

EUGENE O'NEILL SOCIETY

Newsletter

Eugene O'Neill: The Constant Presence

April 2017

IN THE U.S., ON STAGE



Photos:
 1. Chris Whitaker
 2. A. Vincent Scarano
 3. Eugene O'Neill Fdn.
 4. Carol Rosegg
 5. Stephanie Berger

1. *Long Day's Journey Into Night*, Geffen Playhouse, pp. 17-18.
2. *Long Day's Journey Into Night*, Monte Cristo Cottage, pp. 19-20.
3. *Shell Shock & The Rescue*, Playwrights' Theatre, Danville, pp. 28-29.
4. *The Emperor Jones*, Irish Rep, pp. 21-22.
5. *The Hairy Ape*, The Armory, pp. 14-16.

IN IRELAND

10th International Conference
 July 19-22, pp. 10-13

National University of
 Ireland, Galway



Eugene O'Neill:
 Ireland, the Constant Presence



REMEMBERING THE GELBS

pp. 3-9

What's Inside

President's Message	2	Honorary board, special members . .	24
Remembering the Gelbs	3-9	Conference Panels	25
O'Neill On Stage	14-22, 26, 28	Conferences, CFPs	26
10th International Conference . . .	10-13	Eugene O'Neill Foundation	
Member News		Artists in Residence	27-28
New website	23	Playwrights' Theatre	28-29
<i>The Eugene O'Neill Review</i>	23	Contributors	30-31

- SOCIETY BOARD**
PRESIDENT
 J. Chris Westgate
 jcwestgate@fullerton.edu
- VICE PRESIDENT**
 Robert M. Dowling
 Central Connecticut State University
- SECRETARY/TREASURER**
 Beth Wynstra
 bethwynstra@gmail.com
- INTERNATIONAL SECRETARY —**
ASIA: Haiping Liu
 liuhp@nju.edu.cn
- INTERNATIONAL SECRETARY —**
EUROPE: Marc Maufort
 mmaufort@ulb.ac.be
- GOVERNING BOARD OF DIRECTORS**
CHAIR: Steven Bloom
 sbloom@lasell.edu
- Jackson Bryer**
 jbryer@umd.edu
- Michael Burlingame**
 Burlingame@snet.net
- Robert M. Dowling**
 dowlingron@ccsu.edu
- Thierry Dubost**
 thierry.dubost@unicaen.fr
- Kurt Eisen**
 keisen@tntech.edu
- Eileen Herrmann**
 Giggie6000@aol.com
- Katie Johnson**
 johnso33@miamioh.edu
- Daniel Larner**
 Daniel.Larner@www.edu
- Cynthia McCown**
 mccynqn@beloit.edu
- Anne G. Morgan**
 amorgan@theoneill.org
- David Palmer**
 dpalmer@maritime.edu
- Robert Richter**
 rarric@conncoll.edu

EX OFFICIO
IMMEDIATE PAST PRESIDENT
 Jeff Kennedy
 jtkennedy@asu.edu

THE EUGENE O'NEILL REVIEW
 Editor: William Davies King
 king@theaterdance.ucsb.edu

NEWSLETTER
 Editor: Jo Morello
 jo@jomorello.com



A Message from Society president J. Chris Westgate

Dear O'Neillians,

It is with deeply mixed feelings that I write this letter. The recent passing of Barbara Gelb is a great loss for the Eugene O'Neill Society. Along with Arthur, who passed in 2014, Barbara was a great presence in the Society for so long that it is undoubtedly difficult to imagine the future without her. As you will see in the remembrances of them elsewhere in this *Newsletter*, They were so important to so many members of the O'Neill Society and the study of O'Neill's life that we should all take a moment to remember them—each of us individually and together as a Society.

Yet the sadness we feel is mixed with enthusiasm for what lies ahead for the Society, including the Tenth International Conference on Eugene O'Neill: "Eugene O'Neill: Ireland, the Constant Presence." The conference's schedule is now available on the Society's website (www.eugeneoneillsociety.org/index.html) and, as you can see, we have a lot of exciting things to look forward to including lectures from Ireland's president Michael D. Higgins as well as scholars Declan Kiberd, and Gerardine Meaney; a lecture on the Abbey Theatre and its archives; and a performance of Ronan Noone's *The Second Girl*.

Beyond that, the Galway Arts Festival is running during the conference, with offerings we can take in during some down time.

As you saw in the email from our secretary/treasurer Beth Wynstra, registration for the Conference is now available. Conference co-chairs Nelson O'Ceallaigh Ritschel and Audrey

McNamara and members of the executive committee are working diligently on making this conference an amazing experience.



I should note that all the conference information is posted on our newly redesigned Society website thanks to Jeff Kennedy. (See page 23.) Please take some time to look through the amazing work that Jeff has put into the website and send him thanks for his hard work.

Just glancing through the photographs from past conferences in New York City and New London was a treat for me—seeing all of us gathered together to talk about the life and work of O'Neill.

I would be remiss (and in trouble with Beth!) if I didn't take a moment to ask you to consider renewing your Society membership for next year. We've had a great year for membership, with our numbers up from the previous year—

which is great! But we still need all our members in good standing. If you haven't renewed yet, I encourage you to do so soon. As always, you can renew online at the Society [website](#).

I hope you get a chance to see some of the productions of O'Neill's plays that are happening right now. We have coverage on several important productions in this issue (pages 14-22, 26, 28).

I just got back from New York City where I had the good fortune of seeing one of them, *The Emperor Jones*, at the Irish Repertory Theatre. It was an astonishingly visceral experience that left the performers and the audience overwhelmed. (See photos [HERE](#).)

Additionally, I got to see *The Hairy Ape* at The Armory, which was truly enjoyable in the ways that the production experimented with the expressionism of the play.

If you don't have a chance to see the play, click [HERE](#) to watch Rob Dowling's interview with the director, Richard Jones, and the leading actor, Bobby Cannavale.

Until Galway....

Chris

Below, *The Hairy Ape*. PHOTO: STEPHANIE BERGER.
Right: *The Emperor Jones*. PHOTO: CAROL ROSEGG.



“What I am is a Writer”: Remembering Barbara—and Arthur

by Sheila Hickey Garvey

Barbara and then Arthur Gelb were amongst my closest friends for almost thirty years. We often dined together, had a mutual passion for the opera, indulged—just a bit—in gossip, laughed a lot and also shared personal intimacies and concerns in a way that one can only do with the closest and most trusted of friends. Of course, the primary tie was Eugene O’Neill, as my own writing and research builds on Barbara’s interviews with José Quintero and Jason Robards in the 1970s.

Separating Barbara and Arthur was challenging since they co-authored much of their O’Neill writing and were an inseparable couple as often as possible. But I consciously made the decision to focus on Barbara’s unique professional identity in this remembrance because it was almost too easy to become caught up in Arthur’s dynamic personality, exuberant nature and mesmerizing intellect.

My first effort to spotlight Barbara was in 1987 at the time her play *My Gene* premiered at New York’s Public Theater. The play, about Carlotta Monterey O’Neill, starred Barbara’s friend Coleen Dewhurst. I interviewed Barbara and wrote an article based on that interview for *The Eugene O’Neill Newsletter*. In 1995 Fred Wilkins, co-founder of the Eugene O’Neill Society and then-editor of *The Eugene O’Neill Review*, asked me to be the chair for a performance panel at an O’Neill Society conference in Boston.

The panelists were to be Jason Robards and José Quintero. Because Bar-



(File photo, forwarded by Bette Mandl)

bara and Arthur were at the conference to receive the Eugene O’Neill Medallion, I asked Barbara to join the panel. After all she was also a playwright and should be thought of as such. With reluctance Barbara joined my other guests and, of course, held her own while Arthur sat in the audience asking Jason and José provocative questions to rile them up.

Barbara once said to me, “what I am is a writer.” To Barbara, being a writer meant being an artist. As the niece of acclaimed violinist Jascha Heifetz and the step-daughter of successful playwright S.N. Berman she well understood what being an artist truly meant.

She gave me an example to explain some of her eccentricities by telling me that her Uncle Jascha would test all of the children in the extended family by holding a tuning fork to their ears to see if they had perfect pitch. Heifetz’s reputation for perfectionism

was legendary and apparently seeped into their family life right to the edge of the crib.

Barbara’s sense of artistic integrity was indeed finely tuned. This is why Barbara and Arthur together spoke against director Jose Quintero and Donald Gallop (then curator at Yale’s Beinecke Library) for adapting—at Carlotta’s request—the incomplete text of O’Neill’s *More Stately Mansions* for performance on Broadway. Barbara and Arthur both took an unpopular position, one that appeared in *The New York Times* just before the production opened. Because of this there was friction amongst Quintero, Robards, Gallup and the Gelb for many years.

From Barbara and Arthur’s point of view, they had taken a stance on behalf of deceased writer Eugene O’Neill, who was unable to speak for himself and was known to have instructed Carlotta to destroy the unfinished manuscript. To alter an artist’s work without permission was, to Barbara, an ethical violation.

During the Society’s Sixth International Conference in Provincetown, Massachusetts, in 2005, Barbara, Arthur and filmmaker Ric Burns spent the weekend with fellow O’Neillians. They had asked me to arrange the premiere presentation of selections from their then newly completed PBS *American Experience* episode titled *Eugene O’Neill, a Documentary Film*.

That last word “film” was very important, especially to Barbara. The *American Experience* film was vindication for

(Continued on page 4)

The End of an Era: The Passing of the Gelbs (continued)

Remembering the Gelbs

(Continued from page 3)

what she believed was Warren Beatty's lifting of a huge portion of her book *So Short a Time* for his acclaimed movie *Reds*. Barbara had been in talks with Beatty to use her research, but then read in the newspapers that he was making the film—but without her. She received no credit or remuneration for that highly successful film. However, an out-of-court settlement paid for a fur coat that enabled Barbara to boast that it was given to her by Warren Beatty.



PHOTO: STEVE BLOOM

Since Barbara and Arthur's O'Neill work was so intertwined I'd like to share what I was privileged to observe of their work/life process while we composed our *Eugene O'Neill's New York Tour* book, presented in 2011 for the O'Neill Society's Seventh Conference, held in New York City. This guidebook was something Arthur had always wanted to do. Barbara had not realized this and at first thought Arthur was trying to distract himself from completing their current project, their final O'Neill biography, *By Women Possessed*. Since Arthur was vehement, Barbara jumped on board. I soon found out that I would be in charge of helping them select areas of the city to write about, set deadlines, and establish presentation formats to

integrate maps and photos to assist readers in navigating the Gelbs's meticulously crafted prose.

Through a series of monthly meetings in their apartment, over the course of more than a year I was privileged to observe Arthur and Barbara in the process of living and creating in the manner they had been doing for their entire marriage. During those work meetings, I would watch them and sometimes participate in full-out artistic squabbles.

During these times Arthur would sit immovable in his chair while Barbara would rise from hers and circle the room, advocating forcefully for her point of view. It seemed a practiced strategy since Arthur was so much taller than Barbara. By rising, she was taller, and by sitting, Arthur "gave her the floor," so to speak. I would remain seated and cajole, plead, reason and dare to offer a word or phrase as compromise but found that it was best to stay advocating for photos and maps while they turned upside-down and inside-out a particular word, sentence, paragraph, or point of inclusion or exclusion for every section that became the final tour booklet.

At one point Barbara pulled from my fingers three or four pages that both she and Arthur had spent days constructing and, with seeming ruthlessness, ripped them up before my eyes while I sat groaning over the lost prose. Keeping in mind that the two of them were at the time in their

early 80s and that I was in my early 60s, I frequently marveled at their stamina much less their integrity, and their ability to integrate work and life so seamlessly. After these intense sessions, and at some mysteriously agreed upon time, we would leave our work and go out for a fun-filled dinner, or sometimes we would eat in their apartment kitchen while Barbara dutifully scooted about serving us something ordered out as Arthur charmed us both with reporter stories from his days with *The New York Times*.

At one point, we had a disagreement that so upset the three of us that I wondered how we would get ourselves untangled. But it was Arthur and Barbara who handled it with such elegance. They thought about what needed to occur in the process and called me on the phone the next day, Arthur on the phone and Barbara beside him injecting her thoughts.

First, they expressed their great love for me and then explained very clearly what they perceived as the problem from their point of you. I realized instantly that they were right and agreed to the changes and we all laughed and almost cried with relief because all

(Continued on page 5)



Barbara Gelb and Sheila Hickey Garvey at the New London conference in June 2014

PHOTO: JO MORELLO



The End of an Era: The Passing of the Gelbs (continued)

Remembering the Gelbs

(Continued from page 4)

three of us were so worried that our friendship might be impaired.

I cherish the memories of Barbara's and Arthur's attention to the human component. For them it was the key foundation for their enduring and renewable collaborative process.

As a teenager, it was Arthur who I admired for his journalistic courage. But it was Barbara that, as a youth, I emulated as a writer. I was always eager to meet her because she was one of first living woman writers whose articles and books inspired me to become fascinated with O'Neill performances. Barbara broke barriers as a woman journalist for many that have followed. Arthur once showed me a photo of Barbara in which she was clearly the only woman in a crowded *New York Times* journalist's meeting. She sat with a serious look on her face and, if I recall correctly, she was wearing a lady-like hat!



*Tiny Barbara Gelb, dwarfed by a staircase, speaks at the launch for *By Women Possessed*, the new biography of Eugene O'Neill that she wrote with her late husband, Arthur Gelb.*

PHOTO: SHEILA HICKEY GARVEY

(Photo from the Eugene O'Neill Society Newsletter, November 2016.)

As he showed me the photo, Arthur reminded me that the men in that room represented a famously rough and rowdy male pack. But tiny Barbara was totally capable of holding her ground. That Barbara would become a colleague and friend still touches my soul with wonder.

Now, losing Barbara and having so recently lost Arthur, what gives me comfort is knowing that it is possible to completely, fully live the life of a consummate artist while still remaining a decent loving human being of extraordinary character.

Barbara and Arthur were doting parents and grandparents, writers of extraordinary talent, and humanitarians who contributed immeasurably to the quality of the daily life of so many New Yorkers.

Ironically, their private lives were the opposite of Eugene O'Neill's, whose life and legacy they unflinchingly examined for the majority of their separate and mutual writing careers.

The Gelbs: a short recap and memories from members

By Jo Morello

Barbara and Arthur Gelb became devoted fans of Eugene O'Neill in 1946 when they splurged on orchestra seats for *The Iceman Cometh*. They became biographers in the late 1950s, initially stealing what time they could from their "day jobs." He would ultimately become managing editor of *The New York Times*. Barbara, a former *Times* writer, worked as a journalist and later a playwright. Both were also authors as well as committed parents of two young boys. Yet they managed to

write three ground-breaking biographies of O'Neill, contributed to numerous other ventures including a PBS *American Experience* episode titled *Eugene O'Neill, a Documentary Film* (with Ric Burns) and became known worldwide as authorities on O'Neill.

Still they found time to become heavily involved with and supportive of the Eugene O'Neill Society, Eugene O'Neill Foundation and Eugene O'Neill Theater Center. The admiration has been mutual: the Society presented the Eugene O'Neill Medallion

to them in 1995, the Foundation bestowed the Tao House Award in 1996 and the Theater Center awarded the Monte Cristo Award in 2005.

The newsletter has published several articles about the Gelbs over the years, most recently in the [Spring and Fall 2016](#) issues as their biography [By Women Possessed](#) was being released. We have also asked our members to share memories and photos. Some responses appear on the following pages, along with a few reprints from earlier newsletters.

'We just want to finish the damn book!'—Arthur Gelb, June 2006

From Harley Hammerman

My wife Marlene and I write a food blog (twoforthetable.com) when we travel. On June 30, 2016, we were in New York City. Here's our blog for that date:

On Thursday, we had a special lunch date at Nice Matin on West 79th Street on the Upper West Side. The delightful French-Mediterranean restaurant is located in the Lucerne Hotel—the hotel where Eugene O'Neill's parents stayed in the early 1900s. But you knew that.

I had the nice Crab Cobb and Marlene had the wonderful *Moules Provençal* with a side of yummy frites. But this lunch was not about the food.

Arthur and Barbara Gelb are one of the by-products of my obsession with the playwright Eugene O'Neill. Arthur was the former managing editor of *The New York Times*. Barbara is an author and playwright. We first met the Gelbs in Provincetown in 2005, and subsequently dined with them whenever we came to New York to talk about O'Neill, theatre, politics, food, family and more.



The Gelbs at Blue Smoke, June 2006

PHOTO: HARLEY HAMMERMAN

The Gelbs wrote the seminal biography of Eugene O'Neill, *O'Neill*, published in 1962, and a new version of that biography, *O'Neill: Life with Monte Cristo*, in 2000. A final volume—their *pièce de résistance*—will be published in November of this year.

We were fortunate to read an uncorrected advance proof. It's amazing.

We had previously had dinner with Arthur and Barbara in October of 2012, at a time they were feverishly working to finish their final tome. As we talked about the book that night, I told Arthur I was sure it would be a best seller. Arthur quickly exclaimed, "I don't care if it's a best seller. We just want to finish the damn

book! It will be a monument to the two of us."

Indeed, it will be. Arthur Gelb died in May of 2014 at the age of 90. Barbara pushed onward with *By Women Possessed*, polishing final drafts, obtaining permissions and working on a multitude of details.

Marlene and I lunched with Barbara at Nice Matin. It was the first time we'd been with her since Arthur's death. We talked about O'Neill, theatre, politics, food, family and more, as we had in the past. We love Barbara. And we miss Arthur.



Barbara Gelb shares a quiet lunch with Harley Hammerman and Marlene Hammerman (not pictured) on June 30, 2016.

PHOTO: MARLENE HAMMERMAN

And now we miss Barbara.



From Rupendra Guha Majumdar

Please find attached a rare, close-up photo of Arthur Gelb and Theodore Mann taken by me at the garden-site of the erstwhile "Hell Hole" during the Eugene O'Neill Conference in Greenwich Village/NYU in 2011. The occasion was the ceremony of placing a new O'Neill plaque there.

Rupendra Guha Majumdar has been associate professor of English at Delhi University, Delhi, India, since 2009. Previously he was a pre- and post-doctoral Fulbright Fellow at Yale University and a Fulbright scholar-in-residence at Suffolk University (2014-2015).

The End of an Era: The Passing of the Gelbs (continued)

O'Neillians share their photos and memories of Arthur and Barbara

From Steve Bloom

These photos were taken on Veterans Day Weekend, 2012. My wife Margie Mitlin and I visited Barbara and Arthur at their apartment, where I showed them photographs I had recently obtained from a man whose great-aunt had worked for the O'Neills in their home in Marblehead, Massachusetts.



Steve Bloom, center, is flanked by Arthur and Barbara Gelb in the Gelb home.

PHOTO: MARGIE MITLIN

Margie and I loved our visit to the Gelbs' apartment. Arthur and Barbara were kind and gracious hosts, very interested in the photos I had brought to show them, and also very interested in getting to know us better and to hear about our family. Afterwards they took us to dinner to one of their favorite restaurants.

It's hard to imagine a couple who personified New York City and its bustling cultural life more than the Gelbs; we were very grateful to get to spend a few hours with them in their world.



Above, seated: Arthur and Barbara Gelb. Standing: Margie Mitlin, Steve Bloom

Steve Bloom, who is slated to receive a Eugene O'Neill Medallion in July 2017, chairs the board of directors of the Eugene O'Neill Society, on which he has served since 2000. He is an author, editor, essayist and speaker on O'Neill. Steve is associate vice president for academic affairs, dean of undergraduate education, and professor of English at Lasell College, Newton, Massachusetts.

From Gary Schaub



Barbara and Arthur Gelb at a book signing at Tao House in March 2006 with former Eugene O'Neill National Historic Site NPS Superintendent Martha Lee. The book, *O'Neill: Life with Monte Cristo*, was billed as "the first volume of the completely rewritten biography of America's only Nobel Prize-winning playwright."



From left, Arthur and Barbara Gelb, Ric Burns and Kiera Chaplin at a discussion on March 4, 2006, following the Tao House preview of the Ric Burns documentary titled Eugene O'Neill, a Documentary Film, part of the PBS American Experience series. Kiera Chaplin, then 24, is the great-granddaughter of Eugene and Agnes Boulton O'Neill and granddaughter of Charlie and Oona O'Neill Chaplin.

PHOTOS: GARY SCHAUB



More O'Neillians share their photos and memories of Arthur and Barbara

From Chris Westgate

Because I came to the O'Neill Society relatively recently, I had few encounters with Barbara or Arthur Gelb. My first conference was at Tao House in 2008 and I was too overwhelmed by the place and the Society to say much of anything to anyone.



Barbara Gelb at the New York City conference in 2011

When we were in New York City for the conference in 2011, I introduced

myself to Barbara and Arthur but we shared only a moment's pleasantries before we all piled into the bus to tour O'Neill's haunts. And by the time of the conference in New London in 2014 Arthur

was gone, and it wasn't clear that Barbara would be able to attend the conference.

In the end, she did come and shared with us stories about the long-term project of writing biographies about O'Neill with and without Arthur, and the specifics of *By Women Possessed*, stories that were surprisingly personal and undoubtedly painful since she was still mourning the loss of her husband. The stories were funny and charming and moving. They were revealing and



A discussion of the opera A Blizzard in Marblehead Neck at the New York City conference in 2011: Tony Kushner, Arthur Gelb, Barbara Gelb, Jeanine Tesori and Jackson Bryer

PHOTOS: DON SCHINNERER

hopeful and yet tinged with loss. How could they not be?

During her talk, I was struck by how generous and courageous it was for her to share such stories, and clearly I wasn't alone since she received a standing ovation when she was done.

Although I knew Barbara for all too brief a time, I feel like I came to know a great deal about her during that talk in New London. She will be greatly missed.

From other members



Jeff Kennedy, 2011 conference chair, with Barbara and Arthur Gelb.

The O'Neill Society presented Arthur and Barbara with a caricature of them by Justin Robertson, known as "Squigs" in the industry. Squigs is now



kind of the "reigning" caricaturist on Broadway. We had him draw Arthur and Barbara as a gift for their help on the 2011 Conference.

Left, Arthur and Barbara as seen by Justin Robertson (Squigs), who poses with his drawing and its inspiration, the Gelbs, below.



PHOTOS: DAVID ERRIGO

The End of an Era: The Passing of the Gelbs (and other valued O'Neillians)

Marking O'Neill's birthplace in 2000



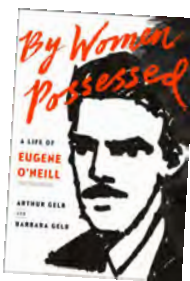
On October 16, 2000, staunch O'Neill supporters gather to dedicate the plaque marking the birthplace of Eugene O'Neill. The dramatist was born into his theatrical heritage on October 16, 1888, at 43rd and Broadway, the location that was then the Barrett House. Pictured are Sam "Biff" Liff, senior vice president, William Morris Agency; Arthur Gelb, former managing editor of *The New York Times* and O'Neill biographer; Paul Libin, executive vice president, Jujamcyn Theatres, and formerly producing director of *Circle in the Square Theatre*; Barbara Gelb, O'Neill biographer, author and playwright; Jason Robards, Jr., performer of many O'Neill roles; and George C. White, founder of the Eugene O'Neill Theater Center.

PHOTO: SHEILA HICKEY GARVEY

(From the Eugene O'Neill Society Newsletter, November 2016.)

A vast body of work—and humanity

No memoir of the Gelbs would be complete without mention of their body of work, yet no brief memoir could contain all of it. Besides their three O'Neill biographies, Barbara wrote a one-woman play, *My Gene*, that was produced with Colleen Dewhurst in the lead. Arthur wrote [City Room](#), a critically acclaimed memoir of his days with *The New York Times*. They both worked with Ric Burns on [Eugene O'Neill: A Documentary Film](#), part of the PBS American Experience series—and they did so much more. Yet they always had time to be thoughtful, caring friends.



Their passing leaves a gaping hole in our culture and, for those who knew them, in our hearts. —Jo Morello



Niall O'Dowd, founding publisher of *Irish America* magazine, presents the 2012 Irish Spirit Award, a House of Waterford Crystal Cliffs of Moher vase, to Arthur and Barbara Gelb, who flank him. Maureen Dowd, right, introduced the honorees as "my favorite Irish cousins, the O'Gelbs."

Meet the O'Gelbs

Maureen Dowd knows Irish. The Pulitzer Prize-winning *New York Times* columnist says, "My mom always said the Jews and the Irish had an affinity. ... born with the gift of laughter and a sense that the world was mad. They had a saying [that] can be applied to *The New York Times*: It is a place where the Jews drink like Irish and the Irish think like Jews!"

Thus she introduced former *Times* managing editor Arthur Gelb and his wife Barbara Gelb, winners of *Irish America* magazine's 2012 Irish Spirit Award. Dowd presented the award to "my favorite Irish cousins, the O'Gelbs," at the Irish America Hall of Fame Induction Ceremony on March 14 at the New York Yacht Club.

"More than anyone else I know, Barbara and Arthur Gelb deserve the spirit of Ireland award because for 55 years, they have lived inside the head of Eugene O'Neill—and that is a very scary place to be," Dowd said.

The Gelbs wrote *O'Neill*, their first biography of Eugene O'Neill, in 1962, and their second, *Life with Monte Cristo*, in 2000. Their final O'Neill work, *By Women Possessed*, will be published in late 2012 (Putnam). Barbara has also written *My Gene*, a play starring Colleen Dewhurst and based on O'Neill's widow Carlotta Monterey. In addition, the Gelbs have collaborated with Ric Burns as writers of the PBS documentary, *O'Neill*.

Arthur and Barbara Gelb, both active O'Neillians, are members of the Eugene O'Neill Society Honorary Board.

—Jo Morello

PHOTO: SADE JOSEPH & IRISH AMERICA MAGAZINE

(From the Eugene O'Neill Society Newsletter, Summer 2012)



10th Annual Eugene O'Neill Conference opens July 19



Part 1: Conference highlights and details

By Jo Morello

In just three months, on July 19, the Eugene O'Neill Society will convene its Tenth International Conference on O'Neill under the unifying theme "Eugene O'Neill: Ireland, the Constant Presence" at the National University of Ireland, Galway.

"It will be a thoroughly memorable conference, not to mention historic, given attendance and a lecture by Michael D. Higgins, president of Ireland," said Nelson O'Ceallaigh Ritschel, conference co-chair. "I imagine that this will be the first time that a head of state has attended an O'Neill conference."

By the time the conference wraps on July 22, attendees will have had the opportunity to hear 43 scheduled papers plus a keynote address by Declan Kiberd, University of Notre Dame; plenary addresses by Gerardine Meaney, University College Dublin, Shiyun

(Helen) Xu, Nanjing Normal University with Robert M. Dowling, Central Connecticut University; and a featured lecture by Dan Murphy, University of Notre Dame.

Attendees can also look forward to the Medallion Banquet—the highlight of every O'Neill conference—when the Society awards its highest recognition, the Eugene O'Neill Medallion, to selected honorees who have significantly advanced the work started by O'Neill. Medallions will be presented to actors Gabriel Byrne and Jessica Lange for their interpretations of O'Neill's plays, and to Society members Steven Bloom, board chair; Robert M. Dowling, vice president and O'Neill biographer; and William Davies King, editor emeritus of *The Eugene O'Neill Review*.

Another noteworthy event will be a production of *The Second Girl* by Ronan Noone, directed by Thomas Conway, Druid Theatre Director in Residence,

National University of Ireland, Galway.

Overall the conference promises to be four days of education, enlightenment, and entertainment, along with opportunities for friendship and fun.

National University of Ireland, Galway, has established a [website](#) with a full menu of conference details including registration, accommodations, complete conference schedule, travel notes and other useful information. Registration is set at €140 for delegates and €65 for students (roughly \$150 and \$70 respectively at this writing).

The Society presented extensive information about the conference, its co-chairs and key participants in the [Spring and Fall 2016 issues](#) of this newsletter. Read the articles, learn about the people you'll be meeting, register, then pack your bags!

See you in Galway!

Part 2: Why O'Neill still matters, in Ireland and elsewhere

By Nelson O'Ceallaigh Ritschel

While never setting foot on Irish soil, Ireland's presence was an integral force in Eugene Gladstone O'Neill's life and dramatic canon. The conference will explore this presence through O'Neill's

work, family, and his temperament—as well as other aspects of O'Neill's life.

O'Neill himself remarked: "The one thing that explains more than anything about me is the fact that I'm Irish. And, strangely enough, it is something that all

the writers who have attempted to explain me and my work have overlooked."

The son of Famine immigrant James O'Neill from County Kilkenny and sec-

(Continued on page 11)

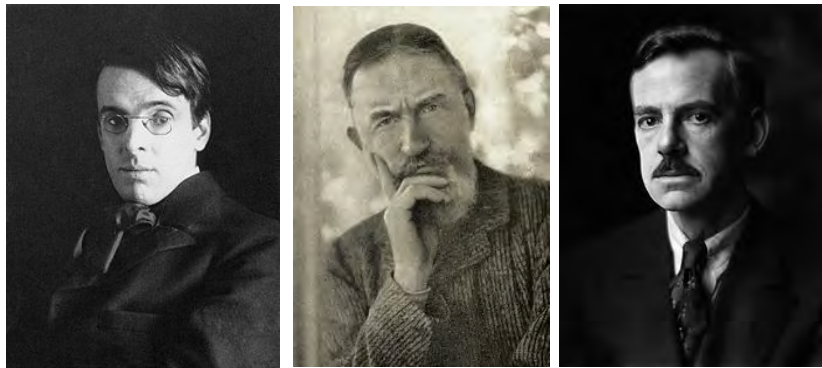
Eugene O'Neill: Ireland, The Constant Presence (July 19-22, 2017)

Why O'Neill still matters

(Continued from page 10)

Second-generation American Mary Ella Quinlan, daughter of Famine immigrants from County Tipperary, O'Neill embodied the American journey for many of the nineteenth-century-born Irish—and like many, that past was never far from the present. Shaped by his father's lifelong fear of returning to abject poverty while conscious of Ireland's 1880s quest for Home Rule, and jolted by his mother's suffering despite her Catholicism, O'Neill began finding his dramatic voice after witnessing the Abbey Theatre's 1911 tour of the eastern United States.

Embracing the Abbey's Dublin theatre traditions, O'Neill set forth on a career that followed realism and experimentation. Following W. B. Yeats and G. Bernard Shaw's 1932 inclusion of O'Neill in



Winners of The Nobel Prize for Literature and Year Won

From left, William Butler Yeats, 1923; George Bernard Shaw, 1925; Eugene Gladstone O'Neill, 1936. PHOTOS: Yeats in 1903 and O'Neill, undated, both by ALICE BOUGHTON; Shaw in 1911 by LANGDON COBURN

the Irish Academy of Letters, O'Neill set forth on a cycle that led to that most Irish of plays, *A Touch of a Poet*. In addition, *Long Day's Journey Into Night* rings with Ireland's presence, which for James Tyrone was still a source of pride despite everything: "And keep your dirty tongue off Ireland, with your sneers

about peasants and bogs and hovels!"

On receiving his Nobel Prize, O'Neill was congratulated by the Irish government—joining Irish Nobel laureate authors Yeats, Shaw, and later Samuel Beckett and Seamus Heaney. Furthermore, Ireland's interest in O'Neill has existed steadily since the Dublin Drama League's 1922 staging of *Diff'rent*, and has included more recent productions by Galway's acclaimed Druid Theatre.

the Irish Academy of Letters, O'Neill set forth on a cycle that led to that most Irish of plays, *A Touch of a Poet*. In addition, *Long Day's Journey Into Night* rings with Ireland's presence, which for James Tyrone was still a source of pride despite everything: "And keep your dirty tongue off Ireland, with your sneers

Sinclair Lewis, Eugene O'Neill and the Nobel Prize for Literature

By Jo Morello

Many view the awarding of The Nobel Prize as a validation of a person's work. Sinclair Lewis, chosen in 1930 as the first American recipient of the Nobel prize for literature, accepted his honor with a somewhat iconoclastic speech in which he lamented that the Nobel committee had not bestowed its honors instead on Eugene O'Neill. Longtime O'Neillian J Rannelli, former artistic director of the Eugene O'Neill Theater Center, has submitted an excerpt from Lewis's speech. Among other remarks, Lewis famously told the committee:

And had you chosen Mr. [Eugene O'Neill](#), who has done nothing much in American drama save to transform it utterly, in ten or twelve years, from a false world

of neat and competent trickery to a world of splendor and fear and greatness, you would have been reminded that he has done something far worse than scoffing—he has seen life as not to be neatly arranged in the study of a scholar but as a terrifying, magnificent, and often quite horrible thing akin

to the tornado, the earthquake, the devastating fire.

The Nobel committee did award its prize to O'Neill in 1936, making him the first—and still the only—American playwright to be so honored. To Lewis's way of thinking, the prize was delayed. To O'Neill it was premature. He viewed the Nobel as recognition for a lifetime of exemplary work, bestowed at the end of a career.

O'Neill claimed he still had his best work ahead of him—and indeed he did. Despite a crippling, progressive disease that left him unable to write for the last ten years of his life, after the Nobel in 1936 he went on to write his "Tao House plays," including *The Iceman Cometh*, *Long Day's Journey Into Night*, *Hughie*, and *A Moon for the Misbegotten*.



Eugene O'Neill's Nobel Prize certificate
BEINECKE LIBRARY, YALE UNIVERSITY

Part 3. Travel information from the conference co-chairs

Galway is a major tourist destination in the west of Ireland, on picturesque Galway Bay, easy to reach from Shannon and Dublin Airports.

Shannon Airport to Galway



The most direct route to Galway from outside Ireland is Shannon Airport, in County Clare. There is a direct bus connection from Shannon airport to Galway city center. Buses depart from the airport arrival gate, and return to the airport at the departure gate. It cannot be simpler.

Bus tickets can be purchased online or at the airport, at well-marked locations. Again, this is the most direct way to travel from Shannon airport to Galway center. The cost is 9.50 Euros one way. Of course, prices might rise slightly during the summer, but that is not reflected now. Student rates are less.

TripAdvisor also recommends bus over train from Shannon to Galway given that buses depart and arrive at the airport's arrival and departure gates. Staff personnel at Shannon Airport will be polite and willing to assist.

The link to Bus Eireann, Ireland's public bus service, is <http://www.buseireann.ie/inner.php?id=251>

Car rental at Shannon

Car rentals are also available at Shannon airport (Hertz, etc.). A few people could share a vehicle, for example. The problem with this might be parking in Galway, which can be difficult during the summer. Some B & Bs provide parking, if one elects to stay in B&B.

Dublin Airport to Galway

Travel from Dublin to Galway is comfortable and easy. If one flies into Dublin, then rail is the way to travel across to Dublin from Hueston Station. The cost one way is 36.50 Euros. Student rates are less. The link to Irish rail is: <http://www.irishrail.ie/fares-and-tickets/dublin-galway>

Travel within Galway

Taxis are in abundance in Galway.

They can be ordered from the hotel desk, or engaged on the roads. The fare to the National University of Ireland Galway (NUIG) campus from Jurys Inn (Galway center) is very reasonable as it is a short ride. Some taxis are small vans, so many can share a taxi. The hotel folks are very accommodating and might be able to order larger taxis the night before. In addition, the taxi drivers in Galway tend to be very polite and talkative.

One can walk from Jurys Inn to NUIG, but some folks might find the walk to be on the long side, but the taxis can handle it.

Folks should not be wary of traveling to Galway from Shannon, and Dublin is a wonderful literary and theatrical city should folks chose to extend their Irish visits.



Galway City Centre



Galway International Arts Festival 17–30 July 2017

Galway International Arts Festival celebrates its 40th Anniversary with world-premiere theatre, major art exhibitions and a stellar music line-up of events. The two-week festival will announce its full schedule on or about May 1. GIAF is already selling tickets for the acts already announced. These

include two theatrical productions (*Woyzeck in Winter* and *Tristan & Yseult*) and three musical performances (Gavin James. Brian Wilson, Passenger).

For more information, click [HERE](#).



The Absolut Festival Big Top tent will rises to house Ireland's largest annual arts festival, running for two weeks in July.

Absence of "The Constant Presence" in Ireland

The theme of the Society's 10th International Conference is "Eugene O'Neill: Ireland, The Constant Presence." In reality, O'Neill's time in Ireland is best described as "The Constant Absence."

Here was a man who famously told his son Eugene Jr., "One thing that explains more than anything else about me is the fact that I'm Irish." As a monied world traveler and ex-pat resident of France, he could go anywhere he chose. Surely he'd longed for and would chose to visit his motherland! Yet he never did. Many have speculated on his reason. In his essay below on the subject, Michael FitzGerald (a most Irish name) challenges O'Neillians to provide an answer to that decades-old question.

Jo Morello

A Penny for Lifting the Irish Veil

By Michael FitzGerald

A penny for your thoughts, O'Neillians. The thrice-married Eugene O'Neill certainly had his share of difficulties in kissing the bride. Just the same, there is another veil he never lifted. A "black Irishman" through and through, he never came to Ireland to view the spots where the Spanish Armada turned to wreckage and fodder in the waves lashing the west coast of Ireland.

Why, do you suppose, he refrained? As O'Neillians worldwide gather for a conference on Galway's shores (figuratively) in July, will we truly attempt to lift the veil of his restraint?

Certainly O'Neill possessed what Robert Edmond Jones described as "the dramatic imagination." Are we to believe the playwright had no affinity for his ancestry (obviously not) or desire to lift his own self-imposed veil of exile?

The Poet touched on things Irish on many a stage, drove characters to denouements of stereotypically Irish flaws, and gave sparks of Irish-



Gort, County Galway, Ireland

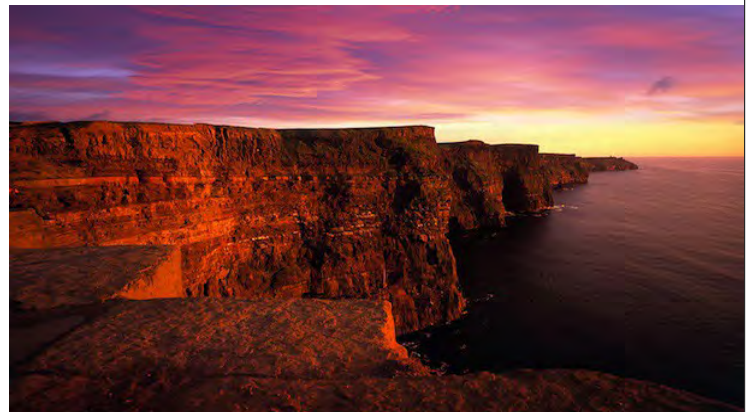
associated vernacular, both in humor and anger. I have a question of O'Neill's admirers, be they Russian or Inuit.

The "black" Irishman-influenced playwright would not lift his "veil" of exile from Ireland, though he wove things Irish throughout his canon as he launched and continued his "dramatically imagined" assault on the American stage of his father. Why?

Eugene O'Neill knew his ancestors marched an army through the "vale of Tralee" in a near desperate

hope for Ireland's political and religious autonomy. He knew Joyce's veil of exile. He knew Sean O'Casey's forging of art. He knew the bridal veil of his first marriage (though taken in honor to uphold the mother-to-be) solidified his "outcaste," like his ancestors, status. Once fame (and to some extent, infamy) attained, though, why did he not return to Ireland the prodigal son, or, the pontificating or humble Poet?

No, his veil of exile was never lifted, bless his heart. With O'Neillians returning to Ireland, let us exchange our pennies on O'Neill's veil, in the session Q & As, or as we wander the haunts of the Irish literati at Gort, or the Armada at the cliffs of Moher.



Cliffs of Moher at sunset; County Galway, Ireland



Supersized to Right Size: the Old Vic's production of *The Hairy Ape* comes to The Armory in New York

by Sheila Hickey Garvey

Eugene O'Neill's 1922 expressionist mini-masterwork *The Hairy Ape* has been given a dynamic new life through Richard Jones's re-imagined production that was first staged at London's Old Vic in the Fall of 2015. It is more than the production of a play; it is a performance event.

Jones and his creative team fill the cavernous Wade Thompson Drill Hall in New York's Armory, located at 67th and Park Avenue, by amply serving up a rich sampling from 20th Century anti-realist movements (Expressionism, Constructivism). Iconic images and sounds drawn from artistic geniuses such as Picasso, Brecht, Lang, and Chaplin are also adapted by the design team from the original Old Vic production (Stewart Laing, sets; Aletta Collins, choreography; Mimi Jordan Sherin, lighting; and Sarah Angliss, composer/sound design). By the end of the performance it's clear the entire production company, relished the freedom to expand their initial vision because of the opportunity afforded by the Drill Hall's magnitude.

Entering the performance space one is immediately struck by the scale of the room because of its height, expansiveness and openness. Being there made it

easy to imagine how it could house military drill units and wartime vehicles, equipment and supplies. Just as quickly the sight of the bright yellow audience-seating risers awakens any tendencies toward vertigo while blinding the eyes. Because the risers are so steeply inclined, however, there isn't a bad seat in the hall.



The entering audience is required to cross over a semicircle that fully surrounds the bank of seats and revolves when activated during the performance. The backstage technical staff, who are present to the audience's view before and after the performance, load and unload the oversized set pieces on to the revolve, which serves as a conveyor belt. It crosses before the audience, pauses for scenic use, and then circles off to be readied for an upcoming scene.

During the performance, the color of the risers is mimicked and reflected back to the audience when the

stoker's boiler room appears in the form of a cage. Its color is a hue described as sulfur to recall the acrid smell that the stokers inhale minute by minute while trapped for excessive hours in their worker's cage.

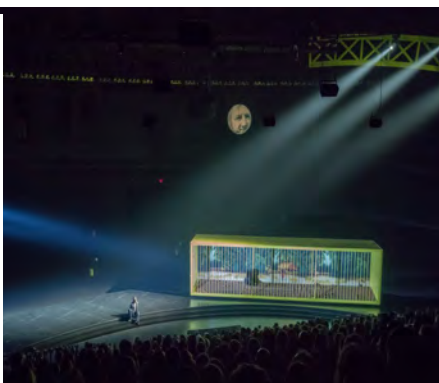
Even an area of windows above and before the audience, which remains unseen until lit, is used as performance space during a sequence in which Yank is abandoned by the prisoner that seems to be his only hope for a friend. We see the man run away from Yank as he crosses the drill hall area and disappears into the darkness. He then returns, still retreating, but above and in front of the audience, now smaller in perspective as he is seen passing before the Armory's upper bank of windows.

Another eerily playful surprise arrives as a gigantic balloon that is floated across the auditorium. It serves as an iconic O'Neillian full moon except that the man-in-moon's face is replaced with that of Mildred's Steel Tycoon father, replete with oversized ears.

The production is further supported and enhanced by more recently advanced sound technology. Thankfully, the actors are amply miked, a vocal support that is well needed by the cast because of the scale of the facility—one not originally designed as a performance space and inherent with acoustic challenges.

Auditory design is a key element in this

(Continued on page 15)



Eugene O'Neill: The Constant Presence—On stage (Mar. 25 - Apr 22, 2017)

The Hairy Ape

(Continued from page 14)

production. The auditorium is endowed with surround sound amplification, allowing the audience to experience the same sensory assault that Yank and his fellow stokers endure on a minute-by-minute basis while they work in the bowels of the ship.

The actors freeze their movement when they hear the creaking of the ship's underpinnings, a sound that gives the impression the bolts are about to burst. Also heard are the thumping and pounding sounds of the ship's engine—one of O'Neill's telling uses of heart beats. These are auditory reminders that the modern world is not just seen but often heard as a cacophony of disparate tones.

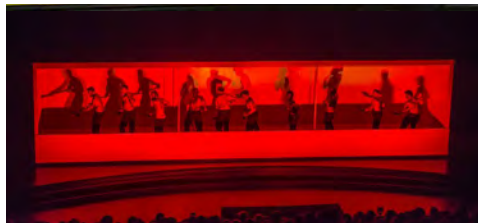
Although the artistic team is British, the production has been recast with American actors. Bobby Cannavale plays Yank, the universal representation of a ship's stoker. Cannavale gives might, heart and growling vocal intensity to O'Neill's Everyman, one whose efforts to think about his life brings him to embark on an excruciatingly futile search to belong in a world—or in this instance a city—that is overtly and violently hostile to his very right to existence.

Since Yank is required to be a true "force of nature," casting that matched the operatic scale of Jones's revival was essential. Cannavale is a potent alpha



male capable of embodying Yank's smoldering anger and bursts of psychic outrage. Yet, when necessary he is riveting and mysterious when still much like the ape he eventually embraces in the Central Park zoo.

Cannavale leads a vital ensemble. The remaining cast takes on numerous characters in the play while executing group choreography sequences. The actors are at times masked and become unison configurations, making them appear regimented and robotic. For scenes taking



place in the ship's cage-like boiler room, cast members are required to execute bold, gymnastic movements that are reminiscent of a Pina Bausch dance piece in which performers stomp and hurl their bodies against furniture, floors and ceilings. Such choreographed sequences convey the precision but also dehumanization of automation and industrialization.

As Paddy, actor David Costabile matches Cannavale's weight of animal passion through poetic speeches in which he points out to Yank their reduced quality of life, one lost when the glorious age of wind-driven sailing was replaced with boats powered by engines.

Constable's sonorous Irish tenor singing voice echoes throughout the auditorium on his character's final exit. It is a reminder of forsaken natural beauty.



A petite Mildred (Becky Ann Baker), the daughter of the steel industrialist, exaggerates her character's spoiled, selfish nature. It's a choice that sets up her fall from grace once she is faced with Yank and the boiler room.

After verbally dehumanizing Yank, she is shown to be inadequate to cope with the implications of her collusion in America's social/economic contract by fainting not once but three times. Her frail, limp body is very slowly and ritualistically carried through the audience and up the very steep sulfur-colored risers by actor Martin Junek as the ship's 2nd Officer. It is definitive visual evidence that Mildred and her class are useless.

The episodic plot centers on Yank's sudden awareness that he is not in control of his life, but that he is instead controlled by the one percent—or in this instance the mini-class of the Gilded Age.

As the story unfolds and Yank wanders desperately throughout the cavernous military space that transforms to represent a vast, indifferent New York City, an uncomfortable metaphor representing the viewer's typical day in the city is

(Continued on page 16)



“A Hairy Ape for the 21st Century: Artist Talk” at Park Avenue Armory



O'Neill biographer and Society VP Robert M. Dowling, *The Hairy Ape* director Richard Jones, and actor Bobby Cannavale discuss the challenges of presenting Eugene O'Neill's play nearly 100 years after its first production by the Provincetown Players in 1922.

PHOTO: KATHERINE SUGG

Society vice president Robert M. Dowling interviewed British director Richard Jones and stage and screen star Bobby Cannavale (Robert “Yank” Smith) about the Old Vic's revival of *The*

Hairy Ape, which was presented at the Park Avenue Armory in New York City from March 25-April 22. The discussion, titled “A *Hairy Ape* for the 21st Century: Artists Talk,” was presented before a live audience on March 31st. (Click [HERE](#) for the interview.)

Dowling is a Eugene O'Neill scholar and professor of English at Central Connecticut State University.)

Media Reviews

In “The Caged Beast Awakens,” (4/1/17), Ben Brantley of *The New York Times* described Jones's revival, designed by Stewart Laird, as “mesmerizing...ravishing,” and Cannavale as “the perfect odd man out in a dehumanizing world of machines, literal and otherwise.”

The headline for *The Daily Beast* review by David Freedlander (3/31/17) says, “‘The Hairy Ape’ at the Park Avenue Armory Is Eugene O'Neill At His Most Epic...as staged in the 55,000 square foot space of NYC's Park Avenue Armory, [it] is a work of art: a painting, or a puppet show perhaps. You don't see it, so much as sink into it...It is not possible to look away, even for a moment.

The Hairy Ape

(Continued from page 15)

now seen from Yank's perspective, or more likely Mildred's perspective because, in truth, the price of admission was afforded.

The Armory's location and its interior, designed by Louis Comfort Tiffany and Stanford White, reverberates with meaning. The Armory was built by the city's wealthy for their descendants, then serving in the American Civil War.

Fifth Avenue is Mildred's address. Monies that fund modern philanthropies—named after Vanderbilt, Carnegie, Frick, Rockefeller and Mellon—are also those donated by patrons of New York's museum mile, only two blocks away from the performance. It is too often forgotten that these are the same names that earned their millions on the backs of

American Yanks.

As the grand mechanisms of the 21st Century's grind foreword, the meaning



of Yank's existential suffering continues.

Britain's blue-collar Liverpool history also shines knowledgeably and forcefully in this stellar production. The Old Vic's grand re-mastering of *The Hairy Ape*, one super-sized to right size, proves O'Neill's efforts to raise American drama to classical stature was indeed worthy of the Nobel prize.

Meet Mildew Douglas

By Jo Morello



Eugene O'Neill and then-wife Agnes Boulton met actress Carlotta Monterey for the first time backstage at the Plymouth

Theatre in 1922, where Monterey was playing the role of Mildred Douglas in *The Hairy Ape*. It was hate-at-first-sight. Years later, after Carlotta had wooed Gene from Agnes to become his third wife, they discussed his low opinion of Monterey's performance. He had snidely dubbed her “Mildew Douglas.”

Edmund's Play: *Long Day's Journey* at the Geffen Playhouse

By William Davies King

Working as dramaturg on the recent Geffen Playhouse production of *Long Day's Journey Into Night* was something of a dream for me and a fascinating way of extending the material that came together in my multimedia edition of the play (Yale University

Press, 2016). The show was directed by Jeanie Hackett, who was until recently the artistic director of Antaeus Theater Company in Los Angeles and who has also worked at Williamstown, the Wallis Annenberg Center, LA Theatre Works and many other companies. She's a specialist in the reinterpretation of classic plays (notably Chekhov) and novels (notably Jeffrey Hatcher's adaptation of Balzac's *Cousin Bette*). Her roots in O'Neill go back to playing the part of Belle in the 1983 Roundabout Theatre Company production of *Ah, Wilderness!*

After the Geffen's production had been scheduled, Hackett's husband Young Ji, who is associate artistic director of the Geffen, came upon my edition, noticed my proximity to LA, and suggested some sort of conversation on the play. That quickly developed into a weekend visit with Jeanie and Young in Santa Barbara and a deep dive into the O'Neill material I have accumulated—pictures, manuscripts, anecdotes, scholarship, free-floating myth, stubborn fact, and, most precious of all, the mysteries: the delicious, aching, unresolvable questions we all ponder about this play. In her



Left, Brotherly love: Edmund (Colin Woodell) and Jamie (Stephen Louis Grush). Right, Motherly love: Jamie, Edmund and Mary Tyrone (Jane Kaczmarek).



PHOTOS: CHRIS WHITAKER

emerging vision of the play, I could see the play coming to life in performance.

Using the Lincoln Center Library collection and the various DVDs and VHS tapes, YouTube clips, and available texts, Hackett developed an extraordinary grasp of the choices previously made in performing the play. O'Neill's masterwork was written, in a sense, in rehearsal. The drama is a restaging of the transformation that made the drama possible—four characters in search of an author in search of four characters (haunted Tyrones). She knew from the start that the play begins and ends with Edmund.

She was struck by the rare audio clips of O'Neill's voice reading a few segments of the play into a wire recorder in 1942, and especially the sound of his voice reading the Swinburne poem ("A Leave-Taking"), which Jamie oddly recites near the end of the play as Mary Tyrone drags her wedding dress through the midnight of a long day in August 1912. It's "morbid," says James Tyrone in chiding his eldest son, but in the voice of his youngest "son" (the son that rises—"Let us rise up and part" is the way the second stanza

opens), O'Neill's leave-taking of his tangled past is a merger into art.

Hackett ended up using O'Neill's voice and the images of his family to frame this production as a memory play, and she staged the metatheatrical presence of an O'Neill who is both author and character, one who speaks in and through the play. She had the cooperation and the exploratory fervor of a superb young actor named Colin Woodell to give greater centrality and presence and depth to the character of Edmund than I have ever seen.

Stephen Louis Grush, as Jamie, defied ideality in the gruesome, gut-defined way he embodied Jamie. When he spoke those same lines from Swinburne at the end of the final act, you could sense how far poetry, even excellent poetry, falls from assuaging the wounds of reality. No character in drama makes us so aware of the insufficiencies of art, and paradoxically by his art. Grush made that clear.

Oddly, the dissonance—I'd even say the defiance—in the production came from its stars, Alfred Molina and Jane

(Continued on page 18)

Geffen's LDJIN: a translucent metaphor of sight and sound

(Continued from page 17)

Kaczmarek. Both (in different ways) stood in the path of the director's re-centering of the play on its emergent (self-destructive) younger generation. In rehearsal it was evident how they both cast back to the past—the characters' displaced youth and their own roots in acting—to challenge or defy Edmund's act of re-creation and Jamie's act of self-destruction.



James (Alfred Molina) and Edmund

Molina played a remarkably lovable plush bear of a James Tyrone, a man out of his depth in this desperately seeking family. He had great scenes of shattering poignancy and others of warm humor, and he brought in a rich array of effects from the old school of acting, which is where his character originates, but ultimately, right up through the end, James Tyrone does not get it.

It is generally supposed that Mary does get it, that O'Neill gives her the play's last line because she is/has the realization of the "deep pity and understanding and forgiveness" he was seeking in writing the play. But Jane Kaczmarek had, it seems, her own agenda—or bone to pick—and so her performance, though it sometimes brought fresh energy to familiar lines, seemed out of touch with the production the director was setting on this stage. The stunning set, lighting, projection, and

sound design all served to create a subconscious atmosphere in which the audience could experience O'Neill's play, but Kaczmarek's Mary and Molina's Tyrone resisted absorption into that environment.

The production was live-streamed by Broadway HD—the first non-New York production to be offered through that organization—and in a couple of months an edited version, put together from a matinee and evening performance the week before the production closed—will be available for a fee. Edmund will be present on the forestage and ready to take you into his play.

Still, a flat screen, no matter how high the definition, will not quite capture the translucency of this production, which is scenically an effect of sheer fabrics and oceans of hazy light, and sonically an effect of intertwined voices and distant melodies, but is metaphorically an effect of O'Neill's knowing this home through and through as the one he could never escape.

Edmund's occupation of the house in this production seemed to be locked in what Nietzsche called "eternal recurrence" as he touched every surface and visited every corner on stage and off. (Tyrone dismisses the

Nietzschean realization as "more morbidity," though you know on some level he knows it too.) When, in Edmund's famous reminiscence of memories associated with the sea, he speaks of "the veil of things as they seem drawn back by an unseen hand," you understand that his deepest experience of being "at sea" was at home with father, mother, and brother.

In *The Birth of Tragedy*, Nietzsche wrote: "The metaphysical comfort—with which, I am suggesting even now, every true tragedy leaves us—that life is at the bottom of things, despite all the changes of appearances, indestructibly powerful and pleasurable—this comfort appears in incarnate clarity in the chorus of the satyrs, a chorus of natural beings who live ineradicably, as it were, behind all civilization and remain eternally the same, despite the changes of generations and of the history of nations."

In that spirit, I will always go back to the conversation I was fortunate to have with Jeanie Hackett's *Long Day's Journey*.



The four haunted Tyrones: James, Edmund, Mary and Jamie.

PHOTOS: CHRIS WHITAKER



Long Day's Journey Into Night at Monte Cristo Cottage

By Kurt Eisen

The theater is always haunted by its ghosts, but the Flock Theatre's production this spring of *Long Day's Journey Into Night* in Monte Cristo Cottage is positively crawling with them. Amazing as it sounds, this is the first production of O'Neill's autobiographical masterpiece performed on site, as it were, in the New London, Connecticut, house that was the playwright's family's summer home in his youth and his direct model for the play's setting.

Indeed, performing *Long Day's Journey* at Monte Cristo Cottage is rather like doing *Inherit the Wind* at the courthouse in Dayton, Tennessee, or *Murder in the Cathedral* in the cathedral at Canterbury. Those latter two spaces, however, were built as public gathering places, whereas the O'Neill family summer home was supposed to be a refuge from public life, especially the world of his father's theater career in the later 19th and early 20th centuries. Admitting the public has always seemed an intrusion into "the chronic angers of that house," in poet Robert

Hayden's phrase, but far more so with a full performance of the play it inspired.

The Flock Theatre, a local New London company under the artistic direction of Derron Wood, has undertaken what seems to be a must-do project, but actually comes with certain psychic, one wants to say, paranormal challenges. The performance of this play feels eerie, as if violating a sacred space. The more immediate issue, says Wood, was the big New York revival last summer at the Roundabout starring Jessica Lange and Gabriel Byrne that locked down the rights to the play for regional companies until recently.

Most theatrical settings are built to accommodate the director's vision of the play. Wood's approach of necessity conforms to the dimensions and décor of the cottage as it is. Similarly, his actors faced not only the usual challenges and anxieties of stage performance, especially these very challenging roles, but also the ghosts that seem palpable lingering occupants of Monte Cristo Cottage. Those who

know the play well can feel a certain thrill as James and Jamie Tyrone go outside to cut the hedge at the end of act one, and are moved to visualize Mary's recollected suicide attempt in the Thames River with those very waters visible from one's seat. (Alas, the offstage hedge-

cutting is not staged, nor is James's dilatory chat with old Captain Turner.)



Audience seating in Monte Cristo Cottage

To accommodate an audience, twenty-five chairs are squeezed in three rows into one end of the Monte Cristo's tiny sitting room where all the play's dialogue takes place, truly a "chamber drama." The intimacy of the play-going experience makes it seem participatory, as if the audience is there to help the actors fend off the house's ghosts. The appealing cast features Christie Williams as James Tyrone, Anne Flammang as Mary, Eric Michaellan as Jamie, and Victor Chiburis as Edmund, with Amy Bentley as the maid Cathleen.

The production includes a three-hour break between acts two and three, to say nothing of the extended all-day spread of three special Saturday performances with three such breaks. Audience members have an opportunity not only to eat supper, but also to explore the house and New London environs, including a tour offered by Derron Wood of the venerable Thames Club, where James O'Neill repaired of an evening to hobnob and gather real estate tips.

Ironically, certain current features of

(Continued on page 20)



Victor Chiburis (Edmund), Anne Flammang (Mary), Eric Michaellan (Jamie), and Christie Williams (James Tyrone)



Distance across decades 'all but disappears'

(Continued from page 19)

the house could not be changed to match the script, notably the contents of the two bookcases that represent the generational clash in the opening set directions, even though in this production one could actually read the lettering on the book spines. This and other such small but inevitable anachronisms remind one of the distance between this performance and the lives and events that inspired O'Neill's play. But when Jamie is crashing into the front steps unseen but highly audible in act four, or especially when Mary's footsteps are creaking the floorboards upstairs in the "spare

room" or on the main stairway during her descent in the final scene, that distance all but disappears. Director Wood and the Flock Theatre can be proud of that.



Anne Flammang



Left, Victor Chiburis, Eric Michaellan, Amy Bentley (Cathleen), Anne Flammang and Christie Williams pose on the porch of Monte Cristo Cottage in a scene reminiscent of the historic photo at right, showing Edmund, Jamie and James in 1900.

From *The Day*, Mar. 19, 2017

"This production has been a long time coming for the New London-based Flock Theatre. Flock Artistic Director Derron Wood had contemplated the idea for years, ... [but then a Broadway production happened.

Flock has a history of staging site-specific work, drawing focus "to these incredible historic properties and houses that are in this area," as Wood says.

Indeed, the production makes full, rich use of the Monte Cristo Cottage itself. . . . The play bubbles with New London references, Wood notes, including to the Thames Club, where the tiles of members' silhouettes feature James O'Neill's, and including fictional versions of a number of major figures in town"

Read the full review [HERE](#).

HISTORIC PHOTO OF PORCH: THE LINDA LEAR CENTER FOR SPECIAL COLLECTIONS AND ARCHIVES, CONNECTICUT COLLEGE; SEATING: KURT EISEN; ALL OTHERS: A. VINCENT SCARANO

Director's Notes

One of the most important and exciting elements of this production is the house becoming a character. The place and space is just as integral to the plot as the characters and writing. Sound is one key element here. In both the house's vertical and horizontal planes, sound travels differently than it would in a theater. You can hear subtleties, such as Mary's stirring upstairs, on a much more intimate and intense level.

Other elements of naturalism provided by the location also contribute to immersion. For example, during a few rehearsals and performances, the fog has rolled in right on cue with foghorns heard in the distance. As such, O'Neill's stage directions are honored in a fashion like never before. The

house adds an extended level of honesty to the text and performances.

Audiences have time and time again told us they've forgotten they were even watching a play; that they felt they were watching these people's lives unfold. One gets an almost claustrophobic feeling being in that room with the Tyrones. They are not afforded the distance of a proscenium. They must experience it as the family does.

Derron Wood, Director
Artistic Director, [Flock Theatre](#)



Spontaneous reaction to *The Emperor Jones*: highly theatrical but

By Samuel J. Bernstein

The current version of *The Emperor Jones* at the Irish Repertory Theatre in New York City is a highly theatrical rendering of the play, even more so than the 2009 production, both of which were directed by Ciaran O'Reilly. This theatricality, while engaging the audience, tends to draw us away somewhat from the complexity of O'Neill's vision.

The play's narrative concerns the unsuccessful efforts of a dictator of a West Indian island, aided by Smithers (Andy Murray), a servile self-serving lackey, to escape the clutches of the community, which he had exploited and dominated. The dictator's name is Brutus Jones, poetically evoking reference to Roman imperial rule as well as, paradoxically, to the common experience of Blacks, particularly in America.

The Emperor is a convicted murderer who escaped to the island from a chain gang. When a dissident community member tries to assassinate Brutus, the shooter's gun misfires and the quick-witted Brutus convinces the



Obi Abili (*The Emperor Jones*)

entire subjugated community that he can be killed only by a silver bullet. This spontaneous claim enables Brutus to maintain his absolute rule over the natives, all of whom he considers inferior to himself.

The initial scene between Brutus and Smithers is less than successful. Smithers seems too hale and hardy, and thus fails to function as a fitting contrast to the Emperor. Secondly, many of lines delivered by Smithers are muf-

fled, and some of these contain obscure information that would enhance the understanding and enjoyment of the audience.

From one perspective, the primary dramatic question of the play is: Will the Emperor manage to escape?

Even in this first scene, however, related motifs come to the fore. One of the most important is O'Neill's condemnation of social injustice, especially capitalism. This sensitive reaction by O'Neill is apparent in the Emperor's arrogant attitude toward the natives and in his comment to Smithers that he learned about economic exploitation and its results from the wealthy people who rode the train where he formerly worked.

The connection between the suspenseful Emperor-escape motif and the social protest motif becomes graphically clear throughout scenes 2-7 of this 8-scene play. The Emperor employs what he learned in white-western America to plan and effect his escape. He hides food, takes essentially extorted money, and carries his revolver containing six bullets, one of which is the silver bullet he formerly used to trick the natives.

(Continued on page 22)



Andy Murray (*Smithers*) and Obi Abili (*Emperor Jones*)

The Emperor Jones

(Continued from page 21)



Despite his intelligence, physical strength, and long-term predatory behavior, his

western experience and education fail to protect him adequately from the trials of making his way through the forest to a waiting gunboat. He loses his way, cannot find his food, becomes exhausted, and undergoes severe and immediate psychological deterioration. That deterioration involves hallucinatory visions and the constantly intensifying sounds of a drum. No audience member can fail to be stimulated by the play's rich evocation of the forest. Clearly, a collaborative effort by Mr. O'Reilly and a gifted group of artists create the phantasmagoria experienced by the Emperor.

The forest confrontation of the Emperor also includes his murderous past, imagined historical scenes of brutal mistreatment on a chain gang, humiliation at a slave auction, and the terrors of participating as a rower on a slave ship. Subsequently, he falls prey to the extremes of native culture as he is forced to dance with a witch doctor and to face the prospect of annihila-

tion by a crocodile god. In each of his hallucinatory visions, he fires his gun until his last bullet, the silver bullet, is expended in facing the crocodile god. The gymnastic and choreographic prowess of Obi Abili (Emperor Jones) is stirring and memorable. His ability to shift from anguish to simple human vulnerability is beautifully accomplished.



In the monologue by Brutus that is featured throughout the forest scenes, the sounds that occur on stage unfortunately make it impossible for audience members to hear every word. Since O'Neill felt very strongly that he deserved to be understood as something of a poet, the loss of some elements of the language during these outstanding scenes is regrettable. Taking into account the full range of theatrical stimuli (lighting, sound, movement, etc.), it is difficult to imagine a more aesthetic, compelling rendering of the theatricality of these crucial scenes. One might argue that Mr. O'Reilly was able to demonstrate that a major facet of O'Neill's dramaturgy was grounded in the the-



atrical richness associated with the theatrical conventions that prevailed during the career of James O'Neill, Eugene's gifted father.

Eugene O'Neill as a young writer felt that the richness of the visions in his mind, philosophically and aesthetically, were superior to the realized plays as they were staged. For this reason, it was rare that O'Neill felt satisfied with either the acting or the style of the play as produced. In a certain way, this leads us to a consideration of the current Irish Rep production of *The Emperor Jones*. Brutus, in essentially casting off his connection with Western culture and all its trappings, has entered, in O'Neill's conception, an affirmative condition of spiritual peace.

He had gone into the forest and returned to the same point from which he had started---back to his fundamental self.

This production's theatricality is unquestionably rich, but I wish that the final moments of the play had more effectively conveyed the affirmative spiritual transformation of its central character.

Photos, from top: Angela Moore; Sinclair Mitchell, Obi Abili; Andy Murray; Obi Abili.

PHOTOS: CAROL ROSEGG



New website provides attractive design, easy navigation

By Jeff Kennedy

Our Society has a new [web page](#) design as of the end of January! We tried to think about creating a site that would be visually interesting, have all of the information about our Society as well as important resources for our members, and not be difficult to navigate. While I'm sure we'll continue to tweak the site over the next months, we hope you like what we've come up with.

At eugeneoneillsociety.org, the sections include a "Home/Welcome" page with a slide show (with photos able to be changed occasionally), an "About Us" page that describes the formation of the Society and its work and many benefits to members, and a "Leadership" page that lists the current Society board and executive committee as well as their contact information.

The "Conference" page gives information about our upcoming conference, currently our Galway 2017 conference and the most current draft of the schedule. The site also includes a "Journal" page with information about the *Eugene O'Neill Review* with a link to JSTOR, where archives of the journal exist. Our "Newsletter" page houses copies of the last few years of bi-annual Society Newsletters.



The page for "Membership" describes membership benefits and allows existing members to renew and new members to join online via PayPal.

Three important links appear at the bottom of every page:

- The "Resources" link provides research and archive information in O'Neill Studies.
- "Photo Gallery" presents a collection of pictures that we'll constantly update and add to (the "More" button takes you to multiple pages of photos).

- The "Facebook" link connects to our Facebook page, where the most current and up-to-the-minute news of all-things O'Neill are posted as they're available.

Our hope is that you'll use and return to the site often and suggest to others, particularly potential members, that they do the same. One of the goals of the Society has been to expand our representation on the web and in social media, and we've taken great strides in doing so over the last months. We invite you to take advantage of these resources!

Fall issue of *The Eugene O'Neill Review* focuses on women in O'Neill's world

Judith E. Barlow, guest editor of *The Eugene O'Neill Review*, is working on a special issue devoted to "The Women in O'Neill's World." This issue of the scholarly journal is scheduled for publication in the fall.

"We're currently editing several articles about women who influenced or were influenced by O'Neill's work; family and friends who helped shape his career; actors who have appeared in his plays; and recurrent female archetypes in his canon," she said. "We

will also include performance reviews and a review of the new Gelb biography of the playwright."

Dr. Barlow is professor emerita of English, Women's Studies, and Theatre at the University at Albany, SUNY.

Membership benefits and special members

The Eugene O'Neill Society is a member-funded organization that supports itself through membership dues. The membership year runs from January 1 through December 31. Each member receives | All editions of *The Eugene O'Neill Review* published that year | Bi-annual Society Newsletter | Calls for papers for conferences sponsored by the Society and for *The Eugene O'Neill Review* | Voting rights | A JSTOR account that allows access to all back issues of *The Eugene O'Neill Review*. Click [HERE](#) to join or renew your membership online.

The Society welcomes all members and especially appreciates support from the special memberships and new members

Eugene O'Neill Society Honorary Board of Directors

Stephen A. Black: Past president, Eugene O'Neill Society; author, scholar

Wendy Cooper: Past president, Eugene O'Neill Foundation, Tao House; past Newsletter editor

Frank Cunningham: Scholar, author

Tom J. A. Olsson: Author, scholar, past International Secretary, Eugene O'Neill Society

Maura O'Neill Jones: Daughter of Shane O'Neill; granddaughter of Eugene and Agnes O'Neill

Margaret Loftus Randal: Past president, Eugene O'Neill Society; author, scholar

Diane Schinnerer: Past secretary/treasurer, Eugene O'Neill Society; past president, Eugene O'Neill Foundation, Tao House.

Lifetime Members

Stephen A. Black, Surrey, British Columbia, Canada
Colin Brown, Provincetown, MA
Robert Dowling New London, CT
Kurt Eisen, Cookeville, TN
Christine Frederickson, Altadena, CA
Guo Jide, Jinan, China

William Davies King, Santa Barbara, CA
Martha Manheim, Strafford, VT
Margaret Mar, Taipei, Taiwan
Brenda & Michael McNamara, Rancho Palos Verdes, CA
Mariko Hori Tanaka, Atami-shu, Japan
Shoji Yamana, Tokyo, Japan

Sustaining Members

Steven Bloom, Sharon, MA
Susan Brown, Hartford, CT
Vivian Casper, Denton, TX
Carol DeBoer-Langworthy, Providence, RI
Eileen Herrmann, Oakland, CA
Jeff Kennedy, Phoenix, AZ
Daniel Larner, Bellingham, WA
Andrew Lee, Cleveland, TN
Manuel Mora-Lourido, Canary Islands

Jo Morello, Bradenton, FL
David Palmer, Lincoln, MA
Alexander Pettit, Corinth, TX
Robert Richter, Mystic, CT
Robert Sehr, Alamo, CA
Diane Schinnerer, San Ramon, CA
Bob Tracy, Washington, DC
Chris Westgate, Claremont, CA
Beth Wynstra, Framingham, MA

New Members

Riadh Mhamdi, Tunisia

Empire Strikes Press, Oceanside, NY



Society presents panels on O'Neill's tragic theatre and his vision of tragedy

Society to host panel at ALA Conference in Boston on May 27

The Eugene O'Neill Society will host a panel at the 28th Annual American Literature Conference, scheduled for May 25-28 at Westin Copley Place in Boston.

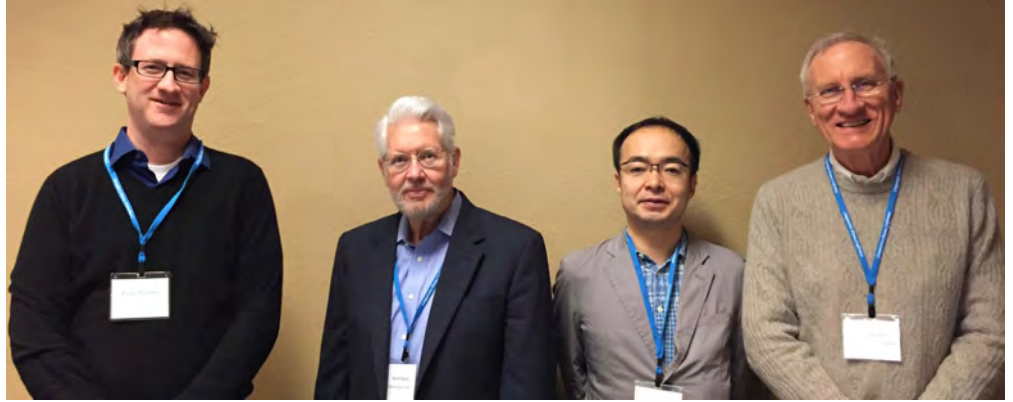
Jeff Kennedy, the Society's immediate past president, chairs the panel titled "O'Neill's Tragic Theatre in Perspective." The discussion is scheduled for Saturday, May 27, from 3:40-5:00 p.m.

The papers and presenters are:

- "O'Neill and Nussbaum: Tragedy and the Fragility of Goodness": David Palmer, Massachusetts Maritime Academy
- "O'Neill's influence on 20th and 21st Century American Tragedians": Jeff Kennedy, Arizona State University
- "Staging the Systemic: O'Neillian Tragedy as 'Flesh and Blood Propaganda'": Joel Pfister, Wesleyan University

For more information, click [HERE](#).

Comparative Drama Conference: April 6-8, 2017, Orlando



Pictured at the Eugene O'Neill Society's panel at the Comparative Drama Conference in Orlando on April 7 are, from left, panelists Ryder Thornton, Wayne Narey, and Yuji Omori. At far right is panel organizer and moderator David Palmer.

By David Palmer

The Comparative Drama Conference, held for more than 40 years, generally in late March or early April, moved from Stevenson University in Baltimore to Rollins College in Orlando, where it will remain for at least the next four years.

This year the conference was held from April 6-8, and the Eugene O'Neill Society again sponsored a panel. Entitled "O'Neill's Vision of Tragedy," the panel was organized by society board member David Palmer (Massachusetts Maritime Academy) and featured three papers: Ryder Thornton (University of California at Santa Barbara and Tulane University)

"Dissonant Protagonists: O'Neill's Nietzschean Approach to Tragedy in the Early Plays"; Yuji Omori (Takushoku University and the University of British Columbia) "O'Neill's Dissipated Characters and Their Critique of Capitalism"; and Wayne Narey (Arkansas State University) "Eugene O'Neill's Allegorical Concept of Tragedy."

The conference will be held April 5 to 7 in 2018, with proposals for papers due to the conference organizers by December 3, 2017. An official call for O'Neill papers will go out to society members in mid-September. For further information and abstracts for all the 2017 conference papers visit the Rollins website by clicking [HERE](#).

Edward Albee Society calls for submissions for *New Perspectives* journal

David A. Crespy, president of the Edward Albee Society, seeks submissions for Volume Three of *New Perspectives in Edward Albee Studies*, the society's official annual publication. The theme is "Edward Albee as Dramatic and Theatrical Innovator." (Volume One, *Edward Albee and Absurdism*, is

now available.) Deadline for submission of completed manuscripts is November 15, 2017.

Essays could explore Albee's plays for innovations in theatrical style, dramatic structure, creation of great characters and subject matter, as well as his work

in roles and venues other than as author of plays produced in theaters.

Click [HERE](#) for the call for submissions or contact the editors: David Crespy (CrespyD@missouri.edu) and Lincoln Konkle (konkleli@tcnj.edu)

5th Conference on American Drama and Theatre: abstracts due Sept. 15

AMERICAN THEATRE & DRAMA SOCIETY

The 5th International Conference on American Drama and Theatre will be held at Université de Lorraine (Nancy, France) on June 4-6, 2018. Abstracts are due by September 15, 2017. The theme is “Migrations in American Drama and Theater,” with the study of migrations, understood in a broad sense. Abstracts for proposed papers are due on September 15.

The conference is co-sponsored by the American Theater and Drama Society (ATDS), working in partnership with the Spanish universities of Cádiz, Sevilla, and Madrid Autónoma, the research group I.D.E.A. (“Théories et pratiques de l’interdisciplinarité dans les études anglophones”) and the Université de Lorraine

Confirmed keynote speakers include:

- **John Patrick Shanley**, American playwright, screenwriter, and theater and film director.
- **John Guare**, American playwright.

- **Lee Breuer**, American playwright, theater director, academic, educator, film maker, poet, lyricist and founding co-artistic director of Mabou Mines Theater Company.
- **Maude Mitchell**, American actress and producer.
- **Dr. Annette Saddik**, professor and scholar of American drama and theater, City University of New York.
- **Dr. Sue Abbotson**, British born professor and scholar of American drama and theater and former president of the Arthur Miller Society.

To submit either a paper, a roundtable discussion, or an already organized panel, please send abstracts of 300 words and a brief CV to Dr. Josefa Fernandez Martin (jfmartin@us.es) by 15 September 2017.

For updated information on the conference (travel, accommodation, participation fees, etc.), please visit <https://idea-udl.org/migrations/>.

Edward Albee Society invites participants for conference on migration

Noelia Hernando Real, president of the Susan Glaspell Society, is interested in supporting a closed panel from The Edward Albee Society for the Conference on American Drama and Theater, according to David A. Crespy, president of the Edward Albee Society.

The theme, as mentioned in the article at left, is “Migrations in American Drama and Theater.”

David Crespy said, “I am particularly interested in hearing from some of our international members in Europe who would like to participate!”

To learn more, email David at CrespyD@missouri.edu or phone 573.882.0535 or 573.999.5695 (cell).

Target Margin Theatre presents *Mourning Becomes Electra* in five-hour production



Brooklyn-based Target Margin Theatre is staging a five-hour, marathon production of Eugene O’Neill’s *Mourning Becomes Electra* at Abrons Arts Center, 466 Grand Street, NYC, from April 26 - May 20. Artistic producer Moe Yousuf has provided photos from the production. For information, click [HERE](#). To buy tickets, click [HERE](#). To hear an interview, click [HERE](#).

The Eugene O'Neill Foundation: Travis Bogard Artists in Residence Program

Travis Bogard Artist in Residence Program welcomes 2017 Tao House Fellows

by Wendy Cooper

The translation of a Chilean playwright's book of aesthetic theory, a performance on the relationship between Shakespeare and O'Neill, and a manuscript of a book describing the artistic vision of a Cuban-American playwright are the projects of three Tao House Fellows chosen for the Travis Bogard Artist in Residence Program at Tao House.

The Eugene O'Neill Foundation announces that the Fellows, selected from ten stellar applicants, are Scott T. Cummings, professor of dramatic literature and playwriting and chair of Boston College's Theatre Department; Patrick Midgely, a Ph.D. student at Texas Tech University, Lubbock; and Adam Versenyi, chair of the department of dramatic art at the University of North Carolina, Chapel Hill.



ADAM VERSENYI

Adam Versenyi will be in residence at Tao House June 13-July 4, 2017 working on the first draft of a translation of Chilean playwright/director Ramon Griffero's book, *La dramaturgia del espacio* (*The Dramaturgy of Space*.)

Versenyi regards Griffero as one of the most important contemporary Chilean theatre artists, but his work is little known in the English-speaking world. Griffero was forced to flee Chile in the military coup of 1973 and on his return to Chile in 1985 founded Teatro del Fin de Siglo (Theatre for the End of the Century).

Griffero, now head of the theatre program at the Universidad de ARCIS has, according to Versenyi, influenced the theatrical discourse in Chile and beyond by his concept of the poetics of space.

In the past year Versenyi has translated ten of Griffero's plays, in 2016 publishing the first English-language translation. Versenyi believes his work at Tao House will expose theatre artists and scholars to new ways of thinking about, and practicing, theatre, and will also be useful to anyone in the English-speaking world with an interest in Latin American theatre, politics and culture.



PATRICK MIDGELY

Patrick Midgely will be at Tao House July 5-12 to work on his project, which involves his skills as a performer, discipline as a researcher, and passion for the concept of O'Neill's relationship with Shakespeare.

Midgely spent five years with the American Shakespeare Center in

Staunton, Virginia. Then, with the award of Texas Tech's Presidential Fellowship (the first ever presented to a student in the arts), he says, "my life-long relationship with Shakespeare and the theatre has just begun, now as a scholar-practitioner."

His 30-45 minute performance includes "selections from O'Neill and Shakespeare beginning with *Long Day's Journey Into Night* and *The Iceman Cometh*, and in the fragmented expositional style of *Strange Interlude*, gradually imply deeper and less obvious connections between the two playwrights."

Selections from *Hamlet*, *King Lear* and other Shakespearean works are included. Midgely explains, "I want to explore the unique ways in which the performance of related characters, themes, motifs, words and even gestures can help us glimpse how O'Neill absorbed Shakespeare...as well as how Shakespeare can help us better understand O'Neill." Midgely will have a "dress rehearsal" at Tao House on July 9 before taking his work to the O'Neill International Conference in Ireland.

(Continued on page 28)

Tao House Fellows will work across a broad spectrum of interests

(Continued from page 27)

Scott T. Cummings hopes to complete the manuscript for a book, *Finding Inspiration: Maria Irene Fornés, Playwriting, Theatre, and Creativity*, during his three weeks at Tao House, from July 30 to August 19.

Cummings considers Fornés the most important American woman playwright of the 20th Century, widely recognized in professional and academic theatre communities as a major figure because, "In her forty-year career Fornés pioneered a new way of writing for the American stage, one based on brief, fragmentary and evocative scenes, often centered on a character caught up in a transition from ignorance to awareness or knowledge."

Cummings published a book on Fornés



SCOTT T. CUMMINGS

in 2013, the first to take account of her complete oeuvre, which included teaching classes and workshops focused on helping playwrights to gain access to their imaginations, to strengthen their creative systems.

Cognitive impairment cut short Fornés' plan to write *The Anatomy of Inspiration*. With the aid of primary

source documents, Cummings hopes to create an approximation of what Fornés planned for her book—a practical guide for writing students and aspiring playwrights and a valuable contribution to American theatre and drama scholarship.

Cummings said, "like Eugene O'Neill, Fornés was a fierce experimentalist and insistent truth-teller. It will be an honor and a pleasure to complete the manuscript in the former home of such a kindred spirit."

Last year's Tao House Fellows lauded the experience, which allowed them to work in the creative atmosphere in which O'Neill wrote his masterpieces. A full description of the program, presented in association with the National Park Service, is available on the Foundation [website](#).

Eugene O'Neill Foundation marks 20 years of Playwrights' Theatre with a double bill of one-act plays on May 6 & 7 in Danville, CA

By Gary Schaub

The twentieth anniversary productions for the Playwrights' Theatre have been scheduled by the Eugene O'Neill Foundation, Tao House.

For this anniversary year, artistic director Eric Fraisher Hayes has chosen two notable short plays that played a seminal role in launching Modern America Theatre.

Eugene O'Neill's *Shell Shock* and Rita Creighton Smith's *The Rescue* will be seen on a single bill on Saturday, May 6, at 8:00 p.m., and on Sunday, May 7,

at 2:00 p.m. in the Old Barn at the Eugene O'Neill National Historic Site in Danville.

Tickets for the Playwrights' Theatre program are available beginning April 1 online at the O'Neill Foundation's [website](#) or by calling 925.820.1818. Seating in the Old Barn is limited so early reservations are suggested.

Both of the short plays made their debut in 1918 at the Provincetown Playhouse on Maccougal Street in New York. The Greenwich Village venue was an outgrowth of the theatrical interest of Eugene O'Neill

and his Bohemian colleagues who had summered and presented newly written works on Cape Cod at the Wharf Theatre on the Provincetown waterfront.

The double bill is produced for the Eugene O'Neill Foundation in collaboration with Symmetry Theatre Company of San Francisco, whose mission is to create stimulating and challenging professional theatre that is "balanced"—i.e., the plays chosen will always have at least as many female characters as male.

(Continued on page 29)



Short plays from 100 years ago take timely look at mental illness

(Continued from page 28)

“Our goal is to recognize that women’s stories are as important as men’s,” says Symmetry’s artistic director Chloe Bronzan. “We hope to bring to the public and theater community at large the need for more ‘balance on the boards.’”

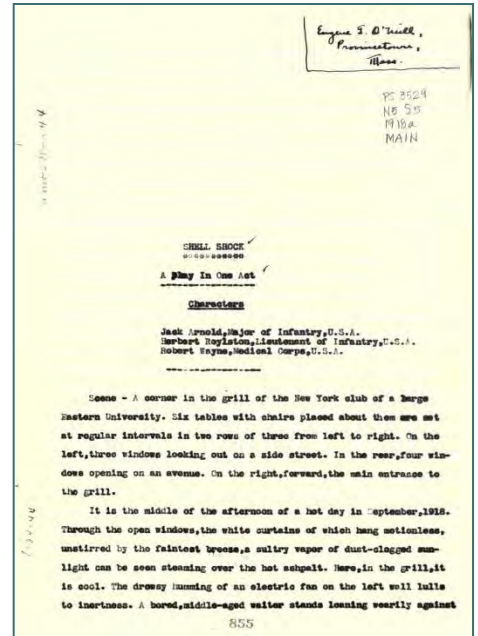
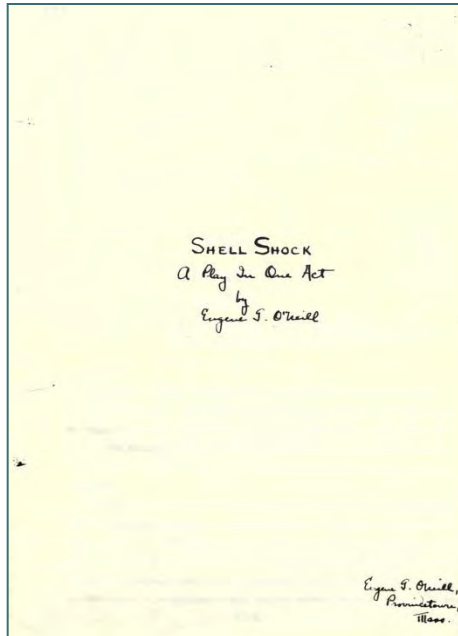
“These two plays from early Provincetown Playhouse give us a special opportunity to present plays that reinforce Symmetry’s mission,” says the O’Neill Foundation artistic director Eric Fraisher Hayes. “Many of us are familiar with the Provincetown Playhouse’s most famous playwright, Eugene O’Neill, but just as important and less known are the works of the Playhouse’s women writers.”

A panel discussion on gender equality in theater and issues related to the plays’ theme of mental illness will take place immediately following the two performances, says Hayes.



PHOTO: EUGENE O’NEILL FDTN.

Shell Shock is the third of Eugene O’Neill’s three plays about World War One. Each of the three was concerned with different realities of



Pictured are Eugene O’Neill’s original title page and first script page of *Shell Shock*, accessed via California Digital Library. To read the entire script in its original form, click [HERE](#).

war. Written in early 1915, and set prior to the end of the war, *Shell Shock* focuses on the impact on mental health that the war is having on many surviving soldiers.

It was written while 26-year-old O’Neill was completing his first year at Harvard University’s playwriting course taught by George Pierce Baker. The one-act play was entered into Harvard Dramatic Club’s competition where it received honorable mention.

Rita Creighton Smith’s *The Rescue* was also written for George Pierce Baker’s playwriting workshop at Harvard. The drama, with three female characters, concerns the remaining daughter of a notable New England family who is worried she has inherited her family’s strain of insanity. She faces the issue when she returns to her dignified, but gloomy, family home for her mother’s funeral.

The Playwrights’ Theatre series was initiated by the Eugene O’Neill Foundation in 1996 in collaboration with the National Park Service. Playwrights’ Theatre presents staged readings of O’Neill plays by professional directors in the San Francisco Bay area, with work by playwrights who influenced O’Neill, or were influenced by him—including works by new and emerging playwrights.

These productions are presented at the Eugene O’Neill National Historic Site in Danville, operated by the National Park Service. Tao House is the location where, between 1937-1944, Eugene O’Neill and his wife Carlotta lived, and where he wrote his most memorable plays, including *The Iceman Cometh*, *Long Day’s Journey into Night*, and *A Moon for the Misbegotten*. Tours of Tao House are available by contacting the National Park Service at 925. 838.0249, ext. 6320.

Babson College students tour Tao House, write and perform short plays

On February 13, 2017 Beth Wynstra brought 22 of her Babson College (Massachusetts) students to Tao House for the day. These students are in Beth's class "Revolutionary Stages and Stages of Revolution: Theater, Politics, and Performance in the City by the Bay," which is a part of Babson's study abroad program in San Francisco. The course covers significant San Francisco/Bay-area theater artists, performance traditions, theater spaces, notable productions, and groundbreaking companies from 1849 until the early 21st century. At Tao House, students enjoyed tours of the house and grounds led by Wendy Cooper and National Park Service officer Tad Shay. Students then wrote original short plays inspired by elements in O'Neill's works and performed these plays in the barn. Beth appreciated the chance to be outside in beautiful weather in February!



Babson College students visit Tao House, escorted by NPS officer Tad Shay, far right; Wendy Cooper, Eugene O'Neill Foundation advisory council (not pictured); and their professor, Beth Wynstra (second from right). Beth, who is secretary/treasurer of the Eugene O'Neill Society, holds her youngest student, Ali, 2.

Meet some of the O'Neillians who contributed their talent to this issue

Samuel J. Bernstein is a retired professor of English, who, during his career spanning nearly 55 years at Northeastern University, was a frequent invited lecturer in the U.S. and abroad. His focus was upon dramatic literature, particularly on the life and work of Eugene O'Neill. He is also an active playwright. Two of his musical works were inspired by O'Neill plays: *Immortal Journey*, based upon *The Fountain*, was presented as an elaborate staged reading on 42nd Street in New York City; *Yank*, based upon *The Hairy Ape*, was performed in a full production at the Boston Center for the Arts. In 2014, *Olympics Uber Alles* was staged off-Broadway; in 2017, *The Queen's Dilemma* was performed at the American Theatre of Actors in New York City.



Wendy Cooper is a former president of the Eugene O'Neill Foundation, Tao House and current member of the Foundation's advisory council and Artist in Residence and library committees. She is also a National Park Service docent giving interpretative tours at Tao House. A former journalist, she served as editor of the Eugene O'Neill Society Newsletter from 2007 to 2011. Professional videographers, she and her husband Tony shot and edited interviews with many O'Neillians including Kaye Albertoni and Jane Caldwell—who knew the O'Neills—and early Foundation and Society members including Travis Bogard. Wendy is a director emeritus of Role Players Ensemble, Danville's regional theatre, which cosponsors the Foundation's annual Eugene O'Neill Festival, created in 2000 during Wendy's presidency.

Robert M. Dowling, 2017 Medallion recipient, is professor of English at Central Connecticut State University. His biography *Eugene O'Neill: A Life in Four Acts* was named a *Los Angeles Times* Book Prize Finalist for biography in 2015. Dowling has written and edited several other books on O'Neill, as well as numerous articles on the playwright for such publications as *The Irish Times*, *The Daily Beast*, *The Huffington Post*, *The Dramatist*, *The Eugene O'Neill Review*, and *Irish America*. He serves on the editorial board of *The Eugene O'Neill Review* and as vice president of the O'Neill Society. Nanjing University Press will be releasing a Chinese translation of his biography *Eugene O'Neill* in 2018.



(Continued on page 31)

Meet more O'Neillians who contributed their talent to this issue

(Continued from page 30)

Kurt Eisen is professor of English and associate dean of the College of Arts and Sciences at Tennessee Tech University, where he teaches world literature and drama. He is the author of *The Inner Strength of Opposites: O'Neill's Novelist Drama and the Melodramatic Imagination* (1994). His writing has appeared in *The Cambridge Companion to Eugene O'Neill* and a variety of journals, edited volumes, and reference works. He is a past president and current board member of the Eugene O'Neill Society, and serves on the editorial board of *The Eugene O'Neill Review*.



Sheila Hickey Garvey, professor emerita of theatre, Southern Connecticut State University (2016). Member, board of directors, Broadway's Circle in the Square Theatre School (2016-). A 2016 Emmy Award winning documentary narrated by Meryl Streep, *Letter from Italy, 1944: a new American Oratorio*, featured Dr. Garvey's staging of the oratorio's world premiere. Acting credits include Long Wharf Theatre and Williamstown Theatre Festival among others. Publications: based on interviews with artists working in O'Neill plays on and off Broadway. Recipient of the Moss Hart Award and numerous awards given by the John F. Kennedy/American College Theatre Festival. Past president of the Eugene O'Neill Society (2001-2003).



Harley J. Hammerman, M.D. is a radiologist by day – the CEO of Metro Imaging in St. Louis. He has an infatuation with the American playwright Eugene O'Neill. He collects him and he catalogues him on the international website [eOneill.com](http://eoneill.com) (eoneill.com). He's a foodie who writes about food with his wife Marlene on the website [Two For The Table](http://twoforthetable.com) (twoforthetable.com). He's an aging baby boomer in search of the Fountain of Youth. Harley Hammerman is [Lost Tables](http://losttables.com) (losttables.com).



Jeff Kennedy is immediate past-president of the Eugene O'Neill Society, and is an assistant professor at Arizona State University, where he teaches courses in theatre and music in the Interdisciplinary Arts and Performance program. A published scholar on the Provincetown Players, he created and maintains the award-winning research website provincetownplayhouse.com. As a celebrated composer and musician, he has worked as a production assistant for Stephen Sondheim and James Lapine, and as a music director for Broadway performers and shows. He is currently finishing a book on the history and artistic legacy of the Provincetown Players.



William Davies King, 2017 Medallion recipient, has recently put together *Long Day's Journey Into Night: Multimedia Edition* for Yale University Press, which follows on his 2014 critical edition. He is currently working on a critical edition of *The Iceman Cometh*, also for Yale. He is a professor of Theater and Dance at the University of California and the former editor of *The Eugene O'Neill Review*. He has published books and articles concerning Eugene O'Neill's connection with his second wife, Agnes Boulton, including *Another Part of a Long Story* (Michigan, 2010), and looks forward to a similar investigation of O'Neill's third wife, Carlotta Monterey.



Michael (M J) FitzGerald, an author interested in theater and things Irish, owns "Gone Fishing Books" bookshop in Lenoir, NC, a furniture town (and, now, home to Google in NC,) in the foothills of North



Carolina's Blue Ridge Mountains. A former director of development of North Carolina's Central University (NCCU,) he has an M.A. in the College of Arts & Sciences, from the University of Texas at Austin, an MBA in finance from the University of Houston, and a B.A. *in cursu classico* (English literature) from St. Peter's University, where he was a Distinguished Military Graduate in 1968.

Jo Morello, newsletter editor, has operated a public relations business in Sarasota, Florida, since 1986 and in Philadelphia before that. She is also a freelance writer and a w a r d - w i n n i n g



playwright. Her full-length play *E.G.O.: The Passions of Eugene Gladstone O'Neill* was produced in Lexington, KY, as winner of the Kentucky Women Writers Conference. Now she is currently writing *Lil & Louis*, about Louis Armstrong and his second wife. She founded and was producing artistic director of Starlite Players in Sarasota. Recent productions—short plays: *Gene & Aggie* (Sarasota/Tampa/NYC); *Talkback* (Sarasota/Tampa/Pittsburgh, PA); *Ancient Oaks* (Sarasota); and collaborations with Jack Gilhooley: *Connubial Bliss* (Kent, UK/Sarasota); *Co-Dependents* (Sarasota) and full-length *Life Upon the Wicked Stage* (Tampa Bay). www.jomorello.com.

(Continued on page 32)



Meet even more O'Neillians who contributed their talent to this issue

(Continued from page 31)



David Palmer teaches philosophy in the Humanities Department at the Massachusetts Maritime Academy. He is on the board of the Eugene O'Neill Society and is editing the anthology *Visions of Tragedy in Modern American Drama: From O'Neill to the 21st Century*, which will be published by Bloomsbury in February 2018. O'Neill Society members Jackson Bryer, Jeff Kennedy, and Brenda Murphy are contributors.

Nelson O'Ceallaigh Ritschel's fifth book, *Bernard Shaw, W. T. Stead, and the New Journalism* (Palgrave Macmillan) was published in February 2017. His fourth book, *Shaw, Synge Connolly, and Socialist Provocation* (University Press of Florida, 2011) has been recognized for excellence by Michael D. Higgins, president of Ireland. In addition to his fields of Shaw, Synge, Irish drama and socialism, Nelson has also published numerous essays on the influence of Irish drama on O'Neill. He is the co-chair, with Audrey McNamara, of the Tenth International Eugene O'Neill Conference. Nelson is chair of Humanities at Massachusetts Maritime.



Gary Schaub, former president of the Eugene O'Neill Foundation, Tao House, has been on its board since 2002. He was president (2007-09) and vice president of development (2009-13) and helped secure funding for both Student Days at Tao House and the O'Neill Studio Retreat. He was also Cultural Services Director for Walnut Creek, CA, from 1974-2001. Gary's awards include Lifetime Contributions to the Local Arts Agency Field (California Arts Council, 2001); Special Arts Award for Distinguished Service to the Arts (Arts & Culture Commission, Contra Costa County, 2001), Outstanding Arts Supporter (Diablo Regional Arts Assn., 1974-2001), Contra Costa County Theatre Shellie Award for Outstanding Contribution to the Performing Arts (1991 and 1999).



Beth Wynstra is an assistant professor of English at Babson College, where she teaches courses in American drama, modernism, acting, public speaking, and business writing. She serves as faculty director for the Sorenson Center for the Arts at Babson and regularly directs musicals and plays. Beth is the secretary/treasurer of the Eugene O'Neill Society.



J. Chris Westgate, president of the Eugene O'Neill Society and book review editor of *The Eugene O'Neill Review*, is associate professor of English at California State University,

Fullerton. He is the author of *Urban Drama: The Metropolis in Contemporary North American Plays* and articles in *Modern Drama*, *Theatre Journal*, and *Comparative Drama*; and editor of *Brecht, Broadway, and United States Theatre*. His book, *Staging the Slum, Slumming the Stage*, which examines the intersection of theatergoing and slumming during the Progressive Era, has just been published by Palgrave Macmillan.

Eugene O'Neill Society 10th International Conference

July 19-22 • Galway, Ireland

Medallion Recipients: Gabriel Byrne • Jessica Lange
Steven Bloom • Robert M. Dowling • William Davies King

For registration, agenda and other information: click [HERE](#).

Stay up to date with Facebook. Click for [Eugene O'Neill Society](#) eoneill.com

The Eugene O'Neill Society

Founded 1979 • eugeneoneillsociety.org



A nonprofit scholarly and professional organization devoted to the promotion and study of the life and works of Eugene O'Neill and the drama and theatre for which his work was in large part the instigator and model.

The Eugene O'Neill Society publishes this newsletter and the scholarly journal *The Eugene O'Neill Review* twice each year for its members. Please direct newsletter correspondence to secretary/treasurer Beth Wynstra at 26 Salem End Lane, Framingham, MA 01702 or bethwynstra@gmail.com. © 2017 by the [Eugene O'Neill Society](#). All rights reserved.