

Irish Festival Celebrates America's Greatest Playwright

Eugene O'Neill is America's greatest playwright. He is the only one to have been awarded the Nobel Prize for Literature and four Pulitzer Prizes. Though O'Neill died 65 years ago his plays remain among the hottest tickets on Broadway. The current production of *The Iceman Cometh* starring Denzel Washington has been nominated for 8 Tony Awards.

O'Neill was deeply proud of his Irish heritage. He famously said, "The one thing that explains more than anything about me is the fact that I'm Irish." Ireland early recognized O'Neill's genius with celebrated productions of his plays.

Therefore, it is altogether fitting that this year will mark the first Eugene O'Neill festival in Ireland.

In a partnership they call "One Festival, Two Countries," the Eugene O'Neill Foundation, Tao House, and the O'Neill Ancestral Trust will present the 19th Annual Eugene O'Neill Festival in Danville throughout September and the inaugural Eugene O'Neill International Festival of Theatre in New Ross, Ireland, October 11-14.

"One Festival, Two Countries" embodies a civic as well as a cultural partnership. Danville and New Ross have become Friendship Cities, and official delegations from the two cities will attend one another's O'Neill festivals. The Danville festival is sponsored by the Irish Consulate in San Francisco.

Why an O'Neill festival in Danville? Eugene O'Neill lived at Tao House in Danville when he wrote his greatest plays, including *The Iceman Cometh*, *Long Day's Journey into Night*, *A Touch of the Poet*, and *A Moon for the Misbegotten*. Tao House is now the Eugene O'Neill National Historic Site managed by the National Park Service. <https://www.nps.gov/euon/index.htm>

Why an O'Neill festival in New Ross, Ireland? James O'Neill, Eugene's father, lived with his parents and seven siblings in nearby Tinneranny. In 1847, the O'Neills emigrated from the Port of New Ross. James, then five years old, later became one of the most famous actors in America.

The 19th Annual Eugene O'Neill Festival in Danville

The Danville festival will feature two plays and a concert.

All My Sons by Arthur Miller

Each member of the Keller family holds one piece of the secret about the wartime disappearance of the oldest son. A series of revelations changes the Kellers forever. *All My Sons* was Arthur Miller's first major success.

Village Theater, 233 Front Street, Danville, CA

Performances: August 31 and September 1–2, 7–9, 14–16

Hughie by Eugene O'Neill

In the desperate hours of the night, two lonely strangers try to make sense of their lives. In a fresh take on the play, director Eric Fraisher Hayes brings to life the thoughts of one of the characters, expressed in O'Neill's stage directions, giving the audience a new appreciation of O'Neill the dramatist and humorist. *Hughie* was written while O'Neill lived in Tao House and benefit productions of the play, starring the original cast of Jason Robards and Jack Dodson, helped save Tao House.

The Old Barn, Eugene O'Neill National Historic Site, Danville

Performances: September 21–23, 27–30

“Turlough O'Carolan: Ireland's National Composer in Music and Song”

Two master musicians from Ireland, guitarist/composer David Creevy and singer/composer Melanie O'Reilly, will perform the songs of Turlough O'Carolan, generally recognized as Ireland's first great composer. David's transcriptions of O'Carolan's music for guitar, interwoven with Melanie's melodies and songs, will create an unforgettable soundscape. Sponsored by Chevron Corporation.

Village Theater, Danville Performance: September 20.

For further information consult <http://www.eugeneoneill.org/> Tickets will soon be available at www.villagetheatreshows.com

The Eugene O'Neill International Festival of Theatre in New Ross

The New Ross festival, October 11–14, will feature four plays and a film.

Mourning Becomes Electra by Eugene O'Neill

Singled out by the Nobel Prize Committee in 1936 as O'Neill's “grandest work” to that point, *Mourning Becomes Electra* will be directed by Ben Barnes. One of the most renowned directors of theater and opera in Europe, Ben is a former artistic

director of the Abbey Theatre, Ireland's National Theatre. This will truly be a theatrical "event," both because it will be performed in two parts, with a dinner break, and because Ben is attracting some of the greatest actors in Ireland for this staged reading.

The S.S. Glencairn Cycle by Eugene O'Neill

O'Neill's four one-act sea plays, collectively entitled the *S.S. Glencairn Cycle*, will be performed on the *Dunbrody*, a full-scale replica of one of the Famine Ships that brought emigrants like the O'Neills and President John F. Kennedy's great-grandparents from New Ross to America. Based on O'Neill's youthful experiences as a merchant seaman, the *Glencairn* plays launched his career as a playwright. This site-specific production, with the necessarily small audience, will be a once-in-a-lifetime experience.

My Real Life by Eoin Colfer

My Real Life, also directed by Ben Barnes, was written by *New York Times* best-selling author and Wexford, Ireland native Eoin Colfer. A hit at the 2017 Edinburgh Fringe Festival, it later toured Ireland to great acclaim. "My Real Life was a surprisingly enthralling evening laden with as much humour as pathos." (*The Irish Times*)

Hughie by Eugene O'Neill

Eugene O'Neill Foundation Artistic Director Eric Fraisher Hayes and his cast will take the Danville production of O'Neill's *Hughie* to the New Ross festival and tour it in Ireland thereafter.

The Count of Monte Cristo, starring James O'Neill

For the festival the Library of Congress has prepared a print of the 1913 silent film, *The Count of Monte Cristo*, starring James O'Neill in his signature role. This role brought James fame and wealth as he played it on stage thousands of times. However, as his alter ego laments in *Long Day's Journey into Night*, James purchased that success at the cost of abandoning his rise as one of America's most promising Shakespearean actors: "What the hell was it I wanted to buy, I wonder."

The New Ross Festival Package

While each evening will be devoted to theater, each day will be spent touring such sights as Hook Lighthouse, Tintern Abbey, Waterford Crystal, Kilkenny Castle,

Smithwick's Brewery, and the Ros Tapestry. Sean Reidy, co-chair of the New Ross festival and former CEO of the JFK Trust, has arranged a special tour of the Kennedy Homestead, the birthplace of President John F. Kennedy's great-grandfather Patrick Kennedy.

The Festival Package costs amazingly little—\$800. This includes five nights at the four-star Brandon House hotel (bed, breakfast, and dinner), the festival events in the evening, and the day trips, including light lunches. (\$100 single supplement)

The Extended Tour Package

Eugene O'Neill Foundation members will join festival-goers taking the optional extended tour. This tour will include two days exploring Kerry's Wild Atlantic Way, including the Skellig Islands, the Ring of Kerry, and the Dingle Peninsula. The tour will conclude with a day in Dublin visiting Trinity College, the National Museum, the National Library, and the Parliament. The total cost of the Festival Package and the Extended Tour Package is \$1,700. (\$250 single supplement)

Make your reservations at www.eugeneoneillfestival.com