

Joan Allen

The acclaimed actress on getting grounded and being selected by Steppenwolf

1 MOTHER TONGUE My mother's influence made me a very grounded person. She would say, "everyone is on an equal playing field," "don't complain and work hard," and "never think you're better than anyone else." My mom is 94, and she *still* keeps me grounded, along with my spectacular daughter, great friends, and my feisty little Boston terrier, Pip.

2 SCHOOL TIES I went to Eastern Illinois University with John Malkovich. He had been asked to join a theatre group that was being formed by Jeff Perry, Laurie Metcalf, Terry Kinney, and Gary Sinise called Steppenwolf Theatre Company. I visited John a few times at Steppenwolf, and one spring he told me, "We're going to do a play this summer, and everyone here kind of knows you. Do you want to do it?" I permanently joined the theatre after college. The actors who influenced me the most were those I worked with closely at Steppenwolf.

3 URBAN HIKING When I arrived in New York in the '80s, I thought, *This is my kind of place*. Everything is out on the street—doormen, taxi drivers, pizza delivery guys—so I don't have to worry about being out after dark. It felt so freeing.

4 ART HOUSE CINEMA Researching my part in *Georgia O'Keefe* was interesting. Most people know her as the lone older woman in the desert. But we focus more on her life in New York City with famed photographer Alfred Stieglitz: how they met and his influence on her. The film is more of a love story than anything else.

Flower Girl Allen stars in the upcoming Lifetime biopic *Georgia O'Keefe*.



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