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COMEDY'S LEADING LADY

JULIA LOUIS-DREYFUS

OF CBS' *THE NEW ADVENTURES OF OLD CHRISTINE*



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MAYBE SHE DIDN'T GET THE MEMO THAT SAYS SHE'S A REIGNING QUEEN OF COMEDY, BUT JULIA MUSES,

“I WILL WEAR THAT CROWN IF YOU SAY SO.”

all hail THE QUEEN

by Greg Archer

WHEN JULIA LOUIS-DREYFUS IS TOLD that she could very well be one of the most significant female forces on network television today, there's a pregnant pause. "Really?" She chuckles with disbelief. "Really?"

It would certainly fit. Louis-Dreyfus didn't just storm the comedy fortress back in the '90s playing the spirited yet sardonic Elaine on NBC's *Seinfeld*, she managed to collect some gold along the way, too—an Emmy, a Golden Globe, three SAG Awards and just as many American Comedy Awards. And she hasn't been doing too bad in the post-*Seinfeld* era, either. Even after 2003's *Watching Ellie*, a sitcom that never took flight, the actress is now the only castmember of the famed series to have found the appropriate anecdote for that notorious *Seinfeld* "curse."

It came in the form of *The New Adventures of Old Christine*, the popular Emmy-winning CBS sitcom about a divorced, often-crazed fortysomething mother trying to make sense of life.

"I had been wanting to do a show about being a mother because I am a mother, a working mom, and ..."

She trails off. "Isn't that funny—that expression 'working mom,' as if a mom doesn't work?" she offers, sighing. And then her ever-sharp mind is back on topic. "I totally fell in love with the script [of the show] and what I love most is playing the anxiety of being a mother trying to keep things under wraps, a bit unsuccessfully actually. It's very fun.">>



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**JULIA LOUIS-DREYFUS
ON SOME OF LIFE'S
MORE DELICIOUS TOPICS:**

Chocolate or vanilla?
“Chocolate!”

Oprah or Ellen?
“Both.”

Who makes her laugh most?
“Oh my God ... well, I would say **Homer Simpson really makes me laugh.**” (Louis-Dreyfus has lent her voice to guest characters on the hit FOX show.)

One of the biggest influences in her life?
“My mother has been a great influence because she has a great sense of humor and wonderful instincts. I can depend on her to this day to be a great mom, like she’s always been.”

Best thing about being a mom?
“Oh ... my children.”



Julia and her son enjoying a recent Los Angeles Lakers Game.

“I think people come to the show because, hopefully, it’s a funny half hour of television,” she adds. “And I think the area is fresh; that this is a show about a hobbled together, contemporary American family where everybody is trying to do the right thing but fails a lot of the times. I think people respond to that notion.”



Julia on the set of “The New Adventures of Old Christine” with cast mates Clark Gregg and Harnish Linklater.

On a deeper level though, they’re responding to Louis-Dreyfus’s charm. Embraceable and funny, she’s like a feisty ball of creative yarn you never quite tire of playing with. She says a great deal of her success—she nabbed another Emmy in 2006 for her work on *Christine*—has much to do with “luck” but is quick to credit her supportive mother, Judith, for helping her discover her own inner strength and use it to go after what she really wanted to do in life.

“I’ve always wanted to perform,” she beams. “I don’t remember not wanting to perform. That is a very satisfying support for me. When I was growing up, I had a very traditional education. I did all of the plays in school and I was president of the Thespian Society and stuff like that. But ‘acting’ ... I love the camaraderie of the process with my fellow actors, my director, my crew. I find that buoying. I love connecting with an audience. It’s like having a deep itch that you get to scratch.”

And it isn’t the only one. Probing deeper, it’s illuminating to discover that beyond Louis-Dreyfus’s playful side, there’s an even more mindful person that cares deeply about her home, her family—she has two boys with her husband Brad Hall—and the environment. In fact, the Emmy-winner’s involvement with *Heal the Bay* (healthebay.org), a dynamic nonprofit dedicated to making Southern California coastal waters and watersheds, especially Santa Monica Bay, clean, safe and healthy, is commendable. She also has strong ties to the Natural Resources Defense Council (nrdc.org), an organization whose mission is paramount: protect the planet’s wildlife and pristine locales as well as ensure the safety and health of the environment.

“When I became a mother, I became increasingly aware, as many people are, of the world around me and my

impact,” she shares. “In Southern California, where the natural world is kind of apparent—you’re looking at mountains, the ocean, you see these beautiful sights—I had seen these certain beaches would be closed due to storm water runoff and I thought, ‘What the hell, that’s not right!’ So I became involved locally here in L.A. [with *Heal the Bay*].”

Through connections from friends, she also forged an alliance with eco patriot Robert Kennedy and joined NRDC’s efforts for sustainability. “I just feel very strongly that environmental activism is the civil rights issue of our time,” she says with conviction. “And, obviously, I’m concerned, as are millions of other people, about the state of our globe.”

The woman actually walks her “green” talk. Her home is retrofitted to be environmentally sound—recycled building materials, solar panels and more. “We do as much as we can,” she admits with some modesty, “but obviously there is more we can do. We’re not perfect but we try.”

When she’s told that it’s refreshing to see that her serious side does, indeed, come out to play, her infectious chuckle returns. And, since we’ve already explored such rich territory, it’s fitting to ask one last question before we part.

What’s some of the best advice you’ve been given about life?

“Have fun at all costs,” she belts out. “That was the advice given to me by my physics teacher in high school. And the other, which I’ve given to myself, is: ‘Take risks—don’t be afraid of making an ass of yourself.’” 



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