



For Immediate Release
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Two Legendary Connecticut Theatrical Organizations Are Back Together Again Working on a Brand New Dramatic Project

West Hartford, CT: The National Theatre of the Deaf is proud to announce their return to the Eugene O'Neill Theatre Center where the company has been in residence since the 10th of May 10 through the 23rd of May 23, 2010 working on a new play script that is the centerpiece of an exciting new project that is being developed in association with the Old State House in Hartford.

This original theatrical work is being written by Deaf playwright Garrett Zuercher and is based upon the founding of the American School for the Deaf by Thomas Hopkins Gallaudet in Hartford, Connecticut on April 15, 1817. The play is entitled, ***The Hat that Built a School***, in reference to how Gallaudet meet a little Deaf child by the name of Alice Cogswell and how he convincingly demonstrated that she could learn and should be afforded the opportunity to attend school like any other child.

There are other key historical facts that serve as great moments in Connecticut history at the Old State House. Governor Oliver Wolcott, in an 1818 proclamation, asked the public, "to aid . . . in elevating the condition of a class of mankind, who have been heretofore considered as incapable of mental improvement, but who are now found to be susceptible of instruction in the various arts and sciences and of extensive attainments in moral and religious truth." His words express the great change in attitude toward Deaf people which had only just occurred. The school went on to become the first recipient of state aid to education in America when the Connecticut General Assembly awarded its first annual grant to the school in 1819.

The Company is indeed excited to be once again creating new work at the Eugene O'Neill Theatre Center, where so many great moments in the theatre, that allows audiences to "See and Hear Every Word," began 43 years ago. Aaron M. Kubey, the Executive Director/President of the National Theatre of the Deaf, said of the new play project that he is directing, "I am looking forward to seeing how NTD can help reflect on the history of the founding of the first Deaf school in American history and relishing the wonderful opportunity to develop this piece on the property of our first home, The Eugene O'Neill Theatre Center."

Members of the cast and company include: **Craig Fogel** who will portray Dr. Mason Cogswell, **Ian Sanborn** a seven year NTD veteran actor appears as Gallaudet's colleague Laurent Clerc, **Skyler Sullivan** plays Thomas Gallaudet and **Jenilee Simons Marques** is Alice Cogswell. The Production Manager, **Betty Beekman** remembers her years at the O'Neill and said, "The creative energy of this amazing campus is as strong as ever!"

There will be an invited reading of the first stage of work completed on the script on Saturday, May 22 at 7:30 pm with a reception to follow in the White House on the O'Neill Theatre Center campus. There is a full production planed at the Old State House in October with performance details to be made available by early summer.

This project has been made possible by an amazing collaboration between NTD, The O'Neill Theatre Center and the Old State House. Sally Whipple, Director of Education and Community Programming and William Bevacqua, Director of Communications and Marketing at the Old State House had asked NTD if they thought there was a possibility of staging a performance in the actual chamber rooms where the discussions were held that lead to the founding of ASD. That was the starter's bell that has lead to this remarkable collaboration.

"We are incredibly grateful to Preston Whiteway, Executive Director of the Eugene O'Neill Theatre Center, and the O'Neill Board of Directors for inviting NTD to come back to our original home," Mr. Kubey said, "we all hope this is the first of many return residencies to Waterford."

For more information about NTD, ***The Hat that Built a School***, The Old State House and the Eugene O'Neill Theatre Center log on to NTD.ORG. For general information contact the NTD offices at 860-236-4193, VP (video phone) 860-607-1338

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