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Hamilton's Jeremy McCarter to Speak at Founders' Day Convocation

Feb. 5, 2018

BLOOMINGTON, Ill.— Known to devout fans of the musical *Hamilton* as the man who co-authored *Hamilton: The Revolution*, Jeremy McCarter hopes his words will inspire another generation to rise up and fight for American ideals.

McCarter will give the keynote speech at Illinois Wesleyan University's Founders' Day Convocation on Feb. 21 at 11 a.m. in Presser Hall's Westbrook Auditorium (1210 N. Park St., Bloomington). The event will mark the 168th anniversary of IWU's founding, and is free and open to the public. Founders' Day honors the 30 civic and religious leaders who came together in 1850 to establish "an Institution of learning of Collegiate grade."

McCarter studied history at Harvard, and soon after, wrote several columns about culture and politics for the *New York* magazine, *Newsweek* and *The New York Times*. He went on to work with the Public Theater in New York City, which was the place where *Hamilton* made its off-Broadway debut. During his five years with the theater, he helped create and organize The Public Forum, a series that gives audiences the chance to engage in panel discussions with the theater's creative minds about the themes and ideas of their shows. McCarter made an arrangement to put his friend, *Hamilton* creator Lin-Manuel Miranda, in touch with the theater, and the two of them watched *Hamilton* launch into the cultural success that it is today.

Using the narrative structure of the musical itself as a guideline, Miranda and McCarter joined forces to document how *Hamilton's* impact as a cultural phenomenon in a tense political climate has birthed a kind of modern-day revolution in and of itself. Their book, *Hamilton: The Revolution* (popularly referred to as the Hamiltome), received the Goodreads Choice Awards for Best Nonfiction in 2016 and became a *New York Times* No. 1 Bestseller.

Through *Hamilton's* impact, not just as a musical but as a means of stirring up social discussion about race and immigration, McCarter witnessed firsthand the power that art can have on national discourse. After moving to Chicago with his wife and daughter two years ago, McCarter set out to continue that kind of discussion through his new production company, the Make Believe Association. A Chicago-based nonprofit, its purpose is to present high-end readings of plays themed around current social problems, with a diverse cast of Chicago actors including Cheryl Lynn Bruce, Miguel Cervantes and Peter Sagal. It aims to create an inclusive, democratic space by providing all tickets at no charge and inviting the audience after the show to collectively discuss how messages from these plays still matter in today's world. According to their website, McCarter's goal in forming the company is to "find a way to share great stories and try to get a feel for the way they affect the world."

In keeping with this idea, McCarter's 2017 nonfiction book *Young Radicals* shares the story of how a handful of young American revolutionaries took their shot at creating a positive effect in their country during the World War I era. The novel, which draws from six years of McCarter's extensive archival research, forays into the lives of five young men and women of various backgrounds, each with bright hopes for the future despite the looming threat of a war that would soon turn the world upside down. Each used their voices to fight for integral American values, such as women's rights and freedom of speech, even as the chaos and bloodshed of the Great War would have them abandon their vision of an ideal America. "A big argument of the book," McCarter explained in an interview with *Entertainment Weekly*, "is that we inherit the ideals of the 'young radicals' and the legacies of their struggles so we can build on them. The point is to do better than they did."

McCarter's address at IWU complements the University's annual intellectual theme, [The Evolution of Revolution](#).



Jeremy McCarter