

O^{the}Neill
 eugene o'neill
 theater center

Sen. Gary LeBeau, Co-Chair
 Rep. Jeffrey Berger, Co-Chair
 Commerce Committee
 State Capitol
 Hartford, CT 06106

Proposal to the State of Connecticut - Request for Bonding

March 5, 2012

Dear Senator LeBeau, Rep. Berger and Members of the Committee:

The Eugene O'Neill Theater Center is seeking multi-year funding from the State of Connecticut to partially support its capital campaign to expand its campus, permitting the launch of an exciting and completely unique national educational initiative that creates permanent new jobs in southeastern CT.

Located in Waterford, the O'Neill is an internationally renowned institution dedicated to discovering and nurturing new talent and writing for the stage, and has been at the forefront of American theater since its founding in 1964. In June of 2010, the O'Neill was awarded the Regional Theater Tony Award on national broadcast on CBS, and presented by O'Neill trustee Michael Douglas. This was the second Tony for the O'Neill, and speaks to the continuing national and international impact of the O'Neill's work, radiating from Connecticut. Scores of well known writers, actors, and directors have launched their careers at the O'Neill, including August Wilson, Meryl Streep, Al Pacino, Angela Bassett, Jennifer Garner, and more. A full outline of the O'Neill and its many illustrious programs is included as an attachment to this document.

The O'Neill is now seeking to launch a new and completely unique national educational initiative as part of its National Theater Institute, which will bring significant national and international attention to the State of Connecticut and secure the O'Neill's financial future. **Furthermore, this project is construction ready, and would generate immediate construction and permanent jobs.**

National Theater Institute

The National Theater Institute (NTI) is the premiere fully accredited, study-away semester program for undergraduate theater students, better than its only peers in London, and has been since its founding in 1970. Alumni of NTI consistently say that the program is "transformative," and they have made major impacts in their field, including: Jennifer Garner;

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Paul Hodes (US Congressman, NH); John Krasinski (Jim, *The Office*); Jeremy Piven (*Entourage*); Adam Bock (playwright); and many more.

Since 1970, NTI has always been exclusively devoted to training in drama. The O'Neill's administration believes that there is a significant opportunity to offer an equivalent course in **musical theater**, and thereby to double the size of the NTI. 90% of Broadway audiences attend musicals, and the success of television shows like "Glee" and "Smash" are indicative of the hunger many young people have for musical theater performance and study. Two of the O'Neill's historic strengths would be combined in this program – undergraduate education and professional musical theater development. Shows like *Avenue Q*; *In the Heights*; and *Nine* were all born at the O'Neill, and connections to the Broadway community run deep. These professionals would be tapped to be mentors and full-time faculty for the program.

NTI tuitions are the largest component of the O'Neill's earned income, providing more than \$2 million annually toward a budget of approximately \$3.2 million. If the NTI were to successfully double its size, the economic consequences to the O'Neill would be profound. Our research shows that there is no other fully accredited one term study away opportunity in musical theater – the O'Neill and the State of Connecticut would have this niche all to itself. Given the emphasis on musicals in American theater in recent years, the program, properly marketed, will be highly successful.

Facility

In order to accommodate these new programs, the O'Neill must expand its physical campus. The O'Neill needs 65 new bedspaces (many would be shared rooms), 5 new rehearsal spaces, a new dining facility, and an additional theater. Centerbrook Architects of Essex, CT, has been engaged to plan and design the new facilities, and has offered a creative solution to accomplish the O'Neill's goals. New dormitory construction would be broken up into 6 new "cottages," built to resemble New England shoreline cottages, in keeping with the look of the O'Neill campus. Rehearsal, dining, and performance spaces would be similarly modest in scale and designed to fit into the beautiful and rural nature of campus.

The Town of Waterford owns the O'Neill's property and land, and is supportive of the O'Neill's goals. The Town has confirmed a new lease granting additional land suitable for siting the new construction. Additionally, the Town has agreed to pay to bring the sewer line to the O'Neill, a significant investment, and granted approvals from all necessary permitting agencies for the project.

Funding

We anticipate that this will be a \$16 Million Campaign, and we are seeking funding from many sources. The O'Neill requests that the State consider \$8 Million over two years, through bonding, a special act, or other avenue; and divided evenly over two years (\$4 Million/year).

The O'Neill is also in the midst of a quiet phase in its campaign, so far raising over \$2.6 Million as of March 1, 2012 from its private supporters. We are confident that we can raise the approximately \$6 million remainder from these supporters.

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Why Invest?

This is a good investment for the State of Connecticut. With it, the O'Neill will expand its programming, bringing it and the State of Connecticut to the forefront of arts education in America. Already a shining beacon in the theater world, the O'Neill would become a larger and more widely-known beacon with this new program, NTI-Musical Theater. With it, the O'Neill can secure its financial future through the tuitions that these programs will generate, making the organization self sustaining. Without the campus expansion that this funding will enable, the O'Neill cannot launch the expansion of NTI into musical theater training, thus depriving hundreds of students across the country a unique and valuable educational/professional experience.

This investment represents good value for the State. While significant, the \$8 Million would quickly generate much more in direct and indirect business activity. Approximately 35 new and permanent full-time and seasonal full-time jobs would be created to support the new programming. The O'Neill's budget size would expand by over \$1M (to \$4.5 Million/year), creating more business in the State.

The first phase of the project, including the cottages, the new rehearsal hall and renovations to an existing building to provide additional rehearsal spaces, is **ready to be constructed**. Working drawings have been completed and bids are being prepared. Construction can begin as soon as funds are received, providing immediate jobs for an estimated crew of 50. While construction proceeds on the first phase, final design of the second phase, consisting of a new theater and a dining hall/library will be completed so that construction on the remainder of the project can be commenced as the first phase nears completion.

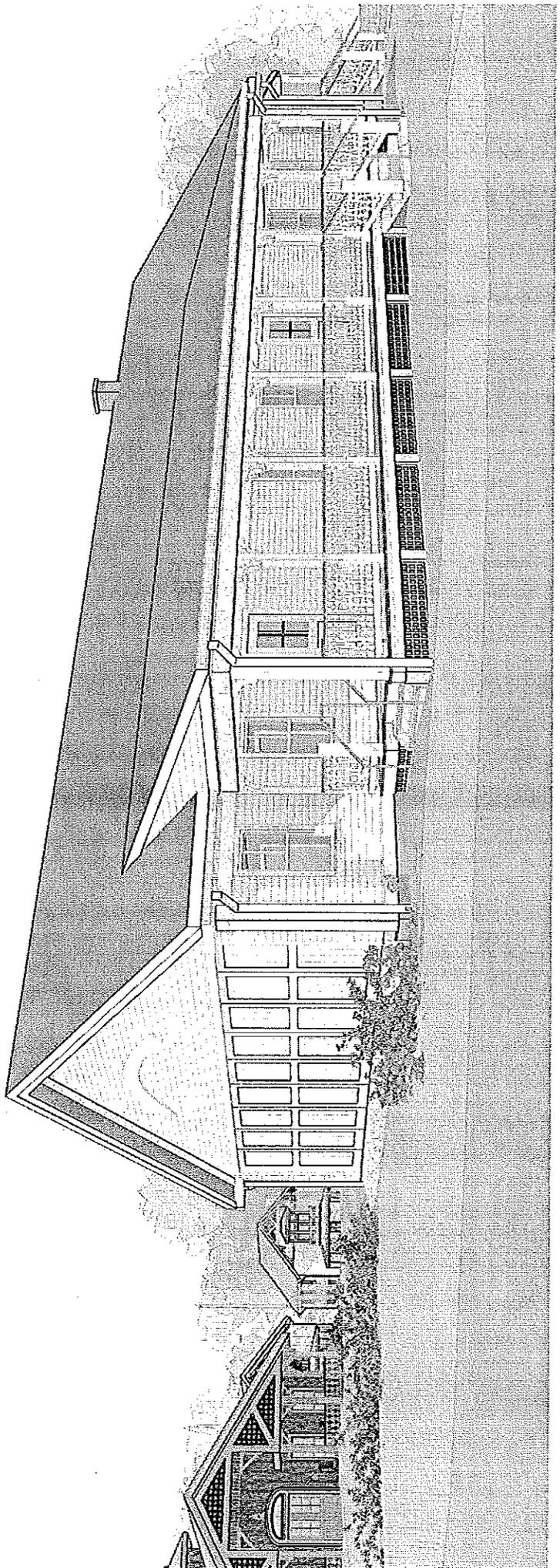
The Eugene O'Neill Theater Center is deeply grateful for the State's consistent support, especially in recent years. This request represents a large jump from past levels of support, but a one-time jump that is justified – the investment will pay for itself, as the O'Neill, a jewel in Connecticut's cultural crown, will be firmly financially stable and an even greater cultural icon for the State. The O'Neill is back on its feet and has demonstrated excellent financial stewardship, with an improved balance sheet while continuing over the past five years to meet its expenses from earned and contributed income. However, this stability is precarious without the larger enrollments that an expanded campus would allow. The demand for the NTI program is strong among college students, and clearly justifies the expansion. We hope that the State will join us on this important project, at a critical positive juncture for the O'Neill.

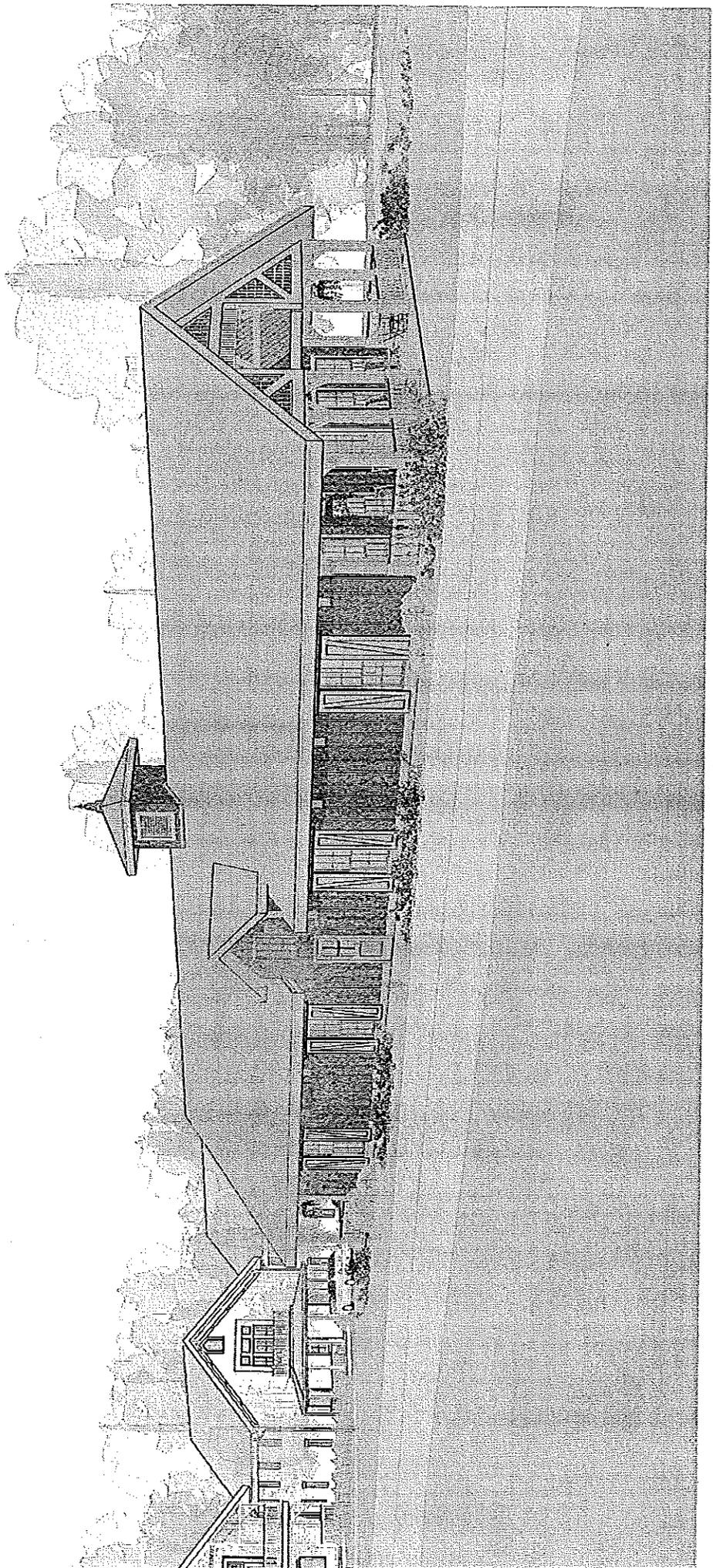
Thank you both for your consistent support and advocacy. Please let me know if there is any further information I can provide.

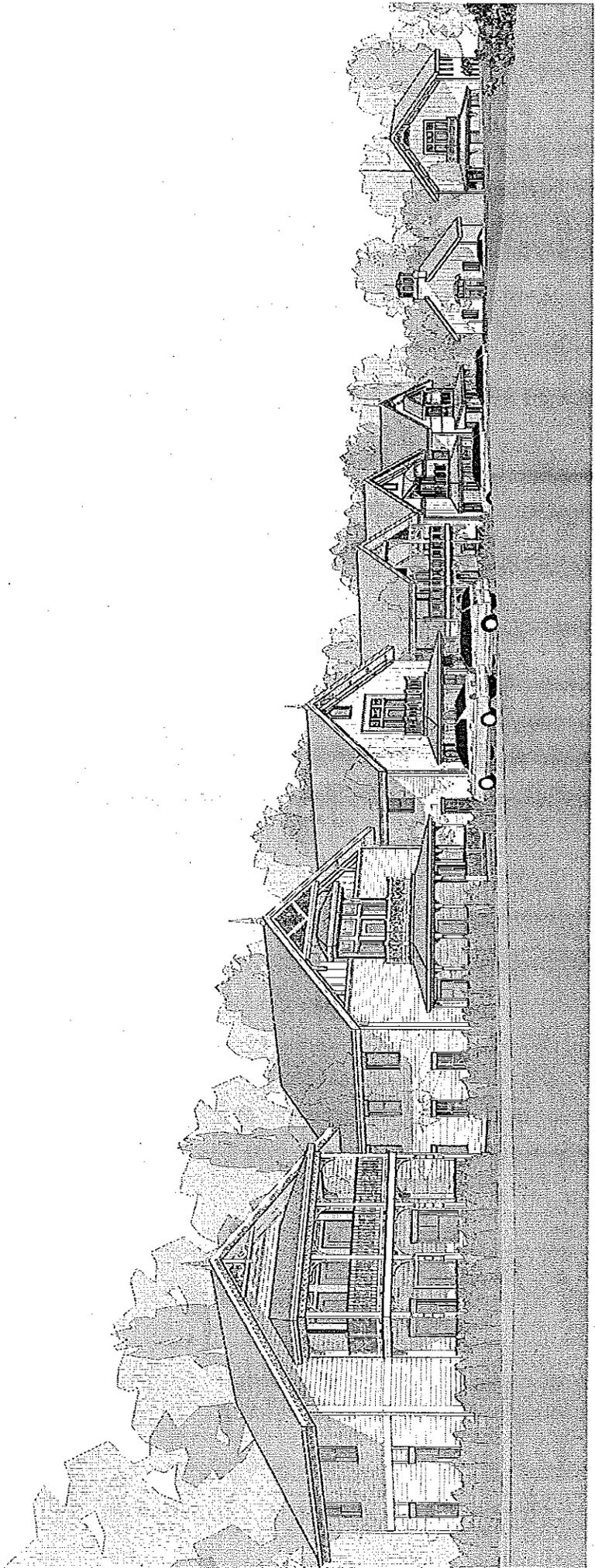
Sincerely,


Preston Whiteway
Executive Director

attachments







O^{the}Neill

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theater center

The Eugene O'Neill Theater Center is dedicated to the development of new work and new artists for the theater, by creating and operating programs for the enrichment of theater artists, students, teachers and audiences, in the tradition of bold exploration embodied in the work of its namesake.

The Eugene O'Neill Theater Center is the country's preeminent organization dedicated to the development of new works and new voices for the American theater. The O'Neill has been home to more than 1,000 new works for the stage and to more than 2,500 emerging artists including such names as August Wilson, Lee Blessing, Adam Rapp, Wendy Wasserstein, Meryl Streep, Woody Allen, Danny DeVito, Michael Douglas, Jennifer Garner, Lin-Manuel Miranda, and more. Scores of projects developed at the O'Neill have gone on to full production at other theaters around the world, including Broadway, Off-Broadway, and every major regional theater. *Avenue Q*, *In the Heights*, [title of show], August Wilson's *Fences*, and Julia Cho's *Durango* represent just a few.

O'Neill programs include: the National Playwrights Conference led by Wendy C. Goldberg; National Music Theater Conference led by Paulette Haupt; National Critics Institute led by Daniel Sullivan; National Puppetry Conference led by Pam Arciero; Cabaret & Performance Conference led by Michael Bush; and National Theater Institute lead by Jeff Janisheski, which conducts semester-long, conservatory style theater training programs including Theatermakers, a six-week summer program; academic credits are awarded for all NTI programs.

The O'Neill's programs enrich theater artists, students, and teachers. For more than 45 years, the O'Neill has served as a creative home for the nation's most talented playwrights, directors, actors, stage managers, and other theater artists. Several artists nurtured here at an early stage in their career have gone on to achieve the highest recognition in the theater world, including the Pulitzer Prize for Drama, the Academy Award, the Tony Award, the Emmy, the Obie, the Golden Globe, and the Richard Rodgers Award.

The O'Neill also owns and operates Monte Cristo Cottage, childhood home of Eugene O'Neill and a National Historic Landmark, which functions as a museum open to the public.

In 2010, the O'Neill received the Regional Theatre Tony Award, marking its second time the O'Neill has received a Tony for its contributions to the field – preceded by the 1979 Tony Award for Theatrical Excellence. The O'Neill has also been recipient of the National Opera Award, the Jujamcyn Award for Theatre Excellence, and the Arts and Business Council Encore Award. The O'Neill is led by Executive Director Preston Whiteway and Board Chairman Thomas Viertel. For more information, visit www.theoneill.org.

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NATIONAL PLAYWRIGHTS CONFERENCE

For four glorious weeks each summer, writers and theater artists from around the world come to the O'Neill to participate in a developmental residency for new works. The National Playwrights Conference welcomes both emerging and established writers to collaborate with directors, dramaturgs, actors, and other professional staff to examine and shape their new projects for the stage. Many of these writers are selected through an open submissions program involving more than 150 readers and a distinguished selection committee. The roster of works developed at the O'Neill and then seen by audiences all over the world increases every year. Prominent among them – by writers who were emerging artists when their plays were developed at the O'Neill -- are Wendy Wasserstein's *Uncommon Women and Others*, Martin Sherman's *Bent*, Lee Blessing's *A Walk in the Woods*, John Henry Redwood's *The Old Settler*, John Guare's *House of Blue Leaves*, David Lindsay-Abaire's *Fuddy Meers* and *Kimberly Akimbo*, Carey Perloff's *Colossus of Rhodes*, Deborah Baley Brevoort's *The Women of Lockerbie*, Kia Corthron's *Breath, Boom*, Keith Reddin's *Frame 312*, and August Wilson's *Ma Rainey's Black Bottom*, *Fences*, *The Piano Lesson* and *Seven Guitars*.

NATIONAL MUSIC THEATER CONFERENCE

The O'Neill's National Music Theater Conference provides a dynamic developmental opportunity for composers, librettists, and lyricists and their newest projects. Over four weeks, these artists collaborate with directors, music directors, actors and other professional support staff. Selected participants attend a month-long developmental residency which, since 2004, has run concurrently with the National Playwrights Conference, providing artists with an opportunity to share their work and learn from each others' processes. More than two-thirds of over 100 music theater projects begun at the O'Neill have gone on to full productions worldwide, garnering countless awards for the works and their creators. Notable among these works are *Nine*, which won the 1982 Tony Award, Best Musical & 2003 Tony Award, Best Revival of a Musical; *Violet*, one of the 90's most acclaimed Off-Broadway productions; *Radiant Baby*, which debuted at New York's Public Theater in 2003; *Avenue Q*, winner of three 2004 Tony Awards, including Best Musical; and Lin-Manuel Miranda & Quiara Alegria Hudes' *In the Heights*, the 2008 Tony Award winner for Best Musical and 2009 Grammy Award winner for Best Show Album.

CABARET & PERFORMANCE CONFERENCE

Established in 2005, this Conference offers artists an opportunity to work on their "small-stage" projects with Cabaret masters and musical directors. Participants gain presentation skills as well as deepening their theatrical and performance ideas. Both established and emerging artists are in residence, sharing ideas and lending professional support and encouragement to each other. Guest artists have included multiple- award-winning actresses Suzanne Douglas, Penny Fuller, and Ruth Williamson, world-famous magicians Darwin Ortiz and David Roth, Grammy Award winning songwriter Marcus Hummon, Tony winner Gretha Boston, *The Fantasticks'* Rita Gardner, Andre DeShields, and more - all of whom developed new Cabaret works while in residence. Two Cabaret Conference shows have even played on Broadway; the meta-theatrical and self-referential [title of show] and the sweetly-told travelogue, *The Story of My Life*.

NATIONAL PUPPETRY CONFERENCE

Inspired by the groundbreaking work of puppeteers Jim and Jane Henson, the O'Neill's National Puppetry Conference encourages puppet artists to create and communicate through the visual and kinetic form of the puppet, and to push beyond their personal boundaries to develop new work for puppet theater. Participants collaborate with guest directors, puppeteers and playwrights to explore a range of performance styles and projects encompassing writing, music, marionettes, character development, puppet design, construction, and staging. Participants have gone on to work in international theater venues, and in Broadway productions such as *Little Shop of Horrors*, *The Lion King*, and *Avenue Q*, and on television shows like *Sesame Street*, *Between the Lions*, and *Bear in the Big Blue House*.

NATIONAL THEATER INSTITUTE

NTI is an exceptionally demanding semester of training in directing, playwriting, design, acting, movement and voice for college-aged students each fall and spring. A core faculty of working professionals, enhanced by frequent guest artists, guides students through the program. After a semester at NTI, students have a sense of the commitment necessary for a career in the theater, and a deeper knowledge of their capabilities, strengths, and weaknesses. The ethos serves as a powerful foundation for their lives, and has served more than 2,000 students through NTI programs since 1970. NTI offers two other accredited training and experiential programs: The Moscow Art Theater Semester (MATS), in which students travel to Moscow to attend a full spectrum of acting classes at the famous Moscow Art Theater; and TheaterMakers, a summer intensive in which students receive training, the opportunity for collaborative project work, and interact with the artists in residence at the O'Neill summer conferences.

MONTE CRISTO COTTAGE

A National Historic Landmark since 1971, the Monte Cristo Cottage was the boyhood home of Eugene O'Neill, and serves as the setting for two of his most notable works: *Ah, Wilderness!* and *Long Day's Journey into Night*. The museum is open Memorial Day through Labor Day; and September to May by appointment, and features an extensive collection of artifacts and memorabilia. The Cottage provides individual and group and tours – few other literary landmarks are as evocative of a writer and his inner world - and also hosts special programming for students and writers throughout the year.

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