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Dramatic Publishing



MOBY DICK

**Adapted
by
MARK ROSENWINKEL**

**From the Novel
by
HERMAN MELVILLE**



Dramatic Publishing
Woodstock, Illinois • London, England • Melbourne, Australia

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MARK ROSENWINKEL

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(MOBY DICK)

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MOBY DICK was originally commissioned and produced by Idaho Theatre for Youth, Boise, Idaho, in the winter of 1993-94, with the following company:

Ishmael MHARI SANDOVAL
Stubb TRINEY SANDOVAL
Queequeg..... KEVIN WILL
Ahab DAN PETERSON

Director David Lee-Painter
Scenic Design and Construction..... Dean Panttaja
Costume Design and Construction..... Patricia Martin
Artist Intern..... Tyson Stoianoff
Composer Micheal Baltzell

From 1993 to 1996, this play has had four separate productions by Idaho Theatre for Youth, playing to over 100,000 adults and children (grades K-12) throughout the western states. In 1996, it was chosen as the North American representative to the International Association of Theatre for Young Audiences (ASSITEJ) World Congress in Rostov, Russia. It was also featured at the 1996 Workshop Days for Children and Young People, sponsored by the Thalia Theatre, Halle, Germany, and toured to various United States military bases in that country. In 1996-97, it was re-mounted by MUNY 1st Stage, St. Louis, and toured to various locations in the Midwest.

MOBY DICK

A Play in Two Acts
For 4 actors

CHARACTERS

ISHMAEL
AHAB
QUEEQUEG
STUBB

Note: Although no attempt has been made to change the story, the roles can be cast cross-gender.

Playing time: 80 minutes

MOBY DICK

SETTING: *The decks of the Pequod. The ship consists of a masthead unit, with other areas defined by rigging ropes. Props, musical instruments, and sound items are visibly displayed. All theatrical effects suggested in the script are meant to be performed openly in front of the audience with no attempt at realism.*

AT RISE: *Sound of ocean waves. A ship's bell. The actors assemble to set up the ship and gather musical instruments.*

PROLOGUE

(CHANTY – “King of the Boundless Sea”)

(This song begins as a solo, accompanied by the other actors on instruments: guitar, accordion, flute, recorder, tambourine or combination thereof. The song is very folk-Irish, lively, and builds with gusto. The actors should be skilled enough to play the song, but the sound should be rough, not slick.)

ISHMAEL.

**IN A DREAM ONE SLEEPLESS NIGHT
I WAS CAST INTO THE SEA**

AND ROCKED ALONG THE WINDING TIDE
WHERE THE WIND WAS PIPING FREE
WHERE THE WIND WAS PIPING FREE.

CHORUS.

YAR HAR AND YO HO HO
THE WIND SHE BLEW US TO AND FRO
YAW HAW AND RIDDLE DEE REE
FOR A SAILOR LOST AT SEA

ISHMAEL & QUEEQUEG.

I LOOKED OUT O'ER THE OCEAN PLANE
AS FAR AS I COULD SEE
I SPIED LEVIATHAN'S MIGHTY SPOUT
A THREE POINTS TO THE LEE
A THREE POINTS TO THE LEE

AHAB.

THAR SHE BLOWS!

ISHMAEL & QUEEQUEG.

THE CAPTAIN CRIED
A-LOOKING TOWARD THE LEE

AHAB.

LOWER THE BOATS AND RAISE YOUR WHEEL

ISHMAEL & QUEEQUEG.

SING OUT ALL HANDS TO ME
SING OUT ALL HANDS TO ME

CHORUS.

YAR HAR AND YO HO HO

THE WIND SHE BLEW US TO AND FRO
YAW HAW AND RIDDLE DEE REE
SING OUT ALL HANDS TO ME.

ISHMAEL & QUEEQUEG.

WITH ALL OUR MIGHT WE OARED THE BOATS
PLOWING THE RESTLESS SEA

AHAB.

STEADY NOW!

QUEEQUEG.

THE CAPTAIN CALLED.

AHAB.

OR BY THUNDER SHE'LL BREAK FREE

ISHMAEL.

OR BY THUNDER SHE'LL BREAK FREE

(Song builds in intensity.)

ISHMAEL & QUEEQUEG.

IN MY DREAM THE LANCE GLEAMED BRIGHT
AS THE WARRIOR KNIGHT PREPARED TO
SMITE
THIS MONSTER WITH HIS JAWS OF DEATH
THE SEARING EYES THE SCORCHING BREATH
WERE LOOMING RIGHT AT ME
LOOMING RIGHT AT ME

CHORUS.

YAR HAR AND YO HO HO

**THE WIND SHE BLEW US TO AND FRO
YAW HAW AND RIDDLE DEE REE
OH LOOMING RIGHT AT ME**

(Instruments play fast and wildly. The sound builds. Sudden freeze. Music becomes very soft and gentle. Single guitar and voice. Cast members exit as QUEEQUEG sings.)

QUEEQUEG.

**THE RARE OLD WHALE, MID STORM AND GALE
IN HIS OCEAN HOME WILL BE
A GIANT IN MIGHT, WHERE MIGHT IS RIGHT,
AND KING OF THE BOUNDLESS SEA
OH KING OF THE BOUNDLESS SEA**

CHORUS.

**YAR HAR AND YO HO HO
THE WIND SHE BLEW US TO AND FRO
YAW HAW AND RIDDLE DEE REE
FOR A SAILOR LOST AT SEA.**

(Sound of a ship's bell as the boat gently rocks. AHAB walks onto the ship, carrying a long harpoon. He limps upon an ivory stump, so the movement is slow and painful. He climbs the masthead, takes out a spyglass and searches for something in the distance, out over the audience. He continues to look throughout ISHMAEL's narration. Ship's bell. Sound effects underscore—the tides of the sea—as ISHMAEL steps forward to narrate.)

SCENE ONE – Ashore

ISHMAEL. Call me Ishmael. Some years ago—never mind how long precisely—having little or no money in my purse, and nothing in particular to interest me on shore, I thought I would sail about a little and see the watery part of the world. I took it into my head to go on a whaling voyage. I know not why. Perhaps it was the call of the ocean itself that sent me packing, or some grand scheme of Fate drawn up long ago...

(Hint of ominous music or sound.

[Note: This should be a Moby Dick theme that appears during other parts of the play. It is played on a large pipe by one of the actors and should be similar to the forlorn and haunting calls of whales.]

Upon hearing this sound, AHAB and ISHMAEL suddenly gaze out in unison.)

No. It was the creature itself who drew me, just as it drew Ahab into the whorling and ever-widening abyss. Even now, as I stand along the wharf and smell the salt air, I look down upon that calm but impenetrable blackness... It's not my own face I see, but that grand hooded phantom, Moby Dick, beckoning me, calling me down to the deep. *(Sound out. AHAB exits. ISHMAEL picks up his carpetbag.)* It was a cold Saturday in December. Nantucket harbor abounded in many sturdy craft. I was drawn to the Pequod, a vessel with an old-fashioned

claw-footed look about her, but touched, like all things noble, with melancholy.

(STUBB appears with ship rigging rope. He sings softly to himself.)

STUBB.

**OUT OF THE DEEP I CALL
JEHOVAH UNTO THEE...**

ISHMAEL. Is this the Captain of the ship? I was thinking of shipping.

STUBB. Think again, mate.

(Sings.)

**LORD, HEAR MY VOICE, OH LET
THINE EARS ATTENTIVE BE**

(STUBB uses the rope to fix rigging which outlines the parameters of the ship. While he works, QUEEQUEG enters. He is a large man with long hair. He wears some kind of native garb—earring, headband, jacket, etc. Perhaps a necklace of shark's teeth. He carries a harpoon. He sits and takes a whetstone from a small pouch he carries on his belt. He begins to sharpen the spear.)

ISHMAEL. Can you take me to the Captain?

(STUBB continues to work.)

See here, I have been to sea a number of times, and I know my way around a ship.

STUBB. Been to sea, have ye now? A regular chippy old tar with saltwater blood. Know anything about whaling?

ISHMAEL. No, sir. But I have no doubt that I shall soon learn.

STUBB. Aye, soon enough.

ISHMAEL. Look, I'm merely looking to see the world a bit.

STUBB. Take a look over the weather-deck. What d'ye see?

ISHMAEL. Nothing but water.

STUBB. You've seen the world. You want to go round Cape Horn to see more?

(QUEEQUEG takes out a shrunken head from his pouch, ties it to the end of the spear. He walks about and waves the head over parts of the ship.)

ISHMAEL. What's he doing?

STUBB. Blessing the ship. Son of a cannibal king, they say. Likely roasted more than a few men on that very lance. Now he puts it to good use by killing whales.

(QUEEQUEG swings the spear over STUBB's torso.)

Easy, Queequeg, ol' mate. You'll poke me liver out.

QUEEQUEG. The gods must bless all things, Mr. Stubb. Even rusty livers.

(STUBB studies ISHMAEL's things, picks out a journal. Opens it. ISHMAEL snatches it back.)

ISHMAEL. Look here. I seek only a hearty sea adventure, and if it entails more than a degree of danger, so much the better.

(AHAB enters. Goes to the masthead and looks out.)

STUBB. It's adventure ye seek? Clap your eyes on Old Thunder there.

ISHMAEL. Old Thunder?

STUBB. The Captain of the Pequod. Ahab by name. A grand ungodly, godlike man. Been among colleges and cannibals, in deeper wonders than the waves. He'll give you more adventure than you bargained for.

ISHMAEL. He knows whaling, then?

STUBB. Aye. Cost him his leg, it did.

ISHMAEL. He lost his leg to a whale?

STUBB. Young man, that leg was devoured, chewed up, crushed by the most monstrous beast that ever clipped a boat. Now he walks the quarterdeck with that ivory stump, wearing a look of ... crucifixion in his face.

(ISHMAEL starts for him.)

I wouldn't speak to him, lad.

ISHMAEL. Why not?

STUBB. He's as liable to bite your head off as shake your hand. Some say he's touched.

ISHMAEL. Touched?

AHAB. Master Stubb.

STUBB. Aye sir.

AHAB. Prepare to sail.

STUBB. Aye, sir. (*Whistles.*) Prepare to sail!

(AHAB walks into his cabin. A portion of a sea chart hangs on one wall. He takes a compass—studies the chart. ISHMAEL follows him into the cabin and watches him for a beat, mustering his courage to speak to him. AHAB continues his map work as he speaks.)

AHAB. Yes?

ISHMAEL. I was thinking of shipping with you.

AHAB. Are ye a man?

ISHMAEL. As man as any, I suppose.

AHAB. Are ye man enough to break your back in the chase of a great whale, to pitch a harpoon down the creature's throat and jump after it into the jaws of death?

ISHMAEL. If it's absolutely necessary.

AHAB. Aye, it's necessary. Are ye familiar with the book of Jonah, lad?

ISHMAEL. Yes.

AHAB. "And God spake unto the great fish, and from the shuddering cold and blackness of the sea, the whale came breaching up and vomited Jonah upon dry land." God spake and the fish obeyed. (*As he speaks, he traces a very long line that runs throughout the map.*) You see, these creatures, these whales, they're guided by infallible instinct, a secret intelligence from the heavens. They travel certain paths, veins that course beneath the ocean just as the blood runs down this very arm. One need only find that vein and... (*He suddenly stabs at the map with the compass.*) Cut directly into it. (*Turns to face ISHMAEL.*) Mr. Stubb!

STUBB. Aye, sir.

AHAB. Give him a line.

STUBB. Come on, lad.

ISHMAEL. Thank you, sir. My pleasure to serve you, sir.

(STUBB pulls ISHMAEL to the deck as AHAB walks to the masthead and looks out. ISHMAEL helps STUBB with the rigging, watching AHAB.)

STUBB. Here now. You'll get on well enough with him if you heed ol' Stubb's 11th Commandment.

ISHMAEL. What's that?

STUBB. Don't think.

AHAB. Raise the anchor, Master Stubb.

STUBB. Aye, sir. Raise anchor!

AHAB. Set the sails.

STUBB. Set sails!

AHAB. Slip to it hearty, my heroes. We're casting off!

STUBB. Casting off!

(CHANTY – “Casting Off”)

(As they sing, the boat is moved/rocked as if leaving the pier.)

QUEEQUEG.

**OUR CAPTAIN STOOD UPON THE DECK
A SPYGLASS IN HIS HAND,
A VIEWING OF THOSE GALLANT WHALES
THAT BLEW AT EVERY STAND.**

STUBB.

SO BE CHEERY, ME LADS.

**MAY YOUR HEARTS NEVER FAIL
WHILE THE BOLD HARPOONER
IS STRIKING THE WHALE.**

(The music underscores the narration.)

ISHMAEL. As the short northern day merged into night, I found myself broad upon the wintry ocean, whose freezing spray cased us in ice, as in polished armor. The Captain stood tall upon the quarterdeck, his face speckled with the freezing rain like the bronze statue of a warrior, his glance stretching infinitely forward as we blindly plunged like fate into the lone Atlantic.

ALL *(singing while moving/working the boat).*

**SO ON YOUR TUBS AND IN YOUR BOATS
AND BY YOUR BRACES STAND,
AND WE'LL HAVE ONE OF THOSE FINE
WHALES,
HAND, BOYS, OVER HAND.
SO BE CHEERY, ME LADS.
MAY YOUR HEARTS NEVER FAIL
WHILE THE BOLD HARPOONER
IS STRIKING THE WHALE.**

(AHAB's glance catches ISHMAEL as the song and movement come to a close.)