

# Lea Thompson, Still America's Sweetheart

By Adrienne Papp photo by Dimitry L, [www.dimitryL.com](http://www.dimitryL.com)

**Y**ou may remember Lea best from her role as Lorraine in the *Back to the Future* series, but since then she has graced the silver screen in more than 10 movies, including *The Little Rascals*, *Dennis the Menace*, and *Come Away Home*. In addition, she has captured the imaginations of television viewers in the Hallmark Channel's mystery movie series, *Jane Doe*, and the NBC series *Caroline in the City* for which she earned TV Guide and People's Choice Awards.

She spent nearly a year as Salle Bowles in the Broadway musical, *Cabaret*, where she found that she had no problem sustaining her voice while performing in eight shows a week for eight months straight. Her mother had been a singer for years and Lea says she just didn't know the depth of her own talent until she was cast.

Lea's philosophy of the entertainment world is one of flexibility: "If movie making is on hold, you go do theatre. The important thing is to have a great part, or a great script to direct; it doesn't matter whether it's movie, TV or theatre." She jokingly suggests (that) "There should be an Academy Award for the best performance in a bad part."

"Some actors seem to wait for the good parts," she said. But coming from a poor background as she did, the idea of just sitting around and waiting for the perfect part is not something she would have ever chosen. She recently began directing, starting with a couple of the *Jane Doe* mysteries. "Directing is another way to diversify... another way to be adaptable. I'm very thankful to the Hallmark Channel for giving me the opportunity to do that. I'm an artist and I like to keep being creative, keep learning." Her passion for directing is obvious: "I had tears in my eyes when the actors did something wonderful. I was so proud," she said.

"Sitcom directing is what I really would love to do because it's fun and it's creative problem solving. It takes a long time to shoot a movie and you're shooting a page or less a day of a long script, but TV is like a play. It's very quick – one week and it's done. It's really interesting. You can shoot six to eight pages a day!"

Lea values family above all. "When Madelyn was 3, I did *Dennis the Menace* and was away for seven months. I decided I couldn't do any more big movies because I wanted to be home with my children. Doing the sitcom was great. The amount of hours required is much smaller, more conducive to family life."

Lea has been married to Howard Deutsch for 17 years. They met when she was engaged to Dennis Quaid. "Dennis is one of the nicest people I know but I wanted to settle down and have a family before I was 29. Howie is a very homey person." The couple have two beautiful and talented daughters: Madelyn, 15, a competitive equestrian/jumper and jazz singer and Zoey, 12, is interested in clothing design.

They are a close family; "We all love animals," Lea says with enthusiasm as she touches on the subject of rescuing animals, which she did for a few horses, a bird, a bunch of fish, cats and a dog. Charity contributions and philanthropy is big on her list too: "Making a difference is important," she adds with conviction.

When asked about her dream job, Lea says thoughtfully, "I'd like to do a great original musical on Broadway, where I could just dig in and originate the role. Singing in a musical is so powerful because you reach people so quickly – deeply into their hearts. There's no greater feeling of connection to other people and the world, it's what we all live for. You can make people cry in three minutes." Then she adds with a giggle, "It takes an hour or more to do that in a movie!"

