Playwrights' Theatre

O'NEILL'S MORE STATELY MANSIONS SLATED FOR STAGED READING AT THE MUSEUM OF THE SAN RAMON VALLEY, JANUARY 12 - 13

The Eugene O'Neill Foundation's Playwrights' Theatre will present a staged reading of More Stately Mansions at the Museum of the San Ramon Valley on Saturday, January 12 at 7:00 pm, and Sunday, January 13 at 2:00 pm. Eric Fraisher Hayes will direct. A post-show discussion will follow each performance.

Written by Eugene O'Neill when he lived at Tao House in Danville, More Stately Mansions is a sequel to A Touch of the Poet, also written at Tao House. Simon Hartford is a pawn in the battle between his wife (Sara Melody) and his mother (Deborah Hartford), to control him through love. Played out against the background of an industrial revolution, the struggle ultimately leads to tragedy and despair.

Like A Touch of the Poet, More Stately Mansions was to have been part of a nine-play cycle entitled A Tale of Possessor, Self-Dispossessed, a project that O'Neill abandoned before writing his masterpieces The Iceman Cometh, Long Day's Journey into Night, and A Moon for the Misbegotten.

O'Neill did not complete his rough-draft of the play, and didn't want it to be posthumously finished or produced. His widow, Carlotta Monterey O'Neill, ignored his wishes and arranged for the play to be performed by the Swedish Royal Dramatic Theatre. More Stately Mansions was the inaugural production of the Ahmanson Theatre, Los Angeles, where it opened April 12, 1967 with Ingrid Bergman, Colleen Dewhurst and Arthur Hill in the leading roles. The famed director Jose Quintero directed the same cast in a Broadway production that ran for 142 performances. Colleen Dewhurst was nominated for a Tony Award for Best Actress in a play.

Admission is $25. Tickets available at www.eugeneoneill.org, by phone at 925.820.1818, or at the door.

MEET ROBERT SEHR - NEW PRESIDENT OF THE EUGENE O'NEILL FOUNDATION

To get a real feel for Bob Sehr, President-elect of the Eugene O'Neill Foundation, you have to sit down with him and have a friendly chat. Bob likes to chat, and it's always interesting.

Bob Sehr will take over the reins of the Eugene O'Neill Foundation from Gary DeAtley for a two-year term beginning in mid-January.

As an attorney, based in Walnut Creek, Bob deals every day with estate and tax planning, probate and real estate law, along with corporate transfers and partnerships. He's past President of the Mt. Diablo Estate Planning Council, and an adjunct professor at Golden Gate and John F. Kennedy Universities where he has taught corporate taxation, as well as financial and estate planning. Bob studied both at Wabash College in Indiana, and at Yale Law School.

But, give him some time off, and you'll find a fellow ready to share great stories and experiences.

“I got drawn to Eugene O'Neill while in college,” says Sehr. “After playing a small role in a production of The Great God Brown, I found I wanted to know more about this Irish guy, and began reading some his other plays.”

Bob grew up in the eastern area of Indianapolis, and, in the O'Neill plays, he found he could relate very personally with people in his blue collar, hard-drinking Irish neighborhood. “My mom's father was born in Ireland, so the Irish-American characters in so many of the O'Neill plays were very familiar to me.”

In All God's Chillin' Got Wings, Bob recognized people and situations he grew up with, in the nearby African-American community. “I was happy to have the O'Neill Foundation produce All God's Chillin' as part of our annual Festival a few years back.”

Bob sees many opportunities ahead for the Eugene O'Neill Foundation. “I'm anxious to see the development of the Artist-in-Residence program,” says Sehr. “It will be a wonderful complement to our current educational and performance activities.”
AWARDS DINNER TO HONOR TWO FORMER BOARD MEMBERS AND THE LESHER FOUNDATION

The Board of Directors of the Foundation has chosen two individuals and one community foundation for recognition at the annual Awards dinner, to be held at the Crow Canyon Country Club on January 24. The Freeman Award will be presented to Carol Lea Jones of Diablo, and Thomas Donahoe of Walnut Creek for their valued volunteer help in promoting the legacy of America’s most notable playwright; the Dean and Margaret Lesher Foundation will be recognized with the “Partnership Award” for its multi-year financial support and encouragement of the O'Neill Foundation’s educational programs.

The Freeman Award, named for Herbert Freeman who served as chauffeur and “man of all work and friend” to Gene and Carlotta during their years at Tao House, is presented to volunteers who have tirelessly given of their time and talents to the Eugene O'Neill Foundation.

Carol Lea Jones served on the O'Neill Foundation Board beginning in 1979 as one of the leaders during the fledgling years of the Foundation. Before Tao House was open to the public Carol spearheaded and coordinated community volunteer and educational programs to bring awareness to O'Neill and his place in San Ramon Valley. Among these efforts in the late 1970’s and 1980’s were the O’Neill Auxiliaries in Rossmoor, Danville and San Ramon. Play readings were held and the Auxiliaries conducted fundraisers to help assure the preservation of Tao House. Through Carol’s stamina and vision, she helped shape the Eugene O'Neill Foundation’s efforts to reintroduce the area to Eugene O'Neill and his role in changing the face of the American theatre.

Thomas Donahoe served on the Foundation Board from 2004 to 2009. During this time he guided in the development of Eugene O'Neill Commemorative in Front Street Park in downtown Danville, working with artist Michael Manwaring on its design and fabrication, Student Days at Tao House and the O'Neill Studio Retreat and negotiating with the Town of Danville on its placement. The O'Neill Commemorative was dedicated opposite the Danville Library, in September 2005. For a dozen years, Tom has documented O’Neill Foundation programs and performances with his photographic expertise. “Tom’s work provides us with an important record of the Foundation’s work,” said Foundation President Gary DeAtley. “These, together with his determined vision for the O'Neill Commemorative, are important visible and tangible pieces of our history.”

All Foundation members are invited to join us in celebrating these well-deserving recipients. Tickets are $75; make your reservations by emailing taohouse@eugeneoneill.org or by calling 925.820.1818.

A Fond Farewell to Board Members - Dan Cawthon and Carole Wynstra

The Board of the Eugene O'Neill Foundation offers a special thanks to two long-time members -Dan Cawthon and Carole Wynstra--who are retiring from the Board of Directors at the end of 2012.

“The contributions that Dan Cawthon and Carole Wynstra have made to the O'Neill Foundation over the past two decades are most commendable,” said Board President Gary DeAtley. “Their talents and their commitments to the legacy of Eugene O'Neill have each, in their own way, moved the Foundation forward in a most positive way.”

Dan Cawthon has served on the Foundation Board for more than more than twenty years. He was Vice President for Programs for thirteen years, and served as Artistic Director of Playwrights’ Theatre, a position he assumed after the death of Travis Bogard in 1997, directing over a dozen productions for the Foundation. More recently, he served as Vice President of PR/Marketing for the O’Neill Foundation. Dan was the guiding light for the Eugene O'Neill Commemorative, dedicated in 2005 in downtown Danville. His course, “O'Neill 101”, attracted hundreds of O'Neill Festival participants. He created and produced two original Festival productions, including O'Neill: The Rhythms of His Soul (2003), and O'Neill: The Genius in His Soul (2007). Dan received the Artistic Award from the Foundation in 2010. He is professor emeritus and former chair of the Performing Arts Department at St. Mary's College in Moraga.

Carole Wynstra joined the Foundation Board in 1997, and has served in several leadership positions on the Foundation’s Executive Committee. She served as Foundation President in 2002-2004. Carole coordinated several fundraising events, and chaired the Eugene O'Neill Festival on three occasions. Carole played a central role in several other Foundation programs, including Student Days at Tao House, working on the O’Neill Commemorative project, and hosting the Foundation’s first Artist-in-Residence. Carole has been an active arts supporter for more than two decades, serving on the Walnut Creek Arts Commission, the Walnut Creek Library Foundation, and as president of the Diablo Theatre Company.
NEW RISERS INSTALLED IN THE OLD BARN AT TAO HOUSE

After nearly two decades of climbing and tripping over uneven wooden seating platforms in the Old Barn at the Eugene O'Neill National Historic Site, playgoers attending events in the New Year will find new, safe, metal risers.

As part of an upgrade plan developed in 2009, the National Park Service and the Eugene O’Neill Foundation have worked to implement this important piece of the plan. The new risers from the Wenger Corporation were installed in October and are ready to use.

“Flexibility and safety is what we were looking for,” says Park Superintendent Tom Leatherman. “The new risers will allow us to set up in various configurations for staging, but will also be easier to install and dismantle.”

Thanks to grants from the Dean and Margaret Lesher Foundation and the Western National Parks Association, NPS was able to acquire the new risers within their current budget.

“Not only are we grateful to both the Lesher Foundation and to the National Parks Association for recognizing this improvement to the Tao House experience, but our audiences are sure to have a safer and more comfortable time when attending events in the Old Barn,” stated Foundation President Gary DeAtley.

PLAYGROUND WRITERS HOSTED BY THE NPS AND FOUNDATION MEMBERS

For the fourth consecutive year, aspiring playwrights from around the Bay Area visited Tao House to learn more about Eugene O’Neill and the plays he wrote while living in Danville, 1937-1944. They are members of PlayGround, a San Francisco based organization dedicated to the development of new plays.

The group arrived at the house on Sunday, November 11, and were treated to a tour of the house by the National Park Service, a brief lecture on A Moon for the Misbegotten by board member, Dan Cawthon, and a picnic lunch at the pool, hosted by several Foundation members and the National Park Service staff.

The playwrights were then given three days to write a ten-page script based on the O’Neillian “prompt”—Haunted by the Past. From the 30 scripts submitted, six were chosen for staged readings by professional actors and directors at the Berkeley Repertory Theatre on November 19.

This year’s finalists were Robin Lynn Rodriguez, Amy Sass, Patricia Cotter, Cleavon Smith, Katie May, and Ruben Grijalva. It is anticipated that at least two of the plays will be presented by Playwrights’ Theatre in May.
ARTIST-IN-RESIDENCE PROGRAM IS DEVELPED BY FOUNDATION ADVISORY BOARD; FIRST “TAO HOUSE FELLOWS” PLANNED FOR 2013

In 2011 the Foundation Board of Directors charged a committee of the Foundation Advisory Board to delineate the parameters and guidelines for an artist-in-residence program at Tao House. The committee formulated the program based in large part on the earlier work by Travis Bogard. One of the original tenets of the Eugene O’Neill Foundation was the establishment of an AIR program at the site, which prompted Professor Bogard to interview luminaries of the theatre world. These distinguished persons concluded that a program would “provide emerging or established artists, scholars and critics of the performing or fine arts an opportunity to work in the solitude and quiet that was for Eugene O’Neill the creative atmosphere in which he produced his masterworks.” That beginning has led us to develop the program outlined below.

Persons selected will be given the title of “Tao House Fellow” and will be those with an interest in any of the performing arts for whom a space of time in comparative solitude and quiet will prove salutary. Fellows will live off site, but spend their days at Tao House in quiet working conditions.

The first phase will begin in 2013 with one, and possibly two, fellowships. The frequency of fellowships will depend on the adequacy of funding. Fellows will be admitted to the program by a committee of the Foundation on the basis of a short curriculum vita, letters of support, and a description of study or project on which the artist desires to work. The Committee will also determine the length of the stay, with the possibility of two weeks to one month.

An integral part of the stay will be the availability of the Tao House library. The library has as its basic core holdings in the American theatre and the life and works of Eugene O’Neill, including manuscripts and manuscript copies of original O’Neill materials, and special collections donated to the Foundation by Sophus Winther, Horst Frenz, Travis Bogard and others.

The Foundation Board of Directors and the National Park Service will expect a copy or representation of the final project resulting from the fellowship and appropriate acknowledgement and recognition in any published work. Fellows will be encouraged to participate in a mutually agreed upon Foundation program, if appropriate.

The program will be funded and managed by the Eugene O’Neill Foundation in cooperation with the National Park Service.

The Foundation website will have a link to the Application Guidelines and Program description beginning in February. For additional information prior to that time, please contact the Foundation with “Artist-in-Residence” in the subject line. The email address is taohouse@eugeneoneill.org.

Those wishing to support the Tao House AIR Program may send a check to the Eugene O’Neill Foundation, P.O. Box 402, Danville, CA 94526-0402 along with the pledge card below; or donate directly from our website: www.eugeneoneill.org, select “About Us” and “Donate”. Please specify the AIR program when sending contributions. The Foundation is a 501(c)3 organization and your donation is fully deductible. (ID #23-7401824)

Thank you for helping to begin this important program.

Residence Program was part of Travis Bogard’s vision for Tao House.

Foundation Board Member Susan Jackson’s theatre company, Southern Railroad Theatre Company, will present an evening of readings of short plays on Monday, January 21st at the Royce Gallery in San Francisco. Co-produced by Diana Brown, these plays will be performed by members of the SRTC, and invited guests, and are part of an effort to provide more opportunities for collaboration amongst theatre companies that work with original plays.

Selections will come from Pacifica Table Readers, Pear Avenue Writers, Playwrights Center of San Francisco, 3GIRLS3, and Wily West Productions. The theme is Resolutions: made, unmade, kept, unless, with a nod to the Southern way of life.

Don’t miss Resolutions: I Do Declare! For reservations, call 415-505-2151. $5 ticket charge.

In addition to her work with Southern Railroad Theatre Company, Susan’s short play, BLUES, has been selected as one of the Pear Avenue Theatre’s “Pear Slices,” to be performed in April, 2013. It will be directed by Troy Johnson.
LESHER FOUNDATION GRANT GIVES BOOST TO STUDENT DAYS AT TAO HOUSE AND THE O’NEILL STUDIO RETREAT

Two key education programs of the Eugene O’Neill Foundation will receive a significant boost over the next two years with word that the Dean and Margaret Lesher Foundation will provide funding to support Student Days at Tao House and the O’Neill Studio Retreat.

“On behalf of the Board of Directors, we are pleased to provide this continued support to the Eugene O’Neill Foundation,” according to Lesher Foundation President Cynthia Ann Lesher. This two-year support grant of $21,000 marks the fourth multi-year grant that the O’Neill Foundation has received from the Dean and Margaret Lesher Foundation.

Entering its twenty-second year as the O’Neill Foundation’s signature educational program for high school students, Student Days brings area high school juniors and seniors to Tao House for an intensive day-long experience in art, drama, writing or photography. The program is conducted in cooperation with the National Park Service. After a tour of the historic site, students spend time with noted professionals in their chosen area of interest, and have an opportunity to practice their skills with talented mentors.

“We’ve been very impressed with the quality and impact of the Student Days experience,” says Foundation Board member Jack De Rieux who oversees the program with the help of many volunteers. “We draw students from diverse areas of the East Bay – from Pittsburg to San Ramon, and from Fremont to Walnut Creek. They leave the program with a better understanding of themselves, their chosen field, as well as of Eugene O’Neill and his works.”

The Lesher Foundation grant will also help support the O’Neill Studio Retreat, an intensive summer program for young high school students interested in playwriting and dramatic arts.

“Since Eugene O’Neill was a notable playwright, we want to give budding writers a chance to try their hand at writing a short play for production at the end of the week-long retreat,” said De Rieux. “It’s amazing the seriousness and depth of commitment that surfaces in these short plays.”

In addition to this grant support, the Eugene O’Neill Foundation relies on additional support from its members and community donors that make these programs possible.

COMMUNITY SUPPORT AIDS FOUNDATION PROGRAMS

On-going support from members and the community are important elements for programs of the Eugene O’Neill Foundation. In recent months the Foundation has welcomed -- with appreciation -- important gifts to help support the Foundation’s mission to promote the legacy of America’s most notable playwright through community educational programs, maintenance of the largest archive of O'Neill records, photos and memorabilia on the West Coast, and performances of plays by O’Neill and by playwrights influenced by Eugene O’Neill.

We offer our appreciation to the Diane & Donald Schinnerer Charitable Gift Fund and to the San Ramon Rotary Foundation for their recent generous support. It is through financial support for on-going activities, as well as contributions to the Eugene O’Neill’s Foundation’s Legacy Endowment, that we are able to provide a wide range of community programs in conjunction with the Eugene O’Neill National Historic Site in Danville.

EUGENE O’NEILL FOUNDATION OFFICERS ANNOUNCED FOR 2013

The Board of Directors of the Eugene O’Neill Foundation chose its Executive Committee officers and elected several Board members for new terms for the coming year. As noted on page one in this Newsletter, Robert J. Sehr will be Foundation President for the 2013-15 two-year cycle.

The Executive Committee will be:

Robert J. Sehr, President
Gary DeAtley, Immediate Past President
& VP of Development
Jack De Rieux, VP of Education
Eric Fraisher Hayes, VP of Programs
Gary Schaub, VP of Marketing/Promotions
Julie Millias, Board Secretary
A new Treasurer for the Foundation will be announced at a later time.

Continuing Board members are:

Mary Greco
Eileen Hermann
Merilyn Milam
Carolyn Schaeffer
Mary Camezon
Ginny Iverson
Susan Jackson
Trudy McMahon
Lynda Schembri
Robin Taylor
A TIME FOR GIVING

As we approach the end-of-year holidays, we recognize that this time is for giving thanks and for helping out those we care for. While living at Tao House, we know that Gene and Carlotta took time out at the end of the year to be thankful for all they had, and to plan for the year ahead.

Likewise, the Eugene O'Neill Foundation approaches the end of year celebrating our 2012 achievements and being grateful for our members and friends who help the Foundation present artistic, educational, and community programs throughout the year. The Foundation, as you know, receives no direct financial assistance from National Park Service, but relies on the community and its members to support its programs.

We hope you’ll include the Eugene O’Neill Foundation in your year-end giving plans. A modest donation – or even a substantial one! – will be of great value to us as we plan for programs for 2013. We are now working on a schedule that includes staged Playwrights’ Theatre productions at the Eugene O’Neill National Historic Site in Danville, the annual O’Neill Festival, and educational programs for high school students during Students Days at Tao House and the O’Neill Studio Retreat for aspiring playwrights. For 2013 we are working to establish a new Artist-in-Residence program which has been envisioned for many years.

Recent years have been hard times for most non-profits. We must rely upon our members and friends for financial support. Your contributions make what we do possible. Thank you!

Please return the response slip below with your year-end gift. Or, go on-line at www.eugeneoneill.org to make your special contribution. Your gift of $50 or $100 or even more can be of major assistance as we plan for 2013.

My Year-End Gift to the Eugene O’Neill Foundation, Tao House

I would like to make a year-end gift to the Eugene O’Neill Foundation in the amount of $ __________________

Your check made payable to the Eugene O’Neill Foundation is most welcome, or

Please charge my credit card:  ☐ Visa  ☐ M/C  ☐ AMEX  ☐ Discover  ☐ PayPal

Card Number: ___________________________  CSC: ___________________________  Name on Card: ___________________________

Expiration: ___________________________  Signature: ___________________________

Or  Donate directly from our website: www.eugeneoneill.org, select “About Us” and “Donate”.

Name: ___________________________  Email Address: ___________________________

Address: ___________________________  City/State/Zip: ___________________________

Home Phone: ___________________________  Other Phone: ___________________________

Eugene O’Neill Foundation  •  P.O. Box 402  •  Danville, CA  •  94526-0402

The Foundation is a 501(c)3 organization and your donation is fully deductible. (ID #23-7401824)

Student Days welcomes high school artists to Tao House on Saturdays in March

Plans are underway for the twenty-second season of Student Days, an educational program of the Eugene O’Neill Foundation and the National Park Service. Since its inception, Student Days has attracted over 2,000 students to Tao House from more than thirty area high schools.

The mission of Student Days is to bring students with interests in photography, writing, drama, and art to the setting where O’Neill created his most powerful work.

New this year, Student Days will be held on Saturdays only. The program will provide the same great experience for the students, without the conflict of missing school work.

Student Days 2013 are:

- Art & Photography: Saturday, March 2
- Drama & Writing: Saturday, March 16

Students are welcomed to the site with a light breakfast followed by an interactive tour of Tao House led by an interpretive ranger from the National Park Service. The tour is designed to introduce students to O’Neill’s life story and his significant impact on world theatre. Workshops, led by professionals in the respective art forms, give students the opportunity to learn more about their chosen artistic interest. They then apply their new knowledge in the creation of a work that may later be displayed at Tao House.

During the lunch break, students are treated to a live performance of scenes from O’Neill’s plays. By the end of the day, students leave Tao House with a deeper appreciation of their respective art forms and an assignment to complete and polish their work for exhibit.

The program is free to all students, underwritten by individuals and organizations with an interest in providing students equal access to artistic and cultural experiences. Applications for the program can be obtained from their high school teachers, or career centers. They can also be downloaded from the Eugene O’Neill Foundation website: www.eugeneoneill.org.
EUGENE O’NEILL FESTIVAL 2012

Dinner guests enjoy the food and friends in the Tao House yard.
~Photo by Penny Washbourn

The weather cooperated as did the full moon for the Festival presentation of “A Moon for the Misbegotten.”
~Photo by Penny Washbourn

Lynda Schembri readies the pre-show dinners.
~Photo by Penny Washbourn

Gary Schaub prepares the libations for the Anniversary Dinner with Charles Schembri lending a hand.
~Photo: Penny Washbourn

Julie Millias readies the concessions for Festival goers.
~Photo by Penny Washbourn

Dan Cawthon, Gary Schaub, and Gary DeAtley at the ADAS reception.
~Photo by Penny Washbourn

Too House Old Barn, Eugene O’Neill National Historic Site, dressed for the night.
~Photo by Penny Washbourn
We Can’t Do It Without You!

Each year the Foundation looks to its members to help secure the community support we need to sustain the Foundation’s programs. You can help us do this by signing on as a Foundation member, or by renewing your current membership.

Without those memberships:

- **We can’t** produce the Playwrights’ Theatre productions each May.
- **We can’t** stage the annual Eugene O’Neill Festival in the Fall.
- **We can’t** maintain the largest O’Neill archival collection and scholar’s resource on the West Coast.
- **We can’t** bring scores of high school students to Tao House to learn about the genius of Eugene O’Neill, and his contributions to the American theatre.

There’s a lot we can’t do without you … and so much we can do if you’re a member.

While we work closely with the National Park Service, we receive no direct program support for these programs. We depend on community members like you to help make it happen. Be a **Crew Member** for as little as $35/yr, or a **Playwright’s Circle Member** for just $100/yr. Other membership levels are available as well.

It’s easy to join or renew. Go on-line to [www.eugeneoneill.org](http://www.eugeneoneill.org), and click the **About Us** button on the Home Page, then select **Membership**. Your annual donation to the Foundation is needed and is greatly appreciated.

Contact Us:

Eugene O’Neill Foundation, Tao House  P.O. Box 402  ~  Danville, CA  ~  94526-0402
Voicemail: 925.820.1818  ~  E-mail: taohouse@eugeneoneill.org  ~  Web: [www.eugeneoneill.org](http://www.eugeneoneill.org)

Reservations for tours of Tao House: 925.838.0249