Professor David Peimer - The Theatre of Eugene O'Neil

- [David] Okay, so thank you so much to Wendy and to Judy hugely, because I know it's your birthday week also. And thanks so much for setting up this stunning purple curtain and for helping get this presentation together. Really appreciate. And just to say a big hi to everybody, there's a little bit of spring in Liverpool and I hope everybody, wherever you are, can experience a little bit of spring as well. Although the Liverpool football team is doing disastrously, there's spring in the air. Okay, okay.

Visuals are displayed throughout the presentation.

So I want to move on to today on the theatre of Eugene O'Neill, who, together with Arthur Miller and Tennessee Williams, are really regarded, as I'm sure many know, the three great playwrights of the 20th century coming out of America. And together with Beckett from Ireland and Pinter from England, a couple of others from England and Ireland, obviously Oscar Wilde, others, and some from different parts, these are amongst the really, really brilliant playwrights. And what's been fascinating for me is to go back to them, the way I read them as a kid, really a university kid. And then afterwards to just see them not only with the benefit of age, but the benefit of much more of a historical and psychological perspective on these guys writing in their time.

And what struck me is that all three, in totally different ways, but of Williams and Eugene O'Neill and Arthur Miller, is they are located between the first and second World War and I don't think we can underestimate that for a second. And their fathers are the ones primarily, who in some way are connected to the war. Whether having fortunate or doing business or are labourers in the city and trying to make a buck afterwards. Obviously they, mostly the children of immigrants in different ways, particularly O'Neill and Miller. But there is something so powerful of the American experience between the wars and after the first World War, which I think is a bit just different to the experience obviously in Europe and in England where obviously in Europe, the landscape, the geography is devastated.

And so many know people from all over in Europe, somebody who's been damaged or fought. So that's a crucial thing. And these guys come back or are part of the war generation. And unlike in England, the war poets and the war writers and certain huge social changes, they come back and they're battled for jobs, they're battled to earn a buck. They look to find this, to find that, even if they've grown up in there and their fathers haven't gone. Nevertheless, the culture has been so hugely affected by that industrialised, utterly devastating First World War. And then of course the Second. So it's in that context, I see the obsession with the father. I see the obsession with the male character, which is obviously followed through later with Mamet and Shepherd that we've looked at. And I see, and also with the mother and the role of the mother, everything is in such change, such flux. In addition, the enormous technological changes, obviously women getting the vote, huge. Perhaps the hint of the beginnings of the civil rights, the real Civil Rights Movement in terms of black Americans achieving their equality and the

vote. And I see enormous changes happening, which are different to, in a way, to those in England and in parts of Europe.

So it's in that context that I want to see this today. And they're very conscious of being the sons of mostly immigrant families and therefore mixing in that way. Which again, is different to the English or the European experience of the soldiers who came back after the First and then 20 years later, literally the Second World War. So there's an immigrant experience because they are the second generation. And I think these things are really important contextually in looking at these three guys as playwrights. For me, what they all have in common is, and Arthur Mill I think really achieves it in "Death of a Salesman", "The Crucible", O'Neill in obviously "Long Day's Journey", in "Street Car" for Williams and other plays. But the utter ambiguity of life, having been part of the devastation of the wars, of The Great Depression, the crash, of the incredible technological advances, and yet the savage horror that it's put to use of to as well, the medical advances and mass movements of people globally, which is different to the makings of empire.

These are forced by wars and young soldiers going to and fro and everywhere. So it's a time of huge upheaval, not to mention the Spanish flu, times of huge upheaval and change. Extraordinary, I think. And I get a sense that all of this put together gives these guys a feeling of where on earth do they belong? Where do they fit? How do they relate to their parents of another generation? Often the fathers come back and there aren't necessarily jobs or they're coming back as almost sometimes war heroes or having achieved something even if they stayed in the States during the wars. What did they come back to? And then the Great Depression, the crash in '29. So I think there's something about the enormous pressures of experience and the pressures of history, which is kind of punching and pushing in with these writers. And again, because they're part of the immigrant culture and the history of America, it's a bit different to the English and European experience post wars. So they, for me, are obsessed with where do they belong? How do they relate to others? How do they forge their own identity? How do they express themselves as men and the mothers?

Or how do they express themselves as mothers and the fathers? And it's, I sense a feeling of real, and I'm not trying to be jargonistic here, but a real dislocation, psychologically, which comes from the historical dislocation of anything that might have had the illusion, partly at least, of being a fairly naive but predictably framed 19th century, which may be an entirely an illusion, but there's a massive change. So they're looking to belong, they're looking to understand. And I sense life is imbued with a grasp of profound complexity and ambiguity. A human can be, can kiss you or kill you within a second. A human can despise you and desire you within a second. A human can love you and hate you within a second. And let me be a parent, a sibling, a partner, a wife or husband, ever. They're understanding the instant shifts in human psyche. And I think this goes, to me, it goes back to the Greeks, ancient Greek theatre to the Elizabethan times in theatre and many others when there was such profound understanding of human nature as ambiguous, as contradictory, as glorious and grotesque. And I don't think they hesitated to go for the jugular.

And for me, truth is beauty. Beauty is truth. So it's, I love it that they go, they're not scared to go so deep. It's also the beginning of psychoanalysis with Freud and all the influencers around that to not stay, just skimming the surface of psychological clothing. But to rip it off and go for the heart. Desire, what is it? What is loneliness? "Long Day's Journey", O'Neill. What is it to belong? What is it to have, in the contemporary jargon, a so-called dysfunctional family? But family, which is filled with love and compassion and rages and hate and fear, hope, what are these really ancient human emotions mean to us in this particular time in history for these people and the culture? So I like to see it in all of this context with these three great writers. And I think that the culture is pushing them to become this. And I have to mention that I think in such a PC and stratified culture where the silo is so powerful today, it's a lot harder to go fully for let's explore the truth of the human heart.

You know, Kafka, again, it's take an axe to cut the cover of the human heart. That human's heart in the function of literature. So it's, I don't think these guys were scared and I put O'Neill in the same camp, but there's a huge price when one does that. When one is prepared to go to the heart of something, whether it's a family or a culture, like Shepherd does or Mamet for me, about business and sales and work or the farm and the family or shepherd or the true west, the brothers, the myths of the culture, there's a price. And the price is a painful quality in the writers themselves because they're touching something which ain't nice, which is scary and it's important. Most of us I think try to imprint this phrase, evade it. So O'Neill I think in this context tries to deal with the loneliness inside everyone, which leads to trying to belong, not knowing where, dislocation and then also the pipe dreams that we all need to make up because to live in that alone, totally truthful existential state, is a pretty tough call.

So we all need the pipe dreams, we all need fantasy, dreams and hopes and aspirations. It's part of human. So what happens is, I think these guys are digging and then to say, well what are the pipe dreams that get exploded when there is such a almost Freudian incisive push for truth in the family, in the culture, in love relationships, parental, sibling, et cetera. And that, for me, is O'Neill's obsession, push for the truth in the face of whether it's lonely, whether it's whatever, society, whether alcohol lubricates it or whatever. And with Williams and Miller. So the quote at the top, "Facts don't mean a thing... What you want to believe, that's the only truth." And it's so extraordinarily resonant today. All the jargon about alternative realities, alternative facts and everything, all this nonsense. But it's reality. It's reality that people are actually living and believing. It almost feels like mediaeval times sometimes, this whole thing of science versus faith and science versus belief. And you know, facts don't mean a thing. What you want to believe that's the only truth. So it's the individual's psychological perception is truth, which may be ancient but may just be having been in these extraordinary times that I'm mentioning resurrected by O'Neill and these other writers, okay?

For me at the core is loneliness and even more profound, an aloneness and what we do to cover it up because we need to. We can't live entirely in truth all the time, drive us nuts. And also society doesn't allow it. So the lie comes in, we have to live lies to a degree. And I think

O'Neil comes to realise this in "Long Day's Journey". I don't think he accepted in the very early plays, but he comes to see that lies are maybe not such a, that what he would call lies, what we would call cover up or pipe dreams perhaps, but in his time the word was lie. And it's interesting that the word lies has come back into our cultures today in the West and not only in the West. So illusion and denial, hope and fear, lust and loss. These contradictions happen in the flash of an eye. Jessica Benjamin talks so much about the need for recognition, which he gets from Hagel for me, the great German philosopher, and that that is the drive for human meaning and human nourishing in life. That the need for recognition is the most powerful force, that we crave recognition from a partner, a child, a parent, a sibling, a boss, a job, whatever it is. And when that recognition breaks down and the isn't what she calls mutual recognition, we have the unbearable tension, which metaphorically leads to a power game of the master-slave continuum.

So not literally master-slave, but a power game of who's got the more and who's got the less and the snakes and ladders of master-slave power in terms of relationships today, we might say passive aggressive power, all that stuff. When the mutual recognition breaks down, and I see this and this is what O'Neill, I sense, instinctively or intellectually or artistically understands because that's when ambiguities, contradictions, all of these that have mentioned come in. And unless we find a way to validate, recognise us in each other, we are contradiction, we're human, we're not gods. So we jump to judgement and confusion and dismissal so quick on a huge global scale. It may be race, religion, gender, whatever, on an ordinary personal level, it may be just partners, children, parents, who knows. But the contradiction is actually the core and ambiguity is the core of being so human. There's that wonderful phrase from Thoreau, that he saw the early part of the, or the part of the 20th century as the phrase was quiet. So many people living in quiet desperation. I think with O'Neil, it's loud desperation because they don't stop going for the jugular. And it comes out to a degree in "Streetcar" and in Arthur Miller's work. If we don't belong, who are we?

There's the classic example of the Jewish person that the pariah, the parvenu. And then of course the question, what do we do about it if we don't feel we belong? Do we write plays like these dislocated writers? What else do we do in our own lives to find a way to integrate, to pull things together? Okay, that's to give an overall context if I can, to go into a little bit of O'Neill's life because his life captures what I'm trying to say is his core vision in his art. And it's an extraordinary life. And I don't want to freak anybody out and I don't want to paint just a depressive arrangement of the facts of his life. Glad it's a pretty wild life. So his plays are the first to use American English vernacular and involve characters on the fringes of society and inverted commerce from prostitutes, et cetera, et cetera. The first in American culture since Elizabethan times, almost, or Jacoby and Marla and all the others. And the struggle to maintain their dreams or their hopes and aspirations and the masks that are needed to maintain that. We call it maybe truth and lie today, but the mask we need to cover up what's just too painful to look at inside. What happens if we break open that mask, like opening the curtains of a stage? We take it into a world of inner revelation, of inner truth and the evasion and denial of truth. O'Neill was born in a hotel in New York City, near Times Square.

He was the son of Irish immigrant actor, James O'Neill and Mary Quinlan, who was also of Irish descent. His father was an alcoholic and an actor and his mother had an addiction to morphine, which was prescribed to relieve the pain because she had a terrible, horrific birth of her third son. Endless pain, morphine. And the son was Eugene. Because his father was often on tour with theatrical company and accompanied by O'Neill's mother. In 1895, O'Neill was sent to a Catholic boarding school. Let's not get into that but just to mention. The O'Neill family would reunite for summers and he did because they were middle class, if not upper middle class. It's very different to Arthur Miller coming from a very poor immigrant family and Tennessee Williams. So he comes from a well-to-do family, although he's an immigrant, nevertheless. He goes to Princeton University for a year and one of his buddies or people he knows is Woodrow Wilson. And there's a famous little story of him throwing beer bottles through the window of the future President of America. O'Neill spent afterwards, quite a few years at sea, he's trying to find something, a quest, a search, some meaning, some connection during which he had bouts of depression, drinking way too much. But he had deep love for the sea.

The contradiction, again this, and he writes about it so often in so many of his plays, the love for the sea, romanticising because the sea, as we know, the sea can be amazing, stunning, beautiful blue ocean, river water and the firm, the beauty, the sunny sky, the magic, but it can flip in a second to be thunderous, huge waves and kill and overturn the boat and the sailor in a flash. Again, same ambiguity, the sea becomes a prominent theme or metaphor in his plays and quite a few are set on ships. Then in 1912 he contracts tuberculosis and is sent to a sanatorium for nearly two years and somehow he manages to, I dunno if overcome, but manage or be with the condition for the rest of his life. 1914 is when he goes to Harvard. So very different to these other guys writing and the class he's coming from. And he attends a course in dramatic technique, as it was called, for a year. He also has an affair with the wife of John Reed, who was the founder of the Communist Labour Party of America. A brief romantic affair with Reed's wife. Anyway, the Provincetown players get set up in mid 1916. Cut a long story short, he wins many Pulitzer prizes, other prizes in New York, globally, everywhere, and is the only playwright from America to win the Nobel Prize.

And it's very hard for playwrights historically to win the Nobel Prize. There was Pinton, there was Beckett, there's O'Neill and a few others. 1936, he has three marriages. O'Neill was married to Kathleen, 1909, then 1918 to Agnes, who was a writer, successful writer of commercial fiction. And they're going to live in a home owned by her parents in New Jersey and then in Connecticut and Bermuda they live. They get divorced in 1929. O'Neill Abandons some of the children from both the first two marriages, then marries an actress, Carlotta Monterey and they eventually get divorced as well. In 1929, O'Neill and Monterey moved to France and during the thirties, the early thirties, we got back to California and lived there until 1944. She organised his life and helped him to really devote his time to writing. But she became addicted to potassium bromide, remember. And his mother's also already been addicted. One of his children, Oona, as I'm sure many people know, marries Charlie Chaplin. She's 18 and he's 54 and he refuses to have anything to do with her.

He rejects the notion of the marriage completely and never meets her again in his life. She calls one of the children Eugene and Geraldine Chaplin, the famous actress comes from that birth as well and so on. So even when she's 18, she marries Charlie Chaplin, uh uh, it's forbidden for him. 1943 is when he disowned Oona for marrying and never saw her again. He also had very distant relationships with his sons. One of them was Eugene Junior, who was a Yale casuist, became an alcoholic, killed himself the age of 40. Another son Shane became a heroin addict, moved to the family home in Bermuda, father disowned him and he jumped out the window. Towards the end of his life he suffered, O'Neill suffered from Parkinson's like tremors, which made it very hard, if not impossible for him to write for the last 10 years. Tried dictating, didn't work. And he wrote his last three remarkable plays, "Iceman Cometh", "Long Day's Journey" and "Moon for the Misbegotten", just in that period in the early forties.

He died in the Sheratan Hotel in 1953, he was 65 as he was dying, he said his last words, and these are true: "I knew it, I knew it. Born in a hotel room and died in a damn hotel room." Dead. In 1956, Carlotta arranged for his play, which is pretty autobiographical, "Long Day's Journey" to be published. Although he had stipulated that it shouldn't be made public for 25 years after his death. It was produced to tremendous acclaim, won the Pulitzer Prize in 1957, et cetera. It was first staged in Sweden, translated into Swedish and staged before it went back to Broadway. Huge hit and is considered his finest. I won't get into why, Ingmar Bergman and many others, you can imagine why Sweden and it's dark for a long time of the year. In 2000, it was discovered that O'Neill had died from cerebellar cortical atrophy, a rare form of brain deterioration unrelated to alcohol or Parkinson's. So all his drinking actually didn't kill him.

Okay, I share that because it's quite, it's a pretty colourful show. He's so vivid, remarkable, wild, insane life. And this is what I believe his contradictions, ambiguities he lived, Elia Kazan said that Tennessee Williams wrote what he lived. Arthur Miller to a degree is, large degree as well, "Crucible". He lived through the house of an American, the McCarthy era and many others before "Death of a Salesman". So it's, these guys wrote what they lived, they weren't scared and he lives this completely wild, crazy, insane life. Maverick and yet remarkable and writes about it's all in his plays. Can see it. Okay here, the top picture on the left, that's Charlie Chaplin in the middle and next to him is an 18 year old Oona O'Neil. She's slightly older, sorry. She's in the early twenties because these are with some of the kids. She's actually older. She's in her late twenties here with some of the kids already born. Okay, this is O'Neill from the right, the big picture with these forbidding, foreboding eyes coming down with a smile and then down again. And then the Time Magazine, the front of the Time magazine.

There in the middle, on the bottom, the little one Eugene O'Neill playwright. That's a postage stamp. Seemed it was quite popular in those days to make a famous playwright put his image on a postage stamp. This is the house that grew up in, as I said, middle maybe upper middle class, he goes to Princeton, et cetera. He hasn't come from the same poor, very poor working class immigrant family as Arthur Miller, et cetera, and others of his contemporary, but it's still the immigrant, okay? And what I like in these pictures is I don't think you'll get a sense of a crazy

guy. You know, he's obviously such a high intensity in this guy, coming from their life background, but also a remarkable a sense for me of not scared to just cut to the chase. The key plays "Long Day's Journey", "Moon for the Misbegotten", "Moon of the Caribbees", which is a very underrated play, but it's one of the first I ever read of O'Neill and it's about these sailors who come back and it's just their time with prostitutes, pimps in the harbour, drinking, where they're going to next and so on.

And he captures the rhythms of the sea in his writing. You know, another player of is called the touch of the put, he had a touch of the put in his writing in the rhythms of the sea, the metaphors he creates all the time. He does it with sometimes with beautiful language inside gritty American vernacular. And in some of the others, his first big success was "The Emperor Jones". Okay, I'm going to look primarily at "Long Day's Journey". These are a couple of the key phrases from his life, from some of the plays just taken to help give a sense of the vision of this guy before I go into "Long Day's Journey", "Man is born broken, he lives by mending. The grace of God is glue." "Happiness hates the timid." I love that. "So does science." "Obsessed by a fairytale, we spend our lives searching for a magic door and a lost kingdom of peace." We're born, we're taught the propaganda, if childhood is internalised propaganda, we internalise fairy tales as kids and searching for the magic doors we grew up, and a lost thing.

Search, loss, obsess, just contradictions, ambiguities, it's imbued with it. "Man's loneliness is but his fear for life." And I think that's one of the most powerful statements of O'Neill's, which goes to the core of my understanding, of his understanding of his plays, is the loneliness can create the coverup job, the pipe dreams, the denial, the fantasies, the hopes we have, et cetera. Some which we achieve, some we don't. But it's also the flip side of that is the fear for life, to go out there and live and not just live quiet desperation. "Life is for each man a solitary cell whose walls are mirrors." Now that's a touch of the poet and I spent many times just, I come back to that phrase, Beckett speak, many of them speak about so many others, but it's so interesting that this guy can touch with this kind of way of feeling and believing this loneliness. And Katharine Hepburn talks about it when she talks about acting in the movie of "Long Day's Journey". The character Mary is the most lonely you can imagine.

Everything is a coverup, a denial, an evasion, a pretence. You cannot help feeling for her character. Not only because she's highly irritating and annoying, everything, but you feel so much and she's a drug addict because you feel the utter loneliness, solitary and the walls are mirrors. And then some of the wit. "You're worse than decent, you're virtuous!" I love some of these phrases. There are many others that show his wit and I think it's underestimated. Often in staging the plays, they're often seen as going into a kind of Dante's "Inferno" of family hell, which they are. Ah, no question. But there's also wit and you got to find it in the plays. "I knew it, I knew it. Born in a hotel room, and God damn died in a hotel room." "Curiosity killed the cat, and satisfaction brought it back." Look at the irony, look at the contradiction, the play of ambiguity, parables, clever little witty phrases thrown in. So not only a touch of the poet in the use of just, I love the playing with words, and the idea with that, of flipping what may seem depressing into something else.

And it's always that resonance of multiple meanings, which for me is the sign of great art, of literature, art, music, whatever. You have many possible meanings. And all I'm doing today is giving you a few of mine, I guess. I'll just put that in here and I just want to put this in here as well. Okay? Then just to go into here, a couple of other phrases of his, just to share. "None of us can help the things that life has done to us." "None of us can help the things that life has done to us." So he believed in fate to a degree and we'd struggle. We tried to mend what is born if we're born broken, but we can't help the things that life has done. The past, he was obsessed with the past becoming, I think this is maybe it was, is linked to the Freud and other things. "The past is the present and the future." It's another phrase from another, from from the play of O'Neill's. Fate is linked to the ancient Greek ideal tragedy. We struggle with free choice against fate. "Why am I afraid to dance? I love music and dance and grace and song and laughter. Why am I afraid to live? It's I who love life and the beauty of flesh and the living colours of the earth and the sky and the sea.

Why am I afraid to love? Why am I afraid to live?" "It's a great game, this pursuit of happiness. Who's up to it?" "I dissolved in this sea, became white sails and flying spray, became beauty and rhythm, became moonlight, and the ship and the high dim-starred sky! I belonged, without past or future, and a wild joy to something greater than my own life. For a second, I belonged to something greater than my own life. And in that second I saw the secret. For a second there is meaning and that was the meaning. Then the unseen hand lets the veil fall and you're alone again, lost in the fog and you stumble on towards nowhere for no good reason. But I did see that secret for a second." "To hell with the truth. The lie of a pipe dream is what gives life to the whole misbegotten mad bunch of us, whether we're sober or drunk. "It wasn't a fog I minded Cathleen, I really love fog. It hides you from the world and the world from you. You feel that everything has changed.

Nothing is what it seemed. No one can find or touch you anymore. Don't you love the fog?" A lot of these are from "Long Day's Journey". "If a person is to get the meaning out of life, you must first like" "You must first learn", sorry. "If a person is to get the meaning of life, he must first learn to like the facts about his life." That's quite a statement, like the facts of our lives. Whatever the trauma, the horrors, the terrors, the fun, the joys of the past have been, kind of deal with it, okay? So these, just to help with some of the vision of it, I want to move on to "Long Day's Journey" and I'm going to dive straight in. This is a contemporary production directed by Richard Eyre, one of the really top London directors of the recent decades with Jeremy Irons acting the main character. So from the trailer.

Video clip plays.

- For my sake, the boy's sakes and your own. Don't you stop now.

- James, please stop. What, what are you talking about? We loved each other. We always will. Let's remember only that and not try to understand the things we cannot understand or help.

Things that cannot be helped.

- If you are this far gone in the past now and it's only the beginning of the afternoon, what is you going to bitter night?

Clip ends.

- [David] Okay, I just wanted to get a sense of a fairly contemporary production with remarkable acting by the two main characters, by Mary and James Tyrone, the parents in the play and something about it, how Richard Eyre manages to bring for me such a contemporary interpretation. It's not just a ripping apart of the jugular of what's happening in the family. Underneath it is such loneliness and underneath it there was love, there was real things that connected all these people in the family, but it's gone, it's been lost. And they're trying to recapture, they're trying to refine something in the torment, in the hell that they put themselves through in one day and one night in the home, in the play. Okay, this is just another picture from it here, just to give you a bit more of a sense.

The play is not only one of the great classics of the 20th century, but it follows the classic, the structure of Greek tragedy. And I'm going to come back to the Aristotle's concept of unreserved, of undeserved misfortune. Aristotle argued that the character we feel the most for in theatre and often in life is the character's undeserved misfortune. And I want to show how all these characters, the four main characters, have something of that inside them. And O'Neill would've known this because he would've read those 38 pages of Aristotle's "Poetics". You would know it inside out as Mamet and all the others. Finding characters who have that at core, but when you find that in your own family, which is this is a semi autobiographical play, your own family, you can forgive or at least accept or at least begin to understand.

And I think that's what he's really trying to do with this play. But it takes the leap of imagination to see what is undeserved misfortune, even in the people in my own family who I may hate or can't bear to be with and can't bear to be without. And that creates an entirely different interpretation on stage. And the actors know it, need to know it. It's unrelenting but there is the truth of this underneath it. And there were once, there was really something and they are clawing something back, not just falling over the edge. It's vicious. There's no question about it. But it also is tender. And like I said before, in the flash of an eye, it jumps from the one extreme to the other. It's set in the seaside Connecticut town in the summer of 1912. The father is James, who is a highly successful stage actor who's forged a long acting career playing the Count of Monte Cristo. He's married to Mary, who's morphine addicted and she has her recriminations, but also her memories of the love with whom her and James and their first child because they went travelling for his career in theatre and she left the boys young with her parents. And the one dies at the age of two from measles.

The fact that she wasn't there, she blames herself, but she blames James, the husband, for the theatrical journey and following him all the time. And this is what comes out, the skeletons in the

family cupboard, like with Shepherd's "Buried Child", got to come out if there's any hope for a truth and reconciliation commission in the family. The oldest son, so James the father, he believes, well, hang on, I went out and became a famous actor. I acted in nonsense. You know, Count of Monte Cristo, I could have been Shakespeare, I could have been a great classical actor, but I brought in the bucks. I brought in plenty of money. You've got a lovely house, got a roof over your heads, you've got money, none of you ever had to worry about money materially. You're all taken care of. And I did it. Yeah, I might have been with prostitutes and other things and I'm an alcoholic partly, but I provided, so each character has their justification and each character has their truth. Mary understands that James also comes from a very poor Irish immigrant background where the father runs back to Ireland and the father's mother has to look after them and starvation wages, go out and work from a very young age, et cetera. He grows up with utter real hunger of real poverty.

And obviously he's obsessed with money, money, money. But he justifies it in that way. Is it a coverup? Is it a reality? Is it denial? No, it's an honest contradiction in his life, which O'Neill I think is coming to much later in his own life with his family. Mary is from a well-to-do family, but goes against her family's wishes and marries, at the time, this young actor who's charming and wonderful and exciting and dynamic. She gives up all that and goes with him. She goes travelling with him. She tries to love and support and be, but she goes with him because he pushes and demands it on the theatrical tours, but the kids stay with the grandparents. And the one dies of measles at at the age of two, there were three sons and the one dies. So she's caught in her own torment. If she hadn't gone, maybe the son would've lived. Undeserved misfortune happening for both. Then there's the character of the older brother, Jamie. And he's trying to be a classical actor like his father could have been, but he's a failed, he's a loser in contemporary jargon. He's a failed actor.

He turns to drink and self-hate, but he's charming and he's got women, prostitute, other things, et cetera, but he's never going to achieve in life. And then there's the other one who's O'Neill's character, Edmund, the younger brother who develops TB and he wants to be a writer, a poet, somebody, something famous, but he's got TB and all the hell of the family comes onto his shoulders. He tries to be the diplomat, pull them together, the insights, but he can't. But he's got TB. He might last to six months, a year and he might be dead. Never achieve any of his hopes and dreams. Each one of the four main characters has undeserved misfortune and O'Neill knows this in classic Greek tragedy of Aristotle and puts it in to understand his own family, I believe, to reach a state, not necessarily of naive forgiveness, but simple glimpses of understanding in order to, in Jessica Benjamin's phrase, have some glimpses of mutual recognition. The father is a complete miser.

He won't even pay for money for Edmund to go to a proper sanatorium to get proper hospital treatment, doctor's treatment, et cetera. Everything is money, nice house, nice car, everything but all that money provided for everything in his family that they can afford the time to go into the psychological carve up job if you like. Okay? But he says later, he says, well, within reason maybe. So everything has its contradiction, the obsession with money, the flip side, even

towards his son who's so sick, he comes up with another contradiction as they all do. Okay, some of the phrases from the play, "I'm sick and tired of pretending this is home," says Mary the mother. Well it's the ambiguities of the play. She blames on the husband's life of the travelling and the cheap hotels to what happened to the son. And that leading to her addiction and maybe if they'd lived in some other way, not all the travelling and so et cetera, might be in a happy home. Who knows? It's constantly unsure. Who knows? Choice is made, can't go back. But these both sides of the coin are true. Mary says, "James, I tried so hard, I tried so hard, please believe me." And she did. It's honest. She comes out with the truth in her morphine addicted state. She knows that the family won't accept that she tried.

She's not just a failure as a mother, she tried her best, but it's, can you imagine the nightmare for her of getting over the guilt that she left the son with her parents at the age of two because the husband demanded she come with on the theatrical touring all the time and he didn't give a damn. But he doesn't have much sympathy for her when she says that, "I've tried." And he says, "Well, couldn't you try it for longer? Couldn't you have just endured?" No, she lost the son. When the doctor calls of news about Edmund's TB, the past is the present, isn't it? It's the future too. Always the past. Memory is so powerful, and when we look at Holocaust education in some, I keep thinking what happens with memory in the life of a group, of a nation, of a tribe of a bunch, whether it's religion or it's nation, whatever, it's how memory is framed. It forges so much of our present and future. It's what O'Neill's saying. "Now I have to lie, especially to myself," she says. So she and all the others, they flip between denial and self-awareness. Again, in the flash of an eye.

Edmund says to his father, well, facts, this is where it comes from. "Facts don't mean a thing. What you want to believe, that's the only truth." All the family members have things they want to believe in spite of the facts. The father wants to believe that Mary is cured because he did love her and she did love him. It was real between them. He wants to believe she's cured of the morphine addiction. He wants to believe things can be forgotten and go back. Mary wants to believe that some of the memory of her life was perfect. She was going to be a pianist. She, yes, she left him and it was real love that she felt for him. Edmund wants to believe that he's not seriously sick with TB. Jamie, the brother wants to believe he can block out that he's an average actor, semi loser and has become semi alcoholic hanging out with prostitutes. Facts are not the issue, to go back to O'Neill, it's what we want to believe that drives us.

As I was saying right at the beginning, coming from this play, "You have to make allowances for this damn family. or go nuts," says one of the characters, says Edmond, okay, that's pretty clear. "What the hell was it I wanted to buy that was so worth it? Well, no matter." And that's the father and towards the end of his life, he looks back and says, "What the hell did I want to buy?" I bought cars, I bought houses, I bought fancy things, everything, but was I happy? And he, it just kept as a question, it's not answered by O'Neill, he's too clever a playwright, but it's poignant. He can't shake off that he's a miser and he can't see value beyond money, including his family's health and sanity. But towards end of his life, well, what the hell was it all about? Can I take the money to my grave?

And then at the end of the play, Mary, "I fell in love with James and was so happy for our time." But she says that at the end of the play, when she is trying to convince herself that at some moment she was happy and they all were. But she's in that moment on stage, she's unaware. The family's watching and she's hallucinating with morphine. It's a unbelievably freaky and heartbreaking moment if you watch it on stage because she's thinking of the happiest times of her life. When she met this guy early on, I fell in love with James and was so happy for a time before the kids were born, before the marriage went south completely. That's the memory that she goes back to. And she's hallucinating, but they're all there around watching. It's like the ghost of the past coming out. So in the masterpiece is the contradictions of which are dizzying almost because they're so quick and so endless in this play of like almost pinballs shooting between reality and delusion, from sentimentality to truth, to TB, to I'm going to become a famous writer to money is no object, no, I'll put you in this cheapest sanatorium possible. All of them go through these kind of contradictions.

So the other thing that O'Neill was obsessed with for me is that how we need to mask our true selves, whether it's denial or hopes or achievements or part how we need, and this is what he comes to. In "Iceman Cometh", one of his last plays where I don't want to go into, I'm not going to go into the story, but the pipe dreams are understood as necessary to keep the characters going, to endure. Not necessarily to be happy or enjoy it, but at minimum to endure life. And there's a strength in that. There's a toughness, yes, the constant push pull of pain and affection, pain and desire. But at the same time, the self-awareness of that, of the pipe dream and the aloneness is, I think, ultimately what he's getting at with all his plays. This was then made into a movie by Sidney Lumet, who as I'm sure everybody knows, was the son of Polish Jewish immigrants. He worked in the Yiddish theatre, et cetera. So I reckon you could understand these kind of characters. 1962 Lumet made the film with Catherine Hepburn. I'm going to show a brief clip in a second. Ralph Richardson, Jason Robards. And at that year's Cannes Festival in '62, Richardson, Robards and Stockwell got Best Actor Award and Hepburn was Best Actress. And her performance later got a nomination for the Oscars. And later when it was done in London, Olivier got the Best Actor Emmy award for his performance, et cetera. Okay, now I want to show some clips. And this is a clip with Katharine Hepburn. But yeah, she's talking about working with Sydney Lumet in the 1962 film and you see a little bit of her acting, which is remarkable.

Video clip plays.

- [Katharine] Lumet directed me in an American classic, Eugene O'Neill's "Long Day's Journey to Night". I think Lumet brought out something different in me, I guess it's called simplicity. I said to myself, don't act, don't do anything. Let the audience hear the lines. The part is so brilliantly written. It just carried me along. The overwhelming loneliness of that lost, drug addicted woman. We rehearsed for three weeks, then we just shot it in sequence from beginning to end like a play.

- I was really very pretty then that place. And he was handsomer than my wildest dreams. He

was different, different from all ordinary men. Like someone from another world. I fell in love, right then. So did he, he told me afterwards, I forgot all about becoming a nun. Lord. Oh, all I wanted was to be his wife. Oh, 36 years ago. But I can see it as clearly as if it were tonight. And we've loved each other ever since. And in all those 36 years, there's, there's never been a breath of scandal about us. I mean, with another woman.

- Doing those classical roles was not what most people expected of me. The reviews were sometimes mixed, sometimes raves, but it gave me real satisfaction, sort of a seal of approval as an actress, you might say, yes, I needed that. Most actors do, I think. What the hell, don't we all? But a Broadway musical.

Video clip ends.

- [David] And then the next piece I want to show is a little bit from the film itself that you may made with Hepburn and Ralph Richardson and Robards. This is the beginning of the play.

Video clip plays.

- Thank heaven, the fog is gone. I, I do feel out of sorts this morning. I wasn't able to get much sleep with that awful fog horn going all night though.

- Yes, like having a sick whale in the backyard, kept me awake too.

- Did it? You had a strange way of showing your restlessness. You were snoring so hard I couldn't tell which was the foghorn. 10 foghorns couldn't disturb you. You haven't a nerve in you, you've never had.

- Nonsense. You always exaggerate about my snoring.

- I couldn't, if you could only hear yourself once. What's the joke? I wonder.

- It's on me. I'll admit that much. It's always on the old man.

- Yes. It's terrible the way we all pick on you, isn't it? You are so abused. Nevermind. No matter what the joke is, it's a relief to hear Edmund laugh. He's been so down in the mouth lately.

- Some joke of Jamie's I'll wager. He's forever making sneering fun at somebody, that one.

- Now don't start in on poor Jamie, dear. He'll turn out all right in the end. You wait and see.

- He's better start soon then. He's near a 34.

- Good heavens. Are they going to stay in the dining room all day? Jamie, Evan, come out

around the porch, a chance to clear the table.

- You'll make excuses, father, no matter what he did.

- I've been teasing your father about his snoring. I'll, I'll leave it to the boys. James, they must have heard you. No, not you, Jamie. I could hear you down the hall almost as bad as your father. You'll like him as soon as your head touches the pillow, you are off and 10 foghorns couldn't wake you. Why are you staring, Jamie? Is my hair coming down or something? It's hard for me to do it up properly now. My eyes are getting so bad and I can never find my glasses.

- No, your hair's all right, Mama. I was just thinking how well you look.

- Just as I was saying at Jamie. She's so fat and sassy they'll soon be no holding her.

- You certainly look grand Mama and I'll back you up about Papa snoring. Gosh, what a racket.

- Oh, I heard him too. I know his .

- If it takes my snoring to make you remember Shakespeare instead of the dope sheet on the ponies. I hope I keep our-

- James, don't be so touchy.

- Yes, for Pete's sake Papa, the first thing after breakfast, give it a rest, can't you?

- Your father wasn't finding fault with you. You don't have to always take Jamie's part. You'd think you were the one 10 years older.

- That's right, forget everything and face nothing. It's a convenient philosophy in life. If you-

- Your father has never wanted family friends. All he likes is to hob knob with men in ballrooms or at the club. You and Jamie are the same way, but you're not to blame.

- I know it's useless to talk, but sometimes I, I feel so lonely.

- Oh.

- Oh.

- You've got to be fair, Mama. It may have been all his fault in the beginning, but you know that later on, even if he'd wanted to, we couldn't have had people here.

- Don't I? I can't bear having-

- Don't take it that way. Please, Mama. I'm trying to help because it's bad for you to forget. The right way is to remember, then you'll always be on your guard.

- I, I don't understand why you should suddenly say such things. What put it in your mind this morning?

- Nothing. Just, well, I, I, because I feel rotten and blue I suppose.

- Tell me the truth. Why are you so suspicious all of a sudden.

- I'm not?

- Yes you are. I feel it. Your father and Jamie too, particularly-

- Now don't start imagining things Mama.

- It makes it so much harder living in this atmosphere of constant suspicion, knowing everyone is spying on me. That none of you believe in me or trust me.

- That's crazy, Mama. We do trust you.

- Someplace I could go to get away for a day or even an afternoon, some woman friend I could talk to. Not about anything serious. Simply laugh and gossip and forget for a while. Someone besides the servants, that stupid Kathleen.

- Stop it Mama, you're getting yourself worked up over nothing.

- Your father goes out, he meets his friends in ballrooms or at the club. You and Jamie have the boys. You know, you go out. But I'm alone. I've always been alone.

- Come on now. You know that's a fib, one of us always stays around to keep your company.

- Because you're afraid to trust me alone. I insist you tell me why you act so differently this morning.

Video clip ends.

- [David] The reason he's acting so differently is because he has TB and he knows it. I wanted to just show a clip here because from the opening, which is setting up the play as you know, the family where they're at each other's throats, but lightly and a bit of fun, a bit of tenderness, a bit of cutting at the jugular. And our slowly O'Neill lets it unravel and we get closer and closer to the human heart of the truth of what's really going on and the extraordinary performance of

Katharine Hepburn. She never stops using her body, her eyes, her face, her lips for one second, but I never feel it's too much. It's just subtle. It's there all the time. But she's riveting. And when my eyes just go to her on the screen, and I'm sure Sydney obviously filmed it this way, but all the time, and we don't, I don't feel it's sentimental or indulgent. This lonely or the morphine coverup. It's real like in all of us, the pipe dream, the denial, the hope and the cold truth of her life and all of their lives. I just wanted to end with something very different. And I feel that O'Neill, his theatre, somehow the poem I'm going to have read now, I feel somehow it speaks to O'Neill and this world. You tell me if you agree or not. Dylan Thomas, reading himself.

Video clip plays.

- Do not go gentle into that good night. Old age should burn and rave at close of day. Rage, rage against the dying of the light. Though wise men that their end no dark is right, Because their words had forked no lightning they Do not go gentle into that good night. Good men, the last wave by, crying how bright Their frail deeds might have danced in a green bay, Rage, rage against the dying of the light. Wild men who caught and sang the sun in flight, And learn, too late, they grieved it on its way, Do not go gentle into that good night. Grave men, near death, who see with blinding sight Blind eyes could blaze like meteors and be gay, Rage, rage against the dying of the light. And you, my father, there on the sad height, Curse, bless me now with your fierce tears, I pray. Do not go gentle into that good night. Rage, rage against the dying of the light.

Video clip ends.

- [David] "Facts don't mean a thing. What you want to believe, that's the only truth." But I think he would've agreed with Dylan Thomas. Rage, rage against the dying of the light. Thanks so much everybody.

- [Facilitator] Thank you David, do you have time for questions?

Q&A and Comments:

- [David] Sure.

Q: From Glen, is there a reason why you didn't mention Stoppard from England when you mentioned Pinter?

A: No, Stoppard, as brilliant and as fantastic and I love his work equally.

Q: From oh nine three, do you recommend the '62 movie?

A: Yeah, brilliant, especially for Katharine Hepburn's performance, I think, and Jason Robards to a degree.

Lawrence, I vividly recall seeing in production of "Long Day's Journey" with Lawrence Olivier. Yep. After unscrewing a light bulb to save money, he jumped off the table backwards. I'm sure he rehearsed that a lot. Thank you.

Q: Was O'Neill aware he'd written a masterpiece?

A: I don't know. We can't know. But I think he might have felt confident about his writing by that stage, much later in his life.

Q: When you talk about undeserved misfortune, isn't there a danger playing the victim card?

A: Absolutely. Great, great point, Lawrence. But it's what the characters then do and the choices they make and the hands and the cards that fate deals with them in terms of what happens with undeserved misfortune. Hamlet has it, many of them and so on.

Yolandi, the old cliche, money can't buy happiness, can buy a lot of happiness. But you know, that's my, you know, it's always ambiguous, it's always contradictory, everything, not only money, but I think everything.

Q: Thanks. DeVry, is this somehow related to the path in life not taken?

A: Yeah, great idea.

What's it from the book, the Road Less Taken, Path Less Taken from Chaya. I've seen the grand production with, with breathtaking Leslie Melville. Yeah, brilliant. Leslie Manville, I think Jeremy Irons. That's the one? For the understated one with on YouTube. Yeah, with Jack Lemmon. She saw in Tel Aviv, great.

I thought the plays was about secrets and how they come to haunt and destroy us in the end. Absolutely. The secrets that are covered from the past and are let out, confronted at least.

Sandy, Stafford, Ontario production with Martha. Yeah, that's great.

Howard. Thank you my cousin. I hope you're well. That's Howard, my cousin. Thank you for that.

I wasn't aware there was a film, the fantastic film is the '62 one with Katharine Hepburn and Jason Robards and Ralph Richardson and then the Jeremy Irons was a stage production done at BAM in New York as well as in London. And there was Olivier production. Joan, Katharine Hepburn famously said when asked whether she drank or took drugs, "Stone cold sober. I find myself absolutely fascinating." She was a brilliant act. I agree completely. Joan, she's an absolutely brilliant actress because she always manages to keep on top of the, it's like the

emotion is the wave and the surfboard is her mind. She never lets the emotion drown the mind and that remains part of the brilliance of her acting. It's just always however freaked or furious or wild the emotion is. It's just controlled. Brando does the same. It's a controlled fury. Controlled loneliness. Controlled despair.

Thanks Debbie. Debbie, thank you Marcia. Thank you so much Marcia, and great to talk the other day. Joan, thank you. Okay, thanks again Ron. happiness, but it's certainly help with the down payment. I know, I love that old joke. Thanks Ron, I agree. Sarah, wonderful. Thanks so much, okay. Appreciate it, thank you. In Toronto. Okay, Roberta, thank you so much. Okay, appreciate.

It's really worth watching the whole movie. I can't go into, there's so many of the other plays, which are brilliant, but at least this one I think gives a real sense for me of O'Neill's brilliance. Those are the main questions I have. I think.

I can't see if they're more, I might have missed them here from Marla, Marion. It doesn't seem as though O'Neill lived by his own victim or philosophy about loving yourself and dealing with misfortune himself. Never responded well to the events the caused. I agree, Marion. But I think his thing of that your past kind of dictates and I think with "Long Day's Journey", I think he does at least try later in his life because it's written much later in his life. I think he does try at least to understand, I don't want to get over sentimental and say forgives and it's all sweet and hunky dory, obviously it's nonsense. But I think he does have an insight, at least to the, to all the aspects of his parents and his siblings. And I think that's a certain amount of maturity that I think maybe he reached, well they didn't with his own daughter Oona, that's for sure and his sons.

Marlina, really enjoyed. Thank you.

Okay, Jackie, thank you so much for your kindness, Jackie.

Q: Again, Elizabeth is the entire duration of the play a problem?

A: Yes. For frequent productions, Elizabeth? Absolutely. In a contemporary production, I would cut the number of words by a quarter at least and cut it from being way so long. You have to contemporary audience, we have to be very aware, there's 140 characters in a text, all the other stuff of contemporary. We've talked about the jargon of time and space link so brief today, but I don't think you could have this long drawn out play anymore. Do Shakespeare, do O'Neill, whoever, got to cut it radically. Remember all these play are written way before the real advent of film, TV and certainly obviously, YouTube, internet, texting obviously all that, where time feels so compressed. So time is a different perception. I would definitely cut it in staging it. In fact I did. Well nevermind. But I've done, I've done sections of it in various places and you always, you have to cut.

Q: Keith, what about the production with Phillips Seymour Hoffman?

A: Yeah, Vanessa Regrade. It's a wonderful, it's superb as well.

Karen, I've learned so much. Thank you Judy. Thank you.

Q: Why do you think he left out the misfortunes of his several marriages?

A: Well, I think his own life is what he lived and what he wrote and how much of this he managed to put into his life in terms of coming to some intelligent, relatively mature, I guess understanding. We can't say.

Dylan Thomas. Thank you Stuart. I just intuitively felt that that link somehow, I don't know why really to be frank, but I feel that it's just a link between the father, Dylan Thomas understanding his own father. The phrase of this, the tenderness and the empathy, but also the rage not only against the dying of the, deaths coming and all of that, but trying to just understand somebody you're so close to.

Thanks Jackie. Your comment?

Elaine, how was the music? Lovely question. I dunno how Sydney Lumet chose it. I'll find out. Great question.

Thank you. Naomi, thanks so much. Okay. The word guys is misplaced in academic talk. Okay. I'm just trying to be David here. I use the word guys or whatever. Okay, I hear you. Okay Naomi, thanks.

Q: Okay Amanda, are there any masterpieces dealing with happiness?

A: Theatre needs conflict. Theatre needs drama. So you have to have protagonist, antagonist. Otherwise it's boring. I hate to say it, but happiness is boring on stage. I learned as a very young kid, it's the tension. Are they going to kiss or aren't they going to kiss? That's drama. When you show the kiss, it's boring. So it's the resolution too early. And to you extend the metaphor of the tension. Are they, aren't they going to kiss? Are they, are they going to fall? Is the battle going to be won or isn't it? Is this one going to achieve the ambition? It's snakes and ladders of ambition, of greed, of hunger, of pride, of loss, of satisfaction, of achievement and falling, hubris, whatever it might be. It's snakes and ladders, drama in the beginning of the play is some of the happiness in the family that I'm showing you with that first, that one clip. But I dunno if you can have drama without conflict and tension and that includes comedy. Comedy still also needs it. We're laughing at the foibles of human life.

From Martin music was Andre Previn. Thank you so much. That's fantastic to know.

Elizabeth saw an introduction of the Harry Ape. Oh god, that's another brilliant play of his at the

old Vic.

Yep, thank you. You can't measure happiness. You can only measure, can only measure pleasure. Thank you Monty. That's a great line.

Okay, thank you JTY.

Q: Sue, are there any recent 20th century comedies that are significant?

A: Oh yeah, I've already done Mel Brooks, I've done the Marx Brothers. Oh gosh, there are so many. I mean I did "The Producers", Mel Brooks, the Marx brothers and others and I've done Monty Python in enormous details. So plenty and more to come.

Q: Why was the O'Neil Edmund in the play?

A: I don't know why he chose that name. Okay. I think that's it. Okay, is that it with the questions? I think.

- [Facilitator] Yes, it looks like that's all the, that's all.

- [David] Okay. That's it. Okay, great. Okay.

- [Facilitator] David, thank you. Thank you so much once again. And thank you to everybody you joined us and we will see everybody again tomorrow.

- [David] Thank you Judy. So much. Thanks to everybody for coming and watching and so much and stay safe and thanks to Wendy. Okay. Take care.

- [Facilitator] Thank you everybody, bye-bye. Pleasure. Bye-bye.