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Award-Winning Director Deanna Jent to Speak at Commencement 2014

April 4, 2014

BLOOMINGTON, Ill.— Award-winning director and playwright Deanna Jent, an Illinois Wesleyan graduate whose son Christopher is in the class of 2014, will give the address, "Story and Truth: The Dionysus Connection," during the University's **Commencement** ceremony at 1 p.m. on Sunday, May 4, on the Kemp Commencement Plaza at State Farm Hall.

Over 500 members of the class are expected to participate, one of the largest classes in University history.

In the event of inclement weather, the ceremony and reception will be moved to the Shirk Center for Athletics and Recreation. The ceremony will be **streamed online** and will be viewable afterward on demand.



Deanna Jent

Jent has received national acclaim for her recent production of *Falling*, which she wrote and directed. Inspired by her family experience with autism, the play was produced off-Broadway in the fall of 2012 and in Los Angeles in the fall of 2013. The script was published by the Dramatists Play Service, Inc. and, as of 2014, has been contracted for three productions, two in the United States and one in Brazil. *Falling* was nominated for Outstanding Play of 2013 by the Drama Desk Awards, which recognizes productions on Broadway, off-Broadway and off-off-Broadway in the same categories, and Outstanding New Play of 2012 by the Kevin Kline Awards, which were started in 2006 to honor achievements in professional theatre in the St. Louis area. **See an IWU Magazine feature.**

Most recently, Jent's production of *All is Calm: The Christmas Truce of 1914* earned five awards from the **St. Louis Theater Circle** in 2014, including Outstanding Director, Outstanding Ensemble and Outstanding Production of a Musical. She is a six-time nominee and 2012 winner of Outstanding Director of a Musical for *Godspell* in the Kevin Kline Awards. She also earned the 2007 Kevin Kline Award for Outstanding Production of a Play for *Standing on My Knees*.

Jent has composed stage adaptations of Jane Austen's *Pride and Prejudice* and C.S. Lewis' *Till We Have Faces*, which have been produced across the country. She has been published in multiple publications, including *Natural Bridge*, a journal of contemporary literature, and *The Riverfront Times*, a St. Louis publication that she worked for as a theatre critic for four years.

A magna cum laude graduate of Illinois Wesleyan with a bachelor of fine arts degree in theatre and a minor in English, Jent earned a doctorate in theatre from Northwestern University in 1989. She has taught at Fontbonne University in Clayton, Mo. since 1994, where she currently serves as a professor of theatre. In 2007, Jent founded Mustard Seed Theatre in St. Louis, a professional theatre company whose productions focus on questions of faith and social justice, for which she currently works as artistic director.

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