

WESTON PLAYHOUSE
THEATRE COMPANY

2017

History and Background

Compiled by Rachel Liff, Administration/Education Intern

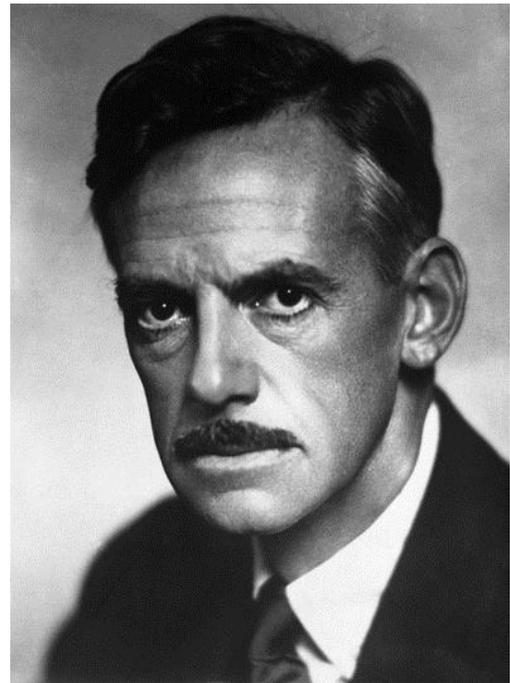
SYNOPSIS

On an ordinary summer's day with extraordinary consequences, this story of the Tyrone family and their battle to uncover—and bury—a lifetime of secrets continues to prove itself one of the most profound and powerful plays ever brought to the stage. This is our third annual American Masters production.

ABOUT THE PLAYWRIGHT

Eugene O'Neill is regarded as one of the most prolific American playwrights of the 20th century. Born in a hotel room in 1888, O'Neill spent most of his formative years following his father, a once-famous Shakespearian actor, from theater to theater across the country. As O'Neill grew older, his father sacrificed his artistic integrity to take on smaller, less challenging roles that provided a larger salary. The family then moved to Connecticut, where O'Neill attended school for the next seven years.

Upon his graduation from a private high school, O'Neill attended Princeton University, but dropped out after only one year. He then moved to New York City, where he spent most of his days drinking with his brother. He eventually met his first wife, Kathleen, and took a job as a sailor. Two years later, after she had given birth to O'Neill's child, they divorced.



https://kategale.files.wordpress.com/2011/11/img_1192mid.jpg

This prompted O'Neill to return home, where he discovered his father had succumbed to a deep depression and his mother a morphine addiction.

For the next five years, O'Neill worked on one act plays. He also entered his second marriage at this time and had two more children. In 1920, he wrote *Beyond the Horizon*, which won a Pulitzer Prize. Over the next decade, O'Neill continued to produce highly successful plays. At the same time, however, he faced personal turmoil with the death of his father, mother, brother, and the divorce of his second wife.

This period of mourning inspired some of O'Neill's greatest plays, including *Desire Under the Elms* and *Mourning Becomes Electra*. He also created a series of plays concerning a singular New England family, but destroyed the manuscripts in fear they would be altered after his death.

The final years of O'Neill's life were spent in relative solitude. While his health was failing, he wrote his final plays that were eventually produced posthumously: *The Iceman Cometh* and *Long Day's Journey into Night*. He died of pneumonia in 1953 in a hotel room. Throughout his life and after his death, O'Neill received the Pulitzer Prize, the Nobel Prize in Literature, and the Tony Award for Best Play (*Long Day's Journey into Night*).

This is a largely autobiographical play. Many of the details established here can also be found in the text of the play.

Sources:

<https://www.biography.com/people/eugene-oneill-9428728>

<http://www.pbs.org/wnet/americanmasters/eugene-oneill-about-eugene-oneill/676/>

MONTE CRISTO COTTAGE

Long Day's Journey into Night is set in O'Neill's boyhood summer residence in New London, Connecticut. The house is commonly referred to as Monte Cristo Cottage, after James O'Neill's most notable role as Edmond Dantes in *The Count of Monte Cristo*. Restoration and curation of the



http://www.theoneill.org/files/7914/5824/5848/bar_1.jpg

cottage began in 1972. It opened to the public in 1982, but was not set to reflect the set of *Long Day's Journey into Night* until 2005. This unique National Historic Landmark lets the public into the private life of a literary icon like no other museum. Tours are available through the Eugene O'Neill Theater Center, located next door in Waterford, Connecticut.

Source: <http://theoneill.org/monte-cristo-cottage>



<https://spookadar.com/wp-content/uploads/2016/03/Connecticut-New-London-Haunted-House-Monte-Cristo-Cottage.jpg>

OUR WESTON PRODUCTION

Long Day's Journey into Night turns a critical eye towards the themes of family, addiction, grief, and guilt. See how the costume and scenic designers began to imagine how these issues take physical form.



Images courtesy of costume designer Tracy Christensen



Images courtesy of scenic designer Lee Savage