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April 15, 1996

Contact: Bob Aaron, 309/556-3181

**Veteran TV, Film, Broadway Actor**

**IWU Grad, James Sutorius, to Perform**

**In "A Thousand Clowns" at Illinois Wesleyan in July**

*Composite  
Locals  
Entertainment*

BLOOMINGTON, Ill.--He's been seen snooping around with Jessica Fletcher on "Murder, She Wrote." He's also been in courtrooms with Ben Matlock. He joined Oscar-winner Burt Lancaster in the Ross Perot-inspired Iran hostage-rescue mission, "On Wings of Eagles," and he was there when U.S. astronauts went to the moon in "Space," a TV movie based on James Michener's novel.

Now, James Sutorius, a 1967 Illinois Wesleyan University graduate, will bring his acting talent to the stage of IWU's McPherson Theatre this summer for 14 performances of Herb Gardner's comedy-drama, "A Thousand Clowns."

"We're very pleased that James Sutorius will be with us this summer," said Jared Brown, professor and director of IWU's School of Theatre Arts and director of "A Thousand Clowns." "We began our guest artist series last summer with John Randolph in Neil Simon's 'Broadway Bound' and James will help us continue that success with 'A Thousand Clowns.'"

Sutorius has appeared on Broadway and in Los Angeles in another Herb Gardner play, "Conversations with My Father." In Los Angeles, he co-starred with Tony Award-winning Best Actor Judd Hirsch, well-known for his role on the popular sitcom, "Taxi."

### **Ticket Information**

Performances of "A Thousand Clowns" are scheduled for July 8, 10, 11, 12, 13, 15, 17, 18, 19, 20, 24, 25, 26, and 27.

Individual tickets are \$10; tickets for children and senior citizens are \$9.

Season tickets for two IWU summer productions are \$18. The other play is Leonard Gershe's "Butterflies Are Free," which will be staged June 14, 15, 20, 21, 22, 23, 27, 28, and 29 at McPherson Theatre and will be directed by John Ficca, IWU professor of theatre arts.

For ticket information, contact: McPherson Theatre Box Office, 304 E. Graham St., Bloomington or call 309/556-3232. Box office hours are: 12:30-5 p.m., Monday, Wednesday-Friday and 12:30-4 p.m., Tuesday.

### **"A Thousand Clowns"**

Sutorius is featured in "A Thousand Clowns" as Murray, a jobless New York writer for a children's TV show, who is raising his 12-year-old nephew. The play explores their relationship and travails with the Bureau of Child Welfare, which wants to take away the youngster from Murray, who is viewed as charming and witty, but

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irresponsible and jobless. The youngster is portrayed as the adult in the relationship.

"A complication develops in the play," Brown explained, "when one of the two social workers on the case-- a young woman on her first job--falls in love with Murray. She tries to instill a 'little' more responsibility in Murray, along with the boy."

The play is appealing, according to Brown, because it has "good humor and a serious theme. It is the type of comedy that attracts me because underlying its humor is a meaningful story and appealing characters, just like our production of 'Broadway Bound' last summer. This comedy does more than just tickle your funny bone."

As a professor and director, Brown sees many benefits of having professional actors like Sutorius join IWU productions.

"Actors like James Sutorius," Brown said, "bring extensive professional experience and knowledge. They expose our students--cast and stage crew--to a professional point of view. They also can share with our students who want to go into the theatre insights about the profession."

By bringing professional actors to IWU's summer theatre program, Brown said, we're trying to do something significant for Bloomington-Normal. "It's good," Brown added, "for the public, our students, and the university."

Rehearsals will begin June 15.

Joining Sutorius in cast of "A Thousand Clowns" are two IWU students: Karen LaShelle, a sophomore theatre major from Round Rock, Texas, and Melanie Keller, a junior theatre major from Park Ridge, Ill. Rounding out the cast are Rhys Lovell, a 1987 IWU graduate who appeared last summer in "Broadway Bound," and Ronald Zielinski, a local performer.

A film version of "A Thousand Clowns" was made in 1965, starring Jason Robards and Martin Balsam, who won an Academy Award for Best Supporting Actor.

### **Sutorius' Background**

Sutorius, 51, was born in Euclid, Ohio. He grew up in Wheaton, Ill., graduating from Wheaton High School, where he appeared in the Drama Club's production of "The Desperate Hours."

His first key acting role at IWU was a portrayal of Hamlet, a role he reprised a decade later at the famed Cleveland Play House, receiving rave reviews.

After earning a bachelor of fine arts degree at IWU, where he majored in drama, Sutorius went to the Academy of Dramatic Art in Rochester, Mich., a classical acting program styled after London's Royal Academy.

Engagements at regional repertory companies--including Michigan's Meadowbrook Theatre and the Asolo in Florida--led Sutorius to New York City, where his early stage credits included "The Changing Room" on Broadway and "Hamlet" for the New York Shakespeare Festival.

Television appearances followed on hit series like "Kojak" (with Telly Savalas), "Cannon" (with William

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Conrad), and "The Bob Crane Show," where he was a regular cast member. In 1977, he starred as "New York Forum" investigative reporter Mike Andros in the CBS television series, "The Andros Targets," loosely based on New York *Times* reporter Nicholas Gage. Sutorius had recurring roles on popular series, such as "St. Elsewhere" and "Dynasty," and daytime dramas, including "Edge of Night" and "Another World."

He has appeared on numerous television series, including: "Family Ties" (with Michael J. Fox), "T.J. Hooker" (with William Shatner), "Call to Glory," "Simon & Simon," "Hardcastle & McCormick," "L.A. Law," "Quantum Leap," "In the Heat of the Night" (with Carroll O'Connor), and "Tour of Duty."

Sutorius also has won roles in many movies of the week, including: "A Perfect Tribute" (with Jason Robards), "Murder in Paradise," "Christine Cromwell," "Nurses on the Line," "Frogmen," "A Whisper Kills," "False Witness," "A Death in Canaan," "Skokie" (with Danny Kaye), "A Question of Love" (with Jane Alexander, Gena Rowlands), "Siege," and "The Long Journey Home."

His big screen credits, include: "Cruising" (1980), "I'm Dancing as Fast as I Can" (1981), and "Windy City" (1984).

On stage, Sutorius starred as Ken Harrison, the heroic victim, in the U.S. premiere of "Whose Life Is It Anyway?" at the Actors Theatre of Louisville. He also has appeared in many regional productions, including: "One Flew Over the Cuckoo's Nest" (StageWest, Mass.), "The Glass Menagerie" (Berkshire Theatre Festival), "Other People's Money" (GeVa, Rochester), and "The Crucible" (South Coast Repertory, Calif.).

#### **Sutorius and IWU Professor John Ficca**

Sutorius was interviewed for a profile of John Ficca, an IWU professor of theatre arts who joined the faculty in 1956, which appeared in the spring, 1994, edition of *Illinois Wesleyan University Magazine*. The article, written by IWU Director of News Services Stew Salowitz, appeared shortly after Sutorius wrapped up a three-month Los Angeles run of the play "Conversations with My Father," including a performance attended by IWU President Minor Myers, jr., and about 40 IWU alumni living in southern California.

"I have great love and affection for John Ficca," Sutorius said. "He was very instrumental in getting me started off in the business on the right foot with the right values. He is so passionate about and committed to his work, it made me passionate and committed also.

"John made sure his students knew that, in order to be successful in this difficult business," Sutorius added, "they could not have a casual attitude about it. A tough but fair teacher, he attempted to get students to take the business seriously and have a discipline about their craft. That advice and teaching has paid off immeasurably for me."

IWU, founded in 1850, enrolls about 1,850 students in a College of Liberal Arts, College of Fine Arts, and a four-year professional School of Nursing. A \$15 million athletics and recreation center opened in the fall of 1994; and a \$25 million science building opened in the fall of 1995. The Carnegie Commission for the Advancement of

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Teaching promoted Illinois Wesleyan to a "Baccalaureate I" institution in 1994, a classification that places it among 161 highly selective National Liberal Arts Colleges in the annual *U.S. News & World Report* rankings. *Barron's Profiles of American Colleges*, another respected college guide, rated IWU "highly competitive (+)" in its latest edition.