

April 15, 2010

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NEWS FROM THE O'NEILL

Eugene O'Neill Theater Center's National Theater Institute to Present Final Project

"Nevsky Prospect" Evolves Into "SQUARE ONE"

**Free Performances on Friday, April 30 and Saturday, May 1 at 7:30 pm
Dina Merrill Theater, Eugene O'Neill Theater Center**

After working for fourteen weeks in a variety of disciplines including acting, directing, playwriting, design, movement and voice, the twenty-five students that comprise the Eugene O'Neill Theater Center's National Theater Institute spring ensemble will present *The Saint Petersburg Project: Nevsky Prospect* on Friday, April 30 and Saturday, May 1 at 7:30 pm in the Eugene O'Neill theater Center's Dina Merrill Theater. Performances are free and open to the public.

This original ninety minute work-in-progress is based on the students' first-hand experience this spring living and training in Russia for two weeks at the Saint Petersburg State Theater Arts Academy. Focusing on Nevsky Prospect, the city's historic street, students are using their personal experience and research to create and collage an original performance piece that deals with the history and tragedies of this legendary city. A true collaboration among the students, *The Saint Petersburg Project: Nevsky Prospect* will be a high-energy performance that mixes dance, theater, songs and original material written by the students.

Jeff Janisheski, artistic director of the National Theater Institute, said, "*In today's political climate, it is more important than ever to understand other cultures, to bridge divides, and to reach out across our borders. Theater can do that. Theater can be the place where we become the other, walk in their shoes, and come to a greater understanding of the human condition.*"

"I've given these students the huge challenge of creating an original piece inspired by their travel abroad," said Janisheski. "The work they are create out of this epic material is typical of the challenge that is NTI: think big, be bold and aim high."

The NTI ensemble is composed of students from schools across the country with diverse theatrical backgrounds. The final project allows them to participate in all areas of the production, including writing, acting, design, choreography, stage combat and directing. Janisheski notes that NTI is a supportive environment where students are encouraged to take risks and develop their own unique voice and perspective within the theater, saying: *"the journey at NTI is like the journey that happens in all great theater: it's about transformation. They enter as students and emerge as better artists."*

For more information on public performances of *Nevsky Prospect*, please contact the O'Neill at 860.443.5378 x213

The National Theater Institute, a program of the Eugene O'Neill Theater Center, was founded in 1970. Under the direction of artistic director Jeff Janisheski, it offers a fully-accredited, conservatory-based theater training semester to college-age students each fall and spring. In addition to a rigorous schedule of conservatory classes led by leading theater professionals, students attend performances and meet with artists at New York and regional theaters. NTI also offers an accredited semester of study abroad with the Moscow Art Theater. Its summer program, Theatermakers, gives advanced students and recent college graduates workshops and classes along with the opportunity to participate as assistants to professional artists during the O'Neill's summer playwrights, music theater, and puppetry Conferences.

The O'Neill, founded in 1964 in honor of Eugene O'Neill, four-time Pulitzer Prize Winner and America's only playwright to win the Nobel Prize in Literature, 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 2,500 emerging artists. 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 major regional theaters.

O'Neill programs include the National Playwrights Conference, National Music Theater Conference, National Critics Institute, National Puppetry Conference, the Cabaret & Performance Conference, as well as National Theater Institute.

In addition, the O'Neill owns and operates Monte Cristo Cottage as a museum open to the public. Childhood summer home of Eugene O'Neill, the Cottage is a National Historic Landmark.

The Eugene O'Neill Theater Center has received a special Tony Award, the National Opera Award, the Jujamcyn Award for Theatre Excellence and the Arts and Business Council Encore Award. For more information, visit www.theoneill.org or email theaterlives@theoneill.org.

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