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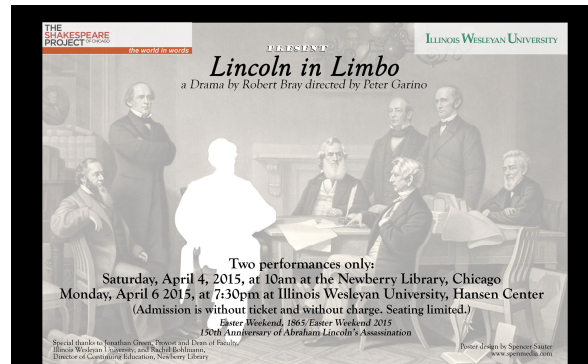
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## Bray's New Lincoln Play to be Staged in Chicago and at IWU

March 19, 2015

BLOOMINGTON, Ill.— A play that imagines the dream-world of Abraham Lincoln's mind from the time he was shot until he died the next morning will be staged April 6 at Illinois Wesleyan University.

Written by IWU Professor Emeritus and Lincoln scholar Robert W. Bray, *Lincoln in Limbo* will premiere April 4 at 10 a.m. at the Newberry Library in Chicago, followed by a performance April 6 at 7:30 p.m. at the Hansen Student Center at Illinois Wesleyan. Both are staged by the Shakespeare Project of Chicago, an equity company, and are free of charge and open to the public.



In what Bray calls “a remarkable coincidence,” the premiere of *Lincoln in Limbo* will occur 150 ‘Easters’ after Lincoln’s assassination on Easter weekend 1865.

Prior to the IWU staging, a conversation with Director Peter Garino, members of the cast, leading Lincoln scholar and author Michael Burlingame, author Guy Fraker, and Bray will be held April 6 at 2 p.m. at The Ames Library’s Beckman Auditorium.

Bray said *Lincoln in Limbo* is a “fantasy of imagination and emotion,” as if taking place in Lincoln’s shadow-mind between the time he was shot on Good Friday, April 14, 1865, and the time he was pronounced dead the next morning.

“Within the scenes, Lincoln is sometimes impersonating himself, sometimes having events control him, sometimes both at once,” said Bray. In the play, Lincoln is attempting to take care of “unfinished business” in his life. Although a work of fiction, *Lincoln in Limbo* features individuals who played prominent roles in Lincoln’s life, including Ann Rutledge, whom some historians believe to be Lincoln’s first love; Elizabeth Hobbs Keckley, a former slave who was Mary Todd Lincoln’s dressmaker and confidante; and Francis Bicknell Carpenter, painter-in-residence at the White House while working on his painting *The First Reading of the Emancipation Proclamation*.

Even though he is a professor of literature and not a historian, Bray’s Lincoln works has been widely praised. Bray is the author of *Reading with Lincoln* (Southern Illinois University Press, 2010), the winner of the 2010-11 Illinois State Historical Society’s Russell P. Strange Memorial Book Award and runner-up for the Lincoln Prize. Another Bray book, *Peter Cartwright: Legendary Frontier Preacher* (University of Illinois Press, 2005), examines the dynamic relationship between Cartwright, a Methodist revivalist, and Lincoln as political rivals in a Congressional race in 1846. Bray also co-wrote the play *Lincoln’s In Town!* with Bloomington playwright and journalist Nancy Steele Brokaw ’71. Bray retired in 2014 after teaching at IWU for 44 years.