



Winter 2-6-1998

Dateline: Bloomington Producer/Writer/Chef Ismail Merchant to Keynote Founders' Day

Sherry Wallace
Illinois Wesleyan University

Follow this and additional works at: <https://digitalcommons.iwu.edu/news>

Recommended Citation

Wallace, Sherry, "Dateline: Bloomington Producer/Writer/Chef Ismail Merchant to Keynote Founders' Day" (1998). *News and Events*. 6920.
<https://digitalcommons.iwu.edu/news/6920>

This Article is protected by copyright and/or related rights. It has been brought to you by Digital Commons @ IWU with permission from the rights-holder(s). You are free to use this material in any way that is permitted by the copyright and related rights legislation that applies to your use. For other uses you need to obtain permission from the rights-holder(s) directly, unless additional rights are indicated by a Creative Commons license in the record and/ or on the work itself. This material has been accepted for inclusion by faculty at Illinois Wesleyan University. For more information, please contact digitalcommons@iwu.edu.

©Copyright is owned by the author of this document.

February 6, 1998

Contact: Sherry Wallace, 309/556-3181
or Spencer Sauter 309/454-5686

Dateline: Bloomington

Producer/Writer/Chef Ismail Merchant to Keynote Founders' Day Convocation at Illinois Wesleyan University, Feb. 11

*Cent III
Chgo
Entertainment*

BLOOMINGTON, Ill.--He's not only a film producer with 40 feature length films to his credit, but also a writer, director, restaurateur and gourmet cook! While his name may not be a household word, his production company is renowned for its artful, visually sumptuous, literary movies.

Ismail Merchant comes to Illinois Wesleyan University to receive an honorary degree, Doctor of Humane Letters, at the Founders' Day Convocation, February 11, at 11 a.m. in Presser Hall, Westbrook Auditorium. Merchant's whirlwind visit includes preparing a variety of Indian dishes for Illinois Wesleyan students dining in IWU's Bertholf Commons on Feb. 10, as well as meeting with theatre arts students and faculty. On the following day, he will hold a press conference and give an address titled "A Man With A View," at the convocation, which is free and open to the public.

As part of the Merchant Ivory team along with director James Ivory and writer Ruth Prawer Jhabvala, Ismail Merchant has produced films for 35 years that have become known as much for their slight budgets as they have for their beautiful "look." The team has found a way to adapt literature to film using works like Henry James' "The Bostonians (1984)," E.M. Forster's "A Room with a View (1986)," and "Howards End (1992)," and Kazuo Ishiguro's, "Remains of the Day (1993)," that are visually impeccable historic reconstructions, appeal to a wide audience, and don't cost a fortune to make.

Merchant was born on December 25, 1936 in Bombay, India. He was educated at St. Xavier's University, Bombay, and received a Master's Degree in business administration at New York University. He met James Ivory in 1960 when Merchant was 24 and Ivory 32. At the time Merchant had co-produced one film, an Oscar-nominated 1960 short, "The Creation of Woman." They formed Merchant Ivory Productions soon after they met and their initial film, "The Householder (1963)," was the first film made in

India to be distributed worldwide by a major American company, Columbia Pictures.

Merchant Ivory was attracted to India in the early 1960s for many reasons, not the least of which was the opportunity to finance its movies with frozen rupee accounts of major American distributors. These accounts contained distribution income which the Indian government would not allow to be repatriated, but which could be used to make films in India. "Shakespeare Wallah (1966), " "The Guru (1969)," and "Bombay Talkie (1970)," were all in some way funded by a major American film distributor.

Since those early days, Merchant Ivory has flourished, producing films worldwide for nearly forty years. "Roseland (1977)," "The Europeans (1979)," "Quartet (1981)," "Heat and Dust (1983), " "Maurice (1987), " "Mr. and Mrs. Bridge (1990)," and "Surviving Picasso (1996)," are but a few of its successful collaborations.

Merchant Ivory has also worked with an extraordinary number of fine actors through the years including Isabelle Adjani, Helena Bonham Carter, Julie Christie, Denholm Elliott, Anthony Hopkins, Ben Kingsley, Daniel Day Lewis, Jeanne Moreau, Paul Newman, Vanessa Redgrave, Christopher Reeve, Maggie Smith, Jessica Tandy, Emma Thompson, Joanne Woodward, and many, many others. Merchant Ivory just finished producing its 40th film--"A Soldier's Daughter Never Cries." The film starring Kris Kristofferson and Barbara Hershey, is based on the novel by Kaylie Jones.

While Merchant is best known as a film producer, he has also directed two television features--a short titled "Mahatma and the Mad Boy" and a full-length television feature, "The Courtesans Of Bombay"--made for Britain's Channel Four, and has directed feature length films including "In Custody (1993)" and "The Proprietor (1996)."

Merchant is also a gourmet cook, restaurateur, and author of two cookbooks--"Ismail Merchant's Indian Cuisine (1986)" and "Ismail Merchant's Passionate Meals: The New Indian Cuisine For Fearless Cooks and Adventurous Eaters (1994)"--as well as three other books about movies and food.

On Monday, Feb. 10, from 5:30 p.m. - 6:30 p.m. Merchant, with a little help from IWU Chef Craig Chojnacki, will prepare five recipes from his "Passionate Meals" cookbook "Gobi Tamatar (Stewed Cauliflower

and Tomatoes), Nimbu Masoor Dal (Lemon Lentils), Basmati Pullao (Basmati Pilaf), Peela Chaaval (Yellow Turmeric Rice), and Tandoori Murgh Dan (a chicken dish made for his friend Dan Rose)" for any adventurous Illinois Wesleyan student dining in IWU's Bertholf Commons that evening. Even though some students probably won't have adventurous palates, they'll certainly be intrigued with the chance to chat with the famed film producer, author, and chef du jour.

Editor's Note: Ismail Merchant will be available to meet with the news media at 10:15 a.m., Feb. 11, in McPherson Theatre, 304 E. Graham St., Bloomington.