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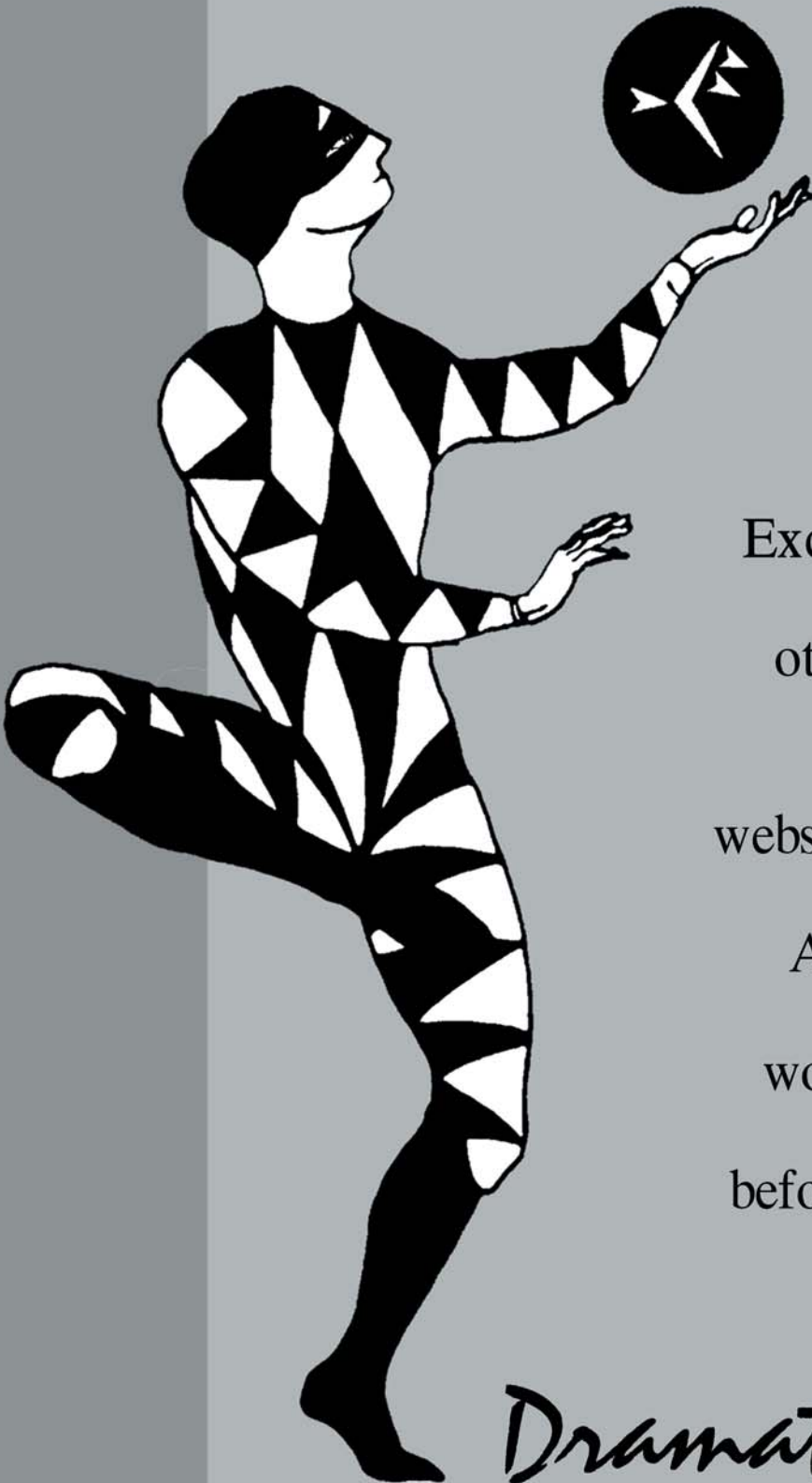
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Dramatic Publishing



MOBY DICK

A small-cast production
designed for young audiences

An adaptation of Melville's novel
by
MARK ROSENWINKEL

Originally commissioned by
IDAHO THEATRE FOR YOUTH
Bosie, Idaho

Dramatic Publishing
Woodstock, Illinois • England • Australia • New Zealand

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MARK ROSENWINKEL

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(MOBY DICK - Short version)

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“Produced by special arrangement with
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MOBY DICK

by
Mark Rosenwinkel

CAST OF CHARACTERS:

ISHMAEL

AHAB

QUEEQUEG

STUBB

SETTING: The decks of the Pequod. The ship consists of a mast-head 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.

MOBY DICK

Sound of ocean waves. A ship's bell. ISHMAEL appears. He looks out at the audience and starts to sing softly.

Prologue:

CHANTY - "King of the Boundless Sea"

(This song begins slowly, becoming more lively and rhythmic as the other actors join in. They assemble parts of the ship or accompany the song on instruments: guitar, accordion, flute, recorder, tambourine, etc. 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 a yo ho ho
The wind she blew us to and fro
Yaw haw and a riddle dee ree
For a sailor lost on the sea

ISHMAEL & QUEEQUEG

I looked out o'er the ocean plane
As far as I could see
I spied Leviathon'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-lookin' 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 a yo ho ho
The wind she blew us to and fro
Yaw haw and a riddle dee ree
Sing out all hands to me.

ISHMAEL & QUEEQUEG

With all our might we oared those boats
Plowing the restless sea

AHAB

Steady now!

QUEEQUEG

The Captain called.

AHAB

Or by Thunder she'll break free

ISHMAEL

By thunder she'll break free

(Song builds in
intensity.)

ISHMAEL & QUEEQUEG

And in my dream the lance gleamed bright
As the warrior knight prepared to smite
This monster with his jaws of death
The searing eyes and scorching breath
Looming right at me
Looming right at me

(Instruments play fast
and wildly. The sound
builds.)

CHORUS

Yar har and a yo ho ho
The wind she blew us to and fro
Yaw haw and a riddle dee ree
Looming right at me.
Looming right at me

(Sudden freeze. Music
becomes very soft and

gentle. Cast members exit
as ISHMAEL sings.)

ISHMAEL

Oh, 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
King of the boundless sea

CHORUS

Yar har and a yo ho ho
The wind she blew us to and fro
Yaw haw and a fiddle dee ree
For a sailor lost on the sea.

(Sound of a ship's bell
and the ocean waves.

AHAB walks onto the ship.
He limps painfully upon
an ivory stump. He climbs
the masthead, takes out a
spyglass and searches for
something in the
distance. He continues
to look throughout
ISHMAEL's narration.

Sound fx 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.)

ISHMAEL

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
Jehova unto thee.....

ISHMAEL

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

STUBB

Think again, mate.

Lord, hear my voice, oh let
Thine ears attentive be

(STUBB uses the rope to fix the 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 times, and I know my way around a ship.

STUBB

Been to sea, have ye now? A regular chippy old tar with salt water 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 it 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 quarter deck 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.

(Rings the bell.)

Prepare to sail!

(ISHMAEL crosses over to
AHAB.)

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.

(Turns to face ISHMAEL.)

Mr. Stubb!

STUBB

Aye, sir.

AHAB

Give him a line. If he dares.

ISHMAEL

I do, sir.

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.)

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's
sail is raised.)

QUEEQUEG
Our Captain stood upon the deck
A spyglass in his hand,
A viewing of those gallant whales
That blew at every strand.

STUBB
So be cheery my 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 quarter
deck, 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 sail and the
rigging.)

So be cheery my lads.

May your hearts never fail
While the bold harpooner
Is striking the whale.

SCENE TWO - "At Sea"

AHAB

Steady on the helm, Mr. Stubb.

STUBB

Aye, sir. We're on the open sea now, mates. Sit and take a breath.

(ISHMAEL and QUEEQUEG stop working. With one last look on the horizon, AHAB descends the masthead and exits.

ISHMAEL listens until AHAB has gone, then opens his carpetbag and begins to write in the journal.

QUEEQUEG, meanwhile, performs another blessing ritual on another part of the stage, using a shrunken head or wooden idol. He sees ISHMAEL writing, walks over to him, and suddenly grabs a cross that ISHMAEL wears about his neck.)

QUEEQUEG

You pray?

ISHMAEL

It's more of a charm, really. No, I don't pray. Not since I was a child.

(QUEEQUEG picks up the journal and leafs through the pages.)

It's a journal.

QUEEQUEG

Journal?

ISHMAEL

A form of prayer, I suppose. A living record of one's thoughts and impressions.

QUEEQUEG

(Returning the journal.)

I prefer to pray.

ISHMAEL

I'm sorry. I'm afraid I'm not a very religious person. I just discovered that I could make more sense of things if I sat quietly and thought a bit.

QUEEQUEG

"Incogito ergo sum....." I think therefore I am.

ISHMAEL

Who taught you that?

QUEEQUEG

A young missionary on a whaler some years ago. He felt it his Christian duty to civilize me, to teach me his ways. Descartes, Aristotle, Aquinas. Discuss, argue, discuss, all day, all night, until one morning he awoke to discover that he had argued so much, he no longer knew what he believed. He lives alone now, on an island, in a hut of mud, eating nuts. The natives call him "The Mad One." That's what comes with too much thinking.

ISHMAEL

How did you come to be a harpooner?

QUEEQUEG

The Captain, he taught me the wonders of the harpoon, taught me to kill. You see, in my country, killing is a holy thing. You take away one life so that others might go on. Even killing a man is done with prayer and blessing. Here, they pay you for it.

(AHAB appears on deck.)

Except for him. For him, too, it is a holy thing.

ISHMAEL

He's a strange one, isn't he? You could watch him all day and never know what he's thinking.