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Winthrop University

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Novel by Modern Language Professor Explores Ida Rubinstein's Artistic Life

Quick Facts

- Translated in French and published by Editions Salvator, the novel is due in bookstores in France this month.
- The book, "Ida Rubinstein; plus haut, toujours plus haut" which means "the novel of an artist's life," explores her artistic passion, leading to a mystic awakening.

*Ida Rubinstein*

ROCK HILL, S.C. – A new novel by Winthrop faculty member [Donald Friedman](#) gives voice to [Ida Rubinstein](#), who transformed the theatrical life in France between the world wars.

Translated in French and published by [Editions Salvator](#), it is due in bookstores in France this month. Rubinstein (1883-1960), a Russian dancer, collaborated with the greatest composers, [Debussy](#), [Ravel](#), [Stravinsky](#) and [Honegger](#), and with writers of equal stature, including [D'Annunzio](#), [Gide](#) and [Claudel](#).

Friedman said the novel outlines how Rubinstein created her own ritual theatre, combining dance and speech. She is known for her beauty, mimetic powers and wealth which allowed her to commission numerous productions for more than 30 years.

The book, "[Ida Rubinstein; le Roman de la vie d'une artiste](#)" which means "the novel of an artist's life," explores her artistic passion, leading to a mystic awakening. During the last seven years of her life, she was drawn to contemplative practices and interior prayer, guided by the prior of the Abbey of Citeaux.

The cover painting is a 1911 portrait of the actress by [Romaine Brooks](#). The publication of the English original also is planned.

Friedman has written widely on [Belgian Francophone literature](#) and has been active as a literary translator, offering a pioneering [Anthology of Belgian Symbolist Poetry](#), as well as works by Paul Willems. His translation of Marguerite Yourcenar's oneiric autobiography, [Dreams and Destinies](#) (St. Martin's Press), was widely reviewed in the national press.

He is founding editor of the Belgian Francophone Library at Peter Lang, an expansive series of monographs, translations, and critical studies that serves as a vital international scholarly forum. Named as Winthrop's [Distinguished Professor](#) in 2000, he then received the [Lauréat des Lettres](#), prix du rayonnement du livre, from the Ministry of Culture, French Community of Belgium. In 2008, he received [Belgium's decoration Officier de l'Ordre de Léopold](#) in recognition of literary and cultural contributions.

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