

## Fighting addiction through art, a playwright previews a forthcoming opera

[pressherald.com/2021/06/13/fighting-addiction-through-art-playwright-previews-forthcoming-opera/](https://www.pressherald.com/2021/06/13/fighting-addiction-through-art-playwright-previews-forthcoming-opera/)

By Bob Keyes

June 13, 2021



Alan Barnes Netherton and Chris Cornwell in a scene from “Chasing the New White Whale” during its New York production in 2018. *Photo by Carlos Cardona, Forty Hour Club.*

Mike Gorman, the Maine-born playwright who has dedicated the last 20 years of his career to writing and producing plays about addiction, returns to Portland with his performance troupe Thursday to present a half hour of scenes and music outside Cove Street Arts.

The snippet, titled “Give Up the Spear,” is part of Gorman’s larger blues opera, “Never Leaving this Boat,” which he and the Forty Hour Club will present on the waterfront in Rockland in September.

The preview at 6 p.m. Thursday is free, with donations accepted to support the Forty Hour Club’s ongoing project to combat addiction through art and performance. It will include live music with original songs, monologues and a mythical chorus of ancient whale hunters. If it

rains, the performance will move indoors.

Gorman collaborated with Portland musician Dan Boyden to compose the music. He described “Give Up the Spear” as a preview of the blues opera that will premiere in Rockland on Sept. 11-12. The performances fit into Gorman’s larger advocacy project, “Chasing the New White Whale,” which is also the title of a play that Gorman wrote and premiered in 2018 at the Ellen Stewart Theatre La MaMa in New York. Gorman previewed that play with an outdoor sampling on the Portland waterfront before moving it to New York.

Gorman’s older brother, who fished out of Massachusetts, died of a heroin overdose two decades ago. Since then, the playwright has focused his work on themes of addiction. At the core of his creative output is a trilogy of full-length plays – “Ultralight,” “The Honor and Glory of Whaling,” and “If Colorado Had An Ocean” – that share interwoven stories and characters.

As part of the ongoing advocacy project, Gorman and the Forty Hour Club present what he calls “environmental installations” – readings and small snippets – in communities across Maine and regionally, drawing characters and scenes from all of his plays. He shapes each presentation for each community, and taps an evolving roster of performers. One constant in all the performances is a small boat, and the struggles of the characters to escape the boat.

**“Give Up the Spear,” 6-6:30 p.m. Thursday, Cove Street Arts, 71 Cove St., Portland, free.**

Comments are not available on this story.

filed under:

addiction

© 2021