

## **SMFA Summit Interview with Stacy Solodkin, premiering 26 May 2021, 10am PDT**

### **Bonnie Gillespie**

Everyone, so pleased to bring to you one of my favorite people. It's Stacy Solodkin of Beth Stein Agency.

### **Stacy Solodkin**

Hello, everybody.

### **Bonnie Gillespie**

Stacy, thank you for sitting down with me. I'm so excited to have this conversation about creating the Hollywood we want. And I know you are an artist of multitude... levels of experience here. I was taking a look at your online presence as I was prepping for our time together and I went, you do it all. You are a true creative.

### **Stacy Solodkin**

I am definitely a creative, yes. I was born an artist, for sure.

### **Bonnie Gillespie**

What is it like to be a talent agent who has... usually actors that are not used to people who speak artist, you are in fact, an ally. You speak all the artists. In fact, maybe you can probably catch people doing artisty things that you're able to go hang on, I know what that actually is.

### **Stacy Solodkin**

Yeah, I think that that's why my company has grown exponentially every year for the last 20 something years. It's because, it really... I started because I love actors, and I started... you know, I speak a different language, and I care. So, I care in a different way, I think, than, a lot of agents who haven't come from my side. And I also started as a manager, so, you know, I've seen a lot and I worked for a casting director, you know, so I, I just see things from different perspectives. I watch every single self-tape, so I can tell when an actor is in and when they're out and I can tell when an actor's energy is present and when it's not. Even if I'm not talking to them, you know, and I can go all day about how energy affects this business.

### **Bonnie Gillespie**

I love that you used the E word because it's seriously one of my favorite words.

### **Stacy Solodkin**

I use it all the time, and I think that, you know, it's.... I always tell people when I first meet with them. It's a sword that cuts on both sides, because I also don't hold people's hands. I know, because I was an actor, how much work you need to put in. And so, I also need people to step up, right, and they need to meet me, and then we rise together. Right? Yeah.

**Bonnie Gillespie**

What does that look like in a practical sense? I mean 'cause I know energy, I'm hella woo so I like energy is so, like... words are inefficient to describe what it actually is. But for those more pragmatic folks watching this conversation...

**Stacy Solodkin**

Like my husband.

**Bonnie Gillespie**

What, what does it look like to be an actor maybe submitting to you hoping to get a meeting? What does "meeting that energy" look like?

**Stacy Solodkin**

Well, you mean, somebody who's sending their stuff into me like how do I choose? Is that the question.

**Bonnie Gillespie**

We can go that way, like yeah, they... what does it look like for someone to show up on your radar, and you go, "I'm gonna work with you. I'm gonna... you're a keeper, even if we don't... even if I don't sign you. Even if maybe you're not my client, I, we're, we're together. We're feeling this vibe."

**Stacy Solodkin**

I say this all the time. These relationships are just like any relationship, right? So, it's like dating. It's like I'm too old, right, so I didn't do the swipe thing.

**Bonnie Gillespie**

Yeah, I don't know which way is the right way...

**Stacy Solodkin**

I don't even know what way is what, but when I talk to the kids today, I say it's like swiping left and right, right? Because everybody wants to know the secret sauce, everybody wants to know, what if I write something great in the, you know, in my tagline in the memo, what's going to make me stand out? And I say, being yourself.

**Bonnie Gillespie**

Yes.

**Stacy Solodkin**

Being yourself, because I respond to authenticity. And if they would just think in their minds, "If I was dating, and I showed up at the table, what would I want to see from myself." And usually, the people who we are attracted to are people who we feel are present, and who are not

trying to put on airs, and who are not name dropping, you know, because then that's ego, right? So, leave the ego at the door. Be fully invested in who you are. Know that you're a winner, right? Know what you have to offer, and just show it to me and let the work speak for itself. Let all the work that you've done before that speak for itself. You don't have to do anything fancy.

### **Bonnie Gillespie**

Nope.

### **Stacy Solodkin**

Nothing fancy and that's how it is. I just... and then the other thing is is that you just know it when you see it. You know who your person is when you see it. So, there's no way to actually quantify that, or for anyone to give you a roadmap of that because there's over 300 talent agencies for a reason. It's like walking into a shoe store. Not everyone's going to like the same pair of shoes. Right? So, I'm not for everyone, and everyone's not for me and that's okay. That's why you don't take it personally, because there is somebody out there for you.

### **Bonnie Gillespie**

And I wish people would get that before they start on their agent hunt journey, because so often, if I just... I'm sure your DMs are the same. Check my DMs. It's a litany of "help me get an agent, help me get an agent, help me get an agent." And I'm sure in yours it's "rep me rep me rep me rep me," and it's like, "why? Why are we a good fit? Why? What work have you done to know that I am actually going to be able to get you where you need to go?" And there's just been for so many people, not folks who are watching this because I know the people who are here are already down with the "Self-Management for Actors" targeting work and they know it's about... know that this is someone who is a good fit for me energetically and also from the pragmatic sense. What is the advice to folks who do just go, "no, I just need any agent? I just so desperately need to get repped because there's an opportunity I don't get until I'm repped." What do we do with that mindset?

### **Stacy Solodkin**

Well first of all, you don't want just any agent. Do you want just any boyfriend? Do you want just any girlfriend? Do you want just any partner? You just want a warm body in your house? You know, are, what are we doing here? We're creating a career; we're creating a life for yourself. You're also creating a family if you have a manager and so you, this takes care, right? And if you want to compete on an elite level, you have to, you have to have an elite mindset, right? So, you also have to study in an elite way, and you have to want elite people on your team. So, I really respond to people who have done their research, and who have targeted agents, specifically because ABCD, you know? And I find that people who all of a sudden, they started and they did they just want an agent, and I usually say, "Well, you know, this is, this is something that you know you're choosing someone, you know, hopefully people get married for life, right?" Doesn't always happen, but hopefully you choose a partner for life, you don't choose a partner for just right now. You don't enter into a relationship thinking, "This is just,

this is just my one, my one year," right? And if that's your mentality, then that's the energy that is going to come back to you.

**Bonnie Gillespie**

True.

**Stacy Solodkin**

Right? So better to wait for that person who is going to be like, "Oh my God" and I just got chills right? You. Boom.

**Bonnie Gillespie**

Yes, I describe that as the hell-yes rep. That not, not only are you hell-yes about them but they're hell yes about you. That you as the agent wake up going, "I'm so excited. We're gonna print money today. Let's do it." Like, you just know that that's an exciting conversation with every casting director to whom you pitch that actor like there's just that synergy.

**Stacy Solodkin**

Right, right, you want someone who's really excited about you. Really excited about you.

**Bonnie Gillespie**

How much does enoughness play into that for the actor who maybe feels they don't deserve someone who's that excited about them? That they've been taught, you know, "You don't matter. You're an actor, you know, you're a dime a dozen. You're disposable." Like how, how do we topple that, that you don't matter mindset to get to a level of, "No, I not only deserve a good agent, I deserve an agent who's really excited about me." Because there's a lot of inertia for the actors don't matter mindset in Hollywood.

**Stacy Solodkin**

Yeah, yeah. Look, I mean I was just talking to a casting director two minutes ago who, you know, said that, you know actors are furniture, you know? So, you're going to encounter that a lot, right? I think that if that is your mindset.... So, whenever I talk to one of my actors, if I hear anything come out of their mouth that has a downward angle, right? Something that goes down, right, not up and forward, downward and back. "Did you get feedback on my audition?" Backward. Right? "Did you, can you call the casting director and see if you can get me...?" Backward. Right? I'm already moving forward, I've already submitted you, you already auditioned. I love you.

So, it's all these things whenever somebody starts talking limiting beliefs, I always say, "You've got to change it up, you've got to change what's in your head." And again, before you get an agent, if you have those limiting beliefs, what you're going to track is an agent with limiting beliefs. So, what you want to do is get a therapist, and work on your limiting beliefs. Or read "You Were Born Rich" or read "Big Magic" or read something -- your book -- and, and get

yourself... like when I decided that I wanted a partner in life, at the age of 43, I hired someone to work with me on my mindset. And I attracted a six-foot four French man production designer who's gorgeous, right, and he loves me. Loves me. And that's what you want your agent to be.

**Bonnie Gillespie**

Yeah.

**Stacy Solodkin**

A six-foot four Frenchman.

**Bonnie Gillespie**

Oh god, I love that. I love the visual. I love the visual. Yes, and you know it's so easy to use the dating analogies, alongside the industry ones, because it is such an intuitive relationship of, do... we are going to be able to to make magic together and make lots of money together. We need to be sure that it's a proper fit, and a proper fit for growth. And this is something I'd like to ask from that that perspective of growth mindset. Do, do you find there's a certain level at which clients outgrow an agent or an agent now can't service the client because they've got a cap on where they feel they can grow? What do we do with those kinds of roadblocks, other than you sit with a client and go, "You need to go to therapy and work out your scarcity mindset." You know, which I, I've said that to my clients so I get it.

**Stacy Solodkin**

Well, it's interesting because, you know, I, I've had people poached from me... recently. And it was after I, you know, I signed the series lead deal, you know, and the big ones come down, or I just signed a recurring guest star in New Mexico, inked the deal, the big ones come down and they pluck, right?

**Bonnie Gillespie**

They're predators, man.

**Stacy Solodkin**

I... here's the thing, it's like, if you know that your agent is booking people on leads on films, series leads, series regulars, if you're not getting out for those things, it's not because of your agent, because clearly your agent is getting those people. Now, there are agencies that are co-star agencies.

**Bonnie Gillespie**

Absolutely. You can tell, you can just go on IMDb-Pro and look and and they just book nothing but costar. They're not looking to try and grow anybody into guest star.

**Stacy Solodkin**

Right, right. So, if you are one of those agents. I think that having a very, I believe in transparency, I believe in honesty. I don't believe in going behind anybody's back; agent to the actor, the actor to the agent. So, I believe in saying, "Hey, listen, this is where I want to go in my career. And I feel like you have never gotten me guest star, series regular. Can we talk about that?" And then you have an honest dialogue. Right? And I think that if you're with your person, right, your person is not going to want to hold you back from flight.

**Bonnie Gillespie**

Of course.

**Stacy Solodkin**

And I have said to clients, when I was smaller, because I started out as a costar agency. You know, and then I booked someone on a big job, right? Big job in New York. Big, big, big, and I said, "Listen, the big ones are gonna come and you're gonna have to go." I used to be an actor, right? I said, "If CAA comes calling, you got to go." And I have had people who have answered that call, and I've had people who've been with me for 16 years, you know? And they're still working like gangbusters. So, you know, I say, again, it's like a relationship. Some relationships.... Listen, all marriages don't end up happy ever after.

**Bonnie Gillespie**

That's right.

**Stacy Solodkin**

A lot of them, a lot of people get divorced, for a lot of different reasons. And sometimes you outgrow your partner. It happens.

**Bonnie Gillespie**

But I believe relationships are managed. All relationships, which means they... it is a, it is a two-way street. We are coming together and having conversations...

**Stacy Solodkin**

I have outgrown actors.

**Bonnie Gillespie**

Yes, yes, what, what is that like when it's clear, "I can't service you anymore. I'm going to release you so you can find your better-fit agent"?

**Stacy Solodkin**

Yeah. So, there are actors who for whatever reason, their limiting mindset, they won't take more class, they, you know what, for whatever reason, they are stuck in costar land or whatever, and I'm not doing those anymore, right? Or they... something has happened. The light has sort of

switched. They are concentrating on something else. There's always an energetic reason for it, usually. And I say, "You know, I'm not, I'm not the person for you anymore." And usually, even though those conversations are hard, it always lights a fire. Always lights a fire. Because the actor has gotten comfortable with me. They would rather have me than no one, and they get complacent. And what I do is I kick them out of the nest. And then they go fly, and usually they fly. If they have the mindset and they go, "Oh my god, now I need someone." It was the thing they needed to like... and I wish I had been that person, but clearly, I wasn't. I was meant to kick them out to their next next journey.

**Bonnie Gillespie**

And catalyze that for them.

**Stacy Solodkin**

Yeah, yeah.

**Bonnie Gillespie**

Yeah, I want to go back to something you said a minute ago that I know struck terror in in actors everywhere watching this, the idea of approaching your agent, and saying, "I want to go out for these sorts of things. I want to have a conversation about the level at which you're getting me out." Like being assertive and authoritative around, "We work for me," let's talk about what that looks like. I know there are actors watching this going, "I would never be able to have that hard conversation with my agent. I don't even want to look at her sideways because she may drop me." What do we do about that?

**Stacy Solodkin**

I've sort of changed my mindset because I say all the time, you know, "I work for you." And I say that when I'm in negotiations and I'm trying to figure out how hard I can push whether an actor will let me walk away or not. But really, I don't, I don't work for them. We're a team.

**Bonnie Gillespie**

Absolutely.

**Stacy Solodkin**

My best relationships are them thinking that I'm the bomb and me thinking they're the bomb.

**Bonnie Gillespie**

Yeah!

**Stacy Solodkin**

And so, they're constantly saying, "Oh my god, Stacy" and I'm like, "No, US. Team." I am only as good as the actors I work with, you know? And I invite actors to... yeah, it's scary, saying, "I want this," but it's necessary, if you want... You are in charge of your career; it is your business.

So, if you... I say in my very first meeting, "My job is to make you happy. If you're not happy, I need to know that you're not happy so that we can figure out if I can make you happy because I only want happy people around me."

**Bonnie Gillespie**

Amen. Life's too short.

**Stacy Solodkin**

Life's too short, and I have a life is too short pile. If people are, you know it's not working, that's the life's too short pile. You know back in the day, when I was an actor, you know, it was the cliché that actors would be at the coffee shop, complaining about their agents. And I'm like I don't ever want an actor at a coffee shop complaining about me. I'd rather set them free, right? Because that's not about me, that's about them.

**Bonnie Gillespie**

No, they weren't they were going to complain about whatever the situation was because they're "gather at the coffee shop complaining" type people. That's just their thing.

**Stacy Solodkin**

And I'm just gonna say one thing. For me, and listen, it's a small town. We all know each other, especially now with Clubhouse, like all us agents we know each other, and even before Clubhouse. We call each other, we all know each other. If you go into a meeting and you badmouth your previous rep, 9 times out of 10, I know I'm not taking that person, because I can feel a chip on a shoulder from a mile away. So really be cognizant, because if you come into a meeting negative, nobody wants to be around someone who's negative.

**Bonnie Gillespie**

That's right.

**Stacy Solodkin**

And nobody wants to hire someone on a TV show who's negative.

**Bonnie Gillespie**

That's right. That's right. One of the first conversations I end up having on projects that I cast is there's a diva report. That we're going to have somebody who's incredibly talented and I'm gonna say, "Just, you want to hear me out on this, this one's going to cause... this one's going to cost you on the set. Like just there's going to be budget problems, there's gonna be energetic problems. You might want to consider this one, this one." They're like, "No, must, must." Every single time that has happened, I always hear back from them with a, "Oh my god, you were so right. Wish we'd listened to you," and I'm like, "No, part of my job is to not have you have an energy suck on that set." And talent is not enough. Like talent is baseline, we just assume the talent. It's also, are we going to have joy being on set together because we spend so much time,



not, not doing the acting part. What's that time like? And if it's bitching, bitching, bitching, I'm like that, that poisons the set.

**Stacy Solodkin**

Also, it's such a... I'm gonna, I'm just gonna set all your actors free right now. Okay. People want to work with people who just enjoy their life.

**Bonnie Gillespie**

Amen.

**Stacy Solodkin**

There's an, the people who I have, who work the most have an ease.

**Bonnie Gillespie**

Yes!

**Stacy Solodkin**

There's ease. So when they walk in the room, everyone knows they don't have to take care of them. There's just an ease. Everybody's like, "Oh, okay. They, they got it. They've got this for us." Right? So, I invite people to walk in the room, and bring themselves and be like, "I've got this for you. This is how, this is how I would do it," and then you walk out, you rip up your sides, you throw them in the trash, not in front of anybody, right? It's your own ritual. Whatever you got to do to let it go and then you go and you have an icecream or go and see your boyfriend or girlfriend or partner, right? And just be easy. This is, if you're doing this, this is your life. This is, you're an actor. Whether someone is choosing you that day or not, you're just you're an actor. It's what you do.

**Bonnie Gillespie**

I love the ritual of being done with it, and really ritualizing that, of just like, "It's... it's over move on, it's..." you've shown us what it is you're about, what your interpretation is of the material, and then let it go.

**Stacy Solodkin**

Yeah.

**Bonnie Gillespie**

Yeah. What, what advice do you have about not playing on loop, "Ooh, I could have done this differently. I should've..." because I think that that's a part of the creative brain as well.

**Stacy Solodkin**

Absolutely.

**Bonnie Gillespie**

...that that, "what if? What if? What if" loop.

**Stacy Solodkin**

Yeah, so I'm I'm a painter, right. Every painting I do, I love, I love it in the moment and then I come back. "Oh, man, I wish I'd done that." Or. "Oh!" And that is the evolution of our growth. We are constantly growing. Right. So, again, I invite everyone not to look backward, because if you're looking backward, you cannot move forward. So, you just have to know that you laid it all out on the table that day. How, whatever that meant. If you made a mistake -- and by the way, most of the time, the people who think they make the mistakes are the ones who book it, right?

**Bonnie Gillespie**

Yeah, for sure.

**Stacy Solodkin**

Yeah, so, because something real happened in the room.

**Bonnie Gillespie**

There was magic in that authenticity, yes.

**Stacy Solodkin**

Yeah, I, yeah, so I have a great story about that but I don't know if we have enough time, but...

**Bonnie Gillespie**

Yeah, please, please.

**Stacy Solodkin**

Yeah, so, so, I represent an actor named Ivo Nandi, and he, when he first came to me, I was like, "Hmm, I'm not sure, but he was very charismatic and we'll give it a try." So, his first... within a week, he was on a show, right. Okay first audition was "ER." He goes in and he has this scene, and it's very intense, and he's doing the scene, and it's straight to producers, and he goes up on his line. And he's standing there looking at the reader. He's trying to figure out his line. And finally, it comes to him and he says the line. And he goes off on the person. They finish the scene. And he walks out and he doesn't tell me... he's just like, "I tanked that audition. I forgot my line; it's horrible." He beat himself up, beat himself up.

Meanwhile, they call me, he's booked it. And he gets to set, and he's doing the scene, and this time, he's got his lines, right, so he does the scene. The director, it's a woman, comes over, puts his arm, puts her arm around him. "Ivo, let's go for a walk. Remember that thing that you did in the audition, that moment that you had? It was so intense. I really want you... whatever you were choosing in that moment... I want you to make that choice again." And he, at first, he was

like, "Oh, yeah, yeah, oh yeah, I got it. I got you, I got you. I got you." So, he had to recreate this mistake.

The thing that you don't realize is that everyone is going in and they're all doing the sides how they think the people want it to be done. And you have to lose yourself. You can't be watching yourself. Anybody who calls me and says, "I rocked that audition, I was so good." I'm like, "You were watching yourself. Probably not. Probably you weren't in the moment," right?

**Bonnie Gillespie**

Because when you're in the moment, you have... you black out. You have no idea how you did. It's...

**Stacy Solodkin**

You don't know, you walk out, you know, they say that, that, that your adrenaline is so high in auditions, it's like a mini car accident.

**Bonnie Gillespie**

Oh my god.

**Stacy Solodkin**

They've measured people's cortisol levels. And so they're like mini car accidents. So that's why, if you're really in the moment, god, you're exhausted by the time you get home, you know? And so, this all started by you saying, going back. Why beat yourself up, like, why don't we celebrate the fact that you got to be an actor today? And that you... somebody called you to the party, somebody called you to the party and said we want to see your art. And you went and made art with someone, right? Let's celebrate that. Go celebrate that and forget about the rest. The rest is not under your control. And meanwhile you could have looked like the producer's wife.

**Bonnie Gillespie**

You can't know.

**Stacy Solodkin**

You can't know.

**Bonnie Gillespie**

Yeah, actors say there's, there's so much rejection and I say actually rejection would be if you handed me a headshot and I ripped it to shreds and said, "No, you're not allowed to audition." Like that, that you're, you're not rejected. You don't get the role, and so what? There are so many more roles, there's so many more opportunities. You are a part of a process of inclusion, and then at some point you were not included anymore, that's not rejection.

**Stacy Solodkin**

Yeah. And meanwhile, for every no that an actor gets, I get 400 nos.

**Bonnie Gillespie**

Right, right. So how do you handle the day of the.... This is the question that I want to ask and we'll wrap on this. The... how do you cultivate a looking forward, not paying attention to the past mindset? What what is the what's the homework for that especially if someone's listening to this going, "I like the idea of that, how do I get there?"

**Stacy Solodkin**

You mean for the actor?

**Bonnie Gillespie**

For even even for yourself because you are getting, you're getting 400 nos where, where an actor is getting the one. Like what, what is your practice for staying forward focused and growth focused and opportunity focused rather than looking back?

**Stacy Solodkin**

Look, life is just too short. I had stage-three ovarian cancer back in 2017 and, you know, if I spent my days worrying about the amount of auditions that I didn't get for my people, then I wouldn't be in my business, which has made money, more and more, every year for 25 years.

**Bonnie Gillespie**

Amazing.

**Stacy Solodkin**

Do you know... and you know why that is? Because I look forward. Because if I looked back on all the things that went wrong, I just learn. I learn every day. I learn from people... I'm very interested in bettering myself. I wish I had time to read a book, like you know, I mean, like, I'm so jealous of actors who have time to like read and like investigate and, I mean, what a beautiful business that you're in, that you get to like, possibly make a profession out of, out of your love for a craft. It's it's it's a wonderful thing. Just look up and forward.

**Bonnie Gillespie**

I love it. That's it, that's the practice of it... is just we choose our point of view. And it's, we can be in really miserable situations, and where are we looking. And if we're looking forward, we're looking up, that that is the only way we can head, because that's the way we're looking.

**Stacy Solodkin**

Yeah, look, they can keep knocking you down, it's just, you got to get back up. In life and everything, it's always about, "Do you want to get back up? Do you want to get back up?" Then get back up, stand up.

**Bonnie Gillespie**

Fabulous. Oh, Stacy I love this conversation so much. Can you tell the many, many fans that I know you have who maybe didn't know you half an hour ago, where they can reach you, find out more about you, your art, all of it? What's the best way to plug in?

**Stacy Solodkin**

Yeah, so on Instagram I do Q and A's all the time. I give a lot of information, it's at @BethSteinAgency and then my art is on @StacySolodkin, you know. Yeah, that's how you find me, and I'm on Clubhouse sometimes.

**Bonnie Gillespie**

Right on. Stacy thank you so much; I appreciate you.

**Stacy Solodkin**

Oh my god, this was so much fun!

**Bonnie Gillespie**

I know! We'll do it again.

**Stacy Solodkin**

Okay! Bye.