



# Married to Laughter: A Love Story Featuring Anne Meara

*Jerry Stiller*

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## Married to Laughter: A Love Story Featuring Anne Meara Jerry Stiller

The current generation knows him as the serenity-seeking Frank Costanza from *Seinfeld*. An older generation knows him as one-half of the comedy team Stiller and Meara. But, as his memoir, *Married to Laughter*, reveals, Jerry Stiller has had a lifelong love affair with entertainment.

Growing up during the Depression in Brooklyn and on Manhattan's Lower East Side, Jerry Stiller discovered the power of comedy when, as a child, he saw Eddie Cantor transform an audience. Jerry's father often took him to vaudeville performances, where Jerry decided that he, too, wanted to make people laugh. He studied drama at Syracuse University, where a charismatic professor inspired Jerry to believe that he could achieve his dream and become a successful actor. After Syracuse, Jerry returned to New York to begin a life in the theater.

Jerry soon met Anne Meara. Even before he fell in love with her, he knew she was a remarkable person. At first they encouraged each other in their separate performances, but eventually they began doing a comedy act in the coffeehouses of New York's Greenwich Village. They created a brilliantly successful act with two characters who were exaggerated versions of themselves. Before long, they were regulars on *The Ed Sullivan Show*, the most popular television program of the day. Stiller and Meara was a smash hit.

But Jerry's first love has always been the theater, and he writes with fondness and charm about his nearly fifty years in show business -- from summer stock to the early days of Joe Papp's pioneering Shakespeare in the Park, from his Broadway performance in *Hurlyburly* to his roles in such films as *The Taking of Pelham One Two Three*, *The Ritz*, *Seize the Day*, and *Hairspray*. He describes the genesis of the hugely successful Blue Nun radio commercials that he and Anne recorded, the first of many award-winning advertisements they would make together.

Jerry takes us inside his life offstage, describing with great candor his personal and professional neuroses, including some unusual experiences in therapy. He recounts hilarious stories about the Stiller family and tells wonderful tales about such friends and colleagues as Walter Matthau, Colleen Dewhurst, Mike Nichols, F. Murray Abraham, and Henny Youngman.

But most of all, he describes life with Anne, showing us his admiration for her as a performer and describing how she gave him the insight into acting that he'd long sought.

*Married to Laughter* is a great love story about two people who found their place in show business without ever losing sight of each other.

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