

Debbie Reynolds to be Honored with 2014 SAG Life Achievement Award

51st Annual Accolade to be Presented During the 21st Annual Screen Actors Guild Awards® Simulcast Live on TNT and TBS on Sunday, January 25, 2015

Debbie Reynolds – actor, singer, dancer, author, champion for the preservation of the artifacts of film history and for the understanding and treatment of mental illness – has been named the 51st recipient of SAG-AFTRA's highest honor: the SAG Life Achievement Award for career achievement and humanitarian accomplishment. Given annually to an actor who fosters the "finest ideals of the acting profession," the union's highest accolade will be presented to the Oscar®, Emmy® and Tony®-nominated Reynolds at the 21st Annual Screen Actors Guild Awards®, which will be simulcast live on TNT and TBS on Sunday, Jan. 25, 2015 at 8 p.m. (ET / 5 p.m. (PT).

SAG-AFTRA President Ken Howard praised Reynolds' artistry over her very accomplished career, saying, "I'm thrilled that SAG-AFTRA is presenting our Life Achievement Award to Debbie Reynolds. She is a tremendously talented performer with a diverse body of screen and stage work, live performances and several hit records. Her generous spirit and unforgettable performances have entertained audiences across the globe, moving us all from laughter to tears and back again. Congratulations, Debbie, on your life achievements."

Star of more than 50 motion pictures, two Broadway shows, two television series, as well as dozens of television, cabaret and concert appearances here and abroad, the 82-year-old Reynolds is celebrating her 66th year in show business. Born Mary Frances Reynolds on April 1, 1932, in El Paso, Texas, she moved with her railroad worker father, mother and brother to Burbank, California, in 1939 and as a young teen performed with the Burbank Youth Symphony and in high school plays. At 16, she entered the Miss Burbank contest in hopes of receiving a free blouse and scarf, and not only won the title, but was seen by talent scouts from Warner Brothers and MGM, who flipped a coin to decide which studio would offer her a screen test. Warner won the toss. Mary Frances gained a studio contract and, courtesy of Jack Warner himself, a new first name.

After an uncredited bit part in *June Bride*, Reynolds made her official screen debut as June Haver's younger sister in the 1950 musical *The Daughter of Rosie O'Grady*. Soon, a successful audition at MGM for the role of "Boop-Boop-A-Doop" girl Helen Kane in the bio-pic *Three Little Words*, led to a contract for Reynolds at the studio renowned for its glorious movie musicals and earned her the first of five Golden Globe® nominations. Her subsequent performance in a Busby Berkeley musical *Two Weeks with Love*, which featured Reynolds and Carleton Carpenter's million-selling rendition of the 1914 ditty *Aba Daba Honeymoon*, convinced the legendary Louis B. Mayer to choose her to play ingénue Kathy Selden in what become one of greatest screen musicals of all time, *Singin' in the Rain*, opposite star and co-director Gene Kelly and Donald O'Connor.

Over the next 10 years, Reynolds made more than 25 films, including *The Unsinkable Molly Brown*, for which she was nominated an Oscar for her title role performance; the Cinerama epic *How the West Was Won*, which garnered three Oscars and five nominations; *Tammy and the Bachelor*, which included the Oscar-nominated title song *Tammy*, a No. 1 smash hit that earned Reynolds a gold record; *The Tender Trap*, opposite Frank Sinatra; *The Pleasure of His Company*, in which she danced with Fred Astaire; as the title role in the film version of the Broadway hit *Mary, Mary*; *Goodbye Charlie*, opposite Tony Curtis and Walter Matthau; *Divorce American Style*, opposite Dick Van Dyke and Jason Robards; and *How Sweet It Is*, opposite James Garner.

Reynolds' first non-musical dramatic role was as a bride-to-be in 1956's *The Catered Affair*, starring with Bette Davis, Ernest Borgnine, Barry Fitzgerald and Rod Taylor. Her performance earned Reynolds a Best Supporting Actress Award from the National Board of Review. Reynolds was to show her dramatic chops again some 40 years later as the difficult title character in Albert Brooks' *Mother*, for which she was lauded with a Golden Satellite Award, a Golden Globe nomination and an Online Film & Television Award nomination. Maternal roles became more commonplace for Reynolds since the '90s. In 1997, she starred as Kevin Kline's mother in Frank Oz's *In* &

Out, earned a 2000 Primetime Emmy Outstanding Guest Actress nomination for her recurring role as Debra Messing's mother in the hit comedy series Will & Grace, played Katherine Heigl's grandmother in 2012's One for the Money and, in 2013, portrayed Liberace's mother Frances (the Liberace family were longtime friends of Reynolds) in the award-winning HBO telefilm Behind the Candelabra.

Reynolds was no stranger to television. She received a 1970 Golden Globe nomination for her work in the eponymous NBC series *The Debbie Reynolds Show* and headlined ABC's *Aloha Paradise* in 1981. She has guest starred in numerous series and variety programs and was one of a quartet of iconic actresses, including Elizabeth Taylor, Shirley MacLaine and Joan Collins, who starred in the 2001 ABC telefilm *These Old Broads*, co-written by Reynolds' daughter, actress and author Carrie Fisher.

Reynolds is also no stranger to live performances. She debuted her first nightclub act at the Riviera Hotel in Las Vegas in 1960, and over the years it has evolved to include songs and clips from her most popular films, as well as tributes to Katharine Hepburn, Bette Davis, Jimmy Stewart, Mae West, Marlene Dietrich, Jimmy Stewart, Barbra Streisand and Judy Garland. Over the next half-century, she has been a headliner on the casino circuit from Reno to Tahoe to Vegas to Atlantic City to the famed London Palladium and performed in concert in every major American city, touring often on the average of 44 weeks a year. She headlined her own showroom, the Star Theatre, at the Debbie Reynolds Hotel & Casino in Las Vegas, which she owned and operated from 1993 to 1998.

In 1973, she took a break from her nightclub appearances to star in the Broadway revival of *Irene*, at the new Minskoff Theatre. Reynolds became the first person to be nominated for a Tony Award before the show officially opened and *Irene* went on to break all previous records for a Broadway musical. After a successful national tour, Reynolds returned to the musical stage with another hit revival, Irving Berlin's *Annie Get Your Gun*, which like *Irene*, was directed by Gower Champion. Reynolds and Champion had previously starred for Reynolds' *Singin' in the Rain* director Stanley Donen in MGM's 1953 musical *Give a Girl a Break*, along with Champion's wife Marge and Bob Fosse, who like Champion became a legendary Broadway choreographer.

In 1993, she returned to Broadway to star in the hit musical *Woman of the Year* and, in 1989, toured the country in a revival of *The Unsinkable Molly Brown*.

Animation fans know Reynolds as the voice of the beloved title character in the 1973 animated feature *Charlotte's Web*, as Madame in the English version of Japanese animation master Hayao Miyazaki's *Kiki's Delivery Service* or as Lulu Pickles in several of the *Rugrats* movies.

Younger audiences may also identify Reynolds with the series of four Disney Channel films *Halloweentown*, which debuted between 1998 and 2006, or may have seen her Daytime Emmy-nominated performance in 2000 in Showtime's *A Gift of Love: The Daniel Huffman Story*, playing the grandmother whose football-star grandson gave up his promise of a career and his kidney to save her life.

In 1955, Reynolds, along with Jack Haley Jr., Hugh O'Brien and other young stars, founded a charity to fight the stigma of mental illness, calling themselves The Thalians, after the goddess of comedy, Thalia. Over nearly 60 years, The Thalians have raised over \$30 million, endowing The Thalians' Mental Health Center at Cedars-Sinai Medical Center. With that center's priorities shifting to other illnesses, The Thalians has shifted its support to UCLA's Operation Mend, which provides medical and mental health support to returning wounded military personnel. Reynolds was elected The Thalians' president in 1957, and for many years alternated between that role and chair of the board with Ruta Lee, and currently serves as the organization's president emeritus. Reynolds has also been a lifelong supporter and fundraiser for the Girl Scouts.

Reynolds' other abiding passion has been the collection and preservation of memorabilia from Hollywood's first half-century of filmmaking. Beginning with the landmark 1970 Metro-Goldwyn-Mayer auction, she amassed thousands of costumes, props and mementos of Hollywood's studios and their greatest stars, building the largest individual collection of Hollywood memorabilia, including Marilyn Monroe's white dress from *The Seven Year Itch*, Judy Garland's ruby slippers from *The Wizard of Oz*, Elizabeth Taylor's headdress and Richard Burton's costume from *Cleopatra*, and Audrey Hepburn's Ascot gown from *My Fair Lady*. While the collection was showcased at Reynolds' Las Vegas hotel in the 1990's, sadly, after numerous attempts over 50 years to establish a Hollywood Motion Picture and Television Museum to give the collection a permanent home, Reynolds sold the memorabilia to private collectors at a series of auctions in between 2011 and 2014

In 1979, anticipating a retirement from performing that has yet to materialize, Reynolds established the Debbie Reynolds Studio in North Hollywood to provide a comfortable space for dancers to rehearse and attend professional classes, with then-unheard-of amenities such as free parking, a coffee lounge, dressing rooms,

showers and spacious rehearsal rooms with pianos. Among the artists who have graced its facilities are Lucille Ball, Michael Jackson, Madonna, Bette Midler, Cher, Usher, Mariah Carey and Johnny Depp.

Over her more than six decades in show business, Reynolds has received numerous accolades for her performing and charitable endeavors. Among them, the Costume Designers Guild honored her with its Presidents Award in 2005 for her collection and conservation of classic Hollywood costumes. She has received Lifetime Achievement honors from the American Comedy Awards in 1996 and 1997, the Palm Springs International Film Festival in 1999, the Savannah Film and Video Festival in 2002, and Chapman University in 2006. In 2007, she was awarded an honorary Doctor of Humane Letters degree from the University of Nevada, Reno. Fans can view her stars on the Hollywood Walk of Fame and the Palm Springs Walk of Stars as well as her hand and footprints at Grauman's Chinese Theatre. Her philanthropic activities have earned her national honors from the Girl Scouts, a City of Hope Award, The Thalians' Ms. Wonderful award, the National Film Society's Humanitarian Award and a Spirit of Hope medallion from the USO for entertaining the troops during the Korean War.

In 1987, Reynolds published her first memoir, *Debbie: My Life*, and in 2013 brought her personal and professional story up to date and shared anecdotes about the making of her extensive filmography in *Unsinkable: A Memoir*. Reynolds is proud of her two children, actor and author Carrie Fisher (*Star Wars*, *Postcards from the Edge*) and producer Todd Fisher. Reynolds is devoted to Carrie's daughter and her granddaughter, Billie Catherine Lourd.





