

Charlotte La Nasa  
Literary Intern, Eugene O'Neill Theater Center  
Summer 2016

This summer I had the pleasure of serving as a literary intern at the Eugene O'Neill Theater Center in Waterford, Connecticut. The O'Neill was founded during the 1960's in order to provide a safe environment for playwrights to develop new work without the pressures associated with a full-scale production. Since its founding, the O'Neill has been home to treasured modern American Playwrights, such as August Wilson and Wendy Wasserstein, and still upholds its founder's commitment to developing new work. In order to foster a time for artists to create in a safe environment, the O'Neill hosts four conferences during the summer: the National Puppetry Conference, the National Playwrights Conference (NPC), the National Music theater Conference (NMTC), and the National Cabaret and Performance conference. Artists for each of these conferences come from all over to learn, connect, and develop their work. The highlight of the summer is undoubtedly NPC and NMTC, a month-long endeavor where 8 plays and 3 musicals are each given a cast, director, and rehearsal time, culminating in public script in hand readings. These readings are meant to be a time for the playwright to hear their words read aloud and make changes, so they do not include production elements such as staging, costumes, and set design.

Literary interns at the O'Neill provide support to artists in all conferences by transcribing rehearsals and creative meetings when needed, printing and organizing all scripts, conducting research for conference participants, and serving as a literary

representative for two plays or one musical during the summer. The literary office is tasked with upholding high standards of efficiency, accuracy, and organization in order to best support the unpredictable needs of creative teams and works in development. The literary office often receives lengthy tasks that must be executed in a short period of time, with careful attention to detail, such as putting together revision packets for a full cast (when the playwright may have sent changes at the last minute), formatting new pages of text in the middle of rehearsal, or transcribing lengthy meetings for a rehearsal starting an hour later. Because of the literary office's high standards for attention to detail, the creative endeavors of the dozens of artists on campus at any given time are fully supported.

I served as a literary representative for the two-week rehearsal process of a musical called *Darling Grenadine* by Daniel Zaitchik. Every morning before rehearsal began, Daniel would email me a list of changes he had made to the script. These changes could involve added dialogue, cuts from the script, changes to lyrics or changes in the order of scenes, or small changes that could simply be written into the script. I had to review the changes, find where they fit into the script, and format the resulting pages to fit with the rest of the script. As a team, the literary office printed the new pages for the entire cast, creative team, production team, and library scripts. This was a very efficient system that allowed script recipients to simply remove old pages and insert their replacements directly. Sometimes these were changes based on conversations that happened in the rehearsal room, which I had to diligently pay attention to in order to write down and create pages for on my

own. Because of my work in the room, the creative team (director, dramaturg, and playwright) and the cast could focus on doing the text justice and bringing the words to life, rather than feeling uncertain as to who had which changes to the script. As a literary representative, I could see the direct results of my work in that flawless pages, delivered on time, were an absolute necessity in order for rehearsal to move forward seamlessly. I also saw that feeling secure in the script helped the creative team and the cast to feel comfortable and safe to try things out and play with the script, which allowed the rehearsal period to be more fruitful in the process of development.

There is tremendous value in spending a summer at the O'Neill as an early career theater professional. I was able to connect with dozens of people at a variety of stages in their careers in both professional and social settings. The cast of *Darling Grenadine* was immensely helpful in providing me advice on moving forward with my career, and I trust I will stay in touch with many of them as mentors and confidants. By working at the O'Neill I was able to explore my interest in the world of professional theater and decide if this was the right path for me. Being able to witness this work has helped me to feel that my diving into the precarious world of theater is far more tangible than it seemed before by connecting with working professionals that I know and respect. If any early-career theater artist were to ask me where they should look for jobs, I would immediately direct them to explore the many internships offered at the O'Neill. The potential held in the opportunity to be there for a summer is extraordinary, and the past eight weeks have changed my life.