Eugene O’Neill’s quest to become a playwright started as a young man recovering from a life-threatening illness and ended at the top of a winding and hilly road in Danville. Tao House, the “final home and harbor” nestled in the Danville hills, is where O'Neill wrote his most celebrated and deeply personal plays. In 2020, the Eugene O'Neill Foundation, Tao House will retrace the playwright’s steps from nascent writer to his journey’s end as America’s first great playwright, with productions of his earliest plays and his last play, the American masterpiece A Moon for the Misbegotten. O'Neill's searching nature guaranteed that his artistic path would be one of many twists and turns: we hope you will join us to see what is around each bend.

O'Neill's Lost Plays
The Web, Abortion, and Recklessness
August 29, 8:00 pm
August 30, 2:00 pm
Village Theatre, Downtown Danville

A Moon for the Misbegotten
September 12–27
The Old Barn, Tao House

‘Theatre Royalty’ at O’Neill Foundation Awards Ceremony

The Eugene O’Neill Foundation, Tao House celebrated in February its Awards Dinner, in the O'Neill Room of Crow Canyon Country Club, in Danville, the town where O'Neill lived. The awards are presented periodically to members of the Foundation, as well as to partners and theatre luminaries—for their contributions to the Foundation’s mission of promoting the vision and legacy of America’s foremost playwright.

Before the award presentation, attendees were treated to a performance of a scene from A Moon for the Misbegotten, by actors Howard Swain and Rolf Saxon.

Artistic Director Eric Hayes received the Artistic Award, also known as the Genie Award. He said, “I’m not sure why I became so devoted to O’Neill’s plays,” then added, “I had a better childhood,” alluding to O'Neill's troubled early life. Maybe, he mused, he was drawn to O'Neill because he grew up in the town where the playwright lived and worked.

The Freeman Award, for a member giving tireless efforts and time to the organization, went to Joyce Michalcyzk, for her essential work in recruiting and organizing volunteers for Tao House programs.

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The Open Gate Award, which acknowledges board members’ dedication and service that enhance the legacy of O’Neill, went to Carole Wynstra.

Recipient of Partnership Awards were Superintendent Tom Leatherman and staff of the National Park Service, as well as the Town and Town Council of Danville. The NPS, which manages the Eugene O'Neill National Historic Site, partners with the Foundation on its programs. Presenter Terry Sherman said, “Tom and his staff have worked tirelessly to promote the vision of Eugene O'Neill.” Accepting for the town were Council members Robert Storer and Newell Arnerich. Presenter Marcia Harmon stressed that “the Town of Danville has always had our backs.”

The Tao House Award was presented to Bay Area theatre legend Joy Carlin, “theatre royalty,” as Artistic Director Hayes designated her in presenting the prestigious award. Carlin has influenced generations of theatre artists in her 50-plus years of acting and directing in the Bay Area. She reminisced about meeting O'Neill scholar Travis Bogard when she taught acting at UC Berkeley. “He told me about Tao House and the Foundation.” In winning this award, Carlin joins other theatre royalty: actors Paul Robeson, Cherry Jones, and Jason Robards, Jr., as well as Travis Bogard.

When it comes to things O'Neill, award-winner Carlin said, noting the Foundation’s many accomplishments in play production, education, and scholarship: “Danville is now the place to go.”

Be sure to check out our Instagram feed: eugene_oneill_foundation and like us on Facebook

John Barry
Travis Bogard Artist in Residence Fellows for 2020

Four artists in residence will work at Tao House this year.

Erin K. Considine, as an actress transitioning to playwriting, will be the first Carey Perloff Fellowship recipient. At Tao House she plans to complete a cycle entitled “The Firefly Plays,” and a play that focuses on a half-Latino family dealing with the mother’s Alzheimer’s.

Paul Kruse, a playwright currently of Austin, Texas, will be working on a final draft of a documentary performance called “Somewhere Else,” about growing up gay in the rural upper Midwest. His project grew out of research on HIV-positive patients and expanded to explore family history.

Tara Palmquist, a playwright from southern California, is working on a new play with a working title, “The Body’s Midnight,” about “disappearing” via a road trip without plan and also “disappearance” in dementia.

Dan Venning, assistant professor of theatre and English at Union College in Schenectady, New York, will be researching and writing about Eugene O’Neill’s first Pulitzer Prizes, which set the tone for how the prize for drama would be understood over the next century.

Travis Bogard Day-Use Program: A reminder to visual artists, creative writers, and theatre professionals. Apply by June 30 for the fall session. For guidelines and applications: http://www.eugeneoneill.org/artist-in-residence-program/

Tribute to Tony Cooper, March 28, 1939-February 17, 2020

Eugene O’Neill Foundation members mourn the passing in February of Tony Cooper, husband of long-time board member and Foundation Past President Wendy Cooper. Dr. Cooper played a significant and essential role in the establishment of the O’Neill Research Library, housed in the New Barn at Tao House. A noted computer expert, he designed a unique data collection and sorting system for the library (in use today), containing programs for each area of the extensive collection: photographs, letters, books, memorabilia, phonograph records, videos, audios, clippings, and playbills. He volunteered a great deal of time to this effort over several years, working with Wendy and Diane Schinnerer (past Library Committee chair) to ensure much of the collection was scanned and accessioned properly into the database.

Working with Wendy on Foundation productions, he also served as our “tech guy.” His technical expertise in lighting, sound, and electrical power was invaluable. Together Tony and Wendy filmed all productions produced in the Old Barn for a number of years, and videoed years of Student Days student interviews and receptions honoring Student Days participants. They also captured on video for our archives many interviews with people significant to the Foundation’s founding, allowing us to preserve its history.

The Foundation owes a huge debt to Tony and is grateful for his many hours of volunteer work to help make the vision and mission of the Foundation come alive. The family has suggested that memorial gifts be made to the Eugene O’Neill Foundation. Mary Cameron

In Memoriam: Jo Harberson

At year’s end, the Eugene O’Neill Foundation mourned the passing of Jo Harberson on December 29. She was a long-time board member who is well remembered for having tackled the job of rewriting the bylaws, as well as for being “a very clear thinker and plain speaker, with a subtle sense of humor.” Members recalled that she was a “bright light” and a tireless worker for the Foundation: It was always a plus “when Jo was ‘on your team.’”

Studio Retreat 2020 Is Cancelled

The Eugene O’Neill Foundation’s annual Studio Retreat, the master classes in acting and playwriting for Bay Area high school students, is canceled this year, because of the coronavirus pandemic. We will miss the creativity and energy the students bring to Tao House each year, and we look forward to planning for 2021.

Superintendent’s Message

It was an honor to receive the partnership award from the Foundation at the awards dinner in February. Having worked with members of the Foundation for over 11 years now, I have seen how creative, dedicated, and passionate they are, and it has been a pleasure getting to know them. Over those years there have been many changes in the members of the Foundation, as well as in the National Park Service staff. After our lead ranger Tad Shay retired, we worked for over a year to refill his position. We are excited to announce the arrival of our “new” lead ranger, Tory Starling (Tory Baird previously). Tory has worked with the four East Bay parks since 2014, when she served as a seasonal interpretive ranger and pathways intern at Eugene O’Neill National Historic Site. After obtaining her MFA in Exhibit Design at UC Davis, she returned to working with us full time as the Education Technician at John Muir National Historic Site. Tory brings many years of experience working with community partners and nonprofits. She is excited about the new opportunities and projects we will work on together in the future.

Tours of Tao House at Eugene O’Neill National Historic Site will remain closed through May 3 in response to guidance from Contra Costa County Health Services and requirements for social distancing protocols. This closure is subject to extension based on further guidance from the county. The health and safety of our visitors, employees, volunteers, and partners is our number-one priority. The National Park Service is working service-wide with federal, state, and local authorities to closely monitor the COVID-19 pandemic.

Thank you for your patience, Tom Leatherman, Superintendent

Visit the Eugene O’Neill National Historic Site

Guided Tours


2 pm. Reservations are required.

Self-guided Tours “Saturdays Without Reservations” at 10:15 am, 12:15 pm and 2:15 pm.

If hiking to the site on Saturdays, please be here before 3 pm. The park is closed to visitors Monday and Tuesday.

Due to the location of this park, all visitors are required to take a free National Park Service shuttle to the historic home and grounds. Visitors are not permitted to drive their personal/private vehicles to the site. The shuttle meets at 205 Railroad Avenue in downtown Danville, outside of the Museum of the San Ramon Valley. Parking is available next to the museum. Admission to the site is free.

Reservation Line (925) 838-0249

Visit www.nps.gov/euon for more information.


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Thanks to Our Donors, Festival Patrons, and Volunteers

We are always grateful for the generosity of our donors, without whom the Foundation’s work would not be possible.

Thank you for supporting your local performing arts!

To see a list of our donors, or to make a donation to the Foundation, go to www.eugeneoneill.org/join-us/ or send your check to Eugene O’Neill Foundation, Tao House, P.O. Box 402, Danville, CA 94526-0402.

Support our Foundation through AmazonSmile. Go to AmazonSmile, shop online, and indicate that a percentage of your Amazon purchase is donated to the Foundation, at no cost to you.