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Kissing Frogs and Other Mysteries: World-Renowned Scholar to Speak on Fairy Tales

September 13, 2007

BLOOMINGTON, Ill. – *Once upon a time*. It is a phrase known around the world for its immediate ability to draw the reader into a world of wonder known as a fairy tale. From Little Red Riding Hood to Harry Potter, these fantastic tales stir countless imaginations.

On Thursday, September 27, internationally acclaimed author and scholar Jack Zipes will visit Illinois Wesleyan University to speak on the lessons that fairy tales hold today in his presentation, “Why We Love to Kiss Repulsive Frog Princes: Memetics and Fairy Tales,” at 4 p.m. in Beckman Auditorium of The Ames Library (1 Ames Plaza East, Bloomington). The event is free and open to the public.

Following Zipes’ presentation, he will stay for a reception in the lobby of Beckman Auditorium. On Friday, Zipes will talk with University faculty in a workshop, and speak at Professor of Russian Studies Marina Balina’s class, “Fairy Tales of the 20th Century.”

At the public presentation, Zipes will discuss how it is important to interpret fairy tales and folk tales in their social and historical context. “We read fairy tales from the time we are children, and it is often forgotten that fairy tales were created as more than children’s stories,” said Sonja Fritzsche, professor of German and Eastern European Studies at Illinois Wesleyan. “Dr. Zipes’ work expresses how these tales not only inspire hope, desires and creativity in us, but also how they educate us and shape our worldview.” Fritzsche was mentored by Zipes at the University of Minnesota, where he teaches German.

Studying and writing about fairy tales for more than 40 years, Zipes is the author of such books as *Breaking the Magic Spell: Radical Theories of Folk and Fairy Tales* (1979, 2002), *Fairy Tales and the Art of Subversion* (1983) and *When Dreams Came True: Classical Fairy Tales and Their Traditions* (1999). His studies discuss the cultural background of fairy tales and how they link to society, expounding on authors from Charles Perrault and Hans Christian Andersen to J.R.R. Tolkien and J.K. Rowling. According to Fritzsche, his translation of the tales of the Brothers Grimm has become the standard. His most recent publication is entitled *Why Fairy Tales Stick: The Evolution and Relevance of a Genre* (2006).

A 1959 graduate of Dartmouth College, Zipes received his master’s degree and doctorate in English and comparative literature from Columbia University in 1960 and 1965 respectively. He has conducted research in many countries including France, Germany, Japan and Italy, and was given an honorary degree by the University of Bologna.

Recognized for his contributions to literature, Zipes’ honors include a grant from the National Endowment for the Humanities, a McKnight Research Grant, a Guggenheim Fellowship and a Fulbright Fellowship. He is one of the founders of the Children’s Theatre of Minneapolis, which inspires underprivileged children to learn the art of storytelling.

Zipes’ visit is brought to Illinois Wesleyan through a joint effort of the International Studies Program’s Russian and Eastern European Studies concentration and Western European Studies concentration and the IWU German Club.



Jack Zipes