



Laura Linney embraces the art of slowing down to reflect on what matters the most in life and reminds us all to....

LINGER A LITTLE LONGER

by *greg archer*

Life, death, living, dying—oh, Laura Linney couldn't be more captivated by the subject matter. At the moment, it's allowing her to do something she does so well—wax philosophical. And nearly everything that spills from her lips sounds rather poetic, even more-so when she is asked about the best advice she's ever been given: "We don't have a lot of time, so we have to work very slowly."

The response is almost riddle-like. After all, we now live in a Twitter-inspired culture. If we don't have much "time," shouldn't we all just be moving faster to pack everything in?

In a word: No.

In fact, Linney has been pondering the subject of time, and what one does with it, so much that the Emmy-winning, Oscar- and Tony-nominated actress has intentionally taken on projects that address that very issue. The first came earlier this year in the form of the Tony-nominated Broadway play, aptly titled, *Time Stands Still*. The moving work found Linney por-

traying a photographer who questions her existence after returning home injured from Iraq. It resumes production this fall.

The second, and perhaps more attention-grabbing, is her series debut on Showtime's *The Big C*, a surprisingly thought-provoking comedy-drama premiering this August about a school teacher-wife-mother who suddenly discovers she has cancer and only has one year to live. (It's the softer yin to *Breaking Bad*'s brutal yang.)

"The subject matter [of the play and the series] intersected with so many things that I have been deeply thinking about over the last few years, just as far as time, and the time that we have, and what you do with the time that you have," Linney admits. "And ... coming to terms with that we don't have forever. Everyone has a set amount of time, whether you have a very long life or a short one. And I just started thinking, 'If you've only had a year to live, is it a blessing or is it a curse to know that?' >>>



THE PROGNOSIS

Laura Linney takes time to reflect on a few things that really matter.

Q!: Biggest professional influence?

LL: Maggie Smith, Jessica Tandy and definitely Judi Dench—all those Brits. But really, the people who have given their entire life to the arts.

Q!: What's your preference—stage or film?

LL: It used to be a much easier question to answer. You know, I grew up in the theater and I was more intimate with it and lived for it—forever. I still do in many ways, but I love the challenge of film and television. I always wanted to be in theater so the rest of this has just been a huge delightful surprise. But I love them both and I am happiest when I am able to do both.

Q!: What could Hollywood use more of?

LL: That's a dangerous question. Well, I think it could use a little more of New York—just a little bit. Hollywood is what it is but there's a brutal honesty in New York. You always know where you stand.

Q!: Most interesting music in your iPod?

LL: All of my '70s funk.

Q!: What makes you laugh most?

LL: My husband [Marc Schauer].

Q!: Any guilty pleasures?

LL: Oh, it's too embarrassing. I watch Hoarders. It's fascinating.



Linney takes on the role of Cathy, a woman awakened by her cancer diagnosis, in the new Showtime series *The Big C* premiering August 16th.

"The series just sort of hit during the right time, and I thought well, since I am obsessing about all these questions anyway [laughs], why not work on it for a solid period of time and really investigate all of that."

In truth, the forty-something actress, who first turned heads as the naive Mary Ann Singleton on the small screen in *Armistead Maupin's Tales of the City* in the '90s—and later in the films *You Can Count on Me*, *Mystic River* and *Kinsey*—has been investigating such esoteric ideals for quite some time. Born in New York, her father was a playwright, her mother a nurse in Manhattan. She says she grew up watching her mother go to the hospital every day and later, come home, "sometimes elated" and sometimes a little deflated.

"Cancer was always there," she recalls. "I've always known about the power of cancer—how it changes so many lives; changes so many families; how it can rob people of a life, and, in a weird way, how it can give people a second life."

That's certainly what happens to her character, Cathy, in *The Big C*, which also stars Oliver Platt (*Frost/Nixon*) as her husband and Oscar nominee Gabourey Sidibe (*Precious*) as her student.

"You see everything differently," Linney notes of what happens after Cathy, who is somewhat

reserved in life, discovers her prognosis. "You hear differently. People are different to you. Relationships are different to you. When you don't have a lot of time, what do you do with it? When I am on my deathbed, whenever that is, I know there will be countless hours that I wish I could have back."

It's a startling admission, really, because when you think of Linney, the performer, the image that typically comes to mind is one of a focused, grounded soul truly dedicated and immersed in the arts. From the outside looking in, a time waster she is not.

"I think when you are in an active state [of terminal illness]," she notes, "when you can make conscious choices about how you're living your life, there's a different sort of urgency in living with those decisions."



A beaming Linney receives an honorary Doctorate during Juilliard's 104th commencement ceremony on May 22, 2009, in New York City.

Not surprisingly, she credits the arts—acting in particular—for helping her see those truths clearly and for broadening her entire perspective about the human condition.

"I really love that I am always learning something I didn't know," she muses. "I'm constantly put in a situation to step outside of myself and beyond myself and, hopefully, to examine and learn about different situations and different people, behavior, philosophy and thought."

She's silent for a moment. "I just love it." **Q!**

TWO STEPS FORWARD

The world is changing and the media—from TV to film—is changing with it. But how does Linney, the thespian, feel about some of today's technological advances?

"We're in that awkward phase. There are things I like about it and things I don't. What I don't like is that it forced everything to speed up even more, and while that is fantastic for the business side of things, it's not so great for the creative people because there are some things that do require time. It's not instant pudding, what we do, it just isn't. There needs to be an infusion of time for certain things to develop. But we're on the ride. The train's leaving the station, you know?"

