

ARENA STAGE MEDIA RELEASE

Molly Smith Artistic Director Edgar Dobie Managing Director Zelda Fichandler Founding Director

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

Contact: Julia Suszynski/Kirstin Franko
press@arenastage.org; 202-600-4056

January 27, 2012

ARENA STAGE ANNOUNCES PARTNERSHIPS AND SCHEDULE FOR THE TWO-MONTH LONG EUGENE O'NEILL FESTIVAL FEATURING EIGHT ORGANIZATIONS ACROSS THE D.C. METRO AREA

(Washington, D.C.) In homage to one of America's greatest playwrights, **Arena Stage at the Mead Center for American Theater** hosts the **Eugene O'Neill Festival**, a two-month examination of the life and work of O'Neill. Similar to the Edward Albee Festival in 2011, this celebration will feature unique collaborations with other arts and education institutions in a diverse program of events. **The Eugene O'Neill Festival runs March 9-May 6, 2012 and is sponsored by Joan and David Maxwell.**

Headlining the festival are three full-length productions, the first of which is O'Neill's singular comedy ***Ah, Wilderness!***, directed by Kyle Donnelly in the Fichandler Stage, March 9-April 8, 2012. His starkly tragic autobiographical play ***Long Day's Journey into Night*** follows, running in the Kreeger Theater, March 30-May 6, 2012, directed by Robin Phillips. In conjunction with the O'Neill Festival, **Shakespeare Theatre Company** is producing O'Neill's play ***Strange Interlude***, directed by STC Artistic Director Michael Kahn in Sidney Harman Hall, March 27-April 29, 2012.

In addition to these full productions, the festival features more than 20 readings, workshops, radio plays, lectures, panels, presentations and art exhibits throughout the Mead Center and partnering venues in the D.C. Metro Area. Participating organizations include **Al Hirschfeld Foundation, Capital Yacht Club, Georgetown University, George Washington University, New York Neo-Futurists, Shakespeare Theatre Company, Taffety Punk and University of Maryland.** Tickets to festival events go on sale February 1, 2012.

"At Arena Stage we are committed to shining a spotlight on the giants of American theater," says **Arena Stage Artistic Director Molly Smith**. "There is no question Eugene O'Neill is one of our giants, and I am so pleased that we are partnering with so many educational and artistic groups across the city to enable deep exploration of his work and highlight the many achievements of this great playwright's life."

Eugene Gladstone O'Neill (1888 – 1953). When Eugene O'Neill began writing for the stage early in the 20th century, the American theater was dominated by vaudeville and romantic melodramas. Influenced by Strindberg, Ibsen and other European playwrights, O'Neill vowed to create a theater in America, stripped of false sentimentality, that would explore the deepest stirrings of the human spirit. In 1914, he wrote: "I want to be an artist or nothing." During the 1920s, he was awarded the Pulitzer Prize for three of his plays—*Beyond the Horizon*, *Anna Christie* and *Strange Interlude*. Other popular successes, including *The Emperor Jones*, *The Hairy Ape*, *Desire Under the Elms*, *The Great God Brown* and *Mourning Becomes Electra*, brought him international acclaim. In 1936, he was awarded the Nobel Prize for Literature—the only American playwright to be so honored.

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O'Neill experimented with new dramatic techniques and dared tackle such controversial issues as interracial marriage, the equality of the sexes, the power of the unconscious mind and the hold of materialism on the American soul. In each of his plays, he sought to reveal the mysterious forces "behind life" that shape human destiny. Three of his final works, written at his California home, Tao House, tower over the others: *The Iceman Cometh*, *Long Day's Journey into Night* and *A Moon for the Misbegotten*. These autobiographical plays portray, with "faithful realism," the haunting figures of his father, mother and brother, who loom in the background of most of his other plays. He was awarded a fourth Pulitzer Prize, posthumously, in 1956 for *Long Day's Journey into Night*. In a career that spanned three decades, Eugene O'Neill changed the American theater forever.

THE EUGENE O'NEILL FESTIVAL SCHEDULE*

For up-to-date information on the festival, visit arenastage.org/shows-tickets/the-season/productions/eugene-oneill-festival/.

FULL-LENGTH PLAYS

Ah, Wilderness!

Directed by Kyle Donnelly

March 9-April 8 in the Fichandler Stage at the Mead Center (times vary)

Tickets \$40-\$85, subject to change, based on availability, plus applicable fees.

To purchase, visit arenastage.org or call 202-488-3300.

Return to an idyllic age of Americana in Eugene O'Neill's unabashedly romantic and sweetly funny *Ah, Wilderness!* As the Connecticut-based Miller clan plans their traditional Fourth of July festivities, their dreamy-eyed middle child Richard is wrestling with cultural conventions, political uncertainty, the power of literature and the exquisite pain of love. The memories of family life were never so delicately portrayed as in O'Neill's only comedy, his coming-of-age love letter to a simpler time, that finds the master playwright "at his most wistful and serene" (*New York Times*).

Strange Interlude

Directed by Michael Kahn

March 27-April 29 in the Shakespeare Theatre Company's Sidney Harman Hall (times vary)

Tickets \$20-\$100. To purchase, visit shakespearetheatre.org or call 202-547-1122.

Michael Kahn directs Eugene O'Neill's Pulitzer Prize-winning, yet controversial, drama about love and deception. Heartbroken over her adored fiancé's death, Nina engages in a series of sordid affairs before marrying a man she does not love. Months later, pregnant with her husband's child, she learns a horrifying secret about his family, setting off a dramatic and emotional chain of events that spans two decades. One of O'Neill's early plays, *Strange Interlude* was hailed as revolutionary, shocked 1928 audiences – and became a smash hit.

Long Day's Journey into Night

Directed by Robin Phillips

March 30-May 6 in the Kreeger Theater at the Mead Center (times vary)

Tickets \$40-\$85, subject to change, based on availability, plus applicable fees.

To purchase, visit arenastage.org or call 202-488-3300.

Delusion and disenchantment have pitted the Tyrone family members against one another for decades. One fateful day, as their increasingly drunken hours slip by, they must either confront their defeated dreams or else be forever doomed to a cycle of guilt and resentment. Eugene O'Neill's autobiographical masterwork exposes the lies we tell, the deceptions we craft, and the undercurrent of compassion that, if uncovered, can redeem us in the end. This Pulitzer Prize-winning American treasure "restores the drama to literature and the theater to art" (*New York Times*).

Tickets to the following festival events go on sale February 1, 2012.

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PRESENTATION OF THE NEW YORK NEO-FUTURISTS

The Complete & Condensed Stage Directions of Eugene O'Neill, Volume 1: Early Plays/Lost Plays

April 19-22 in the Arlene and Robert Kogod Cradle at the Mead Center (times vary)

Tickets \$20 plus applicable fees. To purchase, visit arenastage.org or call 202-488-3300.

The New York Neo-Futurists release Eugene O'Neill's stage directions from their dissertation prison and transform them into rip-roaring physical comedy – in under 90 minutes. Now a Broadway mainstay, O'Neill was considered an experimental playwright when he defied the melodramatic conventions of his day. The Neo-Futurists return O'Neill to his roots in this chronicle described by the *New York Times* as “an impish illustration of how lively entertainment can be created from theatrical spare parts,” which includes selections from two “sea plays,” the one-act *A Wife for a Life* (O'Neill's first play) and the satire *Now I Ask You*.

NEW WORKS

Ah, Eugene O'Neill, or The Birth, Death and (Impractical) Rebirth of American Theater

March 24 at 5:00 p.m. in the Arlene and Robert Kogod Cradle at the Mead Center

Tickets \$2. To reserve, visit arenastage.org or call 202-488-3300.

Desperately struggling to define the work of Eugene O'Neill to a modern audience, a man is surprised when a sea-weary O'Neill washes up onstage. Still haunted by the ghosts of his past, O'Neill seeks redemption by clearing up misconceptions about his life and work. This new solo performance written and performed by University of Maryland M.F.A. student Rob Jansen is an extraordinary and humorous look into the persona of America's only Nobel Prize-winning playwright.

Begotten: O'Neill and the Harbor of Masks

Written, adapted and directed by Derek Goldman

April 26-29 in the Arlene and Robert Kogod Cradle at the Mead Center (times vary)

Tickets \$10 plus applicable fees. To purchase, visit arenastage.org or call 202-488-3300.

As part of its partnership with Arena Stage, Georgetown University presents this original work starring local actor Rick Foucheux (Nat Miller in Arena Stage's *Ah, Wilderness!*) and set in a mythic landscape that evokes Eugene O'Neill's fascination with the Greek dramas. *Begotten* explores O'Neill's legacy and his rejection of the world embodied by his father's renowned performance of *The Count of Monte Cristo*, O'Neill's tortured personal relationships, his diverse creative output and his vision for a new American theater that, while forged out of human suffering, must ultimately transcend it. *Begotten* is part of the Arena Stage-Georgetown partnership which is made possible thanks to the generosity of Andrew R. Ammerman and the family of H. Max and Josephine F. Ammerman.

READINGS

Anna Christie

March 17-18 in the Arlene and Robert Kogod Cradle at the Mead Center (times vary)

Tickets \$2. To reserve, visit arenastage.org or call 202-488-3300.

Anna's back in the man's world of the New York waterfront, looking for the father who abandoned her to want and abuse many years before. Despite good intentions, there's little they have in common, and even less on which they agree. Will a life at sea and the love of a sailor wash her clean of the transgressions that helped her survive? Taffety Punk's Riot Grrrls offer a distinctive spin on the piece by casting Eugene O'Neill's classic as an all-female production.

Exorcism

March 25 at 5:00 p.m. in the Arlene and Robert Kogod Cradle at the Mead Center

Tickets \$2. To reserve, visit arenastage.org or call 202-488-3300.

This lost one-act by Eugene O'Neill centers on young Ned Malloy in the depths of his despair. Performed by the fellows of Arena Stage, *Exorcism* is another example of O'Neill's dark poetry, haunting but captivating in its humanity.

Sea Plays

Tickets \$2 (advance sales only). To reserve, visit arenastage.org or call 202-488-3300.

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Rick Foucheux directs students from George Washington University and Georgetown University in selections from Eugene O'Neill's Glencairn Quartet, which includes O'Neill's first produced play, *Bound East for Cardiff* (1916). These four one-acts demonstrate O'Neill's genius even from his beginnings as a playwright and reflect his life as a young wayfarer aboard a merchant marine ship. The plays remain early examples in O'Neill's quest to break from the melodrama of 19th century theater toward a more realist and humanist expression that defined a modern America.

Moon of the Caribbees, In the Zone

April 11 at the Capital Yacht Club

Light reception with a cash bar at 6:30 p.m. Readings begin at 7:00 p.m.

Long Voyage Home, Bound East for Cardiff

April 12 at the Capital Yacht Club

Light reception with a cash bar at 6:30 p.m. Readings begin at 7:00 p.m.

RADIO PLAY

Recklessness Before Breakfast

Running online throughout the festival.

University of Maryland assistant professor Ashley Smith collaborates with colleagues and students to intertwine two of Eugene O'Neill's earliest one acts, *Recklessness* and *Before Breakfast*, into a single performance adapted for radio. Hear O'Neill's tale of a wealthy businessman engineering a harsh revenge on his wife and her lover, and, at the same time, the story of a poverty-stricken woman looking for a way out of her life of drink and infidelity.

LECTURES AND PANELS

At the Mead Center and Sidney Harman Hall

O'Neill in Cultural Context

March 21 at 6:00 p.m. in the Arlene and Robert Kogod Cradle at the Mead Center

Tickets \$2. To reserve, visit arenastage.org or call 202-488-3300.

A discussion of historical, cultural, dramatic and religious context of the years Eugene O'Neill was writing.

O'Neill: My Life in Art

March 28 at 6:00 p.m. in the Arlene and Robert Kogod Cradle at the Mead Center

Tickets \$2. To reserve, visit arenastage.org or call 202-488-3300.

A panel focusing on how Eugene O'Neill's biography and family history influenced his work.

***Strange Interlude: Asides* LIVE Symposium**

April 1 at 10:00 a.m. in the Shakespeare Theatre Company's Sidney Harman Hall

Tickets \$20 (\$15 subscribers, \$5 students). To reserve, visit shakespearetheatre.org or call 202-547-1122.

This Asides LIVE symposium looks deeply into both the text and production, encouraging audiences to examine the work onstage from a well-informed perspective, in a conversation with Michael Kahn.

Strange Interlude: Windows

April 1 at 5:00 p.m. in the Shakespeare Theatre Company's Sidney Harman Hall

FREE. To reserve, visit shakespearetheatre.org or call 202-547-1122.

Shakespeare Theatre Company's artistic staff and a guest scholar provide a "window" into their production with an insightful, lively pre-show discussion.

Happenings: *Sea Plays* in Rehearsal

April 4 at noon in the Shakespeare Theatre Company's Sidney Harman Hall

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FREE. To reserve, visit shakespearetheatre.org or call 202-547-1122.

In partnership with Shakespeare Theatre Company and Arena Stage, George Washington University students are working on Eugene O'Neill's *Sea Plays* and will present their work-in-progress in advance of the final reading.

Strange Interlude: Divining O'Neill

April 4 at 5:00 p.m. in the Shakespeare Theatre Company's Sidney Harman Hall

FREE. To reserve, visit shakespearetheatre.org or call 202-547-1122.

Explore the play's relevance from a theological perspective.

Happenings: *Begotten* in Rehearsal

April 11 at noon in the Shakespeare Theatre Company's Sidney Harman Hall

FREE. To reserve, visit shakespearetheatre.org or call 202-547-1122.

In partnership with Shakespeare Theatre Company and Arena Stage, George Washington University students are working on Eugene O'Neill's *Begotten* and will present their work-in-progress in advance of the final reading.

The Early Plays

April 14 at 6:30 p.m. in the Arlene and Robert Kogod Cradle at the Mead Center

Tickets \$2. To reserve, visit arenastage.org or call 202-488-3300.

A panel discussion of Eugene O'Neill's early one-act and full-length plays with O'Neill historian Yvonne Shafer and actor Rick Foucheux, along with theater scholars Jackson Bryer and Robert Dowling.

Strange Interlude: Classics in Context

April 21 at 5:00 p.m. in the Shakespeare Theatre Company's Sidney Harman Hall

FREE. To reserve, visit shakespearetheatre.org or call 202-547-1122.

The Classics in Context panel gives the audience the opportunity to discuss the production with a team of experts.

Family Dynamics in *Long Day's Journey into Night*

April 29 at 4:30 p.m. in the Molly Smith Study at the Mead Center

Tickets \$2. To reserve, visit arenastage.org or call 202-488-3300.

Trained psychologist and family therapist Dr. Karen Gail Lewis dissects the minds and neuroses of the Tyrone and O'Neill clans.

ADDITIONAL EVENTS/INFORMATION

ASIDES-Sub/Text Double Issue

Available March 27 in print

In collaboration with Shakespeare Theatre Company, Arena Stage will be featured in ASIDES magazine, a print journal of research, scholarly articles and festival guide.

O'Neill Saint Patrick's Day Sing-a-long

March 17 at 5:00 p.m. in the lower lobby of the Mead Center

An evening of sea shanties, Irish drinking songs and tunes from Eugene O'Neill's shows with piano accompaniment in the Mead Center lower lobby.

Al Hirschfeld Installation: O'Neill As Seen By Hirschfeld

On display throughout the festival in the lobby of the Mead Center

A unique installation, first created for New York University's Kimmel Center, of more than 40 works by the legendary theater caricaturist Al Hirschfeld that spans 72 years of Eugene O'Neill's productions on stage and on screen, will be on display in the Mead Center.

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For full project details please contact press@arenastage.org.

**The Eugene O'Neill Festival schedule is subject to change.*

Arena Stage at the Mead Center for American Theater is a national center dedicated to the production, presentation, development and study of American theater. Under the leadership of Artistic Director Molly Smith and Executive Producer Edgar Dobie, Arena Stage is the largest company in the country dedicated to American plays and playwrights. Arena Stage produces huge plays of all that is passionate, exuberant, profound, deep and dangerous in the American spirit, and presents diverse and ground-breaking work from some of the best artists around the country. Arena Stage is committed to commissioning and developing new plays through the American Voices New Play Institute. Now in its sixth decade, Arena Stage serves a diverse annual audience of more than 300,000. www.arenastage.org

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