

Drama Queen

"LAUGHTER IS AN INSTANT VACATION." Milton Berle



Jamie Fox is lighting up stages with her patented mix of humor and heart.

JEN JONES

Even though she happens to share a household name with a certain Hollywood hotshot, Jamie Fox isn't keen on riding anyone's coattails. "I've heard all the jokes," Jamie says with a laugh. "People will say, 'Where's your Oscar?' It's a conversation I have almost daily." Yet those conversations may soon be a thing of the past if Jamie's career continues skyrocketing. Hot on the heels of a successful stage show, Jamie is undoubtedly making a name all her own.

In April at the University of Judaism in L.A., Jamie premiered *In Dependence*, a one-woman show chronicling her experiences as a celebrity assistant and her brother's struggle

with a cocaine addiction. No slacker, Jamie wrote, directed and performed the entire production—which took a humorous approach to the heavy subject matter. "I'm a firm believer in comedy as a way of discussing serious topics," she says. "It gives people a way to digest a serious message."

Though Jamie is all about exploring the lighter side of things these days, she wasn't always so comedy-oriented. While growing up in Ohio, she starred in musical theater and later nabbed a theater scholarship at Florida State University. "In college, I studied method acting and everything was very serious," she remembers.

It wasn't until journeying to London after college that Jamie discovered her love of improvisational comedy. "The biggest lesson I took away was how to let go and discover my sense of play," she says. Upon completing her year across the pond, Jamie took that lesson straight to L.A., where she enrolled in classes at comedy havens

Second City, Improv Olympic West and Comedy Central Stage—and she hasn't looked back since.

"Improv gives you the freedom of not feeling critiqued," she says. "You're on your feet, stuff flies out of your mouth and you either sink or swim."

Throughout her six years in L.A., Jamie has starred not only onstage, but also on-screen—including roles in the 2004 flick *Employee of the Month* opposite Matt Dillon and Christina Applegate and numerous film-festival favorites. Her current focus is on *In Dependence*, which toured around the country throughout 2007 and is poised for an off-Broadway debut in 2008. Though the show has been a success on many levels, Jamie is most proud of its effect on the Jewish community.

"There is so much success in Jewish culture, but it's also important to show the not-so-pretty side," says Jamie, who recently performed at the Jewish rehabilitation center Beit T'Shuvah. "Drugs are rarely discussed in the Jewish community, and there are so many Jews who've come up to me after my shows to tell me the experience was liberating. It gave them a platform to see it, digest it, discuss it."

Along with telling her own personal stories, Jamie is grateful for the opportunity acting affords to delve into other realities: "My dad is a social worker and director of a Jewish community center, so I've always been surrounded and fascinated by people. As an actor, you get to know all these walks of life you might not otherwise explore." ★

Though not the fashion designer, lawyer or professional dancer she once aspired to be, **JEN** considers freelance writing to be a pretty darn cool job in itself. Visit her website at www.creative-groove.com.



Just the Facts

Name: Jamie Fox

Title: Comedic Actress

Website: www.jamiemfox.com

A Day in the Life: After starting her day off with a rowing exercise class and a pilates session, Jamie sets off on auditions, meetings with her writing partner, rehearsals and phone-call sprees to various theaters.

Whaddya Need to Succeed? Love of storytelling, perseverance, confidence, multi-tasking skills, commitment

Favorite Quote: "Comedy is tragedy revisited."—Phyllis Diller

Most Mortifying Moment: When Jamie was young, she starred in a production of *The Ten Commandments*. When a blackout happened during the show, Jamie seized the moment to fix her backward shirt—but the lights came up at quite a, shall we say, inopportune time! "I got made fun of for a long time after that," laughs Jamie.

Words of Wisdom: If you want to be an actress or create your own show, says Jamie, "Everyone *talks* about doing things; if you want to do something, pick a date, make a postcard, get your butt in gear and go for it!"