

Lookingglass Theatre's David Catlin Adapts Moby-Dick

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And here's how they made a whale for the stage.

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A costume designer's depiction of actresses forming the whale Illustration: Carolyn Rose Sullivan

How do you re-create a whale onstage? And not just any whale, but the über-whale Moby-Dick? Short answer: You don't. In his new adaptation of Herman Melville's 19th-century novel, David Catlin, the artistic director at Lookingglass, takes an abstract, movement-based approach to the problem of depicting a 90-foot beast on a 60-foot stage. Three actresses dressed in white represent the Fates—or the great white whale—that come together to drag the monomaniacal Ahab to his death. Meanwhile, a whale-like skeleton surrounds the stage and audience. "You will have an image of the whale in your brain that no amount of stagecraft could literally construct," Catlin says. At the play's end, a massive sheet of white fabric wholly envelops the audience—like a whale swallowing its prey.

GO: *Moby Dick* begins June 10 at Lookingglass Theatre (821 N. Michigan Ave.)

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