

About Paul Engle

Paul Engle was born on October 12, 1908 in Cedar Rapids, Iowa. He graduated from Coe College in Cedar Rapids the University of Iowa, and attended Columbia and Oxford Universities (the latter as a Rhodes Scholar). From 1941 to 1965, he was director of the Iowa Writers' Workshop, which he built into the premier program in creative writing in the country. In 1967, Engle and his future wife, Hualing Nieh, co-founded The International Writing Program. For their work with the IWP, they were nominated for the Nobel Peace Prize in 1976. Engle was the author of more than a dozen collections of poetry, a novel, a memoir, an opera libretto, and a children's book. He died in 1991. In 2000, Governor Tom Vilsack proclaimed October 12 Paul Engle Day.

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www.humanitiesiowa.org

Views expressed in this program do not necessarily reflect those of the
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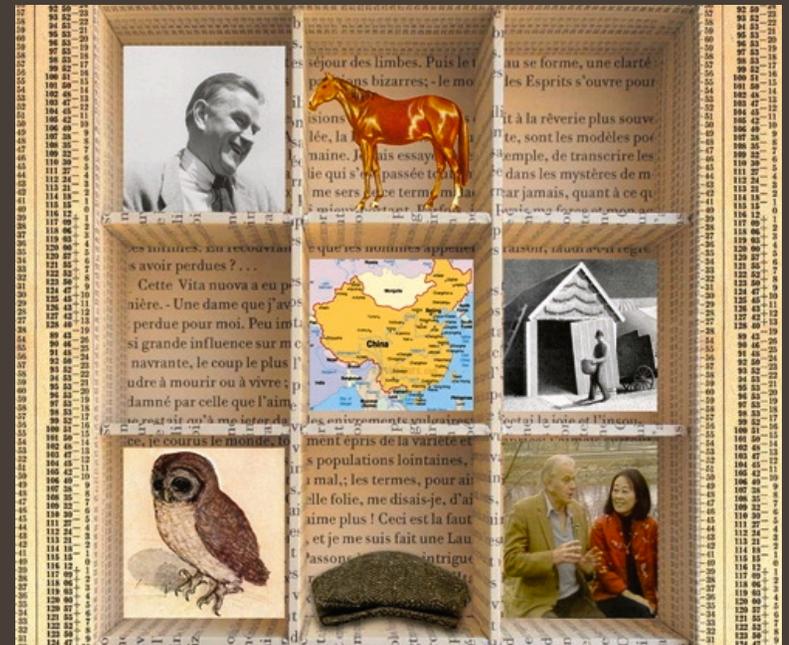
This streaming version of "Leaner than Light" was created by Lisa DiFranza using selected video by Katie Roche, from the stage production.

The audio track was created by Ben Schmidt and Lisa DiFranza, using selected sounds by Clancy Clark from the stage production. It was engineered by Ben Schmidt at Rescued Rabbit Studios, Iowa City. IA.

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Leaner than Light: 12 Frames of Paul Engle by Lisa Schlesinger

Leaner than Light:
12 Frames of Paul Engle

After Joseph Cornell

An Audio/Video Adaptation of a Stage Play

by
Lisa Schlesinger

Time: Summer 2008, the past.
Place: Iowa

The Cast:
Ben Schmidt
Saffron Henke

Saxophone
Brooke Hendricks

International Writing Program writers:
Milena Oda – Czechoslovakia/Germany
Jeremy Tiang – Singapore
Pilar Quintana – Colombia

Director
Lisa DiFranza

Cast for Workshop Writers:

Steven Salinger	Elizabeth McCracken		
Marvin Bell	Marvin Bell		
WD Snodgrass	Katie Roche	Donald Justice	Edward Carey
Chris Harnack	Chris Merrill	Kay Cassill	Lisa Schlesinger

A note from Playwright

Lisa Schlesinger

At the end of his life, Paul Engle was working on a memoir called *Paul Engle Country* which, he specifies, wasn't in chronological order. I imagine that this is because as a poet, Paul Engle conceived of the world in images, and moments of meaning connected by associative imagination rather than chronological time.

When I began to research *Leaner than Light*, I was interested in Hualing Nieh and Paul Engle's mutual love and their dedication to world literature. I was also interested in how they created a place for voices that otherwise would not be heard and a community where they would be welcomed. Not a dramatic thing, really but miraculous and heroic. When I first envisioned this play, I saw spaces opening for IWP writers to walk through. One person I spoke with said Paul Engle sacrificed his career for the work of others. I'm not sure I agree. Perhaps he made a beautiful and successful career of it.

I was also interested in paying homage to Iowa, a place often referred to as the middle of nowhere, but a place that has hosted, nurtured and cultivated countless literary voices and works, both local and global. One of the great moments I had researching this play was sitting with Hualing in her house overlooking the Iowa River, eating dried mango and sharing our love of Iowa. People don't understand, she said, how many writers come here, nowhere else could you gather so many writers in one place. From a literary standpoint, Iowa is far from the middle of nowhere. And yes, it's the writers who come; but it is also the Iowa landscape and people that welcome them.

I am thrilled that we are able to share this internet audio/visual adaptation of the stage play, *Leaner than Light*, which received its first public staged reading in the wake of the Iowa flood in the October of 2008 and its staged premier in October of 2009. I hope viewers are able to get a sense of the staged production, but more, to get insight into Paul Engle's life and his amazing gift to Iowa and to world literature.