and um we were. It was very acknowledging you know it was it was a real high. In the theater, there's a certain, there's a certain way of thinking that acting can't be taught. And uh. But being a human being. Can be the space for allowing people to come into their being especially nowadays with all the electronics and everything. Kids are completely distracted or they were when I was teaching in the end there. Um, and their, their focus was pulled in so many directions and so In developing these processes for, for people for young people to be fully present because it requires authenticity to be on stage and authenticity means being in touch with what it is to be a human being. You know, accessing our emotions.

Um, and I think one of my favorite classes had almost all very young boys very young Hispanic boys. I was teaching at um the Community Partnership For Youth. And they were, um Primarily Socio economically disadvantaged. They were uh little boys of color of all kinds of color and I worked with them on accessing their emotions and allowing and valuing their emotions and letting the crying out. And it was so beautiful. When they would break through. And how wonderful that would be with each other because they were allowed to cry because culturally, they're not. Most of the time boys are boys in general are discouraged from crying and crying is so important. You know, when we talk about the emotions to use the emotions to access the emotions. Most of them would get up there and they would just be angry. And so one of the first things we talked about was that anger is cheap. Anybody can be angry. The world is full of angry. But if you scratch below anger, what is there. Is what's really going on. That's not easy, which is I am my feelings are so hurt. I'm so disappointed. I'm so sad. And so Rather than acting that people will be mad and, and we see how what that does in the world. So we do all these exercises in a safe place.

00:33:08.820 --> 00:33:26.580 Press: To be when they get on that stage, it's not showing off. They're there to work and it is hard work for them to access their emotions. And when they do, it's a beautiful thing a beautiful thing and it impacts them forever. It's one of those Instances that you were asking me about at the beginning, something that impacted me at a young age that they never forget. So this is a very roundabout way of saying that as far as, you know, when I got here 20 years ago I saw a very healthy thriving theatre scene with lots and lots of creative people and, and um good outlets for the kids. And I was fortunate enough to have my run where I made my I made my contribution to a number of young people. And it impacted them as people. You know, not many of them stayed on the stage a number of them did but not a lot of them, but they all

were better people for it. And I know that I have made my contribution with whatever I had at hand. And that's what's important.

00:34:41.460 --> 00:34:46.710 Press: So that's what Elsa. Did you know in her choice of material in her, um in her casting. I mean, I was really fortunate to work with some really fine actors there in some really fine productions. And she didn't stand on. We always had beautiful sets we always had sold out houses and she gave us a five week run, which I do in my productions, a five week run and she paid her actors and I pay my actors, you know, she paid her crew I pay my crew. You know, I don't think anybody should work without being paid, not this kind of work, its work and it takes time and yes you do grow. And yes, it is an opportunity.

00:35:35.760 --> 00:35:38.910 Q: Wow, Could you tell me about your very first performance.

00:35:41.490 --> 00:35:42.240

Jane Press: Oh, sure.(Laughs).Um, I was living in LA. I was very young, I was very young girl I was 12 years old, I was a young 12 and uh it was a review, so there were sketches and there were musical numbers and there were scenes and um my mother was in it, my uncle was in it, my aunt was it my aunt was a fabulous, fabulous singer how she was and she appeared in uh In many musicals in New York. She was just fabulous. So my, my mother, my uncle, my aunt and then our director was a man name uh What's his name, Scott...Are you familiar with the Rocky and Bullwinkle?

00:36:39.870 --> 00:36:40.740 Q: I've heard of it.

00:36:40.830 --> 00:36:42.000 Press: Yeah, that was a Cartoon Rocky. Yeah. Yeah. So, okay, Scott, J. Scott, J. Scott created Rocky and Bullwinkle and he was the voice of Bullwinkle (laughs).So he was. These were the, the adults were professionals, you know, and then they had a bunch of um of teenagers and they had some younger teenagers. And uh so I was in that and um

I used to in those days. I used to have a big booming singing voice and Um so I had a solo with all the girls there were, I think there were 12 girls(giggles), Well girls of all teenagers and we had I had a solo and we had um they made us these dresses. We were all lined up.(Giggles) when we were in the colors of the rainbow. And they were these gorgeous chiffon dresses, you know, this is 1962 and it was called "I enjoy being a girl" that was the I enjoy being a girl, you know, it was all about how we're getting ready for her dates and how you know it's all about the boys.

(Laughs). Um, And so I was in that and we were about three weeks in, and President Kennedy got killed. And it was so horrible because wherever you were on the scale with your um politics everyone loved, everyone was enthralled with President Kennedy and our first lady was 31 years old. She was pregnant when she was still in off when they were still in office. She lost the baby and we all cried. We she was so beautiful. And he was so handsome. They were young. And it was a wonderful moment in time. It wasn't like it is now where everybody's like up with what's happening with our government. We were taught civics, we were very patriotic, we were very proud of our country and we had reason to be proud and, and we accomplished great things. It was a wonderful strong country.

And um, and um and President Kennedy was very he was very inspiring. He was very he used to talk about being sick and so everybody decided to, you know, be fit and so everybody started like exercising and, and he was very inspiring. You see a lot of very, very unhealthy people In those days, it wasn't by the positive to be unhealthy. It was body positive to be fit and healthy. And patriotic and, and loving and make A's in school and to dress well we all dressed well when you went to the airport you dressed up. It was a beautiful thing. The girls wear dresses. You didn't wear pants.

00:40:31.290 Press: (Cries). When President Kennedy was killed, that's when everything changed and it didn't change for the better change for the worst. And you know how everybody is, is all in Wisconsin, their houses now. Everybody was crying and grieving when President Kennedy got killed. It didn't matter if you were a Republican or a Democrat, everybody was heartbroken. It was heartbreaking. It was horrible. It was a death in the family. And that probably was. That was That was our 9/11, you know, that was our pandemic. It was a very uh it was kind of an innocent. Time for a moment there, you know, And I'm very grateful to have lived through it. But anyway, that's what happened and we. The show must go on. But we had to the director. I remember him. Uh, he took out some of the sketches and everything uh and, and, and we kept on you know it's a tradition in the theater. The show must go on. We kept on we were heartbroken, but we kept on and you know it was like people in the theater have a lot of heart.

00:41:59.460 Q: Definitely shows I am, shows so thrilled to be hearing this amazing story and something that you definitely lived through and it touches you I could definitely tell and, oh man. Amazing. Amazing. Um, oh wow! What motivated you to continue to pursue your performance like uh um your production company, if you don't mind me asking.

00:42:27.870 Press: I had written uh, my play and it was part of, you know, I think we all have our healing process. We all have our lessons in life, and we all have our healing process and writing this play was a big It was a big deal for me. And I didn't want to just turn it over to somebody else. I knew it inside and out, and I knew how I wanted it produced. I had worked with my director Robin McKee at the Magic Circle. She had. That's how I met her. She's also my business partner. I have a business outside of this. Uh, but um, she's a fabulous director. She's also over 50 And um and so I thought, you know what, oh, I know what it is. Hang on, let me

show you something. Let's see if I can you see this British is beautiful. Yeah. This is a book by one of my heroes Irene Mayor Selznick. She was Louie B. Mayer his daughter. Louie B. Mayer was the head of MGM Studios in in the old days in Hollywood. And um and uh so she was brought up as Hollywood royalty and then she married, David. O. Selznick, who was the producer of Gone with the Wind. Um, he ended up having an affair with a movie star named Jennifer Jones. Who was the actress who won the Oscar for um uh The saga Bernadette You know, Bernadette, Who saw the vision. Uh, when he left, she went back to New York and she became a theatrical producer. And the first thing she produced was A Streetcar Named Desire by Tennessee Williams and It starred Marlon Brando. If you want to see something phenomenal, look it up because they filmed it look and watch A STREETCAR NAMED DESIRE by Tennessee Williams, and it's A Streetcar Named Desire and it is starring Marlon Brando and Vivien Leigh, who played Scarlett O'Hara in Gone with the Wind.

00:45:48.960 Press: Yeah, yeah, um in the original stage productions. She didn't play it. But when they went to film it. They kept Marlon Brando and they cast her um it's one of the great parts of in theater. Anyway, Irene produced it and she went on to be a fabulous uh you know she, she produced. What else did she do she kept on she and I'm blanking out right now but, but watch that movie. You'll be glad you did. It was the closest thing that you can come to the production. The stage production. It was directed by the stage producer Alien Kazem. Anyway, um, I was so taken by Irene Mayer Selznick. And I thought, I want to do that. I always wanted to do that. I thought, what a great thing. It would be to do to produce your own theater uh productions and um, I didn't have the means to have my own theater like Elsa did with Magic Circle Theater. But I started working out of um uh in Carmel. The Carl Cherry Theatre and that's where I've produced my, my productions. Um, and, and I produced and I, I learned by doing it. I

read her book. (Laughs). But, you know, nobody there was an old boys network. You know, where men can get mentors. When I was coming up, there were no real mentors. There are now there are quite a number of women who are producing now.

You know, women have really come into their own and uh it's lovely. It's wonderful to see when I was growing up no. So it took me until I was in my 60s to, to realize that I could do this. I could do this, and I did it. And I kept doing it and that's how I learned to do it.

00:48:14.880 Q: That's amazing. Oh my goodness. Um, could you tell me about creating the Children's Theatre?

00:48:28.770 Press: Well, the I didn't create it. I created my uh course. I went to work for Marcia Hovik, hired me to be the lead instructor at the Children's Experimental Theatre. And that took that had been going for 45 years and so for the last five years, I was the instructor. So, you know, the Pack Rap Theater in Carmel, all those yeah all those people were students of Marcia's when she was when they were children. So as they grew up and kept on being in theater and then they and Stephen Moore, you know, was her student and in he became his own. He got his own theater and they all those people who run that with were Graduates of the children's experimental theatre when they were young. When I came along, Marcia was just old and she had dwindled down from so many students to just a handful. So I built it back up again and I began to, you know, I incorporated everything that she was doing and I incorporated everything that I had developed over the years. And so, and then I taught that course at the Carmel Academy of Performing Arts for a little while. Not long because it was, it's not really a theater it's um it I had to do it in ballet studios and it didn't really work. So I didn't stay there long and um and then I did it at CPY Community Partnership For Youth. That was wonderful experience really wonderful.

00:50:15.840 Q: Did you ever experience any challenges, while um producing any other um plays?

00:50:37.020 Press: Not as a producer, because when I walk in, as a producer. It's so I'm paying the theater. So they're happy to have the business and they I'm not a neophyte so I know what I'm doing. I know how to present it and ,and um I have Robin as the director who's great at logistics and it's and we have fun to its work and it's fun. So, I mean, it's what theaters do they, they, you know, they either they're interested in co producing which I don't usually I don't do. But when you co produce with the theater. They go in on half of the uh half of the costs and they take half of the door. So whatever profits you make they take I don't do it that way because I am blessed. I am so blessed to have a financial backer. So she's very cheated. There's a reason why they call it angels, a theatrical angel is someone who puts up the money for the production and then she can recoup her money from the profits. So I keep my dear, dear angel Karen puts up the money. Um, so I'm able to book the theater and, and, and you know pay everybody. And then when the profits come in. I pay everybody back I pay Karen. Well my arrangement is, I must say the actors and the end so whatever's left over after the actors and the crew are paid and of course the theater. Gets whatever their booking fee. As I paid them, but they don't take anything of the prophets. I just pay whatever they usually charge per rehearsal and charge per performance. That's what they, how they make their money that way. And so then whatever we make back on top. After we've paid everybody I give back to Karen so.

00:52:41.370 Q: Um, wow Why is it important that, um, well actually, let me rephrase this. To you. What do you find most important when it comes to theater.

00:52:56.430 Press: Most important authenticity. Authenticity and humility. Uh, the theater is, is prone to big egos, you know, um, the, the. When I was very young, I had, I had the, the biggest mistake I ever made in my life was thinking that the more talented someone was the better person they were and I found out the hard way that that is not true. That the performing arts are filled with people with huge blow our egos huge blow out talent, but they haven't cultivated themselves as human beings. And my experience as, as a human being. Is that when you do cultivated the work do the work the hard work that it is the humbling work that it is to Uh to, to be in touch and, and to develop. To be in touch and to help others be in touch with our own profound humanity. It's a huge. It's not humiliating it it's a humility producing experience. And so the people that I most revere. In the, in the performing arts are people who have the talent. And, and don't have to have the, the, the end don't have hubris. I hate hubris and it's funny.

It's all the root of the same you know human hubris humility. Humiliation. I'm not talking about hubris. I'm not talking about humiliation. I'm talking about humanity profound humanity and, and humility, which is something that I think that can't be faked it comes from our own experience by being by doing the work and getting in touch with ourselves as human beings. It's a humbling experience. And when you can have that as a um a resource to draw upon when you're on the stage, it creates an experience that for me is, is, is what theater. Why, if it has never died for all these thousands of years, it's here we are in one room sharing an experience, you know, um this experience of doing Mary I mean I'm up there for an hour and a half. And I'm portraying this Jewish woman whose son was Jesus. And, and she and what she went through as a mother. From the time he was young, to, to, to witnessing him being now than anything from across. And also to portraying others who interacted with her. Men who are trying to bully her,

you know, uh, uh his followers who don't who don't approve of, or who want her version of events to be what they say it is what they say it meant, but that's not what it meant to hurt, not in this piece, not as a human being, not as a mother, they can't know. They could have gone with him and learn from him and everything, but they weren't a woman and they weren't his mother. So that's a, that's a, you know, that's an experience that's one of the reasons why I you know whenever this ends, we will we will present this because it's what for me this experience that I treasure of what is theater. We're all in a room together, having this experience that that that translates through the ages. You know, it's a beautiful thing.

00:57:39.810 Q: Definitely is definitely is. Um, well, you definitely Your insight in in the theater is just so beautiful and, and so amazing that you have vision where You. I mean, I'm I've not seen any replays but it makes me really want to go see how, how you produce all of this together and just make your audience. I don't. I just, I'm just feeling it. Like I'm definitely feeling it just the way you described everything to me and, and you mentioned earlier that um I'm just a little nervous.

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00:58:18.360 --> 00:58:20.790

Jane Press: We do Mother's Day performances. You know, and on Mother's Day we usually a Mother's Day we do two performances, because we have a matinee and evening performance. And if I tell you that there are sometimes four generations of women in the same family, a number of families in the audience and different nationalities and they're all we're all having the same experience. And there on stage is me. The little girl playing me as a little girl I'm playing my mother, there's a woman playing my grandmother who saying the exact same things as my grandmother did. And my mother me saying the exact same things my mother did acting out

scenes which happened, you know, And everybody and then I get emails, I get notes I get letters from people who saw the play and say, oh, we spoke. We all were reminiscing about our mothers, you know, women my age, we were talking on the way home about our mothers and our grandmothers and it's so beautiful. It's just beautiful. Yeah.

00:59:45.150 Q: How do you feel about the decisions you have made in your life.

00:59:55.620 Press: Oh, you know, I have the only regrets I have is, and they are definitely regrets are tough.(Giggles). Regrets are tough I wasted a lot of time. And when you're young it seems like you have all the time in the world. If I could do anything in my life. If I could go back and tell myself don't stop, don't stop. I mean, there were so many times in my life that I stopped doing what I love doing because my feelings were so hurt, I didn't believe in myself. I was so disappointed. I was. I wasn't good enough. I wasn't, you know, I wasn't pretty enough. I wasn't talented enough. I wasn't you know I I didn't know what to do next. So I just stopped. I just stopped. If I and I wasted time I wasted the time of my life. Do you know just trying to get through it. You know, just I um I developed, you know, addictions. I'm, I'm 16 years into recovery and. and it's the best thing. And now, at the end of my life I the last Quarter of my life. I'm making up for lost time, you know, I'm going as fast as I can. And I'm just actually I'm taking my time now.(Laughs). I'm finding that my time my finding my time is is, is is good. It's not too fast and too slow, but I never knew that before you know um I my regret is, is the loss time you can't get that back. But, you know, it led me to where I am now. So I guess it was worth it.

01:01:55.530 Q: Oh wow, um, What would you change if you could do something differently?

01:02:04.110 Press: Oh, I would not have stopped playing the violin. I would not have stopped um composing and writing and recording. Um, I would not have stopped my artwork. Um, all of

those I have a body of work that I did create and it's lovely and and and and and and it all stopped at a certain point, it just stopped (laughs), so I have the work that I did create and I am um uh with this pandemic. One of the silver lining linings is that I have plenty of time to get to address these things now and slowly, I am doing that now. So I was working on a new piece of music. Today, As a matter of fact, and it's the first time in about seven years that I've written music. So I'm very pleased about that.

01:03:09.000 Q: So you chose. Um theater and actress sing. Um, Do you mind me asking, Where did you um get influenced with music?

01:03:21.870 Press: Oh, Laura Nero. Here we go. Yeah, if you want to hear some really fine music um, Get an album called Eli and the 13th confession and it's Laura NYRO and its NYRO. You're in for a treat. So she was my biggest influence and I was always a musician. I was a musician before I started acting. I started playing violin. When I was 8, I think 8 and I just, I kept on but I stopped. Eventually, you know, because I had to practice so long to keep up. And I didn't think that I wanted to be a professional violinists so I did stop but I I know now that I didn't have to stop completely (giggles), but I thought I did. It was either all or nothing, you know, and by then I thought, wow, I'm going to be an actress, you know.

01:04:27.030 Q: How do you see your life and I'm sorry, actually let me real question, rephrase this, how do you see your life's work continuing?

01:04:36.540 Press: Through the people that I, I, I touch. I like with you, you know, the people that I um. When I was ever, I don't know why it is but ever since I was, I can remember in my life. And I can remember way back when I was in the crib. I've always wanted to make a difference to whoever's life I touched. I wanted it to matter. I think that people die on the vine for feeling like they don't matter. Or that they didn't make some kind of a contribution. That they left

this world and it didn't make any difference that they were there. And that's always been kind of a harsh show to me. I want it to matter. And I know for a fact because I hear from these young people that I taught when I was little. And I have one daughter and she's 35 now, and she has three little boys. And I see her mothering them in a way that I mothered her not the whole thing. But in some ways, and it's so amazing to me. And I see them blooming and I see that because I know her. This I see where my influence translated through like my grandmother's influence translated through to me. And that makes a big difference. I know that it wasn't for nothing.

I know that you know when I lay dying. I think one of the things that that I you know I didn't get to record everything that I had written and that will be hard, but I know that the most important thing is what we're talking about now.

01:06:40.050 Q: Definitely I mean, touch me up and just within the hour. Like it's gave me chills this interview. It's like, really. I honestly feel like I'm blessed just speaking with you and.

01:06:57.570 Press: Bless your heart. (Laughs). Bless your heart.

01:07:03.210 Q: Is there anything else you would like to comment or add about your work or um your mother anything about your family or yourself and would definitely like to hear.

01:07:16.650 Press: I will say that my mother was um uh my mother was a very hard and angry woman and she battered her children. They didn't have a Child Protective Service in those days, but they would have removed all four of us from the, the house. I know that for a fact. Um, and um when she died, which was just two years ago in February of 2008 I was the only one with her. And there were long stretches of my life that I had nothing to do with her like my siblings, no one would come and uh because she was very, very, very abusive to us. And um I, as a result of my being in my recovery program, I was able to be with her um when she died. And I was

able to um tell her I loved her, and that I know that she loves me. And, and to thank her. And and to be there when she took her last breath, like I, I like she was there when I took my first breath. I, She gave me an opportunity to learn about forgiveness. I did. For anyone who is in that 12 step recovery program. It's a lovely thing. It's really lovely thing because you get to recover your humanity all over again, which you know addictions take away And uh part of the process is making amends. And I actually made an amends to my mother who she was the one that you know,(laughs) but I was able to make an amends to her. And um and to tell her you know just how much I really loved her. And admired. You know, her talent. She was a beautiful looking one, and she was a be a wonderful actress really wonderful.

It was it was out of that that I wrote my, my play. You know, because she was really manhandled by my grandmother and my grandmother was physically crippled by her own mother. I mean physically her mother crippled her. So it's a legacy in the family, and she and her mother had a horrible relationship, but her mother and me, my grandmother had a beautiful relationship. And that's one of the things in the play. Just like my mother had a beautiful relationship with my daughter. You know, there's actually a name for that. It's like the inherited through the generations inherited woundedness and uh the gifts and the blessings and the curses of motherhood. It's this play shines a light on that and it was a result of it was I got by writing this, played by producing this play by being in this play um healed me. But not only healed me. Every time we do this play, and I've had three productions. Now I see my mother and my grandmother and her mother. I see them.

01:12:34.770 Press: It's wild, you know, like, I'll see them passed by. It was like, whoa, I see them. They're walking, arm in arm, they're happy. They love it. It's wherever they are. This work

is healing them. It's a healing work. But there's no way out, but through with this mother daughter stuff. And so I am looking forward to having you with the play and um it probably won't be for another three years because we're out of this two years and two years I'll do Mary and then the following year will do My Mother's keeper again, but I will. I have your information. I'll make sure to contact you and I really thank you for this opportunity. I mean, you're such a lovely, lovely young woman, and it's just, it's like you said, it's a blessing. This has been an absolute blessing. And I think you with all my heart.

01:13:32.460 Q: Appreciate it. And I appreciate you doing this interview and agreeing to it and I look forward for that email and I i hope to hear from you soon and I hope you take care and stay safe and healthy.

01:13:35.400 Press: Thank you, you too honey you too. Bye, bye.

