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Lily Tomlin

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Governors State University presents Lily Tomlin

Friday, May 11, 2007

2006/2007 Season sponsored in part by a generous grant from The Illinois Arts Council
Lily Tomlin, one of America's foremost comediennes, continues to venture across an ever-widening range of media, starring in television, theater, motion pictures, animation, and video. Throughout her extraordinary entertainment career, Tomlin has received numerous awards, including: six Emmys; a Tony for her one woman Broadway show, Appearing Nitely; a second Tony as Best Actress, Drama Desk Award and Outer Critics' Circle Award for her one woman performance in Jane Wagner's The Search for Signs of Intelligent Life in the Universe; a CableAce Award for Executive Producing the film adaptation of The Search; a Grammy for her comedy album, This is a Recording as well as nominations for her subsequent albums Modern Scream, And That's the Truth, and On Stage; and two Peabody Awards—the first for the ABC television special, Edith Ann's Christmas: Just Say Noel and the second for narrating and executive producing the HBO film, The Celluloid Closet.

Tomlin was born in Detroit, Michigan and grew up in a working-class neighborhood on the outskirts of one of the city's most affluent areas. Although she claims she wasn't funny as a child, Tomlin admits she "knew who was and lifted all their material right off the TV screen." Her favorites included Lucille Ball, Bea Lillie, Imogene Coca, and Jean Carroll, one of the first female stand-ups on The Ed Sullivan Show. After high school, Tomlin enrolled at Wayne State University to study medicine, but her elective courses in theater arts compelled her to leave college to become a performer in local coffee houses. She moved to New York in 1965, where she soon built a strong following with her appearances at landmark clubs such as The Improvisation, Cafe Au Go Go, and the Upstairs at the Downstairs, where she later opened for the legendary Mabel Mercer in the Downstairs Room.

Tomlin made her television debut in 1966 on The Garry Moore Show and then made several memorable appearances on The Merv Griffin Show, which led to a move to California where she appeared as a regular on Music Scene. In December 1969, Tomlin joined the cast of the top-rated Laugh-In and immediately rose to national prominence with her characterizations of Ernestine, the irascible telephone operator, and Edith Ann, the devilish six year old. When Laugh-In left the air, Tomlin went on to co-write, with Jane Wagner, and star in six comedy television specials: The Lily Tomlin Show (1973), Lily (1973), Lily Tomlin (1975), Lily: Sold Out (1981), and Lily for President? (1982), for which she won three Emmy Awards and a Writers Guild of America Award. Tomlin also starred in the HBO special about the AIDS epidemic, And the Band Played On (1993). She has guest starred on numerous television shows, such as Homicide, X-Files and Will and Grace, and played the boss for two years on the popular CBS series, Murphy Brown. She is also heard as the voice of the science teacher Ms. Frizzle on the popular children's animated series, The Magic School Bus, for which she was awarded an Emmy.

On film, Tomlin made her debut as Linnea, a gospel singer and mother of two deaf children in Robert Altman's Nashville (1975); her memorable performance was nominated for an Academy Award, and both the New York Film Critics and National Society of Film Critics voted Lily Best Supporting Actress. She next starred opposite Art Carney as a would-be actress living on the fringes of Hollywood in Robert Benton's The Late Show (1977). She went on to star with John Travolta as a lonely housewife in Jane Wagner's Moment By Moment (1978), and then teamed with Jane Fonda and Dolly Parton in the late Colin Higgins' comedy, 9 to 5 (1980). She starred as the happy homemaker who became The Incredible Shrinking Woman (1981), written by Jane Wagner, and the eccentric

Tomlin made her Broadway debut in the 1977 play, Appearing Nitely, written and directed by Jane Wagner. Appearing Nitely included such favorites as Ernestine, Edith Ann and Judith Beasley, the Calumet City housewife, and also introduced Trudy the bag lady, Crystal the hang-gliding quadriplegic, Rick the singles bar cruiser, Glenna as a child of the sixties, and Sister Boogie Woman, a 77-year-old blues revivalist. Appearing Nitely was later adapted as both an album and an HBO Special. Tomlin next appeared on Broadway in 1985 in a year long, SRO run of Jane Wagner's critically-acclaimed play, The Search for Signs of Intelligent Life in the Universe. The Broadway success was followed by a coast-to-coast, 14-city tour that spanned four and a half years. Tomlin extended this extraordinary theatrical career with a cross-country, 29-city tour of The Search, a new production of The Search on Broadway, a record-breaking, six month run of the production in San Francisco, and a six week run in Los Angeles.

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In 2002, Tomlin joined the cast of the hit NBC series, *The West Wing*, playing President Bartlett’s assistant, Debbie Fiderer—a role for which she received a 2003 Screen Actors Guild nomination for Best Actress in a Drama Series. In the fall of 2003, she was honored as the 2003 recipient of the prestigious Mark Twain Prize for American Humor in Washington DC. Tomlin returned to the cast of *West Wing* for the 2005-2006 season and continues to make appearances around the nation.

A collaboration between Lily Tomlin, Jane Wagner, Allee Willis, and the zany and creative, BUBBLES the artist has produced the magical Lily Tomlin website. Lily’s entire career in art, text, photos and videos can be found at:

www.lilytomlin.com

If you enjoy this performance, you can purchase many of Lily’s classic performances in the lobby or on her website!