



O'Neill's "Anna Christie" Sept. 2023

Eugene O'Neill's *Warnings and Before Breakfast*

Directed by Eric Fraisher Hayes

Jan 13-14, 2024

We will return to the Museum of the San Ramon Valley in January 2024 for a theatrical experiment, the combining of two early O'Neill one-act plays, *Warnings* and *Before Breakfast*, into a single play telling a bigger story. We hope you will join us.

Tickets and more info [coming soon!](#)

A Look Back at the 2023 Eugene O'Neill Festival

The 2023 Eugene O'Neill Festival was again a huge success! This year's headliner event – O'Neill's 1922 Pulitzer Prize-winning play "*Anna Christie*" – drew sold-out crowds for all eight performances. Our actors were lauded with standing ovations and clapouts. Our Artistic Director, Eric Fraisher Hayes, once again captained a live theatre experience that drew audiences in and inspired engagement with those who attended.

This year, the Foundation also tried something new by including a new play in the Festival line-up. Written by our 2021 Artist in Residence during her time at Tao House, Jennifer Maisel's *Yellow Wallpaper: 2.0 2020* had a two-performance run in downtown Danville. Her play is a modern meditation on Charlotte Perkins Gilman's 1892 feminist short story "The Yellow Wallpaper," and Maisel's protagonist is an academic trying to pen an essay about Perkins Gilman while enduring a 21st-century version of isolation due to COVID lockdown. We hope to include more new works like this in future festivals.

In addition, the local community of Danville had the opportunity to participate in multiple events over the two-month run of the Festival. Highlights include a Book Launch and Whiskey Tasting/Stroll, both hubbed at Auburn Lounge; a Poetry event at Cottage Jewel; an art event at Pinot's Palette; a Nature Walk at Tao House and a Historic Walk in downtown; and a self-guided Ghost Stroll through downtown Danville that featured some of our "Ghosts of Tao House." If you haven't seen our "Ghosts of Tao House" (a virtual series that brings O'Neill's characters to life in short snippets), check them out on our YouTube channel.

A special thanks goes out to our steadfast partner, the National Park Service, and the countless volunteers who worked tirelessly behind the scenes. Their coordination, organization, and upbeat engaging attitude helped to make all of our patrons feel welcome and to pull off eight performances smoothly.

If you missed out on the Festival this year,
we hope to see you in 2024!



Cast of "Anna Christie"; Aaron Malberg, Charles Woodson Parker, Adrian Deane, Kyle Goldman, Cynthia Lagodzinski



NPS Interpretive Ranger Hilary Grabowska and EONF Co-President Carole Wynstra



Board Member Sarah Cain welcoming guests to the Old Barn



The Old Barn during a night-time performance of "Anna Christie"

Harley Hammerman Collection in St. Louis

A Eugene O'Neill Symposium was held on October 6 at Washington University in St. Louis, celebrating the donation, by Harley Hammerman, of *The Hammerman Collection* to the University. The Foundation was a sponsor of the event, and Co-President Carole Wynstra attended.

The Collection contains over 1,500 O'Neill items, including letters, manuscripts, plays, and memorabilia. Harley explained it was his 10th-grade English teacher who began his interest in O'Neill. The collection took over 50 years to create and assemble. This is now the second largest O'Neill collection after the Beinecke at Yale.

The day included a presentation by playwright Ronan Noone and plenary talks by Beth Wynstra (Babson College) and Katie Johnson (Miami of Ohio). Guests enjoyed a guided tour by Joel Minor (Librarian, Special Collections, Olin Library) of artifacts on display in a 110-foot-long wall case, which is only a small amount of the total archive.

In the evening our production of *The First Man*, directed by Eric Fraisher Hayes was presented in the beautiful Umrath Lounge. Check out *The Hammerman Collection* online at eOneill.com



O'Neill Artifacts Presented to

NPS This summer, the Foundation acquired and presented to the National Park Service a hand mirror that O'Neill purchased as a birthday gift for his typist Jane Caldwell, of whom he was very fond. It was accompanied by a note written in O'Neill's hand: "*I must warn you that this is an enchanted, haunted mirror, for whenever you*

gaze in it you will see in its secret depth someone staring back at you with—well, let us say, with an emotion befitting the loveliness the surface of the mirror reflects.”



Florence McAuley presenting mirror to Hilary Grabowska, NPS

In addition, the Board voted to donate six archival items to the National Park Service for their use at the Eugene O’Neill Historic Site at Tao House. Among the items donated were: O’Neill’s hand-carved ring in a devil head design; the original Chinese Gate Symbols from the courtyard gate; and a dagger that sat on O’Neill’s desk for letter opening. These items have been stored in the EONF Library vault for many years as part of the special collection of rare books and archival materials. They will now be available to showcase at Tao House for visitors.

National Park Service News



I join the chorus of bowled-over theatrical arts patrons in deep appreciation of the great work done on the production of “*Anna Christie*” this year. I suppose *patron* is not quite accurate for me, given that I was present at the performances in work-mode, sporting a fancy orange safety vest, and as concerned with the smooth operations of shuttle buses as I was taking in a great performance. But, nevertheless, I did get to take it in, and was duly impressed. It is such a pleasure to be a part of such wonderful work.

Other good work in recent months included some outstanding youth programs, such as the Youth Conservation Corps (YCC) which helped us maintain our grounds, and amazing interns in both natural resources and facilities/maintenance. A professional conservator performed conservation treatment on the Fu Dog sculptures at the base of the stairway at Tao House, filling in missing sections of wood, and cleaning/polishing the sculptures. We are wrapping up the less glamorous but critically important work of conducting a condition assessment of the drainage features around Tao House and in the

courtyard so we can avoid the flooding that occurred there in last winter's atmospheric rivers.

Recently, we had a key transition as Ranger Kelli, who oversaw the entire interpretive and education program at all four national park sites our staff manages, moved on to a great new job with the Washington office of the NPS. We are in the midst of the process of recruiting to fill her position.

Now here we are at the beginning of a new federal fiscal year, which, for probably 98% of newsletter readers, has little meaning. But for us at the park, and for me especially, it is usually a wonderful fresh start, full of promise, just like a new school year is, or January 1. This new year will likely see more transitions, not yet known, and more opportunities, also waiting to be discovered. And what I know is that your National Park Service team is ready for all of it, looking forward to working with you to achieve good things, and grateful for the support the Foundation and its members provide. ***K. Lynn Berry, Superintendent***



Please check www.nps.gov/euon for updates about access to the Eugene O'Neill National Historic Site. Follow us on Facebook at www.facebook.com/EugeneONeillNPS

A Honeymoon Trip to Tao House

Tom Ptasinski and Noelle Meaway Ptasinski of Los Angeles visited Tao House on their honeymoon and returned soon thereafter to attend "*Anna Christie*." Tom is a screenwriter, producer, and director and Noelle is senior interior designer with the firm of West Haddon Hall.



"Tom is a huge admirer of O'Neill," Noelle said. "He has a large photograph of O'Neill above his desk. So, when we decided to drive up the coast for our honeymoon, I suggested a stop at Tao House. I didn't know much about O'Neill, but I love architecture and house tours."

Tom first encountered O'Neill in high school. "I was too young to grasp the full scope of *The Iceman Cometh*, but it left a huge impression on me. I continued my study of O'Neill's work as a Film-Drama major in college, and I take any chance I get to see the plays on the stage."

"*Anna Christie*" was her first O'Neill play, Noelle said. "And what a place to see it performed!" Tom and Noelle loved "*Anna Christie*." "The production was fantastic, with a great cast," Tom said. Noelle was equally enthusiastic. "Beautiful staging and great performances. Adrian Deane's Anna was honest and heartbreaking. I'm definitely looking forward to the Foundation's future productions."

And we in the Foundation look forward to renewing our acquaintance with our new best friends.

O'Neill's *Welded* and *Beyond the Horizon* Available to Stream!

The Tao House Films of O'Neill's *Welded* and *Beyond the Horizon* are available on the EONF YouTube channel. These films, along with our many other virtual offerings, demonstrate our ongoing commitment to bringing Eugene O'Neill's plays to the screen. As far as we know, our filmed adaptation of *Welded* is the only one in existence! We hope you enjoy this rare glimpse into the lesser-known canon of America's greatest playwright.

Also included in this playlist is the [recorded online discussion](#) between director Eric Fraisher Hayes, Dramaturg Beth Wynstra, our four actors, and several O'Neill scholars. *Beyond the Horizon*, the accompanying guide, and scholar videos can all be found [HERE](#).



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Please consider us in your year-end giving. Invest in the future of our theatre, education, and artist-in-residence programs. Your generous donations help cover production costs and enable us to continue bringing performances and programs that promote the legacy and vision of America's greatest playwright.

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