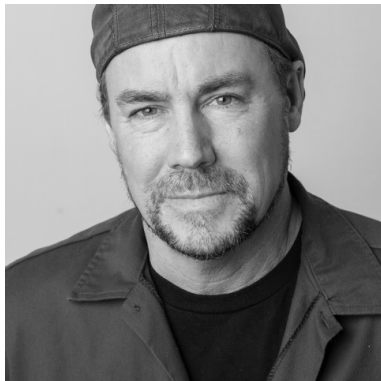


Michael Gorman

Playwright / Installation & Experimental Theater Artist/ Writer / Director / Performer

Bio



Mike Gorman is a playwright, installation and experimental theater artist, and founder of “The Forty Hour Club”—his theatrical production company based in Rockland, Maine. With a mission of “*A Commitment To Community Through Theater*”, The Forty Hour Club is dedicated to creating installations and productions that ask the question “To what consequence?”. Specifically, Mike’s work focuses on the economic, environmental and systemic challenges facing working communities, and the paramount issue of

sustainability.

Formed by a collective of independent artists drawn predominantly from the trades, The Forty Hour Club embraces the collaborative spirit of the job-site to tackle major issues and bring an authentic working-world perspective to the stage. Mike’s plays and productions have graced stages as lofty as The Ellen Stewart Theater at La MaMa in NYC, to the gritty loading docks of The Commercial Fish Exchange in Portland, Maine, and every level in between.

Mike is also a *Playwright in Residence* at La MaMa Experimental Theater Club in New York City, where he has a long-standing history and has produced many of his plays over the past 25 years.

For the past two decades, Mike has been focused on writing and producing plays about the on-going opiate epidemic. At the forefront of his work is a trilogy of plays—“The Honor and Glory of Whaling” that deals with the issue of opiate addiction in the commercial fishing community of New England. New and evolving works further explore the current National opioid crisis through the unique lens of the fishing industry, and draw inspiration from *Moby Dick* and Ahab’s obsessive pursuit of the Great White Whale.

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Gorman's personal obsession with these themes originally grew from his own family history with opiate addiction (his brother, Kevin, a commercial fisherman, died of a heroin overdose), and compelled him to embark on a creative journey that led to the creation of a direct-approach model of theater aimed at addressing the opioid crisis head-on. This "*Arts Intervention*" serves to directly connect with the communities and individuals being devastated by the on-going epidemic by bringing performances directly to those communities and by involving them in the production.

Working with community members in recovery and groups from prisoner re-entry programs, Gorman uses the stage and the voices of those on it as a form of restorative justice for all involved. This model and project—which Gorman has named "*Chasing The New White Whale—Harpooning Addiction*"—combines theater, performance, multi-media installations, and an arts & advocacy model that together address the opioid crisis that is taking place in those communities. Says Gorman "this project is not simply about personal sadness and loss; it is about a regional and national health crisis and an artistic call to action. It is not intended to be my plaintive voice but the echo of the over 100,000 lives lost to opiate addiction each year."

At its heart, Michael's artistic work explores the phenomenon of invisibility—that there is a whole class and culture of people among us, that feels, for all intents and purposes, invisible—the addicted, the imprisoned, the un-housed, and the abandoned members of our disenfranchised working communities.

"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

With this project, and through his work as a playwright, director, installation artist, and independent theater maker/producer, Gorman hopes to engender a greater awareness of the epidemic and the underlying disease of addiction; create connection and engage the audience and community in a creative dialogue that propels constructive change; help reduce the stigma associated with addiction; and ultimately, help initiate healing.

Michael Gorman lives and works in Maine, where he makes his living as a builder and renovator while continuing to write and develop new theatrical works.

For more about Mike and his work, visit his website: www.fortyhourclub.com

Michael Gorman – CV

Playwright / Writer / Director / Installation & Experimental Theater Artist

Theatrical Productions: (*Major Self-Produced Works*)

- ***“The Ahab Inside Me–A High-Seas Blues Intervention”***–(2022, Augusta, ME.)
Written by Michael Gorman. Directed by Joe John Battista. This provocative and challenging recitative blues opera/musical theater production explored the traumatic impact of a fatal overdose on a New England fishing family. This new work-in-development was self-produced and supported by a grant from The Maine Arts Commission.
- ***“Never Leaving This Boat–Fragments of a Blues Opera”***–(2021, Rockland, ME.)
Written and Directed by Michael Gorman. Music Direction by Charles Duke. This provocative and challenging new work by playwright Michael Gorman premiered at The Steel House Amphitheater on the Rockland, Maine waterfront. The 2 day/3 performance event used the power of live performance to address the opioid epidemic and incorporated original live music (including 12 original songs written by Gorman), spoken word, and performance– to restore connections lost or frayed by the compound crises of the opiate epidemic and COVID. This work was self-produced and supported by a grant from The Maine Arts Commission.
- ***“Chasing The New White Whale”***– (2018, New York, NY)
Using Melville’s 19th-century monster as a metaphor for the modern plague of opioid addiction, Gorman’s epic production explored the current National opioid crisis through the unique lens of the commercial fishing industry, and drew inspiration from Moby Dick and Ahab’s obsessive pursuit of the Great White Whale. The play premiered Off-Broadway at The Ellen Stewart Theatre at La MaMa in New York City on November 24 - December 9, 2018. This work was self-produced.
- ***“The Honor And Glory of Whaling”–A Trilogy”***
This trilogy of plays constitutes a major body of work by Gorman, written and

performed over nearly 2 decades. All three works premiered individually at La MaMa Experimental Theatre Club in NYC: ***If Colorado Had An Ocean (2014)***; ***The Honor & Glory of Whaling (2008)***; and ***UltraLight (2000)***. Inspired by the life and death of the playwright's oldest brother, a commercial fisherman, the plays deal with the issues of addiction and recovery in the commercial fishing industry of New England and chart the rise and fall of a commercial fisherman struggling with addiction. The trilogy tackles the complex emotional and social issues around relationships and livelihoods within the close-knit fishing community and shines a light on the unspoken hardships that fishing and addiction take on both family and community. This work was self-produced.

A complete list of Michael Gorman's theatrical works can be found on his website: ([Link here](#)).

Other Theatrical Productions:

Mike has a long-standing relationship with **La MaMa Experimental Theatre Club in NYC**, where he was the LaMaMa ***Playwright In Residence*** for the 2018-2019 Season. Over the years Mike has produced and premiered many of his other plays at La MaMa including:

- "How and Why I Robbed My First Cheese Store" (2013)
- "The Poet and the Lumberjack" (2011)
- "Death by Joinery" (2006)
- "Counting Coup" (2002)
- "Single Action Shotgun" (2001)
- "A Funny Old Bird" (1997)
- "Interview" (1996)
- "Chores" (1995)
- "Biffing Mussels" (1994).

Theatrical Tours:

- **"UltraLight"— New England Tour (2003)**
Ultralight is a play about a younger brother's struggle to help his older brother

fight his heroin addiction. The play takes the form of a dramatic parable, with the younger brother cast in the role of a fisherman and the older brother cast in the role of a trout. Interwoven with the present-time action of the play is a mythical story that explores the lessons to be learned from addiction about the bonds of brotherhood, wilderness, story-telling, and integrity.

After Ultralights' debut at La MaMa in New York City, the play went on to tour at venues throughout Maine while successfully reaching out to the addiction & recovery community. The tour included stops at: The Portland Stage Company in Portland, ME; Penobscot Theatre in Bangor, ME; and The Grand Theatre in Ellsworth, ME. The tour was sponsored by MAAR— The Maine Alliance for Addiction & Recovery.

Theatrical Installation Works/Community Engagement & Outreach Events/Staged Readings:

Michael Gorman's staged readings, community engagement events, and performances often cross the line into installation work, and for that reason, all are included here.

- ***"The Ahab Inside Me—A High-Seas Blues Intervention"***—(Sept. 2,3,4, 2022. Augusta, ME.) Written by Michael Gorman. Directed by Joe John Battista. This provocative and challenging recitative blues opera/musical theater production explored the traumatic impact of a fatal overdose on a New England fishing family. Gorman partnered with the addiction, recovery, and reentry community in Augusta Maine, and included community members in the production.
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- ***"Never Leaving This Boat—Fragments of a Blues Opera"***—(September 11-12th 2021). Rockland, Maine. This new work by Maine-based playwright Michael Gorman premiered on the Rockland waterfront during National Recovery Month. The performance event and installation used the power of live performance to address the opioid epidemic and incorporated original live music and 12 songs written by Gorman, spoken word, and performance— to restore connections lost or frayed by the compound crises of the opiate epidemic and COVID. This work was supported by a grant from The Maine Arts Commission.

- **“Give Up The Spear”**—(June 2021). Cove Street Arts, Portland, Maine. Buoyed by the enduring spirit of the blues and propelled by the provocative energy of street theater, “Give up the Spear” tapped into Gorman’s larger body of work and epic art and advocacy project “Chasing the New White Whale”. Raw and edgy, and minimally rehearsed, the performance offered a privileged first glimpse of the upcoming opera, as well as an exciting window into Forty Hour Club’s developmental process. Part of the Ellis-Beauregard Foundation Closing Reception *Fellows & Residents*: an exhibition curated by the Foundation’s Executive Director Donna McNeil, featuring work of awardees from 2017-2019.
- **“In Ahab’s Head—Chasing Phantom’s”**—(2019) A collaborative community performance in association with “What’s Art Got To Do With It?”— A 3-day conference about the power of art to address our opioid epidemic. This short and powerful piece featured R.A.W. Players (Restorative Art Works) & members of the Maine Coastal Regional Re-Entry Center/Restorative Justice Program (all non-actors), in the roles of The Phantom’s, and incorporated monologues about their lives and experiences dealing with addiction, incarceration, re-entry, and healing. (Belfast, Maine—Nov 1, 2019).
- **“The Hungry Ghost”**— (2019). “The Hungry Ghost” (a parable and scene taken from Gorman’s play “The Honor and Glory of Whaling” that deals with the themes of opiate addiction, loss, and family) was an installation, reading, and performance that took place in the rural community of North Haven—an island 15 miles off the coast of Maine. Students (elementary to high school) read and acted out the scene on stage as part of the evening performance, which was followed by a presentation by Gorman about his Art & Advocacy model “Chasing The New White Whale—Harpooning Addiction”.
- **“Ambergris”—Mining The Net Yard for the Roots of Addiction and New Models of Sustainable Fishing—** (2018). “Ambergris” was an environmental installation and performance that explored the roots of the disease of addiction and the economic devastation being caused by the ongoing opiate epidemic within the commercial fishing community. This multi-media community event was held outdoors on the working waterfront in The City of Portland, Maine at the Portland Fish Exchange & Net Yard, and featured performers, dramatic readings, dance, live music, artwork, and video and photographic projections. The event was funded by a Kindling Fund Grant (The Andy Warhol Foundation for the Visual Arts) and was part of Gorman’s on-going project/arts & advocacy model

"Chasing The New White Whale—Harpooning Addiction".

- **"Goin' West"**—(2018). A staged reading of Michael Gorman's original 1987 play "Goin West" was staged at the La MaMa Galleria in New York City. The reading was Mike's first event as the newly appointed "Playwright In Residence" at La MaMa. Directed by Arthur Adair. Featuring Alan Barnes Netherton, Jennie Vath, and Nick Denning, along with live musicians.
- **"A Playwright's Journey"**—(2018) A staged reading, installation, and multi-media performance time-line of the history and development of Gorman's epic trilogy of plays "The Honor and Glory of Whaling" was presented at The Steel House in Rockland, Maine. The community event included readings from Gorman's work; live performance pieces from Gorman's plays; dance; video; artwork; live music, and a real boat. This event was the final project and public engagement component for Mike's Ellis Beauregard Residency.
- **"The Chase"**—(2017). An installation and staged reading series inspired by Gorman's trilogy of plays, "The Honor and Glory of Whaling", that deals with the issue of opiate addiction in the commercial fishing industry of New England. The installation and readings were created and performed at the La MaMa Galleria in NYC in April 2017 and CMCA (Center for Maine Contemporary Art) in Rockland, ME in June 2017.
- **"The Honor & Glory of Whaling— A Trilogy"**—(2016). A marathon staged reading of Gorman's Trilogy of plays ("*UltraLight*", "*The Honor & Glory of Whaling*", and "*If Colorado had An Ocean..*") took place at New York Theatre Workshop in NYC.
- **"UltraLight"**—(2016). A staged reading of Gorman's play "*UltraLight*" was held at The Stonington Opera House in Stonington, Maine, and was a featured play of the theater's community engagement series.
- **"Fishing for Paradise"**—(2014). A multi-media installation "Fishing for Paradise" was a deconstruction of the playwright's creative process for his trilogy of plays, "The Honor and Glory of Whaling". The installation took participants on a dramatic journey of discovery through the playwright's world as he unearthed the layers of production history of his epic cycle of plays that plumb the depths of addiction and recovery in the commercial fishing industry. The installation also incorporated the work of several other visual artists, and was created in the La

MaMa Galleria in NYC, to coincide with the production of Gorman’s play “If Colorado had an Ocean ...”

- **“UltraLight”**— (2002). A staged reading of Gorman’s play **“UltraLight”** was held at The Gloucester Stage Company in Gloucester, MA, following the play’s premiere at La MaMa in NYC.

Current Projects:

“Chasing The New White Whale—Harpooning Addiction”

Chasing The New White Whale—Harpooning Addiction is an on-going project and “Arts Intervention” theatrical model created by Michael Gorman dedicated to bringing awareness to the issue of opiate addiction in the commercial fishing community of New England and beyond.

Through an evolving series of environmental installations, readings, presentations, performances, education/outreach, and through direct engagement with the community, Gorman and his production company *The Forty Hour Club* have created a new model of theater aimed at addressing the opioid crisis head-on.

Gorman has taken the project on the road to working communities hardest hit by the epidemic, and often presents performances in non-traditional “venues”, such as locations in and around working waterfronts. With this project, Gorman hopes to engender a greater awareness of the epidemic and the underlying disease of addiction; create connection and engage the audience and community in a creative dialogue that propels constructive change; emphasize the need for more understanding and compassion; help reduce the stigma associated with addiction; and help initiate healing.

Awards, Grants, & Residencies: (*Most Recent*)

- **June 2023**— Awarded a **Project Grant** from **The Maine Arts Commission** for the production of “The Ahab Inside Me—Redux”.

- **April 2023**—Awarded a **major grant** (\$20,000) from **The Onion Foundation** for “The Ahab Inside Me—Redux.
- **June, 2022**—Awarded a **Project Grant** from **The Maine Arts Commission** for the production of “The Ahab Inside Me”.
- **January 2022**- Awarded a **Job’s Creation Grant** from **The Maine Arts Commission** for continuing work on the on-going project: *Chasing The New White Whale—Harpooning Addiction*.
- **June 2021**- Awarded the **Project Grant For Artists** from **The Maine Arts Commission** for the production of “Never leaving This Boat—Fragments of a Blues Opera”.
- **April 2019- Artist Residence.** Michael was invited to the island of North Haven, Maine as an Artist in Residence as part of their Arts & Enrichment Program. He and members of The Forty Hour Club presented a series of school workshops, which culminated with an evening performance by students and a presentation by Mike about his work on the project "Chasing The New White Whale—Harpooning Addiction".
- **July 2018**- Mike received **The Project Grant For Artists** from **The Maine Arts Commission**, which he used to create a video companion piece to his theater project “Chasing The New White Whale”.
- **November 2017- Kindling Fund Grant** (Andy Warhol Foundation). Mike received the grant to pursue his environmental installation—“Ambergris”—at The Portland Fish Exchange in the heart of the working waterfront in Portland, Maine.
- **August 2017- Artist Residency and Grant, Ellis Beaugard Foundation,** Rockland, ME. Mike received a six-month Artist Residency and Grant to continue his playwrighting and installation work.
- **April 2017**- Mike was appointed “**Playwright in Residence**” at **La MaMa Theater** in NYC for the 2018-2019 season, where his play “Chasing The New White Whale” was produced and premiered in Nov-Dec 2018. Mike continues to be a playwright in residence at La MaMa.

Education:

- 1986-1988– B.A. in Literature –Clark University, Worcester, MA.
Mike pursued independent studies and began his playwrighting career at Clark, earning a B.A. in literature. He was also nominated for The Rhodes Scholarship and received the Russ Granger Award as the University’s outstanding Scholar-Athlete. He was also nominated for induction into the Clark University Athletic Hall of Fame (soccer).
- 1984-1986–School of Landscape Architecture at The College of Environmental Science and Forestry, Syracuse, NY.
- 1982-1984–Associate’s Degree in Landscape Development, SUNY Cobleskill, NY.