

# Moby Dick

Thursday June 25  
2015

We are all Jonah in David Catlin's stunning new adaptation of *Moby Dick* at Lookingglass Theatre. The skeletal set, by Courtney O'Neill, centers on a vast, metallic rib cage. The bones encompass the stage, the actors and nearly the audience too. This retelling of Melville's doorstep classic is one told entirely from within the belly of the whale.

Produced in association with the Actors Gymnasium, the play begins quietly with Ishmael (Jamie Abelson) uttering his famous request and recounting his first encounter with Queequeg (Anthony Fleming III). But once the Pequod sets sail, the stage lights up with action. Actors scramble up the set and hang near the rafters, intestinal rigging draped around them. Melville's words haven't been forgotten, but neither has the power of brute, tribal theatricality.

Christopher Donahue's shabby Ahab is sadder than the usual portrayals but, while his clothes are wrinkled and his voice is hoarse, he still has that ecstatic, maniacal charisma. When Ahab battles Kareem Bandealy's rationally-minded Starbuck, it feels elemental.

Passing wraithlike through the proceedings are three Fates, played by Emma Cadd, Kasey Foster and Monica West. They're the feminine tonic that cuts through the story's macho pretensions. They are the slaughtered whales, but also the drowning sea. A moment of butchering a whale carcass for meat and oil becomes an act of sexual violation.

The only disappointment—though after a show-stopping entrance—is Moby Dick himself. The representation of the great white whale is meant to be intimate, but it's not. Against everything else, it's just tinny. It's a Moby Dick that could never swallow us whole.

**Lookingglass Theatre Company in association with The Actors Gymnasium. Adapted and directed by David Catlin. With ensemble cast. 2hr 30mins; two intermissions.**