

**LA MAMA**  
EXPERIMENTAL THEATRE CLUB  
*presents*

# **CHASING The New WHITE WHALE**

**A New Play**

By Michael Gorman

**Directed By:**

Arthur Adair

A FORTY HOUR CLUB PRODUCTION

**WHERE:**

The Ellen Stewart Theater at La MaMa  
66 East 4<sup>th</sup> Street, New York, NY 10003

**WHEN:**

November 24 – December 9<sup>th</sup>, 2018 (PREMIERE!)  
(With an additional show on Monday Nov. 26<sup>th</sup> @ 7pm)

**SHOWTIMES:**

Week 1: Sat Nov 24th @ 7pm; Sun Nov 25th @ 3pm; Mon Nov 26<sup>th</sup> @ 7pm  
Week 2: Nov. 29 –Dec 2: Thur, Fri, Sat @ 7pm; Sun @ 3pm  
Week 3: Dec 6 – 9: Thur, Fri, Sat @ 7pm; Sun @ 3pm

**TICKETS:**

La MaMa Box office: (212) 352-3101 | Online: <http://www.lamama.org>  
General Admission: \$25 | Students/Seniors: \$20





## ABOUT THE PLAY— *Chasing The New White Whale*

In an ambitious new production—using Melville’s 19th-century monster as a metaphor for the modern plague of opioid addiction, playwright Michael Gorman explores the ruinous effects of the opiate epidemic on the commercial fishing industry.

Inspired by Moby Dick, and drawn largely from his trilogy of plays “*The Honor and Glory of Whaling*”, CHASING THE NEW WHITE WHALE follows the plight of legendary New England fishing Captain Robby Foerster and his boat *The Northern Star* as he falls deeply into addiction after a fateful first encounter with heroin. The play connects Robby's addiction with Ahab’s obsessive pursuit of the Great White Whale, and reimagines Captain Ahab's final thrilling chase in Moby Dick. "After all, what was Ahab, but an addict really, and what was Moby Dick but an allusion to opium, and heroin, its contemporary scourge."

Featuring a mythical chorus of ghostly whale hunters and modern day commercial fishermen inspired by Ahab's stowaway crew—"Fedallah and the Phantoms"—CHASING THE NEW WHITE WHALE explores theater and the current National opioid crisis in the elemental way the Greeks once did, and takes us to the true “place of seeing”. Through the voice of the CHAPLAIN—a character based upon the Chaplain in Moby Dick, and played by the playwright himself—the play also makes a powerful arts and advocacy statement about the devastating effects of the opiate epidemic on America's working communities and the desperate need for more treatment and education.

CHASING THE NEW WHITE WHALE is both a personal and timely work. Originally inspired by the death of the Playwright’s oldest brother, a Massachusetts commercial fisherman, to a heroin overdose, Gorman's vision and call for empathy and understanding has expanded beyond his own growing awareness of addiction as a disease, rather than a moral shortcoming, to his concern for the families and communities effected by the opiate epidemic. In the playwright's words, as voiced by the Chaplain: "God has laid but one hand upon you, both his hands are upon me ... for I am a greater sinner than ye ... for I, too, have judged. There is no such thing as 'other people's children', shipmates. They are our future."



## ABOUT THE PROJECT—*Chasing The New White Whale*

CHASING THE NEW WHITE WHALE— The Project— is an evolving series of environmental installations, readings, presentations, and performances dedicated to bringing awareness to the issue of opiate addiction in the commercial fishing community of New England and beyond.

Through direct engagement with the community, Gorman and his production company The Forty Hour Club have created a new model of theater—an innovative “tool” with which to “Harpoon Addiction”. This unique arts & advocacy model, based upon the revolutionary 19th century invention of the “toggle” harpoon, draws parallels to the both the insidious nature of addiction and the resourcefulness needed to “harpoon” it. Gorman’s work on this project explores the current National opioid crisis through the unique lens of the fishing industry, and draws inspiration from Moby Dick and Ahab’s obsessive pursuit of the Great White Whale.

By presenting performances in non-traditional “venues”, such as locations in and around working waterfronts, Gorman’s work has the unique ability to creatively connect with the individuals and working communities being devastated by the opioid epidemic. As one fishing captain and former addict said after experiencing a performance at Portland’s Fish Exchange (Maine)— “It (*the play*) connects with the working class and the fishing industry...the drugs...the lives and the people it destroys. I know....I was in that deep dark place..”. Through this “direct approach” model, Gorman hopes to engender a greater awareness of the epidemic and the underlying disease of addiction; engage the audience in a creative dialogue that propels constructive change; and emphasize the need for more understanding and compassion.

Gorman’s personal interest in this project grew from his own family history with opiate addiction (his brother, Kevin, a commercial fisherman, died of a heroin overdose), as well as from his work on his trilogy of plays—THE HONOR AND GLORY OF WHALING. Gorman’s newest play CHASING THE NEW WHITE WHALE is the culmination of this project and work, and features a mythical chorus of ghostly whale hunters and modern day commercial fishermen inspired by Ahab’s stowaway crew—“Fedallah and the Phantoms”— who represent those who are often “invisible” in our society—the addict; our abandoned and alienated working communities; the marginalized. Through this new play, and the role of the CHAPLAIN—played by the playwright himself—Gorman hopes “to speak a word for addicts”, and use his pulpit to effect meaningful social change.

Gorman’s greater vision for the project includes touring the play Nationally, with the goal of directly reaching those communities hardest hit by the opioid epidemic.



## ABOUT MICHAEL GORMAN—PLAYWRIGHT:



Mike Gorman is the newly appointed Playwright in Residence for La MaMa's 57th Season and Director of The Forty Hour Club, a resident company of La MaMa, formed by a collective of independent artists dedicated to creating work that asks the question, "To what consequence?" The productions focus on the economic, environmental and systemic destruction facing working communities and the paramount issue of sustainability.

He made his debut at La MaMa in 1994 as a member of performance duo "The Fabulous Giggin' Bros." with their evening of short plays "Biffing Mussels". He has since had more than a dozen productions staged at La MaMa, including "If Colorado Had an Ocean...(2014); "The Honor and Glory of Whaling" (2007-8); and "UltraLight" (2000)—the three plays in his trilogy. Mike makes his home in Maine and New York City.

**Artist Statement:** "As an artist, I have become obsessed with the idea of invisibility—that there is a whole class and culture of people among us that feels, for all intents and purposes, invisible. At the same time, I have become obsessed with the loss of nobility, as these people were once some of our most prominent and noble. They are the ones who go out to sea, build things and work the land. They're important to our identity, and their loss—in particular, through the current opiate epidemic—is nothing short of a tragedy. To make visible the invisible, and in the process, restore dignity to a people who have been stripped of it by fatal forces often beyond their control—that is my current goal as an artist.

— Michael Gorman, Playwright



## CAST & PRODUCTION CREW: Chasing The New White Whale

### PLAYWRIGHT/DIRECTOR/DESIGNERS

PLAYWRIGHT: Michael Gorman  
DIRECTION: Arthur Adair  
LIGHTING DESIGN: Chris Akerlind  
SET DESIGN: Donald Eastman  
COSTUME DESIGN: Sarah Boyden  
SOUND DESIGN: Tim Schellenbaum  
PROJECTION DESIGN: Donna Daly

### ACTORS:

ROBBY: Alan Barnes Netherton  
THERESE: Meridith Nicholaev  
JOHNNY: Chris Cornwel  
RAY: Mark Daly  
ELIJAH: Jim Reitz  
STEVEN: Khari Constantine  
MICHELLE: Victoria A Villier  
CHAPLAIN: Michael Gorman  
FEDALLAH: TBD  
CHORUS (2): TBD

### COMPOSERS/MUSICIANS

Sammo  
Chriz Zaborowski



## ADDITIONAL RESOURCES:

For more information about “Chasing The New White Whale”—  
The project or the play, please visit Michael Gorman’s website:

[www.fortyhourclub.com](http://www.fortyhourclub.com)

Watch The Trailer for CTNWW:

<https://vimeo.com/289303477>

## CONTACTS:

**Michael Gorman, Playwright**

Director— Forty Hour Club

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