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TWO O'NEILL PROJECTS NAMED FINALISTS IN PRESTIGIOUS 2008 STEINBERG/ATCA NEW PLAY COMPETITION

Waterford, CT – The Eugene O'Neill Theater Center is proud to announce that two of this year's six finalists for the prestigious American Theatre Critics Association (ACTA) prize were developed at the National Playwrights Conference (NPC) in 2007. The NPC takes place annually in July.

The two plays are *The Crowd You're In With*, by Rebecca Gilman, and *End Days* by Deborah Zoe Laufer. *The Crowd You're In With* received its world premiere at the Magic Theatre in San Francisco in November 2007. *End Days* received its world premiere at Florida Stage in Manalapan in October 2007.

"I had a fantastic experience developing my play at The O'Neill," said Ms. Laufer. "Artistic Director Wendy (Goldberg) brought together a remarkable, talented community of designers, actors, directors, dramaturges and staff – I was so happy to know, not only those amazing people who worked specifically on my play, but everyone at the Conference. I was inspired by each piece there this summer. From the first day, I knew I'd never really had a development opportunity like this before. It was really about the play. And my understanding the play. And, with a brilliant cast and director, seeing what really worked, what needed changing, and what worked better than anything I'd thought of myself."

Wendy C. Goldberg has helmed the NPC since 2005. During that time, fifteen O'Neill projects developed at the NPC have premiered at theaters throughout the country, including The Public Theater and The Manhattan Theatre Club in New York, the Denver Center Theatre Company, the Alliance Theatre (Atlanta, Georgia), Long Wharf Theatre (New Haven, Connecticut), The Goodman Theatre and Steppenwolf Theatre Company in Chicago, and the Magic Theatre in San Francisco, among others. This season (2007/2008), nine O'Neill projects have received or are receiving their world premieres.

Ms. Goldberg said, "I am extremely proud of the O'Neill's support of these new projects for the American theater. We are celebrating an incredible season of premieres and it affirms, yet again,

how rare the O'Neill process is and how truly beneficial it has been in the lives of these works, readying these plays for production.”

The American Theatre Critics Association (ATCA), receives funding for this prestigious award from the Harold and Mimi Steinberg Charitable Trust, which recognizes plays that have premiered outside New York City. The finalists were selected from 28 eligible scripts submitted by ATCA members. The top honoree in the Steinberg /ATCA New Play Award will receive \$25,000 -- the largest prize for a national playwriting award. Two additional playwrights will receive \$7,500 each. Winners will be announced at a March 29, 2008 ceremony at the Humana Festival of New American Plays at Actors Theatre of Louisville (Kentucky).

Since the inception of ATCA's New Play Award in 1977, honorees have included NPC alums Lee Blessing, Lynn Nottage, August Wilson and Lanford Wilson; and Marsha Norman, who developed two new works at the O'Neill's National Music Theater Conference, which also takes place annually in July.

The Eugene O'Neill Theater Center advances the American Theater through programs that encourage creative excellence and develop diverse voices and new work. It has been home to more than 1,000 new works for the stage and 2,500 emerging artists since its founding in 1964. Scores of projects developed at the O'Neill have gone on to full productions at other theaters around the world, including Broadway, off-Broadway and major regional theaters, garnering every major award for theatrical excellence. The O'Neill has been honored with a Tony Award, the Jujamcyn Award for Theater Excellence, the National Opera Award and the Arts and Business Council Encore Award. The O'Neill's programs include the National Playwrights Conference, National Music Theater Conference, Puppetry Conference, Cabaret & Performance Conference, National Critics Institute, and the National Theater Institute, which includes semester-long, fully accredited intensive theater-training programs and a six-week accredited summer program, Theatermakers. In addition, the O'Neill owns and operates the Monte Cristo Cottage, a National Historic Landmark and the childhood home of Nobel Prize-winning and four-time Pulitzer Prize-winning playwright, Eugene O'Neill. For more information, please visit the O'Neill website, www.TheONEill.org or call 860-443-5378.

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