

Suburban actor on board for Lookingglass' 'Moby Dick'



- Video: Lookingglass' "Moby Dick"

When viewers enter the theater to see Lookingglass Theatre's production of "Moby Dick," they appear to be venturing into the belly of a whale.

"On the perimeter of the set, and reaching out over the audience, there are these curved ribs making it look like you're inside of a whale," said cast member Anthony Fleming III.

Besides giving an authentic feel to the show, the ribs serve as objects the actors can climb on in Lookingglass' highly physical adaptation of Herman Melville's "Moby Dick," the tale of an obsessive sea captain's quest to kill the whale that took his leg. The show, which opened last month at Water Tower Water Works, has been extended through Friday, Aug. 28, because of demand.

Fleming, a former resident of Downers Grove, plays Queequeg, a young prince who joins the crew of Captain Ahab's ship.

"He's covered head to toe in tattoos and is sort of the barbaric savage character of the show," Fleming said. "At first glance he can be very frightening. But at the core he's very different and has a lot of great characteristics. It's really cool to change people's perception as the play continues."

Fleming got his start in theater at the age of 10 in a local production of "The Adventures of Tom Sawyer." In his years at Downers Grove South High School, he continued his participation in theater. He was also heavily involved with the debate and speech team. In 1996, he helped the school's speech team win the state championship.

"I knew I wanted to be an actor while I was in high school. Performing every weekend (for speech team) really got me ready," Fleming said.

Since graduating, Fleming has taken on different acting projects ranging from a part in the Chicago-shot movie "Divergent" to a performance in "Camino Real" at Chicago's Goodman Theatre. Currently, he is an ensemble member at the Lookingglass Theatre, where he has performed in a variety of shows.

"Moby Dick" is similar to most of the theater company's work, but with an added dimension of physicality, said Fleming.

"It's a very physical play but a great adaptation to a classic American novel that is very accessible to people who have read it, or people who have never read it," he said.

The show is intense and filled with adventure, but also has moments of lighthearted comedy. The actors move around the stage constantly, engaging in acrobatics and other physical tricks.

"The things we do can be dangerous," Fleming said. "Sometimes literally we have each others' lives in our hands. By the end of the show you're tired, but you're exhilarated."

Once the show closes, Fleming will take a break from performing for a few years so he can focus on his job as a fitness instructor. He enjoys running and plans to do several trail runs in different parts of the country.

"I'm excited that this is a strong play because it's one of the last ones I will do for a while," Fleming said. "Every night we get to set sail on this great adventure and take the audience with us."