

PRESS RELEASE

CHASING MOBY DICK INTO THE 21ST CENTURY

NOVEMBER 5, 2018

**Playwright Aims To “Harpoon Addiction
With New Play “Chasing The New White Whale**

AN EPIC NEW TALE MAKING ITS WORLD PREMIERE

November 24 – December 9, 2018

At The 2018 Tony Award Winning Theater—La MaMa, NYC

Written By Michael Gorman

Directed By Arthur Adair

(New York)- 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 epidemic on the commercial fishing industry. This new work will be presented by LA MAMA – the 2018 Tony Award winning theater – in its historic Ellen Stewart Theater (66 E. 4 St. NYC, NY) on November 24 – December 9, 2018, where Gorman is the newly appointed “Playwright in Residence”.

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. Drawing inspiration from Moby Dick, 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."

CHASING THE NEW WHITE WHALE is both timely and personal. Originally inspired by the death of the playwright’s oldest brother, a commercial fisherman, to a heroin overdose, and drawn largely from his trilogy of plays “*The Honor and Glory of Whaling*”, CHASING THE NEW WHITE WHALE explores the current National opioid crisis through the unique lens of the fishing industry. Gorman’s new play is the culmination of an epic project of the same name—an ongoing 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 Arts and Advocacy tool with which to “Harpoon Addiction”. Following each of the 3pm Sunday performances, Gorman will engage audience members in “talk-back” sessions with members of the fishing community (including a fishing captain and recovering addict), as well as others involved in addiction and recovery communities throughout New England and beyond.

As Tony Kushner had his “Angels” in America, Gorman has his “Phantoms” in America—a mythical chorus of ghostly whale hunters and modern day commercial fishermen inspired by Ahab’s stowaway crew and representative of the invisible people of America’s abandoned working communities. Through his 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. And as La MaMa believes, through his appointment to the newly created position of “Playwright in Residence”, the time has come.

SCHEDULE—November 24 – December 9, 2018

Preview performances for CHASING THE NEW WHITE WHALE are Saturday, Nov. 24 at 7 P.M., and Sunday, Nov. 25 at 3 P.M., prior to the official press opening on Monday, Nov. 26th. CHASING THE NEW WHITE WHALE will perform Thursday through Saturday at 7 P.M., and Sunday at 3 P.M., playing its final performance on December 9, 2018.

General Admission: \$25; Students/Seniors: \$20; La MaMa also offers 10@\$10, these are the first ten tickets for every performance at \$10 each, first come first served, advance sales only.

Running time: 1hr, 45 minutes.

For tickets, visit: lamama.org; or call OvationTix at 212.352.3101

The cast includes: Khari Constantine, Chris Cornwell, Mark Daly, Mike Gorman, Alan Barnes Netherton, Meridith Nicholaev, Jim Reitz, Victoria A. Villier, and Sarah Boyden.

Production design credits are: Chris Akerlind (Lighting Design); Donald Eastman (Set Design); Sarah Boyden (Costume Design); Tim Schellenbaum (Sound Design); Donna Daly (Projection Design); with music composed & performed by Sammo & Chriz Zaborowski.

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.

ABOUT LA MAMA

La MaMa is dedicated to the artist and all aspects of the theatre. La MaMa's vision of nurturing new artists and new work remains as strong today as it was when Ellen Stewart first opened the doors in 1961. La MaMa has presented more than 5,000 productions by 150,000 artists of all nations, cultures, races and identities. Cultural pluralism and ethnic diversity are inherent in the work created on our stages. Here, artists find a supportive environment for artistic exploration, and audiences are part of the development of an artist's work over time.

A recipient of the 2018 Regional Theater Tony Award, and more than 30 Obie Awards and dozens of Drama Desk, Bessie, and Villager Awards, La MaMa has been a creative home for thousands of artists, many of whom have made lasting contributions to the arts, including Blue Man Group, Ping Chong, André DeShields, Adrienne Kennedy, Harvey Fierstein, Diane Lane, Warren Leight, Michael Mayer, Tadeusz Kantor, Bette Midler, Meredith Monk, Peter Brook, David and Amy Sedaris, Julie Taymor, Kazuo Ohno, Marc Shaiman and Scott Wittman.



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