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Internationally Renowned Director to Speak on Campus

Rachel Hatch
Illinois Wesleyan University

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October 7, 2008

Contact: Rachel Hatch, (309) 556-3960

Internationally Renowned Director to Speak on Campus

BLOOMINGTON, Ill. – Award-winning director Rainer Simon will make Illinois Wesleyan University one of the stops on his national tour. Simon will speak on campus at 4 p.m., Monday, Oct. 20, at Beckman Auditorium in The Ames Library (1 Ames East, Bloomington).

Long a celebrated figure in Germany, Simon's 1984 film *The Woman and the Stranger* took home the coveted Golden Bear Award at the Berlin International Film Festival, one of the largest film festivals in the world. He was also nominated for a Golden St. George Award, the highest honor at the Moscow Film Festival, for his 1981 drama *Jadup and Boel*. The film, which centers around events in a small, German town after World War II, was deemed too controversial for viewing in East Germany, and was not released in his home country until 1989.

"We're very excited to bring Rainer Simon to campus on this national tour," said Sonja Fritzsche, associate professor of German and Eastern European Studies and co-chair of the Modern and Classical Language and Literatures at Illinois Wesleyan. "His talent is demonstrated by the fact that he has managed to continue his career successfully after the reunification of Germany in 1990. Few in East Germany's film industry have been able to make the transition from one system to the next and continue to make films."

Simon's visit is sponsored by the University's Department of Modern and Classical Language and Literatures, Russian and Eastern European Studies, and the German Club. Along with speaking at Beckman, Simon will address several University classes.

Three of his films will be screened on campus prior to his talk:

Wednesday, Oct. 15: *Till Eulenspiegel* (East Germany, 1975) at 7 p.m. in Buck Memorial Library, Room 108 (210 E. University Ave., Bloomington).

Thursday, Oct. 16: *The Woman and the Stranger* (East Germany, 1984) at 7 p.m. in Beckman Auditorium, The Ames Library.

Sunday, Oct. 19: *The Call of Fayu Ujmu* (documentary on Ecuador, 2002) at 7 p.m. in Beckman Auditorium, The Ames Library.

Simon started his career at the East German DEFA film studios in 1965, working as an assistant director under Ralf Kirsten (*The Lost Angel*, 1966) and Konrad Wolf (*I Was Nineteen*, 1967). He made his directing debut in 1968, with the children's film *How to Marry a King*. His major films include: *Till Eulenspiegel* (1975), based on a film script by Christa and Gerhard Wolf; *The Airship* (1983); *The Woman and the Stranger* (1984) and *Jadup and Boel* (1981).

Since shooting *The Ascent of the Chimborazo* (1989) in Ecuador, Simon's work has focused on the life and culture of the indigenous people of Ecuador. In 1994's *The Colors of Tigua* (*Die Farben von Tigua*), Simon highlighted the celebrations, traditions and daily life of the Quichua Indians of the Ecuadorian Andies, exploring how pre-Columbian myths blend with Christian influences. Also known as a documentarist, writer and photographer, Simon now teaches film workshops for young filmmakers in Ecuador.

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