

THE VILLAGE TRIP

**A New Annual Festival Celebrating the History and Heritage of
Greenwich Village**

EUGENE O'NEILL AND THE VILLAGE

Walk, talk and live performance led by Cecilia Rubino

Assembling at the Washington Square Hotel, Friday September 28, at 12 noon

The winner of four Pulitzers and a Nobel Prize for Literature, **Eugene O'Neill** (1888 -1953) was the first genius of American theater. An autodidact and a fighter for social justice, he was part of a golden circle of Greenwich Village writers and radicals the impact of whose work is still felt today. Born in a hotel on Times Square, his actor father an alcoholic, his mother a morphine addict, he set out to reimagine his family history in a series of harrowing plays that show a disdain for what he saw as the cardboard cut-out conventions of Broadway. *Long Day's Journey Into Night* is arguably his most autobiographical work.

O'Neill arrived in the Village in 1914, falling in with a crowd that included John Reed, Theodore Dreiser and Sinclair Lewis. (In Warren Beatty's 1981 movie *Reds* O'Neill was played by Jack Nicholson.) He spent much of his time in the Golden Swan, a seedy bar on the corner of West 4th Street and Sixth Avenue known to its largely disreputable clientele as the Hell Hole or the Bucket of Blood. The bar would provide the sad inspiration for Harry Hope's Saloon in O'Neill's 1939 play *The Iceman Cometh* - Dorothy Day was another regular. Reportedly, this communist-Catholic activist could drink O'Neill under the table.

It was Reed and his girlfriend Louise Bryant who tempted O'Neill up to the Cape, where the Provincetown Players' second season was just beginning. In a ramshackle theatre in a former coastguard station, O'Neill made his debut as a produced playwright with *Bound East for Cardiff*, a one-act play inspired by his years at sea. By the end of that 1916 summer, the 29 Players had decided to start a theater back in Greenwich Village. Reed – a journalist and author of *Ten Days That Shook the World* – wrote a manifesto: "Be it resolved, that it is the primary object of the Provincetown Players to encourage the writing of American plays of real artistic, literary, and dramatic – as opposed to Broadway – merit." Premises at 139 MacDougal Street were leased for \$50 a month and the season opened with O'Neill's *Bound East for Cardiff*. Four years later, he won his first Pulitzer with *Beyond the Horizon*.

Eugene O'Neill and the Village begins with a 45-minute walk from the Washington Square Hotel – which O'Neill would have known as the Hotel Earle – to sites, including Provincetown Playhouse, that were integral to O'Neill and his time in the Village. Returning to the Hotel,

Cecilia Rubino, Associate Professor of Theater at Lang College/The New School, will direct scenes and monologues connected with Village locations from *Ah Wilderness*, *The Iceman Cometh*, *Anna Christie* and *Long Day's Journey Into Night*.

The Village Trip is a sponsored project of Fractured Atlas, a non-profit arts service organisation. Fractured Atlas will receive grants for the charitable purposes of The Village Trip, provide oversight to ensure grants are used in accordance with grant agreements, and provide reports as required by the grantor. Contributions for the charitable purposes of The Village Trip must be made payable to Fractured Atlas and are tax-deductible to the extent permitted by law.

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