



Welcome to 2021 Travis Bogard Fellows



Clockwise from top left: Kate Bredeson, Chuck Goodin, Minghao Tu, Jennifer Maisel, Bill Bowers.

Inaugurated in 2015 by the Eugene O'Neill Foundation, the Travis Bogard Artist in Residence Program gives theatre scholars, playwrights, and critics an unparalleled opportunity to create in the sylvan, inspirational setting of Tao House. O'Neill himself was the first artist in residence at Tao House, where he lived from 1937 to 1944 and created some of his most famous plays.

From a nationwide pool of qualified applicants, the Foundation has selected five individuals, whose projects run the gamut. Although, one theme predominates among some of the fellows who will attend this year: how to create art in the middle of a pandemic.

Mime and novice playwright, **Bill Bowers** plans to use his time at Tao House to develop a play, *Between Us*, inspired by his experience of contracting COVID and living for months in quarantine, during which time he became a Zoom maven. "What do we gain and lose as we exist in this pandemic?" Bowers wonders. "How do we find community, and how does isolation bring us together in a shared experience?" At Tao House, Bowers will have time to contemplate answers to these questions.

Minghao Tu's work at Tao House, *A Silkworm Play*, will focus on another type of quarantine—that of two silkworms in a shoebox. Tu remembers being fascinated by these animals as a child in China. "My play will reimagine that childhood memory from the silkworms' point of view," Tu notes. Memory plays a key role in this endeavor, as it did in some of O'Neill's work created at Tao House, Tu explains.

"When shelter-in-place was instituted last year," says playwright **Jennifer Maisel**, "my mind kept returning to Charlotte Perkins Gilman's 1892 feminist short story, *The Yellow Wallpaper*." Maisel explains that the story is the evocative tale of a woman confined to her room by her physician husband, who has diagnosed her with hysteria.

"My project, *Yellow Wallpaper 2020*, will explore a female professor trying to write a paper on Gilman and her story when the Covid crisis forces the professor into isolation."

Chuck Goodin has spent the last decade with theatrical nonprofits working with underserved youth. He is a founding member of RePlay, an improvisational theatre company that enacts stories of audience members. At Tao House, Goodin plans to develop *Fort Hope*, a three-act play that tells the story of Andy Tallman, a young man who must find a way to excuse himself from burdensome family obligations. "I began this endeavor by attending the Eugene O'Neill Festival in New Ross, Ireland," says Goodin. "I have been a fan of O'Neill's work since my college days."

Reed College professor **Kate Bredeson** will work on her forthcoming book, *A Lifetime of Resistance, the Diaries of Judith Malina*. Bredeson contends that Malina's prominence in theatre history has been overlooked. Malina was a co-founder of New York's Living Theatre. "She outlined her passion and vision in her diary entries. My project is to edit these entries into a book for students, theatre historians, artists, and general readers."

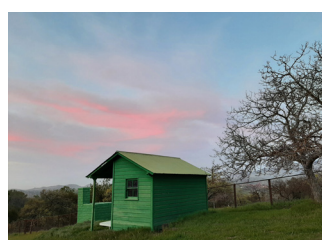
Virtual Performances Coming Home in 2021

Tao House was a crucial cradle of creativity for Eugene O'Neill. The playwright referred to his house in the Danville hills as his "final harbor and home," and it is inarguably the site of his greatest artistic output. For this haunted artist, his work was his only refuge and Tao House the closest thing to a home he ever knew. With the pandemic disrupting live performance, and tours unavailable most of the past year, our artistic programming is devoted to virtual presentations connecting O'Neill's plays with the history and beauty of Tao House and the surrounding Las Trampas Regional Wilderness. The year starts with a series of short films entitled "The Ghosts of Tao House." In each film, characters from O'Neill's plays come to life and tell their stories, with Tao House as their backdrop. Our ghost lineup will feature monologues from *Beyond the Horizon*, *Desire Under the Elms*, *Lazarus Laughed*, *Anna Christie*, *A Touch of the Poet* and *The Hairy Ape*.

This fall, EONF will premiere a virtual production of Eugene O'Neill's Pulitzer Prize-winning play *Beyond the Horizon*. The play will be presented in three recorded episodes that can be viewed individually or all at once. In keeping with the spirit of our traditional fall festival, we will be looking to offer additional experiences to complement *Beyond the Horizon*. "The play is set on a farm and there are multiple outdoor scenes," says EONF Artistic Director Eric Fraisher Hayes. "Tao House and the surrounding wilderness will be a unique asset to this production."

The artistic programming in 2021 is designed to celebrate the power of O'Neill's plays and the home of their creation. We are looking to build on the myth of Tao House as a place of creativity, and remind audiences of the magic of seeing Eugene O'Neill's plays at Tao House. We are also seeking to celebrate the natural beauty and solitude that inspired and sheltered the playwright, allowing him to create some of American theatre's greatest plays.

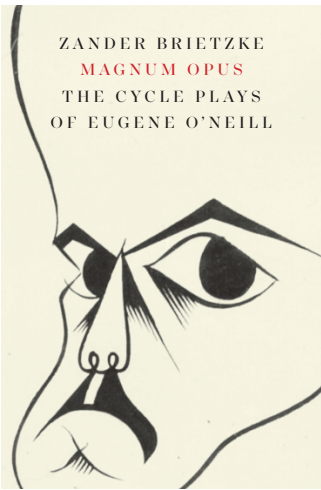
To watch our ghost videos, visit www.eugeneoneill.org/the-ghosts-of-tao-house/



A Conversation With Zander Brietzke

When Eugene O’Neill moved into Tao House, he had designs on a sprawling series of 11 plays capturing the spirit of the American story through the life of an Irish-American family. Unfortunately, only two of the plays, *A Touch of the Poet* and *More Stately Mansions* survive. In his new book, *Magnum Opus: The Cycle Plays of Eugene O’Neill*, author Zander Brietzke argues that the abandoned project was more successful than traditionally thought. Brietzke provocatively makes the case that the heart of the intended cycle lives in the two existing plays, and that the true center of this epic endeavor is the Irish immigrant Sara Melody. Join us for a conversation between Zander Brietzke and EONF Artistic Director Eric Fraisher Hayes on April 22 at 7:00 pm.

Visit our website for more info, and for the link to this virtual event!
<http://www.eugeneoneill.org/event/a-conversation-with-zander-brietzke/>



Guest Column by Martha Ross Eugene O’Neill’s Tao House: A unique Bay Area destination

East Bay residents hiking in the Las Trampas Regional Wilderness west of Danville are known to sometimes pass by a national treasure and not know it. They may see the gracious, adobe-walled villa off in the distance and only later learn it’s called Tao House and was once the home of playwright Eugene O’Neill, one of America’s greatest writers.

The Eugene O’Neill National Historic Site, with Tao House and its surrounding 13 acres, has served as a unique Bay Area destination for more than 40 years. The Nobel Prize-winning O’Neill lived at Tao House from 1937 to 1944, writing his arguably greatest plays: *The Iceman Cometh*, *Long Day’s Journey Into Night*, and *A Moon for the Misbegotten*.

O’Neill built Tao House because he needed a quiet place to live, work, and reflect. For visitors, there’s something inspiring about walking through the private rooms and exterior spaces that nurtured a great artist. That’s true for visitors who love O’Neill specifically, theatre or literature generally, or who just enjoy visiting scenic cultural sites in Northern California. When O’Neill wasn’t writing, he took in views of Mount Diablo, swam in his pool, raised chickens, and enjoyed walks with his wife Carlotta Monterey.

The lifting of COVID restrictions has allowed the National Park Service to resume reservation-only tours and shuttle services to Tao House Wednesdays through Sundays. The Eugene O’Neill Foundation may also resume its youth theatre workshops and other programs on the property in the coming months.

That means new and returning visitors can experience why O’Neill was so enamored of Tao House, as he described in a 1940 poem: “Here/Is home/Is Peace/Is quiet/Here/Is love/That sits by the hearth and smiles into the fire.” — *Martha Ross, EONF Advisory Board Member*



Travis Bogard Day-Use Fellowship

Visual artists, writers, designers, theatre directors...

An opportunity to work without interruption in the beauty and silence of Tao House, in the Travis Bogard Day-Use Program.

Fellowship Application Deadlines
April 30, 2021 (for August 1—November 30 session)
July 31, 2021 (for December 1—March 31 session)

Learn more about the Day-Use Program at
www.eugeneoneill.org/artist-in-residence-program/
and Eugene O’Neill National Historic Site: www.nps.gov/euon

Virtual Student Day 2021

We thank the Dean and Margaret Leshner Foundation and the Wood Foundation for sponsoring our virtual Student Day on March 27, 2021. Thirteen highschool students participated in a day of creative playwriting and acting on Zoom with our instructors, ending in some wonderful online performances. We hope to see them in person this summer for Studio Retreat at Tao House!

National Park Service News: Superintendent’s Message



As spring emerges and the fruit trees blossom, we are welcoming people back to Tao House. In mid-March, we resumed tours and shuttle service to the site after Contra Costa County COVID cases markedly decreased—allowing family members to make reservations by phone or email, and visit the house Wednesdays through Sundays at 10:00 a.m. or 2:00 p.m. Although we don’t anticipate another uptick in cases, please check our website for the most current information about our operating status.

Over the winter, we have been able to take advantage of the closure by completing several routine maintenance projects at the site, including pruning in the orchards, repairing the courtyard door, and assessing the condition of brick walkways and tiles around the pool. Meanwhile, our Interpretation and Education staff has been busy working on new programs, like our “Driving through Danville Bus Tour,” interpretive videos, interacting with visitors through social media, helping the Foundation with virtual programming, and spontaneous outdoor interpretive activities, such as our trailside game show “Who Said It?”

During this time, museum staff digitized Herbert Freeman’s oral histories. Freeman was the O’Neills’ trusted handyman and chauffeur while they lived at Tao House. We also recently hired David Kiger as our new Museum Technician—expanding our museum staff from two to three. David quickly jumped in on housekeeping duties to get Tao House ready for the public, and in the coming weeks he will be conducting research for exhibits and cataloging artifacts.

We hope that in the near future you will join us for a tour of Tao House.—*Tom Leatherman, Superintendent*

Please check www.nps.gov/euon for updates about access to the Eugene O’Neill National Historic Site.

Thanks to Our Donors, Theatre Patrons, and Volunteers

Invest in the future of our theatre, education, and artist in residence programs.

Your donation helps cover production costs and enables us to continue bringing performances and programs that promote the legacy and vision of America’s greatest playwright. Thank you for supporting the Foundation!

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

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

JOIN US! Would you like to be involved in the work of the Foundation? There are many opportunities for your talents or skills, or as a candidate for the Board of Directors. Go to our website: taohouse@eugeneoneill.org to see how you can become involved.