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Media Advisory

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February 17, 2003

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Media Advisory

Event: The Illinois Wesleyan University School of Theatre Arts in conjunction with the Women's Studies Program will host a talk by Lisa Merrill, professor of speech communication and rhetorical studies at Hofstra University, N.Y.

Date: Feb. 25 (Tuesday)

Time: 4 p.m.

Admission: Free and open to the public

Location: McPherson Theatre, 2 Ames Plaza East, Bloomington

Background: Merrill's talk will focus on the life of playwright Caryl Churchill and will be given prior to the opening of Churchill's play *Fen*, which will be performed at Illinois Wesleyan's McPherson Theatre Feb. 25-March 2.

In addition to being professor of speech communication and rhetorical studies at Hofstra University, Merrill is currently a visiting professor of performance studies at Northwestern University, Evanston, Ill. Her ongoing research and publications are in the fields of performance studies, American studies, Victorian studies and women's studies.

Merrill's critical biography of 19th century actress Charlotte Cushman, *When Romeo was a Woman: Charlotte Cushman and Her Circle of Female Spectators*, was recently awarded the Joe A. Callaway Prize for Best Book in Theatre or Drama and the Peter Herman Literary Award. She also is the recipient of the 2002 Lilla A. Heston Award for Outstanding Scholarship in Interpretation and Performance Studies.

A well-known playwright born in London in 1938, Churchill grew up in England and Canada. She wrote her first play *Downstairs* while attending Oxford University. It was first staged in 1958 and won an award at the National Union of Students Drama Festival.

Churchill served as resident dramatist at the Royal Court Theatre from 1974-75. During the 1970s and 1980s, she also collaborated with several theatre companies including Joint Stock, an organization dedicated to the collective creation of theatrical work and Monstrous Regiment, a feminist theatre union.

Contact:

For more information, contact Sara Freeman, IWU professor of theatre history, at 309/556-3816 or Danielle Drogos, publicity coordinator for the IWU School of Theatre Arts, at 309/556-3442.