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Illinois Wesleyan University's Theatre Season Commences with *RAGS*

BLOOMINGTON, Ill. – Illinois Wesleyan University's McPherson Theatre opens this year's season with *RAGS*, a musical by Joseph Stein (book), Charles Strouse (music), and Stephen Schwartz (lyrics). The musical will run from Tuesday, Oct. 7, through Sunday, Oct. 12, at 8 p.m. on Tuesday through Saturday and 2 p.m. on Sunday.

Other shows to be performed this season include: *Our Country's Good*, a play by Timberlake Wertenbaker, Nov. 18-23; *Dance Concert 2003*, Jan. 27-31; *Hamletmachine*, a play by Heiner Muller, Feb. 24-29; and *As You Like It*, a Shakespearian comedy, April 13-18. All performances will be at the McPherson Theatre, 2 Ames Plaza East, Bloomington.

RAGS is the story of a naïve Russian immigrant's arrival at Ellis Island in search of her husband, who has preceded her and her young son to America. When they are reunited, she discovers the endangerment of her ethnic culture in the face of assimilation.

According to the *New York Post*, "There is a grand and epic quality to *RAGS*, reflected in the high seriousness of Charles Strouse's ambitious score, the nimble passion of Stephen Schwartz's lyrics, and the very scope of Joseph Stein's sweepingly panoramic story."

RAGS had a disastrous run on Broadway in 1986, closing after only four performances. After many revisions, it was transformed into a moving saga of greed, power, strength, and love. The final version of the musical enjoyed a successful run at the Walnut Street Theatre in Philadelphia, convincing critics of its merit.

The Illinois Wesleyan School of Theatre Arts selected *RAGS* for this season because, according to Tom Ossowski, assistant professor of theatre arts and director of the musical, the show is "a great piece for actors, and the music is unbelievably beautiful."

"*RAGS* is about the universal idea of having goals and how to move forward to build a new life," Ossowski said.

Season tickets can be purchased in two packages. Package #1 is \$24 and entitles the patron to one ticket for each production on a Tuesday, Wednesday, Thursday or Sunday performance. Package #2 is \$32 and entitles the patron to one ticket for each production on any night including a Friday or Saturday performance.

Season ticket holders receive priority seating, guaranteed seating, and easy ticket exchange, and tickets can be held at the box office for your convenience.

Individual tickets for Tuesday-Thursday performances are \$6 for adults and \$5 for senior citizens. Tickets for Friday and Saturday performances are \$8 for adults and \$7 for senior citizens. The cost is \$1 for students with an IWU or ISU ID.

Tickets may be reserved in advance by calling the McPherson Theatre Box Office at (309) 556-3232, and may also be purchased at the door. The Box Office also handles requests for season tickets.