Eugene O’Neill Foundation Summer/Fall Newsletter 2015

Announcing the 16th Eugene O’Neill Festival

“A Season of Desire”

Experience desire through the eyes of two of America’s greatest playwrights. This September, the Eugene O’Neill Festival explores the appetites behind our desires with productions of Eugene O’Neill’s *Desire under the Elms* and “A Streetcar Named Desire” by Tennessee Williams, accompanied by a special showing of the classic Elia Kazan 1951 film *A Streetcar Named Desire* starring Marlon Brando and Vivian Leigh.

Casting for *Desire under the Elms* will feature Konnor Heredia as Eben and Grethen Lee Salter as Abbie. Randy Anger, who played Larry Slade in last year’s sold-out production of *The Iceman Cometh*, returns in the role of Ephraim Cabot.

“A Streetcar Named Desire” will feature Festival newcomers Melanie DuPuy as Blanche, Rob August as Stanley and Samantha Behr as Stella. Veteran director George Maguire (*Anna Christie* and *Cat on a Hot Tin Roof*) will direct.

This fall, the Eugene O’Neill Festival focuses on the various ways humans yearn for what they do not have, and in some cases, covet what they should not have. In addition to these powerful, poetical and sensual plays, the Festival further explores the role of desire in human experience through a series of sneak preview presentations at local libraries, local tours, and a panel discussion on the evolution of desire in the arts, with a look at O’Neill’s life through his plays.

Desire in the form of our appetites and hungers can take many forms and lead us down many paths; oftentimes at speeds beyond our control. In the hands of these American masters, passions and lust find new heights.

Join us for an exhilarating Season of Desire!

* Editor’s Note: “Desire Under the Elms” a 1958 film of the 1924 Eugene O’Neill play, was directed by Delbert Mann from a screenplay by O’Neill and Irwin Shaw. Sophia Loren stars as Abbie, (Anna, in film), Anthony Perkins as Eben, Burl Ives at Ephraim. The film was nominated for Best Black and White cinematography at the Academy Awards and also was nominated for the Palme d’Or in the 1958 Cannes Film Festival. This film is available on DVD and on line viewing.

For tickets or more information, go to www.eugeneoneill.org

The TAO of DESIRE
And TAO HOUSE
by Janet Roberts.

Following the TAO, employing the Tao Te Ching (*The Book of the Way and Its Virtue*), by Lao Tze, consider the Chinese characters on the Tao House Gate, and on the andirons in the fireplace, and Eugene O’Neill’s relationship to the Tao.

Ch 1. “…Truly, Only he that rids himself forever of desire can see the Secret Essences… He that has never rid himself of desire can see only the Outcomes…”

Ch 3. “If the people never see such things as excite desire, their hearts will remain placid and undisturbed. Therefore the Sage Rules/ By emptying their hearts/ And filling their bellies, /Weakening their intelligence/ And toughening their sinews/Ever striving to make the people knowledgeless and desireless…”


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**Eugene O'Neill Festival Previews**

Join us on a Thursday for a peek at this year’s festival. Get the inside scoop from the directors, designers and actors who are going to be bringing these classics to life this September. Admission: Free

Danville Library  
August 13th  
7:00pm

Lafayette Library  
August 20th  
7:00pm

Pleasanton Library  
August 22nd  
2:00pm

Danville:

**Eugene O'Neill: Evolution of an Artist**  
*From Provincetown to Tao House*

EONF Director of Artistic Programming Eric Fraisher Hayes will give an encore presentation of his Ashland, Oregon Shakespeare Festival lecture delivered this past June. Hayes has directed or produced nearly twenty of O'Neill's plays and offers some unique insights into the life and plays of Eugene O'Neill.

Museum of the San Ramon Valley  
205 Railroad Ave, Danville  
Saturday, September 12th at 2pm.

Admission: $10

**The Secrets of O'Neill in Danville**

This hour-long walking tour will provide stories about O'Neill and Danville when the O'Neills lived at Tao House. It begins at the Museum of the San Ramon Valley, 205 Railroad Ave, Danville, and ends at the O'Neill Commemorative on Front Street across from the Danville library.

Museum of the San Ramon Valley, Danville  
September 12th at 4pm

Admission: Free

**Tao House: The Art of Desire**

Amy Glynn, poet and former EONF board member, will appear on a panel of experts, discussing the evolving depictions of desire in the interdisciplinary arts; literature, film and theatre in the 20th - 21st century.

Old Barn, Tao House  
Saturday, September 19th at 2pm.

Admission: $15

**A Streetcar Named Desire by Tennessee Williams**

Role Players Ensemble  
Village Theatre, 233 Front Street,  
Danville  
9/4, 9/5, 9/6th, 9/11, 9/12, 9/13th, 9/17 and 9/19  * Features a Post Show Discussion  
All shows 8PM, except 2PM matinees on 9/6 and 13  
Admission: $31 For tickets or more information, go to roleplayersensemble.com

**Desire under the Elms by Eugene O'Neill**

Old Barn, Tao House  
9/18, 9/20th, 9/24, 9/25, 9/26 and 9/27th  
* Features a Post Show Discussion  
For tickets or more information, go to www.eugeneoneill.org  
Admission: $35  
All shows 8PM, except 2PM matinees on 9/20 and 27

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**Eugene O'Neill in the Ashland Shakespeare Festival 2015**  
By Eric Fraisher Hayes

I have long admired the success of the Oregon Shakespeare Festival in Ashland. Now in its 80th season, OSF is the top theatre destination on the West Coast. Nowhere else west of the Rocky Mountains do people travel so far to see great theatre. However, it was a real eye-opener to discover that the Eugene O'Neill Foundation, Tao House had produced more O'Neill plays in the last eight years than Ashland’s five productions in eight decades.

When Ashland invited me to speak on Eugene O'Neill as part of the OSF Noon Speaker series June 20, I was honored to participate. A key element in my invitation, as a “scholar/practitioner” though an unfamiliar self-description, perfectly reveals my experience with O'Neill's plays. Eugene O'Neill is not only the Father of Modern American Drama; he is also the Father of the American Experimental Theatre. He revolutionized the art of how a story could be told on stage in the 1920’s. Many of his theatrical innovations are still with us today.

After chronologically reading the entire O'Neill canon when I first joined the Eugene O'Neill Foundation, Tao House, and then directing and/or producing nearly 20 of his plays in the Barn Theater, I had been set on a unique course. To focus my lecture, I inventoried O'Neill's 51 plays, distilling what I thought most important for audiences. I realized that ultimately, there has been a narrative at work regarding Eugene O'Neill over the last half century: a handful of plays, the last autobiographical plays, written at Tao House, after he obtained the Noble Prize, are so great, so truthful that 90 percent of his plays are seen as apprentice pieces, unworthy of much attention, a viewpoint fostered by scholars and professional theatres alike.

I came away from my Ashland experience incredibly grateful to OSF for the opportunity to be part of their incredible summer program, and also very proud of the leadership the Eugene O'Neill Foundation and its partner, Role Players Ensemble, has been showing with its yearly Eugene O'Neill Festival. Each September, the festival becomes not only the torchbearer for local cultural heritage, but a leading light for the playwright who shaped American theatre. Danville is ground zero when it comes to producing the works of Eugene O'Neill. It is my sincerest hope that the Eugene O'Neill Festival and Tao House move beyond the moniker of “best kept secret” to assume its rightful title as a leading producer of the plays of Eugene O'Neill.

Eric Fraisher Hayes is the Artistic Director for the Eugene O'Neill Foundation, Tao House Festival.

Poem on DESIRE by poet and former EONF Board Member, Amy Glynn:  
http://www.newcriterion.com/articles.cfm/Apollo---Daphne---7549

**Speaker Series: John Lahr**

Rakestraw Books, 3 Railroad Ave., Danville  
10/4 3:30PM - please note new time

**Film: A Streetcar Named Desire**

Join us for the classic 1951 film adaptation of Tennessee Williams' Pulitzer Prize-winning play. Nominated for 12 Academy Awards, winner of 4, this film that put Marlon Brando on the map!

Village Theatre, Danville  
September 10th  
7:30PM  
Admission: $10

**Editor’s Note: Film: “A Streetcar Named Desire” - See Movie Review, “Listen to me Marlon”. Friday, August 7, 2015 SF Chronicle E6 for mention of “Brando’s explosive, much talked about, imitated and parodied performance in “A Streetcar Named Desire”.”**
TAO LIBRARY SPEAKER SERIES presents

Biographer John Lahr

In following the current practice of teaming a Tennessee Williams play done by Role Players with a Eugene O’Neill play in the Fall Festival, the Tao House library and Role Players are hosting John Lahr, whose biography “Tennessee Williams: Mad Pilgrimage of the Flesh,” in the Rakestraw Bookstore on Sunday, October 4.

“I think of this book as a club sandwich,” Lahr said. “I wanted to explore this synergy between the private life, the public life and the plays, with some extra mayo of storytelling and interpretation.”

Among the 70 cassettes of untranscribed interviews in Williams’ chosen biographer, Lyle Leverich’s papers was a long conversation with Pancho Rodriguez, Williams’s lover from 1946 to 1948 and the model for the brutish Stanley Kowalski in “A Streetcar Named Desire.” Mr. Lahr also drew on correspondence with Audrey Wood, Williams’s longtime agent, and secured “carte blanche,” Lahr said, with the papers of Williams’s most important plays, including “Streetcar” and “Cat on a Hot Tin Roof.”

Jeff Kennedy, TAO House Library Archival Advisor, will dialogue with the former New Yorker theater critic John Lahr about Williams and the art of biography. This lecture will launch a Library Speaker Series, and recognize those board members who developed the library (Diane Schninnerer, Linda Best, Carol Sherrill and Florence McAuley).

This special event will be held as part of the Festival on October 4, Sunday, at 3:30 pm, at Rakestraw Books, 3 Railroad Ave., Danville, beginning with a reception, co-sponsored by Role Players, followed by recognition of the founders, after which the conversation with the author will take place, following by a book signing.

Cost: $36.00 includes copy of Lahr’s book made available by Rakestraw Books/Michael Barnard.

Please note that the time of this event has been changed. It is now starting at 3:30pm, not 2:00 as previously announced. Location is at Rakestraw Books, 3 Railroad Ave., Danville

“Eugene O’Neill’s Journey: The Past is the Present is the Future Too.”

Dr. Eileen Herrmann’s Noon Lecture

Oregon Shakespeare Festival, Ashland

September 5, 2015

Dr. Eileen Herrmann, a member of the Board of Directors of the Eugene O'Neill Foundation, an author and co-editor with Robert Dowling of “Eugene O’Neill and His Early Contemporaries: Bohemians, Radicals, Progressives and the Avant Garde” (2011) will give a lecture at the 2015 Ashland Shakespeare Festival in the Noon Lecture Series in September.

“Long Day’s Journey into Night is an epic American family tragedy, blending realistic subject matter with a naturalistic exploration of the limits of personal freedom,” is the assessment of Dr. Herrmann. Of course, it follows that such a uniquely classical American drama is reliant on the themes of “aspiration” and the American Dream.

“The play’s tragic stature is based upon the idea that underneath life, there exists universal pain that gives way to our greatest need: for pity and forgiveness”, says Dr. Eileen Herrmann. Completed after O’Neill received the Nobel Prize in Literature, (the only American Playwright to do so), A Long Day’s Journey into Night is considered one of the greatest tragedies of the twentieth century.

The drama centers on Mary’s dictum that life in the present won’t let us escape the past. While the play physically takes one on a journey from morning to midnight, the play’s real journey is inward, underscoring that in our end is our beginning.

After presenting a few of the play’s major challenges—for instance, its competing character portraits requiring an ensemble of stellar actors —Dr. Herrmann’s 45 minute interactive talk will conclude by highlighting a few famous productions of the play. O’Neill’s famous play “Long Day’s Journey into Night” joins his father’s much enacted “The Count of Monte Cristo” on the Shakespeare Festival program in Ashland in 2015.

Thomas Hart Benton
b. 1889; Neosho, MO
d. 1975; Kansas City, MO

Poker Night (from a Streetcar Named Desire) 1948
Tempera and oil on linen
Mrs. Percy Uris Bequest 85.49.2

In 1947, Thomas Hart Benton was commissioned by Hollywood producer David O. Selznick to create an original painting based on a scene in the film version of Tennessee Williams's Pulitzer Prize-winning play, A Streetcar Named Desire, as a gift for Selznick’s first wife, Irene, a theatrical producer responsible for bringing the play to Broadway. “Poker Night” captures the sexual tension and violent undertones in the relationships between Blanche DuBois, a down-and-out Southern belle (holding up a mirror), her sister, Stella (leaning over the armchair), and Stella’s husband, the hot-tempered, childlike Stanley Kowalski (wearing a white undershirt). It documents one of the play’s most dramatic moments, when Blanche taunts a drunk and angry Stanley with her petty provocations.

“Poker Night” is at the Whitney Museum of American Art in New York.

http://whitney.org/WatchAndListen/AudioGuides?play_id=174
Oregon Shakespeare Festival celebrates a dialogue between two plays.

By Janet Roberts

With a touch of genius and ingenuity, The Shakespeare Festival in its 80th year, produces both the most autobiographical play, “A Long Day’s Journey into Night” in which Eugene O’Neill’s father, is memorialized and plays the major role, and then simultaneously produces in the Shakespeare Theater, Alexander Dumas’ “The Count of Monte Cristo”, the play in which O’Neill’s father enacts the vengeful hero for decades. In “Long Day’s Journey into Night”, the father James O’Neill, the actor, explains that he lost his true opportunity to be a great Shakespearean actor, an appropriate confession for the play to be included in the festival celebrating the Bard.

“A Long Day’s Journey into Night”

For the enactment of “A Long Day’s Journey into Night, the staging is effective, a theater in the round, so we see characters circle one another with a corner off stage aloft, staging is effective, a theater in the round, so we see illusion and descending as a ghost in the theater’s rafters.

The director of this year’s production, Christopher Liam Moore, reflects, “I have read “Long Day’s many times...with each return, I found something unexpected – a new challenge, a new understanding, a new sadness”.

The plot in this play thickens and grows tragic by the moment. The guilt of the father James Tyrone (Michael Winters) may be, in the estimation of the sons, Edmund (Danforth Comins who has also played Stanley Kowalski in ”A Streetcar Named Desire” and “Venice” in “Ah Wilderness”) and Jamie (Jonathan Haugen) and their mother, Mary (Judith-Marie Bergen), that he is absent in the theater, drinks too much, and has a life in which his wife does not participate at his club. The wife revives her experience in the convent, and her early years, when the nuns praised her for her playing of the piano. She lives constantly in the nostalgia of the past, claiming time and again, that she has always been lonely, and has never been able to have a real home since childhood. But of course, her life with James in the theater belies this.

Along with the innovative staging, the “Irish-ness” of the characters is asserted time and time again. Since this is one of O’Neill’s last plays, and a play most loved, as it faces the familiar sibling rivalry among brothers, the love of the sons for their mother, even though she has betrayed them with her drug addiction, and their seeming contempt for a father, whose respect they crave, despite his own substance abuse, blaming him for their mother’s affliction, due to his “cheap” miserly attitudes in not paying for a better physician.

Scholar Margaret Loftus Ranald argues: “The play is more than mere autobiography because it shows the struggle of human beings in torment. The setting, in Monte Cristo Cottage, New London, goes beyond either realism or naturalism because this little world encapsulated in fog becomes symbolic of the human condition and the traps in which human beings find themselves caught.”

Editor’s Note: Other productions: In 2016, in NYC, Jessica Lange will play the role of Mary Tyrone with Gabriel Byrne as James Tyrone, and John Gallagher, Jr as Edmund in the Round About Theater on Broadway. The director is Jonathan Kent. Previews start March 31. I saw Jessica Lange in “A Streetcar named Desire” in 1992. Mr. Byrne played the lead in “A Touch of the Poet” in 2005 and received a Tony nomination for “A Moon for the Misbegotten” in 2000. In the past, in 1975: Edmund was played by William Hurt; Mary by Jean Smart and in 1956: on Broadway, directed by Jose Quintero, with Jason Robards as Jamie and Frederic March as James Tyrone, with Florence Eldridge as Mary.

Oregon Shakespeare Festival’s Celebration of a Dialogue Between Two Plays.

“The Count of Monte Cristo”

“The Count of Monte Cristo” in which James O’Neill had played Edmund Dantes more than 6000 times... it brought him both wealth, as he acquired the script and its royalties, and fame. Fearful of the childhood poverty from which he had escaped, his miserliness and his sense of loss of his career “by selling out” are the source of “Long Day’s Journey...”

It is O’Neill’s version of “Monte Cristo” that forms the foundation for OSF’s 2015 production script. In 1885 O’Neill purchased the rights to Fechter’s version (1868) (later condensed, 1883) of “Monte Cristo” and made numerous revisions as he continued to play Dantes for the next 35 years. “As hope, justice, vengeance mercy and forgiveness vie for Dantes wounded soul and hardened heart, the Count becomes a poetic myth”. Mid 19th century France and Napoleon Bonaparte play offstage. A melodrama in its adaptation of Alfred Dumas’s long novel, the portrayal participates in the burlesque and vaudeville routines of James O’Neill’s day, and the venues where Eugene O’Neill failed to show his plays, after their Provincetown debut. The faithful enactment to the adaptation in which O’Neill’s father performed for more than 30 years, was modernized, not with the usual video projections of “the sea”, but with dancers representing waves, in flowing scarves floating across the stage.

Another continuous thread was the representation of the life on stage being about a sailor and his fortunes being made at sea through a wealthy benefactor, but then becoming estranged due to marriage to a Catalan, and the jealousy and hostile rivalry and no means being spared, to see that is prevented from achieving his happiness but is tragically cast into a dungeon for 18 years. Of course, when Dantes escapes, he avenges the wrongs, and succeeds in killing all three persons who have stolen his life, his love and his wealth. Through returning as “The Count of Monte Cristo”, he triumphs over all. The hero is restored to his wife, Mercedes, and his son Albert...on stage as the curtain falls. We could not hope for more.

Editor’s Note: Professor William Davies King, professor of theater at UC Santa Barbara and editor of the Eugene O’Neill Review and I attended the same viewing of the plays on July 21. In addition to delivery of the noon hour accompanying lecture, on July 22, Professor Davies King taught a class on the two plays “in conversation.” At the conclusion, Judith-Marie Bergan (Mary) and Vilma Silva (Mercedes) offered commentary. His book “Another Part of a Long Story: Literary Traces of Eugene O’Neill and Agnes Boulton.” is available in the Tao House bookstore.

For Carlotta, on our 12th Wedding Anniversary

Dearest: I give you the original script of this play of old sorrow, written in tears and blood. A badly inappropriate gift, it would seem, for a day celebrating happiness. But you will understand. I mean it as a tribute to your love and tenderness which gave me the faith in love that enabled me to face my dead at last and write this play - write it with deep pity and understanding and forgiveness for all the four haunted Tyrones. These twelve years, Beloved One, have been a Journey into Light - into love. You know my gratitude. And my love! 

Gene, Tao House July 22, 1941

THE IRISH LITERARY & HISTORICAL SOCIETY
The Irish Literary & Historical Society was founded in San Francisco in 1945 to provide an open, non-sectarian, and non-political forum for the presentation and discussion of Irish and Irish-American art, history, literature and society, and culture. Monthly events are held at the United Irish Cultural Center in San Francisco. Events are free for members. Inquire: www.ILHSsf.org
**Provincetown Players**

**Centennials 2015-2016**

Provincetown, Massachusetts

Next summer, in 2016, Provincetown Players will celebrate Eugene O’Neill and the centennial debut of that play “East to Cardiff” (1916) “the best sure-fire play”, bringing the life of the sea to the stage. The play made all foresee that he would be a great playwright, and all would forget that a month earlier he had suffered failure in John Reed and Louise Bryant’s house with a play about an American movie man who had financed a Mexican revolution to film its battles, which had proved insufferable.

“Jig, Susan, and Gene: The Triumvirate that Shaped the Provincetown Players” with Linda Ben-Zvi, chair; Drew Eisenhauer, Emiline Jouvre and Jeff Kennedy, Society President as participants was one of the special round-table panels during Eisenhauer, Emiline Jouvre and Jeff Kennedy, Society President Provincetown Players “ with Linda Ben-Zvi, chair; DrewCook’s “The Sniper,” which then took place at the Provincetown Theatre.

In keeping, coincidentally, with the theme of the Fall Festival in which then took place at the Provincetown Theatre.

O’Neill’s “The Sniper” in encore performance

Eugene O’Neill’s “The Sniper”(written 1916, produced 1917, and published 1950) was originally written in George Baker’s seminar into which O’Neill was accepted at Harvard University in 1916. Baker applauded, “The Sniper’s well wrought structure, timely subject matter, and dramatic power…” he didn’t think it judicious however for Harvard to put on a war play during actual wartime. The play about the “rape of Belgium” won an honorable mention in Baker’s play competition; O’Neill failed to get the play on the vaudeville circuit in NYC, as it would be censored until after the end of the Great War.

O’Neill wasn’t interested in presenting the physical horrors of war so much as “the way in which the war dehumanized, disturbed and destroyed lives and souls: he exposed the manner in which it fatefully derailed and diverted individuals from their human and humane courses,” says Robert Dowling in his biography of O’Neill. (Editor’s Note: A similar approach is taken in the Academy award winning 2014 film, “American Sniper”.)

**Biographer, Robert Dowling, Special Guest**


“Illusions generated a lot of talk in postwar American theatre. The truth is that no amount of reality could compete with the Holocaust. So there was a turning inward. In 1947, Tennessee Williams’s Blanche DuBois told audiences that she wanted not realism but “magic”, and that emotional honesty wasn’t necessarily synonymous with the truth” (p.74). The thread continues: “Unlike Blanche DuBois, Mamet’s characters aren’t looking for magic. They’re looking to disabuse others of the ridiculous desire to believe in a trusting, loving world” (p.75).

The New Yorker, June 29, 2015.

**NEW ARRIVAL IN BOOK STORE: TAO HOUSE.**

**Eugene O’Neill: A Life in Four Acts**

Robert M. Dowling Yale University Press 2014

Dowling’s book was a finalist for the Los Angeles Times Book Prize in the Biography category and the Los Angeles Times Book Prize.

“This extraordinary new biography fully captures the intimacies of Eugene O’Neill’s tumultuous life and the profound impact of his work on American drama. Robert M. Dowling innovatively recounts O’Neill’s life in four acts, thus highlighting how the stories he told for the stage interweave with his actual life stories. Each episode also uncovers how O’Neill’s work was utterly intertwined with, and galvanized by, the culture and history of his time.

Much is new in this extensively researched book: connections between O’Neill’s plays and his political and philosophical worldview; insights into his Irish upbringing and lifelong torment over losing faith in God; his vital role in African American cultural history; unpublished photographs, including a unique offstage picture of him with his lover Louise Bryant; new evidence of O’Neill’s desire to become a novelist and what this reveals about his unique dramatic voice; and a startling revelation about the release of Long Day’s Journey Into Night in defiance of his explicit instructions. This biography is also the first to discuss O’Neill’s lost play Exorcism (a single copy of which was only recently recovered), a dramatization of his own suicide attempt.

Written with lively informality yet a scholar’s strict accuracy, Eugene O’Neill: A Life in Four Acts is a biography that America’s foremost playwright richly deserves.”


In “True Lies”, a review of David Mamet’s new play, “The Shawl” in New York, Hilton Als, writes:

“The thread continues: “Unlike Blanche DuBois, Mamet’s characters aren’t looking for magic. They’re looking to disabuse others of the ridiculous desire to believe in a trusting, loving world”. (p.75).”

The New Yorker, June 29, 2015.
AIR Artist In Residence News

Travis AIR (Artist in Residence) Hermann Farrell passed around a postcard he had received acknowledging his membership in the EONF when it was first formed, to the delight of those present on June 12, 2015 at a generous reception held at the home of Advisory Board member, Carol Sherrill, who with Florence McAuley played a key role in organizing and funding the AIR Residency.

Working in the Trunk Room proved productive as Hermann finished a full draft of the play. He could not praise the solitude, or the impact of being in the space at Tao House, where O'Neill had penned his plays, or credit employing its archive and library resources, enough. Hermann cited an example of being able to simultaneously read both Eugene O'Neill’s diary and that of Carlotta, viewing the same day entries, to enter the landscape in which they both lived. Mentioning another residency at the prestigious MacDowell Colony, Herman strongly feels there is a real future for the Tao House AIR (Artist in Residency) program.

This creative space changed the direction from a post-modern production to a focus on aspects of O’Neill’s life narrative. Both Travis fellows in their research at Tao House were very interested in the role of Eugene’s brother, Jamie, on Eugene O'Neill’s life and on his plays. Herman Farrell has come full circle, as 30 years ago, in 1983, he wrote a melodramatic “Dreams of the Son: A Life of Eugene O’Neill.” He humorously shared an encounter with a rattlesnake which may have upturned his energies to a fast finish. The Eugene O'Neill Foundation awaits the outcome of the reception of this new play by this award-winning playwright and screen-writer.

DAVID PARKER says, “My Tao House Fellowship in the Travis Bogard Artist-in-Residence Program at the Eugene O’Neill National Historic Site was exceptionally valuable, not just for enabling me to pursue the project I had planned but also for the serendipitous ways it led me to new ideas. I worked on O'Neill’s vision of tragedy in the Tao House plays, in particular his depictions of characters related to his brother Jim. I hoped for the perfect place to explore the character of different creative genius, - that of the actor, and that of the playwright. The tensions of race and language are central to her investigation, as her distant relative, Charles Gilpin refused to say "The N. ....word". Pender’s Expressionist play, in outline form, which she works on, in the Trunk Room, at Tao House, will benefit from research in the Tao Library archives. She aims to be inspired by Tao House, where O'Neill wrote his greatest plays. Pender concludes: “There might not be a legitimate American theatre without him(Eugene O'Neill) ...he is the one who reminds me to challenge myself in what I write and why.”

About the AIR

Adrienne Earle Pender, an emerging playwright, writing plays in North Carolina since 2001 says her research in classical Greek drama “changed everything”. Jean Klein, her professor tells us that Adrienne’s thesis play, “Somewhere In Between “ in the MA and MFA Creative Writing Program at Wilkes University in Wilkes-Barre Pennsylvania, (2008-2010) was selected for main stage production by Theater in the Park, in Raleigh, North Carolina and for a staged reading at Wordsmyth Theater in Houston, Texas in 2014. Other short plays appeared in conferences such as the 2004 Edward Albee 12 Annual Last Frontier Theatre Conference. A member of the International Center for Women Playwrights and the Dramatist Guild, Adrienne served as president of the North Carolina Playwrights Alliance. Adrienne also served on the panel of the prestigious Telluride (CO) Independent Film Festival, and the Key West (FL) Independent Film Festival.


The aspirant young, budding playwrights, actors and directors spend 10 days at the annual “Studio Retreat” for high school students. It’s a three part “marathon” according to Ignacio Zulueta, professional playwright, winner of the “Emerging Playwrights Award.” Beginning with a tour of Tao House, the library and Barn Theater, as well as the grounds, O’Neill comes to life for the talented teenage Studio Retreat students who, in the Archives and Library, can read O’Neill transcripts and listen to tapes of O’Neill reading his own words.

Peer learning and collaboration is a pervasive element in their tutelage in directing or acting as the young playwrights and actors begin by sharing their application writing samples and develop exercise acting techniques as warm-ups. “Because the retreat is longer than in past years, each play group has become closer and more of a team, developing an interactive team attitude”, explains Chad Deverman, retreat coordinator. The novices all choose a site-specific location on the ranch for the action of their play. The theme and tone of the drama may be affected by the actors in the student team; for instance one young dramatist chose an all-female cast for a women’s issues-oriented play. Professional directors Joel Roster (Artistic director Town Hall Theatre, Lafayette) and Susan Jackson (San Francisco City College drama professor) enhance this experience by opening up critical feedback to the entire play “team”.

According to Zulueta, every playwright ultimately must release his writing – first to an actor who is trusted to enact the character envisioned; then to an audience to share in its promise: a happy comedy arousing laughter or “emotional intimacy” of a drama. Each year the witnessing of these creative youth in that practice results in more than one parent exclaiming “I didn’t know my child could...[act, write, direct]...like that!”

In a time of necessity for collaborative resources, Zulueta asks, “Why not establish ‘Theatre in the Parks’ throughout the federal and state park systems?” Viewed as “too expensive” and non-essential, funding for the performing arts is oftentimes cut from school district budgets. “Children must be “exposed to theatre at a young age if it is to remain a viable art form,” says Zulueta. The cooperation between the National Park Service and the Eugene O’Neill foundation’s initiative is an effective remedy to the decline of young people attending live theatre now and in the future. The O’Neill Studio workshop is supported by grants from the Wood Foundation and the Dean and Margaret Lesher Foundation.

Thanks to Board member volunteers: Trudy McMahon, Merilyn Milam, Gary Schaub, Florence McAuley, Katy Colbath, Mary Anne Osborne, Dimitrios Dimitrakos, Eric Fraisher Hayes, Susan Jackson. Sorry to any we may have missed!
NPS Acting General Superintendent Report

We have been in transition this summer with some temporary staffing changes. Tom Leatherman has been detailed to the Pacific West Regional Office as acting Deputy Regional Director while Martha Lee takes time off to spend with her new grandchild. I have filled in behind Tom as acting General Superintendent of the four national parks in Contra Costa County, and Ralph Bell, our Facility Manager, is filling in as acting Deputy Superintendent. Paul Scolari, Chief of Resource Management and management team liaison to the Eugene O’Neill Foundation, is on a detail to the Washington Office of Legislative and Congressional Affairs. Isabel Ziegler, Supervisory Museum Curator, has stepped up to guide the RM division while Paul is gone. Tad Shay continues at the helm as the Lead Park Ranger at the park, with Tori assisting with interpretive programs and Tao House tours. We’re looking at getting back to “normal” staffing-wise by the end of November.

We hope to repair the second tank in the near future. The Studio Retreat this year was an outstanding event with a significant increase in the number of participants. We hope to continue to increase visitation numbers at the park - currently at about 3,200 visitors per year, especially as we lead up to the 100th anniversary of the National Park Service and the 100th anniversary of O’Neill’s first play. Thank you for your continued support, and we look forward to seeing you at the Eugene O’Neill Festival in September!

Susan Fritzke.

Admission To The Site

Fees Admission to the site is free

Reservations are required to visit site by shuttle. The park is closed to visitors on Monday and Tuesday.

Guided tours Available on Wednesdays, Thursdays, Fridays and Sundays at 10 AM & 2 PM. Reservations are required for guided tours of the site.

Self-guided tours Offered on “Saturdays Without Reservations” at 10:15 AM, 12:15 PM and 2:15 PM. If one is walking up local roads, or sauntering through Las Trampas Wilderness to get here on Saturday, please be here before 3:00 PM.

Due to the location of this park, all visitors are required to take a free National Park Service shuttle from the town of Danville to tour the historic home and grounds. Visitors are not permitted to drive their personal/private vehicles to the site. For both “Saturdays Without Reservations” and reserved tours, the shuttle meets at 205 Railroad Avenue in downtown Danville, just outside the Museum of the San Ramon Valley. Parking is available next to the museum.

Reservation Line (925)-838-0249

EOF MEMBERS-ONLY EVENT

Saturday October 24, 2015 2PM Matinee
in cooperation with ACT (American Conservatory Theater), San Francisco.

AH, WILDERNESS by Eugene O’Neill, Directed by Associate Artistic Director, Mark Rucker
A.C.T. 415 Geary Theater, San Francisco

O’Neill’s exquisite coming of age classic is a tender comedic portrait of a sensitive boy poet and his growing pains, and one family’s well meaning attempts to stay united in the face of misunderstandings. “Return to an idyllic age of Americana in Eugene O’Neill’s unabashedly romantic and sweetly funny Ah, Wilderness! as the Connecticut-based Miller clan plans their traditional Fourth of July festivities, their dreamy-eyed middle child Richard is wrestling with cultural conventions, political uncertainty, the power of literature, and the exquisite pain of love. The memories of family life were never so delicately portrayed as in O’Neill’s only comedy, his coming-of-age love letter to a simpler time, that finds the master playwright “at his most wistful and serene.” (New York Times).

Recommended reading:
New President Elect for January, 2016: Merilyn Milam

Incoming president elect in 2016, Merilyn has focused on educational programs, contributing to Student Days and Studio Retreat for more than 9 years, employing her professional background and expertise. She joined the Board of Directors of the Eugene O’Neill Foundation in 2006, after retirement as a program administrator in the Mt Diablo Unified School District with both Gifted and Talented Education and Title I (Federal funding for high poverty schools) in order to remain involved in community service. She says, “This is a unique group with many facets and complex challenges, so I do want to be as prepared as possible to help the group move forward”.

JANET M ROBERTS

Janet Roberts has a history of dedication to the preservation of literary house museums; she was introduced to Tao House, when she met an EONF board member, after a lecture on Strindberg by a visiting Stockholm University scholar at UC Berkeley. O’Neill acknowledged that Strindberg first gave him “the vision of what modern drama could be”, and Ibsen gave him his first conception of “a modern theatre where truth might live.” Ms. Roberts subsequently saw the BAM (Brooklyn) production of “The Iceman Cometh” in 2015 and toured Tao House.

Janet Roberts taught literature, including Drama, and creative writing at the university level and was active in and published papers with the Ibsen Society. She looks forward to contributing to the Eugene O’Neill Society. Janet taught Classical Greek Drama at Nanjing University in the faculty with Professor Liu Haiping, and participated in the opening of the Pearl S. Buck House Museum in China in 2012. In the USA, she taught at Fordham University and Hunter College in New York, and at Temple University and The University of Pennsylvania, as a Dean’s appointment Assistant Professor.

Janet served on the Boards of other literary house museums and either wrote for and/or edited their newsletters as well as worked with fund raising, program development and interpretation. These include the Anna Akhmatovah Foundation (Philadelphia, St. Petersburg Russia), The Pearl S. Buck Foundation (Pennsylvania), and The Edith Wharton Restoration (Massachusetts) and Edith Wharton Society. She served on the Boards of Classical America (Philadelphia and New York City). Janet has written for ICOMOS/UNESCO publications on house museum development particularly in Central Asia and the Caucasus during her Fulbright Scholar role in 2000-2001.

In the USA, Janet Roberts consulted for Cliveden, a National Historical Trust property, and related Germantown and mainline house museums under the administration of the Philadelphia Museum of Art, where she created a column for the newsletter employing a special object to create a narrative to illuminate the life at Cliveden. She also consulted for her husband’s ancestral property, the General Anthony Wayne House. She has actively toured house museums, in the USA and nationally.

A published writer and poet, Janet Roberts most recently had an artist’s residency, a three month award, to write a memoir at the Dorland Mountain Arts Colony in 2012. Her haiku, written in that residency, became available in 2014 on Amazon.com. A recent poem and essay were published in the literary journal, Schuykill Valley Journal in Philadelphia. Janet admires the poet in the playwright such as in Chekov and Ibsen who were also favorites of Eugene O’Neill. She looks forward to contributing to the Eugene O’Neill Foundation at Tao House and developing more collaboration and a wider patronage.

Welcome New Board Members!

MARY ANN OSBORNE

Mary Ann Osborne, an Alamo resident, is a new EONF board member who is already giving some time to the Studio Retreat. She says, “Meeting Gary Schaub, Co-President, found me ready for an effort”... the challenges of being a Board member. She has started work with Gary Schaub on promotion and press contacts. She says, in declaring her assets: “I bring a business background in health care sales, marketing, and education... built on degrees in Psychology and Business.”

Mary Anne says that, after first visiting Tao House, she read Stephen Black’s “Eugene O’Neill, Beyond Mourning and Tragedy”, published in 1999 by Yale University Press. Osborne comments that she found this early history of O’Neill “riveting” for her, as were the dynamics in O’Neill’s plays of family life. A selection of the Stage & Screen Book Club, the publisher’s synopsis reads: “Professor Black, a trained psychoanalytic therapist, studied the many grieving characters in O’Neill’s plays; he concludes that when the playwright accepts his losses and moves on, his characters do likewise, reflecting the playwright’s psychological and artistic growth and his hard-won victory through his own healing psychoanalysis.”

DIMITRIOS DIMITRAKOS

Born in Greece, romance and marriage to an American brought Dimitrios Dimitrakos to America. He is an attorney admitted in California and in the European Union, holds an honors Master of Laws (LLM) degree, with specialization in public international law. A member of the board of directors of the Hellenic Law Society of Northern California and a member of the Public International Law Committee of the State Bar of California’s International Law Section, he has taught international law and human rights to teenagers from around the world at UC Berkeley. He was recently accepted to the Leadership San Ramon Valley program for 2015/16.

Dimitri says he is a lover of philosophy, international politics and affairs, linguistics, music and alternative medicine. In his free time, he enjoys his family and friends, and playing the bouzouki. With his election to the board of directors of the Eugene O’Neill Foundation, he aspires to see the Foundation’s programs reach out to even more people, not only those already interested in and exposed to arts but especially those who have not had the opportunity to be touched by the artistic spirit yet.

Editor’s Note: Eugene O’Neill like other great dramatists, was an admirer of classical Greek drama. His play, “Desire Under the Elms” is inspired by plot elements from the Euripides play Hippolytus. O’Neill himself spoke of classical tragedy in his plays: “Tragedy...has the meaning the Greeks gave it. To them it brought exaltation, an urge toward life....it roused them to deeper spiritual understandings and released them from the petty greed of everyday existence. When they saw a tragedy on the stage they felt their own hopeless hopes ennobled in art.”
Thank you to our Members...

... AND TO OUR BOARD

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Gary Schaub

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Thank you to all our valued Crew Level and Actor Level Supporters!

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John and Carol Sherrill
Susan Taylor
Brian Thiessen
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The Eugene O'Neill Foundation, Tao House is most grateful to you, our supporters for your generous contributions that allow us to provide artistic and educational programs which focus on O’Neill’s vision and legacy. Eugene O’Neill is recognized throughout the world as America’s foremost playwright.

Please join us in recognizing the following donors through June 30, 2015.

All gifts and updated donations received after that date will be acknowledged in our next publication.

Thank you also to all our valued Crew Level and Actor Level Supporters!

Tao House featured item: Carlotta’s plates from Paris

Designed by Michael Manwaring Located in in the park across the street from the Danville Library (400 Front St.)

Keep an eye out for our upcoming Volunteer Plea. None of our performances or educational programs would be possible without our generous members and volunteers offering their time and resources!