

## SMFA Summit Interview with Judy Kerr, premiering 18 May 2021, 4pm PDT

### Bonnie Gillespie

Everyone, let's welcome back everybody's favorite summit interview from our inaugural SMFA Summit, it's my mentor, Judy Kerr. Hi Judy!

### Judy Kerr

Aw, Bonnie. Thank you so much and I'm so happy to be here.

### Bonnie Gillespie

Oh Judy, so happy to have you back. Honestly, we got a lot of feedback on last year's summit, obviously our inaugural summit, learning what works and what doesn't and what we're capable of as summits go. First time we'd ever produced a summit. And we got so much feedback about your session and our conversation and so of course I want to have you back, because you're very popular. You're a very big draw.

### Judy Kerr

Well, I want to be sure and... and let's be sure, because I did this last year at the end, let's be sure and talk and give out my email address: Judy@JudyKerr.com—because I want to send everybody who wants one a PDF copy of the 12th edition of "Acting Is Everything." I love to share it.

### Bonnie Gillespie

Look at that. Done. Just like that.

### Judy Kerr

So, remind me at the end.

### Bonnie Gillespie

I sure will. Can we talk about "Acting Is Everything"? Let's start there. What caused you to write "Acting Is Everything" when it was just an idea?

### Judy Kerr

Well, when I started in the business in 1975, I was 36 years old, and I'd just started acting when I was 34. And so, I stepped into a world that I knew nothing about... nothing, nothing, nothing, except that I was drawn to an acting class. Joan Darling. And I was, it was impossible to get in. I audited for years and then I got to be her secretary... all the things that you need to do to try and make your way in this business. Find a mentor. And it... I didn't know anything and it was tough. And everyone said I was too old, I couldn't do it, you can imagine all of that. And I just believed that I could because I wanted to so much, and so I figured out... and just like you talk about the lurking... and there was a networking group and there was a place where I found out about auditions. And I would set settle back until I knew... and then I would get in and then I'd

go to the next level of what that was. And so, in 19... into it that I started teaching two years later in 1977, and through Joan Darling's guidance, and then by 1985 I was writing a book. I'd already been writing essays for my actors who came to me, "How do I do this?" Well, I had found out how to do it, how to make the way. How to do... have your bible. We, I... called it something else. But, and the mindset... the mindset was so important, because I didn't feel like I was enough.

### **Bonnie Gillespie**

Gosh, and isn't that amazing how that continues. The work of enoughness is just the heartbeat of this business in so many ways, and low enoughness, high enoughness, everywhere in between. We all share that journey.

### **Judy Kerr**

We do, and I'm so grateful for sharing the journey with you, because I still need that work. I'm, I'm on a new adventure. I'm on the end of the spectrum. I love that word spectrum.

### **Bonnie Gillespie**

Isn't it good?

### **Judy Kerr**

It's just so good. It just brings up all kinds of visions. But anyway, so I'm on the spectrum of what's that old life? What are those old years going to be? And, of course, I'll never retire. I mean I'm always waiting for the phone to ring for... to show up on the set, or a coaching client. I'm very lucky. I'm very lucky that that coaching keeps me in touch and I have a few, select students.

### **Bonnie Gillespie**

I love your clients. I love the clients we share, they're fantastic. And just... and to ask a little bit about your coaching, what, what is it when someone comes to you for coaching that you're usually doing with them? Is it the craft? Is it nuts and bolts about the business? Is it enoughness? Is it a combination of all the things?

### **Judy Kerr**

I think it's a combination of all the things but main... mainly, I'm working with people who are auditioning. And it's always about the story. The story and figuring out what that story is. And a coach can help you figure out the story, that, that the writer has written, and then how you can tell that story. Because all the actors that are coming in there to audition will tell the story differently because they're just... telling it from their experience. I know I'm talking to the choir, but... so... it's that love of the story, and finding how you can tell it. And I have such a passion about that, as of course actors do and, but the in my coaching that's, that's mainly what it... I interviewed Nina, Nina Foch one time... this was a very famous actress and very famous acting coach. And she, this was probably in 1980... and she charged \$250 an hour.

**Bonnie Gillespie**

Back then.

**Judy Kerr**

Back then, which is like, what? 1000 now? I mean 1500? It was a lot of money, \$250. And she said, "All I do is ask the actor questions." I learned a lot from that.

**Bonnie Gillespie**

And I think so much of what coaching is asking the questions that the person's not asking themselves, or that when they ask themselves, it feels like criticism, but when it's asked from outside, they can feel the love that is behind the question and the growth that we're looking to encourage from them.

**Judy Kerr**

Right. And when you're asking questions about story, it's digging... it's digging in on what else, what else is this and what else is that. And that's why I always say that when you're downloading from Showfax your scripts and stuff. download everybody's.

**Bonnie Gillespie**

Let's talk about that tip because I'm, I'm always shocked that people aren't teaching that in every acting class.

**Judy Kerr**

Me too. I have... one of my actors, the other day called up. I mean, I was coaching her on the script and I said, "Well, now what about this character, what's he doing?" and she said, "Oh, I didn't get it." Go! Get everybody! Read, and then come back.

**Bonnie Gillespie**

And so what we're talking about is get like go into Showfax and, for the project you're auditioning, download every character's sides.

**Judy Kerr**

Right, and read them all, even if your character's not anywhere near because they could talking about you. That's the story. You want to get as much of the story as you can.

**Bonnie Gillespie**

Yeah, it's like you're piecing together the script that way and you may end up with 60% of it but if you only download your sides, maybe that's two pages.

**Judy Kerr**

Right, right.

**Bonnie Gillespie**

You cover a lot of ground with the rest of that script, right?

**Judy Kerr**

Right, and I know most of the people watching this know this, the people who follow you, they... you, you've showed them this.

**Bonnie Gillespie**

They could they could still stand to be reminded.

**Judy Kerr**

That's right, I wanted to... I love this mindset...

**Bonnie Gillespie**

Oh yeah.

**Judy Kerr**

...framework that...

**Bonnie Gillespie**

The Get in Gear framework, yeah, yeah.

**Judy Kerr**

...this, to me—I love to print out your stuff and I always keep copies of it—but this for me... the mindset is always the most important, and I just love how you grouped it together and, and you can refer to it and you know where you have to work and how you have to keep your mind strong.

**Bonnie Gillespie**

Do you know what that evolved out of? I don't know if you remember the... probably the last time we were together in person. We were at a friend's for dinner. And you showed me where you kept a picture of a map that I had done that involved, you know timing and training and the tools and all that. This Get in Gear framework is the evolution of that model that you had kept on... that. Look at that y'all. She means it when she says she prints it all out.

**Judy Kerr**

Bonnie, I keep this on my desk. You saw, I went for it... I didn't know you were gonna say that at all.

**Bonnie Gillespie**

I love that you had that handy, because—of course she did. You had it on your phone at this dinner party we were at and you of course you have it right there.

**Judy Kerr**

Oh, I'm so glad you... oh. Well, that's why I love it so.

**Bonnie Gillespie**

It's the evolution of that. But Judy if you think about it, you've seen the evolution of "Self-Management for Actors" from before it was born, because you, you sat with me and Keith at breakfast at Du-par's.

**Judy Kerr**

Pancakes!

**Bonnie Gillespie**

Yes of course, pancakes. Gotta get the pancakes. Yes, because we could meet for lunch or dinner but no no we, we're meeting for breakfast, we have to meet for breakfast. Yes. And talking about publishing "Casting Qs". "Self-Management for Actors" wasn't even a concept. I just had all these casting director interviews. And the work, work that you lined us up for was to become our own content providers.

**Judy Kerr**

Right.

**Bonnie Gillespie**

Because I had a really not great book deal I was being offered, and you said, "Turn that down. Do it yourself."

**Judy Kerr**

Right, right, and we had learned the way. Yeah, right. Right.

**Bonnie Gillespie**

And you taught us. You taught us.

**Judy Kerr**

And you guys did it, and wow, wow. And I get to be such a great beneficiary because working in the Expansive Capacity mastermind and how you have evolved it, it's like a dream from what "Acting Is Everything" and what I was capable of and, and passing on. And then the world opened up and you understood it, and knew it, and it's everything I dreamed of. To be able to track actors and agents... and on these shows, and all of that that you came out with...

what we used to have to do it, coming with the credits at the end of the show and we had our little formulas, but nothing like what it is today.

**Bonnie Gillespie**

The technological revolution and the accessibility of technology—just everything coming down in price going from, you know, where to create your own content would mean you still had to hire someone who has a camera because who could ever afford one, to now everybody has a camera crew in their pocket.

**Judy Kerr**

Right, right, and they know how to edit and upload; I don't, but they do. They bring it to me and show me. It's amazing. I, I, I think it's so great for the actors who are involved in social media and media, you know I have a presence there but I never visit. And I tried it for a couple of years but it, it, it just, it doesn't serve me. And because... I don't know why.

**Bonnie Gillespie**

I think it doesn't, it doesn't bring you joy.

**Judy Kerr**

No, it's too... it's just not personal enough, or some... who knows what it is but...

**Bonnie Gillespie**

Not your thing, not your thing. Totally fine, totally fine.

**Judy Kerr**

I know and that's what is so wonderful about the things that you teach, is that you also embrace the people who can't embrace everything. That you don't have to embrace everything.

**Bonnie Gillespie**

And I think the goal of embracing everything comes from such a patriarchal model of, you know, we have to say yes to everything. Don't ever turn down a role. Work for free, like, hustle, hustle, and it's like: Do we have to treat ourselves like that? Could we maybe have boundaries and decide social media is not for me, and still be successful? Yes, because someone is proving that's true every day.

**Judy Kerr**

Yes.

**Bonnie Gillespie**

I would like to ask you, Judy. What do you think when it comes to believing in yourself, and believing in your dreams, and that core enoughness, like what is the work of that? Because you've been a part of this industry for so long, you've got... you started "late" as they would say.

**Judy Kerr**

Yeah.

**Bonnie Gillespie**

I get I still get emails from people who are 24 saying, "It's too late. It's too late to start," and I'm like... "Child! Start!"

**Judy Kerr**

Right. Right. Well, I think it's... start. If you have a dream you, you can get on the path, whatever the dream is. If you want to be an actor, well then you have to study, you have to learn how to act, you have to know that is your path. If that is your passion. And when you feel like you have enough to offer as an actor for someone to turn on a camera or turn on the stage lights or whatever it is that you're worthy for an audience to see you. You can step out of class and move ahead. The dream will open. There, there will be a next path. There, there are opportunities every day, and if you're prepared for it and you're ready to jump, then you go and you do it. I've been willing to do that, and, and as an actor it's jumping off the cliff, whether it's in your acting class or stepping on the stage or action. And when I started teaching my first class I had... talking about launching at 85%... I had three students, and they didn't know it, I'd invited two friends for free to...

**Bonnie Gillespie**

Fill up the space? You plant... you planted your audience.

**Judy Kerr**

Because somehow, because, Joan had told me, "I need someone else to be teaching class so you can teach." And so, I said, "Okay. How can I do it?" And so, I... then I was on that path of renting the room, and setting it up, hoping they'd show up, and then doing the next thing that... the what it, what it took. And that meant always looking every day—at that time it was different things, whether it was Dramalogue, whatever it was—looking and soliciting an agent, getting an agent, doing all of that, whatever those next steps. There always is a path, then you may start down that path and that doesn't feel right and then there'll be another path and you go and you take that one. It's not a straight path.

**Bonnie Gillespie**

So true.

**Judy Kerr**

It zigs. Zags. And you don't know where it's going to go. One of my young acting students said to me the other day... she's 22. And she said, "You know, I'm thinking about maybe just having some faith." She said, "I, I've been, I've been so afraid of all the time my whole life and, and as

I'm looking back, it seems like things kind of worked out." And I said, "Wow, that is so good. Yes. Get that faith. Start to have some faith."

**Bonnie Gillespie**

Yes. What a wonderful gift to give to yourself, especially at that early age, yes.

**Judy Kerr**

Yes and I have—in fact you helped me so much when I recently went through that allergic thing and thought I was dying. And you had said, "Sometimes I just say 'I'm safe.'" And I have a prayer... something I say all the time. Sometimes I need to say it all the time, and, and I remembered the little thing that you said and then finally it came back to me in a few hours, but this is what I say: "I believe in myself, I trust my instincts, and follow my heart. All is well. I am safe." So, if I carry that and I've said that thousands and thousands of times. Sometimes I have to say it, you know, that "I believe in myself, I believe in myself." It's your, the picture that you shared with that saying, whatever it was. I passed it on to everyone I know and all my friends about the bird sitting on the branch.

**Bonnie Gillespie**

Yes, and that that was the bird doesn't trust the branch and its strength... it knows that if the branch were to break it trusts its wings; it can fly.

**Judy Kerr**

I love that. I love that vision. I love that.

**Bonnie Gillespie**

Me too.

**Judy Kerr**

Because that's... it's never in the branch.

**Bonnie Gillespie**

And we spend so much time thinking it is.

**Judy Kerr**

Yes, we think it's there, we think it's other people. We think it's that and, and it isn't. It's us and it's what we can believe that we can bring into ourselves. And I get excited about it because it's all energy and it's something... every day when I wake up, I meditate, and I write... I'm not good at meditating.

**Bonnie Gillespie**

Me neither.



**Judy Kerr**

I heard... when it started, when I started out... and I started out when I was working on "Seinfeld" because Jerry Seinfeld had been meditating since he was 19 and Michael Richards used to talk about, you know he could always tell when he'd meditated. And you, you know, so I started meditating, but I heard that it takes 15 years to get good at it. I've been doing it way more than 15 years, so I don't ever have to get good at it. I do it. I don't... so that was a great relief.

**Bonnie Gillespie**

That's really beautiful freedom to grant yourself: "I don't ever have to get good at that, but I still have to do it."

**Judy Kerr**

Well when I knew it was gonna take 15 years... of course at the time I think I started in '95... I couldn't imagine 15 years. So I didn't think I'd ever have to get good so I'm not, you know, but I do it, and I must, there must be a payoff. And, and I also write five things I'm grateful for, five things I'm proud of, and five directions that I have to go and, and those... some days I, they're one or two words, other days they're... it just depends, but still, for a day of really doing nothing. And today was a big day though. I was doing a lot because I was talking to you. But tomorrow when I start my day, there's not much going on except I don't have to wear my mask outside now, but I still have to start it out with something. I don't know... I don't walk around feeling not enough. But I could be confronted with something maybe something that might come up but I'll be able to overcome it.

**Bonnie Gillespie**

I like to say, we all have our "ding things," which is... going through life, and then \*ding\* and it's like, "Whoa! Low enoughness. What just happened?" And some of our ding things we know. We know. Like I can list off ding things including relatives and situations that like, I go, "I got some," but then others surprise us. What's the work when you're surprised by a ding thing?

**Judy Kerr**

Well, I'm a, I, you know, cover and hide until I can take it. Oh, then I could take it.

**Bonnie Gillespie**

Judy. Like, get in your bunker.

**Judy Kerr**

But then, I can take anything. I really can. I can take it all. I can take it. I am tough, tough, tough, tough. You get down in there, boy, I can do anything.

**Bonnie Gillespie**

Y'all see why she's my mentor, right?

**Judy Kerr**

But that initial... oh, yeah. I yeah, I really have to protect myself. Oh yeah.

**Bonnie Gillespie**

Judy we've come to the end of our time and I'm to remind you to share your email address.

**Judy Kerr**

Please, anyone who's interested in reading "Acting Is Everything," I'm very proud. I love the acting tools that I have in there that Joan Darling allowed me to use and... used by thousands, and they're terrific. And also my self-esteem builders—I think they're all real practical things. That's what we used to call them in the old days, instead of enough-builders.

**Bonnie Gillespie**

It's all enoughness.

**Judy Kerr**

Yes, it's all enoughness. Judy at Judy kerr dot com, and put in the subject line "book" or "send book" or anything just so I know that you want the book and you aren't just saying hello.

**Bonnie Gillespie**

Judy, I treasure you. I love you. Thank you so much for another great conversation and lots of laughs.

**Judy Kerr**

Thank you. I'd love being with you. The best.