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FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE:

EIU GRAD FINALIST IN ACTING COMPETITION

CHARLESTON, IL--Eastern Illinois University theatre arts graduate Robert Charles Caisley was adjudicated one of two Irene Ryan acting finalists at the recent American College Theatre Festival five-state regional competition at Southern Illinois University-Carbondale.

More than 900 actors competed for Irene Ryan acting awards and an opportunity to represent their region in Washington D.C. in April.

Irene Ryan finalists hailed from Illinois, Indiana, Ohio, Michigan and Wisconsin. Each year, one or two participants are selected from 16 regions. These winners are awarded \$1,000 scholarships and an all expenses paid trip to Washington for the national competition where two participants will receive awards of \$5,000 each.

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The Irene Ryan Scholarship Award for Excellence in Acting provides recognition, honor and financial assistance to outstanding student performers wishing to pursue further education. The Irene Ryan Foundation was created by Ryan who is probably best known for her role as Grannie in "The Beverly Hillbillies." She also played the role of Grannie in Pippen on Broadway where she passed away during a memorable performance. The awards offered as her memorial are for educated working actors.

Two of the national festival finalists will be awarded fellowships to attend the Shenandoah Valley Playwrights Retreat in Staunton, Virginia, where they will perform as members of the retreat's acting company. One national finalist will be selected to receive a fellowship to attend the Chautauqua Theatre School where he or she will participate in the Chautauqua Theatre School's Conservatory Theatre Company.

During his senior year at Eastern, Caisley's first full-length play, Once More Unto the Breach, was selected by the theatre arts department as a season offering. In that same year, the play was published by Aran Press in Louisville, Kentucky. Caisley also wrote an original children's play, "The Magic Of Being Me," which the department toured successfully in Spring 1990.

Since leaving Eastern in 1990, Caisley has matriculated for an MFA at Illinois State University in directing. He teaches acting and continues work as a playwright. ISU has produced two of his adapted works, Prometheus and Christmas Carol. For the last two summer seasons, he has been a member of the Illinois Shakespeare Festival's acting company. In October of last year, he published an acting scenes text and a slim volume of poetry.

In a 1989 Times Courier interview, Caisley said, "It's funny because when I was 16 years old, I was diagnosed with Tourette's Syndrome (a disease characterized by involuntary utterances) and the neurologist always said that whatever kind of career he takes, he'll always take a backstage type of career. So every now and then I send him a letter saying, 'Yeah, I'm in another show.' But I think the theatre is what makes me able to overcome the symptoms because of the required concentration of every aspect of being in-the-moment."