Robinson Directs Music Revue Revival.

As part of its 2016 Centennial celebration of O’Neill’s first produced play in 1916, the Eugene O’Neill Foundation will present four performances of a revival of *O’Neill: The Rhythms of His Soul*, a lively musical revue created by Dan Cawthon. Newly adapted and staged by the Music Director Rachel Robinson, five performers sing and dance their way through the *Eugene O’Neill Songbook*, by Travis Bogard. These include Billy Raphael, Lisa Woo, Eric Carlson, Kate Metroka, and Brad Crooker. The Pianist is Mark Dietrich and the choreographer is Megan McGrath.

Rachel Robinson, director of the Tao House Production of “Rhythms of His Soul” has worked as a freelance music director with the Willows Theater, The Berkeley Playhouse, the Boxcar Theater and the Bay Area Children’s Theater. With a degree from The Steinhardt School at New York University (2007), Rachel brings cabaret and acting experience from New York. She grew up in the Washington D.C. area where she appeared in opera many times, at an early age, with a solo debut (1998) as the “Third Spirit” in “The Magic Flute” and a role as a peasant child in “Fedora” starring Placido Domingo.

The Revival of “Rhythms” is scheduled for two weekends in late Spring, in the Old Barn at the Eugene O’Neill National Historic Site, Danville. The dates are: April 30-May 1 and May 14-15. (Saturday evening at 8:00 p.m. and Sunday Matinees at 2:00 pm). Limited tickets for *O’Neill: Rhythms of His Soul* are available online at www.eugeneoneill.org or by phone at (925) 820-1818. All tickets are $35.

### AFTERGLOW

**Wine, Music and Merriment on the hill at Tao House**

**Saturday, May 14, 2016 5-10 p.m.**

Please join us for Dinner Al Fresco and a Musical Performance in the Old Barn.

Support the Eugene O’Neill Foundation’s theatrical offerings, the internationally acclaimed research library, the Travis Bogard Artist-in-Residence and Student Educational Programs. Invitations forthcoming!

* 4:15 p.m. Van Transportation from 205 Railroad Avenue

* 5:30 p.m. Cocktails in the Courtyard & Mini Auction.

*The performance on the 14th is a Package Event at $150. Tickets for the performance only, if available, will be released on Tuesday, May 10th.*

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The Eugene O'Neill Songbook: "The Rhythms of His Soul" by Dan Cawthon

To celebrate the publication of The Eugene O'Neill Songbook in 1973, the O'Neill Foundation threw a garden party for Travis Bogard, the editor. Over 100 people gathered on a warm summer evening in Burkawhite’s Diablo garden for wine, hors d’oeuvres and music. It was magical. There were twinkling lights in the trees. No mosquitoes.

Travis Bogard, with the help of his friends, sang his way through the Songbook. Now and then he would pause to make a wry comment on one of the songs, in a brilliant performance.

It was then that the seeds for O’Neill: the Rhythms of his Soul were planted. Whereas Travis assembled the songs alphabetically (by play), starting with Abortion (which features “For He’s a Jolly Good Fellow!”) and ending with A Touch of the Poet, my revue presents them in eight parts, emphasizing the various themes throughout the canon: “The American Dream, The Sea, the Barroom, Romance, Ireland, the South, the Misbegotten, and Behind Life.” A narrative introduces the themes. What strikes me most about the music is that it was written prior to 1914, the year O’Neill wrote his first play—A Wife for a Life. As he matured as a playwright, he didn’t turn to the music of the culture surrounding him, but to the songs that had shaped his soul as a young man.

“The Rhythms of his Soul” was first performed at the Village Theatre, Danville, in 2003 for the annual Eugene O’Neill Festival. This revival, in 2016, directed by Rachel Robinson, features the character of O’Neill himself, played by Brad Crooker, who shares in the narration and joins in on a few of the songs.

What a fitting way to celebrate both the 100th anniversary of the first production of an O’Neill play in 1916 and the founding of the National Park Service.

BOUND EAST FOR CARDIFF CENTENNIAL CELEBRATION

by Eric Fraisher Hayes

In 1916, aspiring playwright Eugene O’Neill was invited to spend the summer with an artist’s colony in the seaside town of Provincetown, Massachusetts. There, he was introduced to the Provincetown Players, an amateur theatre troupe lead by George Cram Cook and Susan Glaspell. The theatre troupe was searching for what they called “an authentic voice” for American theatre, a playwright able to touch on the truth of human experience. The young O’Neill was encouraged to submit a play for consideration. He chose a one-act script based on his experience at sea, which was unanimously approved. On the evening of July 28, 1916, Eugene O’Neill had his first produced play, Bound East for Cardiff. The Provincetown Players had found their “voice” and Modern American Drama was born.

To honor the 100th anniversary of this important moment in American theatre, the Eugene O’Neill Foundation, Tao House administered by the National Park Service, will be presenting two script-in-hand performances of Bound East for Cardiff on Saturday, July 30th at 8pm and Sunday, July 31st at 2pm.

Digital Resources: for appreciation of Bound East for Cardiff.

See Jeff Kennedy’s analysis in: http://www.provincetownplayhouse.com/boundeastforcardiff.html
a monologue by Yank: http://www.monologuearchive.com/o/oneill_007.html
Read the play: http://www.eoneill.com/texts/cardiff/contents.htm
https://archive.org/stream/provincetown01shayrich/provincetown01shayrich_djvu.txt
The Glencairn series: http://americantheatrefrog.com/oneill.html
See a YouTube production of a speech from the play: https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Z_gRyL0ZvBk
The 2017 Pulitzer Centennial To Celebrate O’Neill’s Four Pulitzers

Mary Camezon, EONF Board member and the Library/Archives Chair reports, “We have been in touch with Sara Pepitone, the digital editor for Pulitzer Prizes. For the centennial year of the Pulitzer Prize, we have been asked to share anything that we have that is related to O’Neill’s winning works – notes, playbills, personal mementos. These images will be shared on Facebook, Instagram, and Twitter.” Mary continues, “I and (board member/scholar) Eileen (Herrmann) will review what we have and plan to share what we find.”

The Pulitzer Prize for Drama is one of the seven American Pulitzer Prizes that are annually awarded for Letters, Drama, and Music. The Prize for Drama is one of the original Pulitzers, inaugurated in 1917, although no Drama prize was given that year. Eugene O’Neill was the second playwright to win a Pulitzer prize for Drama. His play, performed on Broadway, Beyond the Horizon (1920) was his first Pulitzer. O’Neill would win four Pulitzers in Drama, more than any playwright.

A first edition of the book version of Beyond the Horizon is on display in O’Neill’s study in Tao House. The NPS curator for Tao House reports that there is in the NPS Archives a phonograph record with cover: “BEYOND THE HORIZON, EUGENE O’NEILL CYCLE. RADIO BROADCAST RECORDED BY NATIONAL BROADCASTING CO., INC.”

Established in 1917 by provisions in the will of American (Hungarian-born) publisher Joseph Pulitzer, and administered by Columbia University in New York City, prizes are awarded yearly in twenty-one categories. Each winner receives a certificate and a US$10,000 cash award. The winner in the public service category of the journalism competition is awarded a gold medal.

January 2016 Staged Readings at the San Ramon Museum by Eric Fraisher Hayes

This January marked the seventh year in a row that the Eugene O’Neill Foundation, Tao House has partnered with the Museum of the San Ramon Valley to stage a play reading. The joint venture began with a simple observation and a question.

Back in June of 2009, I was invited to attend a celebration at the museum, and as I walked around the facility I found myself standing in the middle of the freight room, the largest room in the building, and musing over this notion: “I wonder what it would be like to put on a play here?” Soon afterwards, I found myself asking the nearest museum representative about the prospect of hosting a play. He took me to another representative and repeated the question. The second representative pondered the question and then took us to a third member of the museum. Eventually, I was connected with the decision-makers who told me that there was a small window of time in January that could be used for a play. Without hesitation, I said “Yes!” Figuring out the “how” would come later.

Each successive year since 2009, for four days, we take over the freight room of the Museum of the San Ramon Valley. Display cases are first moved out of the freight room. Then I borrow a truck and with the help of the National Park Service, we transport platforms, risers and furniture down from the old barn at Tao House to the museum where a little theatre is created in the 20x50 ft. space. Rehearsals are held Thursday and Friday night, and again on the Saturday afternoon of the first of the two performances. Because the commitment is so short (Thursday night to Sunday afternoon), many of the Bay Area’s talented actors, union and non-union, are able to squeeze the performance into their busy schedules and we are the beneficiaries. By Monday morning, we are packed up and returning everything to Tao House.

At the start of each year, I am reminded of the simple power of imagining something new and the importance of sharing the thinking with others. I am reminded of the possibilities of committing to a good idea with a faith that one way or another, it is possible to make it happen.

Witnessing Eugene O’Neill’s First Pulitzer Prize winning Play.

Suffering and sacrifice in the face of following one’s dreams or abdicating choice becomes a compelling theme in Eugene O’Neill’s first Pulitzer Prize winning play, Beyond the Horizon (1920) read at the Museum of the San Ramon Valley in Danville on January 9 and 10 (2016). Two brothers, Robert and Andrew Mayo, choose paths that reverse the destinies each had hoped he would achieve. By each of them falling in love with the same woman, in the resulting competition, one brother has to lose her to the other.

In a remarkable staged reading (remarkable, in part, due to only two days of preparation), Eric Fraisher Hayes lead actors Chad Deverman (Robert Mayo) and Teddy Spenser (Andrew Mayo), the play’s two beleaguered brothers, in a successful staged reading. True to form, Hayes, in his role as director, coaches the actors, including Hilary Schwartz (Ruth Atkins), John Hale (James Mayo, Ben, Dr Fawcett), Beth Chastain (Kate Mayo), Valerie Weak (Mrs. Atkins), and David Schuster (Captain Scott), to embrace and interpret a tragic theme from O’Neill’s theater repertoire. The performance required smooth pacing and credible interaction, and was noticeably effective in its impact on the audience. Sniffles were heard and tissue was visible!

The final scene where protagonist, Robert Mayo, expresses a revelation as he dies, is key to the “secret” that is beyond the horizon. Robert declares that although it is “too late for this world...[he]... will not miss the secret” in the next world as he has “won...the right of release beyond the horizon.” Gazing at the sunrise above the hills, Robert pledges to “remember – only through sacrifice – the secret required beyond – there the sun.” The panacea beyond the horizon that beckons all of us to a life of ease and comfort: “If only...” is actually an illusion.

This play poses questions for the audience: Is the sacrifice of one individual necessary for the happiness of another? A book I read recently addresses the questions raised by O’Neill’s drama about suffering. Paul Kalanithi’s best seller, When Breath Becomes Air (Random House, 2016) examines reckoning with the premature death at age 37, of a Stanford neurosurgeon. The author finds some peace and comfort recognizing that suffering is inherent in the human condition and that we must realize that it is not how long we live, but how we live.

Contributed by EONF board secretary, Katy Kolbath
2016 Student Days
By Katy Colbath.
A “whirlwind” of activity contained in a pastoral scene best describes the 2016 Student Day Saturdays hosted by the Eugene O’Neill Foundation. Thirty seven high school students immersed themselves in master workshops: art, acting, photography and playwriting, while they also enjoyed the quiet serenity of Eugene O’Neill’s beloved TAO House nestled in the Danville hills. Teenagers from nine high schools as far away as Fremont and as close as Monte Vista, quickly acclimated, connected with each other and energetically participated in their day-long workshops of choice. Notable this year was the Art workshop under the guidance of PIXAR animator, Tia Kratter. From the famous Emeryville-based organization, founded by Lucasfilm in 1979 and acquired by Steve Jobs in 1986. Tia’s stories were mesmerizing, including creation of a sequence for Buzz Lightyear of Toy Story in which Buzz dances Spanish style. To support their drawings, PIXAR hired and filmed two professionals from “Dancing with the Stars” to create a sequence of just ten seconds! Every animated film takes approximately four years to complete, and the first year, according to Tia, is the most fun and creative; the last year of perfecting the film is “torture”? Such were the interesting insights for the students!

22 Babson College Students Visit
Beth Wynstra’s “Revolutionary Stages and Stages of Revolution: Theater, Politics and Performance in San Francisco” students toured Tao House, enjoying talks by Merilyn Milam and Dan Cawthorn, while engaged in playwriting and acting sessions. Babson College (Wellesley, Mass.) students have a semester long program in San Francisco. Professor Wynstra is also the secretary of EONS.

Despite rain and windy weather, the acting students (most were returning participants) were thrilled to work again with actor/director Chad Deverman whose lively instruction includes physical and shouting exercises. In contrast, the photographers had great weather and quietly explored the Tao House grounds, shooting architectural angles as well as the hillsides perhaps, framed by a fence against a bright blue sky. Then, with the magic of current technology, the students’ photos were immediately downloaded into an LCD projector to be enlarged and displayed in color on a screen in the Old Barn. That process enabled photographer/instructor Lorena Castillo to provide immediate feedback to the budding artists.

“Wonderful!,” characterized Mt. Diablo High School student, MacKenzie Chandler and Piedmont High School student, Jane Simonetti’s experience working with their instructor, Erin Edens in Playwriting. The half dozen young writers tackled their scripts with sustained intensity. Students hope to return in July for the “Studio Retreat” to write and produce their plays. The Eugene O’Neill Foundation volunteers and the National Park Service look forward to this special event this summer.

EONF 2016 Summer Studio Retreat
A Studio Retreat in its seventh year will be held at the Eugene O’Neill National Historic Site, July 14-24, hosting local Contra Costa area high school students with an interest in acting or writing. Under the guidance of professional actors and playwrights the two groups hone their skills, working separately for the first few days with the actors studying movement and technique while the writers develop ten minute scenes. Then, the two groups combine forces, as the writers test their scripts with the actors. To have one’s dialogue spoken on stage at such an early point allows the writers to assess what does and does not work. Throughout the week the plays are necessarily revised while the actors learn to perform scenarios, culminating in a public staged reading on the afternoon of July 24 in the Tao House Old Barn Theater. None of this is possible without the partnership of the Eugene O’Neill Foundation, the National Park Service and the generous financial support of the Lesher and Wood Foundations.
Travis Bogard Fellows for 2016

By Florence McAuley

The Eugene O’Neill Foundation is pleased to announce the selection of the 2016 Travis Bogard Artists in Residence. The recipients are Thierry Dubost, professor of English at the University of Caen, Normandy, France and Valerie Joyce, Ph.D., Associate Professor of Theatre, Villanova University, Villanova, Pennsylvania. The two fellows were selected by a panel of their peers and ratified by the Board of Directors in February.

Thierry Dubost has an ambitious project of writing a short biography of Eugene O’Neill in French for the theatre community in France. Essential to his project are the letters of O’Neill, and photos of the staging of his plays which are contained in the Research Library at Tao House. Dubost states, “In a word, the purpose of my book is to help O’Neill gain a new visibility of French stages, initiating a first step towards a better understanding of Eugene O’Neill’s works for a French public.” As deputy mayor of the town of Falaise, Normandy, France, Thierry is in a unique position to promote O’Neill’s theater.

Valerie Joyce has chosen to spend her time at Tao House refining the play text for I Will Speak for Myself, a one woman show which portrays sixteen African American women’s lives from the Colonial Period to the Civil War. She has been accepted to present the play at the Edinburgh Fringe Festival in August 2016. Should time allow, Valerie also intends to continue work on her book, “Embodied Performance and African American Women, 1649-1865,” a scholarly manuscript about African American women.

The Fellows will be using the “trunk room” in the courtyard at Tao House and will have full access to the grounds, library and archives whenever they wish. They are provided with housing, meals and a car during their stay. The workspace has been set up to give the fellows the utmost opportunity to work on their projects in the atmosphere that was so conducive to creativity for Eugene O’Neill.

The Foundation is gratified to award fellowships to these deserving individuals, which continues the standard set by the 2015 fellows who benefited significantly from their time at Tao House.

EONS Presents “O’Neill at 100 Years on the Stage” at National American Literature Association

“O’Neill at 100 Years on the Stage” will be the topic the O’Neill Society members will pursue in celebrating the centennial of O’Neill’s first produced play, “Bound East for Cardiff”, in 1916. This panel will present papers focusing on important productions that significantly altered or enhanced the perception of O’Neill as a playwright in the USA or internationally, as well as papers that address productions that made contributions to theater history. This includes physical productions in terms of design, directional approaches or interpretations of a specific play, or a time or era when a play was produced that caused it to connect differently with its audiences.

The Director of the National American Literature conference is Professor Alfred Bendixen, Princeton University, Princeton, New Jersey. Janet Roberts, an EONF Board member, and EONS member, will present a paper “Inter-Arts as A Creative Force: Painters and a Playwright. Charles Demuth, Marsden Hartley and Eugene O’Neill: A Man and the Sea.” The American Literature Association will hold its 27th annual conference, May 26-29th, 2016, at the HYATT Regency San Francisco, 5 Embarcadero, San Francisco.

“Images of O’Neill in the Popular Mind”: EONS Panel at CDC in Baltimore

Travis Bogard Fellow, 2015, David Palmer, who teaches at the Massachusetts Maritime Academy, reports that at the Comparative Drama Conference (CDC) held in Baltimore from March 31-April 2, 2016, the Eugene O’Neill Society held both a society business meeting and a round table discussion of Images of O’Neill in the Popular Mind. Tony Kushner, playwright, was among the panelists, each of whom presented a five minute opening statement, preceding a discussion. A transcript will be published in the Eugene O’Neill Review, edited by Professor William Davies King, with guest editor, Beth Wynstra.
The play “East of Cardiff” is set in “the seaman’s forecastle of the British tramp steamer Glencairn on a foggy night midway on the voyage between New York and Cardiff”. The S.S. Ikala a British tramp steamer from New York to Buenos Aires was the model for the S.S. Glencairn of O’Neill’s early sea plays.

LITERARY PRECEDENT IN KIPLING: The overall structure of the play determined by Yank’s situation, bears a striking similarity to Kipling’s “The Rhyme of the Three Sealers”, which has Jim Tyrone misquote in “A Moon for the Misbegotten”. Kipling was one of young O’Neill’s favorite writers. The relevant passage reads:

Then Reuben Paine cried out again before his spirit passed:

"Have I followed the sea for thirty years to die in the dark at last?
“Curse on her work that has nipped me here with a shifty trick unkind –
I have gotten my death where I got my bread, but I dare not face it blind.
Curse on the fog! Is there never a wind of all the winds I knew
To clear the smother from all of my chest and let me look at the blue?”
The good fog heard – like a slitten sail, to left and right she tore,
And they saw the sun-dogs in the haze and the seal upon the shore...
And the rattle rose in Reuben’s throat and he cast his soul with a cry,
And “Gone already?” Tom Hall he said, “Then it’s time for me to die.”

The text focusses on Yank’s fate, in a dialogue between two close friends, both of them realizing one of them is dying. Moving from noise to stillness, from togetherness to loneliness, and from life to death, the play’s structure is characterized by constant suspense-creating shifts.

MUSIC. As in all O’Neill plays, music has a role. Melancholy and desolation are countered by Paul’s soft playing of a folk song on his accordion. However, at a critical point, Driscoll tells Paul to stop his “organ playing”: “Is that banshee screechin’ fit music for a sick man?” Organ playing suggests a funeral. A "banshee", in Irish popular belief, is a supernatural being in the shape of an old woman foretelling death by mournful singing. When the accordion music stops... “the steamer’s whistle sounds particularly loud in the silence.”

THE FOG. O’Neill seemed to love fog and even simulated it in Tao House interiors. However, fog implies impaired visibility, obscures reality, and presents a danger at sea. Fog delays the voyage to Cardiff and increases the chances of Yank dying before arriving in port. Yank and Driscoll agree that “it’s a hell av a life, the sea’, commenting on the the two friends, having suffered together. Life on shipboard is a world in miniature... the fog becomes a symbol of man’s seeking his way through life.

When Yank realizes that he has no choice, he courageously accepts his fate. The ending of the one act play suggests an upward journey: the fog has lifted; the stars are out. Symbolically, “A pretty lady in black is waiting for him”. See: Eugene O’Neill. A Playwright’s Theater Egil Tornqvist.

O’Neill had models of the famous Donald McKay designed American Clipper ships. Don Pace was the builder (1933-34) of these models for O’Neill. These included:

Lightning, Flying Cloud, Sovereign of the Sea, Staghound, James Baines and the Great Republic and a Chinese Junk. O’Neill wrote to Pace, "...one of my great interests in selecting these models is to have before me, comparatively, the changes in McKay design in his fastest ships, to have them all on tables side by side... Mrs. O'Neill has made me a present of The Lightning." -- on the 5th of May 1934, at Casa Genotta--now on display in O’Neill’s study at Tao House. All McKay ships on display are replicas.

Eugene O’Neill enjoyed a swim every day at Tao House. He enjoyed the beach swims each afternoon in Provincetown in 1916.
The Tao of Tao House: WATER.
by Janet Roberts

“Men of supreme goodness resemble the nature of water.” (Commentary. He She Gong)

The O’Neills named their beloved home, Tao House, which they built when they had voyaged to the Far East. As “Tao” (Dao)”The Way” is the constantly changing cycles of Life; the “Zi” (De) is its philosophical and practical application in life, society and politics. Lao Xi was the philosopher.

Chapter 8. Lao Xi. The highest good (Te Way) is like water. The goodness of water is that it benefits ten thousand creatures; yet itself does not contend.

If men think the ground the best place for building a house upon,
If among thoughts they value those that are profound,
If in friendship they value gentleness,
In words, truth; in government, good order;
In deeds, effectiveness; in actions, timeliness –
In each case it is because they prefer what does not lead to strife,
And therefore does not go amiss. Translation: Arthur Waley (1934)

Jessica Lange on Broadway in “Long Day’s Journey” at the Roundabout’s American Airlines Theater.


Lange, an Oscar and Golden Globe winner, will play Mary Tyrone, a victim of morphine addiction, in the O’Neill semi-autobiographical play, returning to the part after playing it on the West End in London in 2000. It’s one of the great female roles of American drama, as were the parts Lange tackled in her two prior Broadway appearances, including Tennessee Williams’ “The Glass Menagerie” (2005) and “A Streetcar Named Desire” (1992).

Gabriel Byrne, who stars as the family patriarch James Tyrone, appeared on Broadway in a Roundabout revival of O’Neill’s “A Touch of the Poet,” in 2005. John Gallagher Jr., a Tony winner will play the son Edmond with Oscar nominee, Michael Shannon as Jim Tyrone, Jr.

Yale University issues multi-media Critical edition of "Long Day's Journey Into Night"

Experience the American classic—as you’ve never experienced it before. This multimedia edition, edited by William Davies King, offers an interactive guide to O’Neill’s masterpiece.

• Hear rare archival recordings of Eugene O’Neill reading key scenes.
• Discover O’Neill’s creative process through the tiny pencil notes in his original manuscripts and outlines.
• Watch actors wrestle with the play in exclusive rehearsal footage.
• Experience clips from a full production of the play.
• Tour Monte Cristo Cottage, the site of the events in Long Day’s Journey Into Night, and Tao House, where the play was written.
• Delve into O’Neill’s world through photographs, letters, and diary entries.

And much, much more in this multimedia eBook.

Early Praise:
“The multimedia edition of Long Day’s Journey into Night is thrilling....I will never think of this play in the same way again. How fitting that one of the greatest of all American plays should give rise to this brilliant and generous work, which sets an entirely new standard for publishing in drama.”—James Bundy, Dean and Artistic Director, Yale School of Drama and Yale Repertory Theatre.

Watch the trailer: https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Q36Gvcn2hpY
Celebrating the NPS Centennial at Tao house
by Tom Leatherman, NPS General Superintendent

It is the start of the centennial year for the National Park Service and we continue to seek out opportunities to share the legacy of O’Neill with new audiences. A variety of exciting events are being planned to help us celebrate this milestone. In addition to the enhanced programming being offered at the site, in conjunction with the Eugene O’Neill Foundation, the staff at the park will be working to exhibit new items from our museum collection. These new exhibits will enhance the performances and programming at the site, and will provide a window into the life of the O’Neill’s while living in their “final home and harbor,” as O’Neill himself liked to call Tao House. We will also continue to maintain the house and grounds so that all visiting the site can experience the same inspiring landscape and serenity that allowed the playwright to create the amazing dramatic works we know today. As we celebrate the first 100 years of the National Park Service and of O’Neill productions, we want to create new opportunities for all to #FindYourPark as we enter our next 100 years. Please join us in helping keep the legacy of Eugene O’Neill alive!

O’Neill Foundation Works with NPS on Long-Term Planning

As we celebrate the National Park Service’s 100th anniversary, it’s an appropriate time to reaffirm the value and purpose of our national park system, and to reconsider the impact that these parks – including the Eugene O’Neill National Historic Site – have for the American people.

To this end, several O’Neill Foundation representatives – as “partners” with the National Park Service – are participating in a year-long process that will allow the Park Service and the community to better communicate the significance of each of our national parks and monuments.

“As a partner with the National Park Service, I’m very pleased that NPS invited us to participate in this important process,” said O’Neill Foundation President Merilyn Milam. “It will assist us in better communicating the value of this cultural resource to the Tri-Valley area, and guide the Foundation in its educational and performance programs into the future.”

In early January seven members of the O’Neill Foundation Board and Advisory Board spent a day in a workshop with National Park Service staff to initiate this process and to create a “Foundation Document” that will guide NPS in the promotion and protection of the Eugene O’Neill National Historic Site into the future. The workshop was led by Brad Phillips of the NPS Regional Office in San Francisco, and Park Superintendent Tom Leatherman.

The “Foundation Document” reviews the purpose of each park and identifies the significant features and interpretive elements that best describe the nature and value of the site in a national context. Why is the Eugene O’Neill National Historic Site important? Why should we promote and protect the legacy of playwright Eugene O’Neill? How does the historic site foster a better understanding of O’Neill and his role as “Father of the American drama”? What resources are necessary to reinforce these significant elements?

“The January workshop was just the beginning of this process,” said Leatherman. “Our NPS staff will continue to develop the ideas and suggestions provided at the workshop, and then we will bring the entire package back to the O’Neill Foundation Board of Directors, in a final draft form, later in the year.”

“It was important that the Park Service include our partners in this planning document,” said Park Superintendent Tom Leatherman. “Our collaboration with the Foundation is central to the experience we provide to visitors at the Eugene O’Neill National Historic Site.”
Appreciating the unique, complex and numerous facets that make the Eugene O’Neill Foundation Board of Directors, a challenge to chair, Merilyn Milam brings a decade of service on the Board of Directors, as well as years of leadership experience as a professional educator and as a volunteer in the community of the San Ramon Valley. “I have long been a theater devotee, but working with the interesting mix of teachers, actors, community volunteers, business people, lawyers, artists, and others that serve on the O’Neill Board of Directors, I have come to have a greater appreciation of just how challenging it can be to keep the theater, in general, and Eugene O’Neill, specifically, relevant and within the reach of all in today’s world.”

Having long honed her skills as a measured and careful leader who listens to all and then makes thoughtful decisions, Merilyn’s service as the President of the Diablo Valley Panhellenic, and as chairperson of Children’s Council and Youth Danville-Alamo AAUW (American Association of University Women) and of the Diablo Symphony Panhellenic, and as chairperson of Children’s Council and Youth Council at the San Ramon Valley United Methodist Church has well-prepared her for leadership of a Board of Directors of a foundation.

In 2006, when Merilyn was elected to the EONF Board of Directors, she was naturally attracted to the foundation’s education programs. These include “Student Days,” where local high school students spend time working with professionals in acting, artistic design, photography or playwriting and the annual summer “Studio Retreat,” a week-long opportunity, for high school students, to write, direct and act in their own productions.

Merilyn’s leadership in the Mt. Diablo Unified School District as the manager of both Title I, a program for high poverty schools, and the Gifted and Talented Education (GATE) program laid a foundation for her role in EONF. As a professional educator, nothing delighted Merilyn more than seeing young people blossom, developing and gaining recognition for their talents. In her career as a high school English teacher at San Ramon Valley High School, Merilyn connected students to literature, increasing their awareness of universal themes, such as those Eugene O’Neill, playwright displays in his Pulitzer prize winning dramas.

In her present role as President of the Board of Directors of the Eugene O’Neill Foundation, Merilyn, with a generous nature and fine sense of humor, has already demonstrated her leadership with a planning committee for the future of the Tao House site with the National Park Service. In her role at board meetings, she instills, along with active participation, the values of using time wisely and effectively, in eliminating unproductive committee meetings. She has resolved to guide the EONF to gain more community visibility and wider participation in the cultural life of the San Ramon Valley in the centennial celebration of the first O’Neill play performed in Provincetown.

On a personal and public level, Merilyn perpetuates the values of life-long learning, as demonstrated in her gift of appreciation to the former co-presidents, Gary Schaub and Trudy McMahon, to whom she presented the latest biography of Eugene O’Neill by Robert Dowling. Such initiatives encourage all members of the Eugene O’Neill community to treasure the opportunity to learn more about the only American playwright to win the Noble Prize.

In Memoriam:
Robert Rezak, Former EONF Board Member

A major force, advocate and leader on the local arts scene in Contra Costa County left with the passing of Robert R. Rezak. A resident of Concord, California, Robert Rezak died at home at age 83 on February 12. Born in San Francisco, and retired after 35 years with Pacific Bell management, he is survived by his wife, Patricia, and three adult children.

Robert Rezak had been a long-time Board member of the Eugene O’Neill Foundation, and was a current member of the Foundation’s Advisory Board. For many years Bob handled publicity for the O’Neill Foundation, and acted in the role of MC for many of its annual award dinners. “Bob’s heart was always with the Arts,” said EONF Board President Merilyn Milam. “He worked with wit and grace to make the arts more known in the community.”

Rezak was a founding member of the Arts and Cultural Council of Contra Costa County (ACS), and helped create its arts award program. He was a Walnut Creek Arts Commissioner from 1995–2000, and served as a Trustee of the Diablo Regional Arts Association. He served for 22 years on the executive committee of the Concord Pavilion Associates, and had affiliations with Diablo Symphony, Diablo Theatre Company and the Contra Costa Wind Symphony.

Bob was truly a positive and effective force for the arts in this county,” according to former EONF Board president, Gary Schaub, himself a former leader in the cultural sector in Walnut Creek. “Bob not only spoke positively, but he used his professional promotional skills to help so many non-profit arts and cultural groups.”

Bob Rezak’s memorial service was on Friday April 1 at 1:00 pm at St Francis of Assisi Church, 864 Oak Grove Rd., Concord. A reception followed the service at Heather Farms Community Center, 1540 Marchbanks Drive, Walnut Creek.
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 March, 2016). All gifts and renewed donations received after that date will be acknowledged in our next publication.

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