2012 Eugene O’Neill Festival Features Pear Avenue Theatre Production of A Moon for the Misbegotten

A Moon for the Misbegotten. O’Neill’s final play, written at Tao House in the early 1940s, will be the centerpiece of the 13th annual Eugene O’Neill Festival. Sponsored by the Eugene O’Neill Foundation, in partnership with the National Park Service, the play will be performed in the Old Barn at Tao House by the Pear Avenue Theatre, Mountain View—September 27 to 30.

Like its predecessor, Long Day’s Journey into Night, A Moon for the Misbegotten is autobiographical. In it, O’Neill extends a benediction to his estranged brother Jamie through one of his most memorable characters, Josie Hogan. The 1973 revival, starring Jason Robards, Jr. and Colleen Dewhurst, established Moon as one of O’Neill’s masterpieces.

The Festival production is directed by Jeanie K. Smith, featuring Susannah Greenwood and Kurt Gravenhorst in the roles of Josie Hogan and Jim Tyrone. Curtain for the Thursday, Friday, and Saturday performances is 8:00 pm; the Sunday matinee begins at 3:00. Admission is $35, which includes shuttle transportation to Tao House from the Museum of the San Ramon Valley in downtown Danville.

MAKE IT A 75TH BIRTHDAY PARTY FOR TAO HOUSE, SEPT 28-29!

Audiences for the Friday and Saturday evening performances of A Moon for the Misbegotten—September 28 and 29—are invited to attend a 75th anniversary fundraiser prior to the show to support the work of the Eugene O’Neill Foundation. Attendees will enjoy wine or beer, deli-boxed dinner, and desserts in the Tao House courtyard. Music from the late 30s and early 40s—popular music during the years when the O’Neills lived at Tao House—will be provided. In addition, Dan Cawthon, professor emeritus at Saint Mary’s College, will be on hand to present a short lecture on the play.

Admission to the Friday and Saturday evening festivities is $75, which includes priority seating for the performance of A Moon for the Misbegotten. Shuttle service from the Museum of the San Ramon Valley will be provided by the National Park Service at 6:00 pm.

Celebrating the 75th Anniversary of Tao House

13th Annual EUGENE O’NEILL FESTIVAL

Danville, CA  Sept. 7 - 30th

Ab, Wilderment! by Eugene O’Neill
Role Players Ensemble
September 7 - 22
The Village Theatre, Danville
www.danvilletheatro.com
See story, p.2

O’Neill’s Danville, 1937-1944
presented by former Danville
mayor, Beverly Lane
The Village Theatre, Danville
September 15, 10:00 a.m.
No admission charge.
See story, p.2

Tao House – Through Artists’ Eyes, Alamo-Danville
Artists’ Society Exhibit.
The Village Theatre Gallery
August 24 - September 22
Artists’ reception, August 25,
12:00-3:00 pm.
See story, p.3

A Moon for the Misbegotten
by Eugene O’Neill
Pear Avenue Theatre
The Old Barn, Tao House
September 27-29, 8:00 pm
September 30, 3:00 pm
See story, p.3

On Saturdays during the Festival, the National Park Service provides free shuttle service to Tao House for self-guided tours. The vans leave the Museum of the San Ramon Valley–205 Railroad Avenue, Danville–at 10:00 am, 12:00 & 2:00 pm

The Eugene O'Neill Festival is sponsored by the Eugene O’Neill Foundation, Tao House, the National Park Service, and the Town of Danville.
Ah, Wilderness! Slated by Role Players Ensemble for Eugene O’Neill Festival

In conjunction with the 2012 Eugene O’Neill Festival in Danville, the Role Players Ensemble will perform O’Neill’s only comedy, Ah, Wilderness!, at the Village Theatre, 233 Front Street, September 7 – 23.

Ah, Wilderness! is a warm-hearted, richly humorous look at life in small town America. Set in New London, Connecticut in 1906, O’Neill described the play as “the way I would have liked my boyhood to have been.” He uses all his insights into human relationships and motivations to craft the very real and funny foibles of the Miller family on a supposedly sleepy 4th of July weekend at the beginning of the 20th century.

Hailed as O’Neill’s only comedy, the play was first performed in 1933, featuring George M. Cohan in the role of the father. It has been translated into a musical, Take Me Along!, and two movies and has been frequently revived, once with Will Rogers. Jason Robards, Jr. and Colleen Dewhurst played the parents in the 1988 production celebrating the 100th anniversary of O’Neill’s birth.

The director, Eric Fraisher Hayes, will present a lecture on the play at the Danville Library on September 4 at 7:00 pm. Described as a “sneak peek” into the production, actors from the production will be on hand to perform a scene from the play, and the designers will reflect on the challenges of bringing the work to life.

Tickets are available at www.villagetheatreshows.com or at the Danville Community Center, 420 Front Street. Phone reservations at 925.314.3400.

O’Neill’s Danville: 1937 - 1944

When Eugene O’Neill and his wife Carlotta moved to Danville in 1937, the Nobel Prize-winning playwright wrote to a friend, “We really have an ideal home, with one of the most beautiful views I have ever seen—pure country with no taint of suburbia.” They built Tao House in Las Trampas Hills west of Danville—thinking it would be their “final harbor.”

Local historian and former Danville mayor Beverly Lane will describe “the way we were” when Eugene and Carlotta arrived in town. She is a long time member of the Eugene O’Neill Foundation, and a former president and has done considerable research on the O’Neills’ six-year tenure at Tao House. She will provide background on the O’Neill’s purchase of the Las Trampas property, the building of Tao House, and the couple’s relationship with their Danville neighbors.

The lecture will take place in the Village Theatre, 233 Front Street, on Saturday, September 15, at 10:00 am. There is no admission charge.

IN THE SPOTLIGHT.....


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Wedding bells rang out last week for Beth Wynstra and Brandon Armstrong, who tied the knot August 10 at a ceremony on the beach in Santa Barbara, Ca. Beth has contributed her many talents to several Foundation projects and is Secretary of the Eugene O’Neill Society. Her play Always, Gene has been performed twice by the O’Neill Foundation, and was staged by the Irish American Cultural Center in Chicago.

Beth and Brandon met at UC, Santa Barbara where both of them obtained their doctorate degrees. Brandon is currently doing post-doc research at Harvard and Beth is Visiting Assistant Professor of English at Babson College.
National Park Service Update
By Tom Leatherman, Superintendent

National Park Service Restorations Are Part of Tao House History

The theme of the Eugene O’Neill Festival this year celebrates the 75th anniversary of the original construction of Tao House in 1937, but that is only part of the story. When the National Park Service assumed responsibility for care and upkeep of the house in the 1980s, we began an extensive rehabilitation effort to return the house to its historic condition. Many alterations had been made to the house, and there was also significant deterioration of the building, requiring a significant investment in time and energy. As part of the festival, on September 22nd, a National Park Service ranger will provide a brief overview of this restoration effort through a photographic presentation and talk. This presentation will be given three times that day, coinciding with the arrival of the three shuttle trips that occur on Open Saturdays. During the festival we will also have artifacts from our museum collection, and the foundation’s collection, on special exhibit in the house. Catch a shuttle at 10:00, 12:00 or 2:00 at the Museum of the San Ramon Valley and visit the site to learn more about Tao House, the restoration effort, and the man who continues to inspire the world, Eugene O'Neill.

Remembering An Influential O’Neillian – Ted Mann (1924-2012) by Gary Schaub

One of the most influential arts leaders responsible for the resurgence of interest in Eugene O'Neill in the mid-19th century was Ted Mann – co-founder of New York’s Circle in the Square. He was a driving force in the rise of Off-Broadway theatre in the 1950s. Mann died in New York in late February at age 87.

The revival of The Iceman Cometh starring Jason Robards in 1956 is seen as a landmark production in events in re-evaluating O’Neill’s legacy, and bringing renewed attention to the Nobel Prize playwright’s later works – many written in Danville at Tao House during O’Neill’s residency from 1937-1944. Circle in the Square produced the American premiere of A Long Days Journey into Night on Broadway in 1957.

“The American theatre lost a true friend of O’Neill, and a guiding force in the American Theatre with the passing of Ted Mann,” said Gary De Adey, the O’Neill Foundation’s president. “We were honored to have his participation many times at events over the years at Tao House.”

Ted Mann was presented with the distinguished Tao House Award by the Eugene O’Neill Foundation in 1999. After service in World War II, Mann studied law and passed the New York bar exam, but never practiced law. Rather he was drawn to theatre, and teamed up with director Jose Quintero, first in Woodstock N.Y. Later the duo moved to Sheridan Square area in New York’s Greenwich Village and founded the Circle in the Square.

Early productions at Circle featured Robards, George C. Scott, Al Pacino, Jane Alexander, Colleen Dewhurst, and Geraldine Page, in respected productions of Summer and Smoke and Dark of the Moon, among many others.

Mann later teamed up with producer Paul Libin (also a Tao House Awardee). This led to an invitation in 1972 to move Circle in the Square to a new Broadway theatre on 50th Street, opening with Dewhurst in O’Neill’s Mourning Becomes Electra. Circle was awarded a special Tony Award in 1976 for 25 continuous years of quality productions. Over the years, Mann produced sixteen of Eugene O’Neill’s plays.

Mann’s memoir, “Journey in the Night: Creating a New American Theatre with Circle in the Square” was published in 2007.

Tao House - Through Artists Eyes

Accents, Uniqueness and Moods of O’Neill’s Danville Home

Tao House - Through Artists’ Eyes is the title of an exhibit by the Alamo-Danville Artists Society to be held in the Village Theatre Art Gallery, 233 Front Street, August 24th to September 24th. It is presented in collaboration with the Village Theatre Art Gallery and the Town of Danville.

The exhibit is planned to coincide with the Eugene O’Neill Festival, celebrating the 75th Anniversary of Tao House. Artists, photographers and sculptors will show works inspired by Eugene O’Neill and their visits to the house.

A reception for the artists will be held at the Gallery on August 25th, 12:00 - 3:00 pm.

Gallery hours are Wednesday – Friday from 1200 pm to 5:00 pm; Saturday: 11:00 am to 3:00 pm. The gallery is closed on Sundays.
Former Foundation Presidents Plan New Artist-in-Residence Program at Tao House in 2013

The Foundation Board announces the establishment of an Artist-in-Residence Program at Tao House to begin late 2013. Four of the former Foundation presidents are spearheading the campaign to raise the necessary funds for the startup program. The AIR is the lynchpin of the artistic program formulated by the founders of the Foundation.

By giving a donation, you can be instrumental in finally having individuals prosper in their artistic development by experiencing the creative energy at Tao House that so inspired Eugene O’Neill. Your help is essential!

Donations can be sent to the Eugene O’Neill Foundation, Tao House, P.O. Box 402, Danville, CA 94526 and specified for the AIR program.

Thank you,
The AIR Committee:
Linda Best,
Carol Sherrill
Wendy Cooper
Florence McAuley

SUPPORT THE FESTIVAL - SUPPORT THE FOUNDATION!

As the Eugene O’Neill Foundation celebrates the 75th Anniversary of Tao House, we reflect on the many ways we, in partnership with the National Park Service, promote the legacy of America’s first great playwright.

With the support of our members, we are able to produce Playwrights’ Theatre bringing to life the early works of O’Neill. We bring scores of high school students to Tao House in the spring and summer — free of charge — to participate in Student Days and the week-long O’Neill Studio Retreat. In addition, we maintain the largest O’Neill archival collection and scholar’s resource on the West Coast.

While we work closely with the National Park Service, we receive no direct financial support for our programs. We depend on community members to help make it happen.

We invite you to be “festive” with us on Tao House’s Diamond Jubilee by participating in the various events we’ve lined up. Won’t you also consider becoming a member of the Foundation? You can be a Crew Member for $35/yr.; or a Playwright’s Circle Member for $100. Other membership levels are also available.

It’s easy to join or renew. Go online to www.eugeneoneill.org and click the Memberships button on the home page. Your donation to the Foundation is needed and greatly appreciated.

FIFTH O’NEILL STUDIO RETREAT HELD AT TAO HOUSE IN JULY

From July 9–15, twenty-one writing and acting students from eight different Contra Costa high schools participated in the fifth O’Neill Studio Retreat, sponsored by the Eugene O’Neill Foundation in cooperation with the National Park Service. Under the guidance of professional playwright Ignacio Zulueza and equity actor Chad Deverman, the students spent six days developing their writing and acting skills preparing for a performance of their newly created works in the Old Barn at Tao House on the final afternoon of the retreat.

Student Playwrights

Photo by Tom Donahoe

Student actors rehearsing at O'Neill Studio Retreat

Photo by Tom Donahoe

Jack De Rieux, the VP for Education for the Foundation who designed the program, comments: “The audience was treated to plays that were at once provocative, surprising, and fresh. Although the plays broached a range of topics, from gaining independence to preserving love, their writing experiments with form brims over with wit and emotion. Most of all, their plays speak to what an inspiring place Tao House is, and provides us a peek into the magic O’Neill must have experienced during his time in the hills of Danville.”

Foundation board member Julie Millias was in charge of hospitality, assisted by Trudy McMahon, Carole Wynstra, Susan Jackson, Gary Schaub, Lynda Schembri, Barbara Grant, Merilyn Milam, Robin Taylor, Eric Fraisher Hayes, and Tom Donahoe.
DIAMOND JUBILEE OF TAO HOUSE
- EUGENE AND CARLOTTA O’NEILL’S “FINAL HARBOUR”
EXORCISM PERFORMED FOR O’NEILL SOCIETY MEMBERS ATTENDING ALA CONFERENCE IN SAN FRANCISCO

On May 27, the Eugene O’Neill Foundation, Tao House, and the National Park Service hosted members of the Eugene O’Neill Society to a staged-reading of Exorcism, directed by Foundation board member Dan Cawthon. The Eugene O’Neill Society members, attending the American Literature Association Conference in San Francisco, took advantage of their close proximity to Tao House and enjoyed the special performance of this recently discovered one-act play by Eugene O’Neill.

Bay Area actors Joel Roster and Rob Seitelman performed the roles of Ned Malloy and Jimmy Tomorrow, assisted by Jack De Rieux (Edward Malloy), Mark Jordan (Major Andrews) and Eric Fraisher Hayes (Nordstrom).

Following the performance in the Old Barn, audience members participated in a talkback with the actors and director, followed by a buffet dinner and drinks to ward off the cold wind and blustery weather. Jack De Rieux, the Foundation’s VP of Education, and actor/teacher Chad Deverman gave presentations about the various educational programs offered at Tao House in the spring and summer.