

Each will pen a 10-minute play, which will be directed by artistic director **Dennis Zacek**.

## DRAMA KLATCH

**Minneapolis/St. Paul:** **Bill Corbett's** *The Stuff of Dreams*, a one-hour play commissioned by the **Guthrie Theater**, has recently been crisscrossing 38 cities in nine states, with several stops this month in Minnesota, South Dakota and North Dakota.

Under the direction of **Jef Hall-Flavin**, *The Stuff of Dreams* surmises a heady conversation among five of Western drama's heavy-



**Antigone redux:** Ann Kim and Laura Esping from Guthrie on Tour's *The Stuff of Dreams*.

weight protagonists: the title characters from *Antigone*, *Hamlet* and *Cyrano de Bergerac*, as

well as Nora from *A Doll's House* and Willy Loman from *Death of a Salesman*.

A blend of original dialogue and short excerpts from the characters' source texts, the pastiche play is convened by a mysterious host, who conjures these characters to life on an open stage. "Our play tells its own story," Hall-Flavin says. "This allows for a genuine response and time for reflection, questions and, hopefully, inspiration.

"The hope is that this will engage the audience as active participants," Hall-Flavin goes on. "We focus on the imagination of the

actors and the audience, so the possibilities are endless."

For more information about *The Stuff of Dreams*, visit the Guthrie Theater website at [www.guthrietheater.org](http://www.guthrietheater.org). The tour ends on May 11.

## SUNDAY IN THE PARK WITH...

**Minneapolis:** Terror is the new toxin. Fear is a relentless reality. As the United States strikes Iraq, the anxiety-ridden people of south Minneapolis have found themselves openly asking what the future would look like. "You can see a progression in the annual May-Day Parade and Festival in our community," says **Sandy Spieler**, artistic director of **In the Heart of the Beast Puppet and Mask Theatre**.

"Following Sept. 11, there was so much grief and anger that were just on the surface, and these feelings came out strongly in the masks and puppets that lined the parade. Last year's theme was 'Mayday! Mayday!' It was a cry of distress. This year, there is still a lot of grief and anger. But people are trying to channel their feelings into specific visions. What does peace look like? In the context of a tumultuous world, what does subversive joy look like? How do we raise children in an atmosphere of health, joy and protection, given the state of the world today?"

On the first Sunday of May every year for the past 29 years, Spieler has acted as chief midwife to a storytelling extravaganza of masks and puppets that cul-

## MORE STATELY TAO HOUSE

**Danville, Calif.:** America's most famous unknown theatrical landmark—Tao House—is slated to reopen on May 1. It was at here that **Eugene O'Neill** secluded himself between 1937 and 1944 to write most of his major works, including *Long Day's Journey into Night*, *The Iceman Cometh*, *A Moon for the Misbegotten*, *Hughie*, *A Touch of the Poet* and *More Stately Mansions*.

Tao House has been closed to the public for nine months, pending a seismic retrofit. Part of May's kick-off reopening includes performances May 17 and 18 of *Into the Wake of the Moon*, a new one-man play about O'Neill written and performed by Bay Area actor **Kurt Gravenhorst**.

Only by a series of flukes did O'Neill happen to write his major works in a tiny, rural farming community 30 miles east of San Francisco. Traveling from Georgia in 1936 with wife Carlotta Monterey to visit critic Sophus Winter in Seattle, O'Neill learned he'd won the Nobel Prize. Since poor health prevented a trip to Stockholm, and O'Neill disliked foggy Seattle, he and Carlotta traveled to Oakland, where she had grown up. Soon O'Neill was in the hospital, having his appendix removed. After renting local homes to recuperate, the O'Neills decided to use their newly acquired \$40,000 Nobel Prize money to build a dream house in nearby Danville.

Resting on a rolling brown hillock at the top of a steep, narrow, winding country road, Tao House is in the middle of what was once farm country—and still is, to some extent, though many large and comfortable suburban homes have appeared in the area since 1944. Carlotta oversaw the home's design, a striking mixture of Spanish ranch house architecture with some Chinese influence. Tao House's long, low, off-white stone exterior with red roof tiles looks spectacularly over the San Ramon Valley.

By early 1944, however, enforced World War II blackouts in the San Francisco area drove the O'Neills back east. After Eugene left California, he completed no more plays. He lived another decade in poor health, dying in a hospital in Boston in 1953. So the years in Danville, in fact, were the great playwright's final hurrah.

The Eugene O'Neill Foundation and the National Parks Service now operate Tao House and its activities. For information about events, tours and the O'Neill letters collection, visit [www.eugeneoneill.org](http://www.eugeneoneill.org). —John Angell Grant



**Carlotta Monterey and Eugene O'Neill at Tao House in the early 1940s.**

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