

**DAVID SCHWEIZER (Director).** Schweizer is delighted to return to LA where he has directed new work and innovative revivals, performances and operas for many years—including Lisa Loomer's *The Waiting Room* at the Mark Taper, Marlane Meyer's *Kingfish* and *Geography of Luck*, *The Joni Mitchell Project*, Tom Babe's *Demon Wine* at LATC, *Peer Gynt*, *Broadway* and *Salome* at the Actor's Gang, Michael Sargent's *Tarantula* at the Cast, Charles Mee's *Berline Circle* at the Evidence Room, *Powder Her Face*, *Elegy for Young Lovers* and, recently, Vivaldi "lost opera" *Moteczuma* at Long Beach Opera. New work with his own Modern Artists Company has included the award-winning *Plato's Symposium*, John Fleck's *Psycho Opera* and *Blessed Are the Little Fishes*. Now based back in New York, recent work includes Rinde Eckert's *Horizon*, Charles Mee's *Wintertime*, *Songs from an Unmade Bed*, Mike Albo's *My Price Point*, William Hamilton's *White Chocolate*, Richard Rodney Bennett's *Mines of Sulphur* at New York City Opera and Stephen Hartke/Philip Littell's *The Greater Good* world premiere at Glimmerglass Opera. He has collaborated with such experimental companies as Theater X (*The History of Sexuality*), Mabou Mines (*It's a Man's World*) and has extensively directed internationally, particularly in Eastern Europe where his adaptation of *Peer Gynt* is still running in Warsaw. This past summer's off-Broadway shows include Marga Gomez's *Long Island Iced Latina*, Taylor Negron's *The Unbearable Lightness of Being Taylor Negron* and Robert Wuhl's *Assume the Position*. His production of the new musical *Max Understood* opens on September 28 in New York, and he will be directing Joe and Benjamin Boone's musical, *Con-Man*, at 24th Street Theatre in April as part of the "The Melville Project."

**ELLIOT MEYERS, Production Stage Manager.**  
**KATHI O'DONOHUE, Lighting Design.**  
**JOHN ZALEWSKI, Sound Design.**

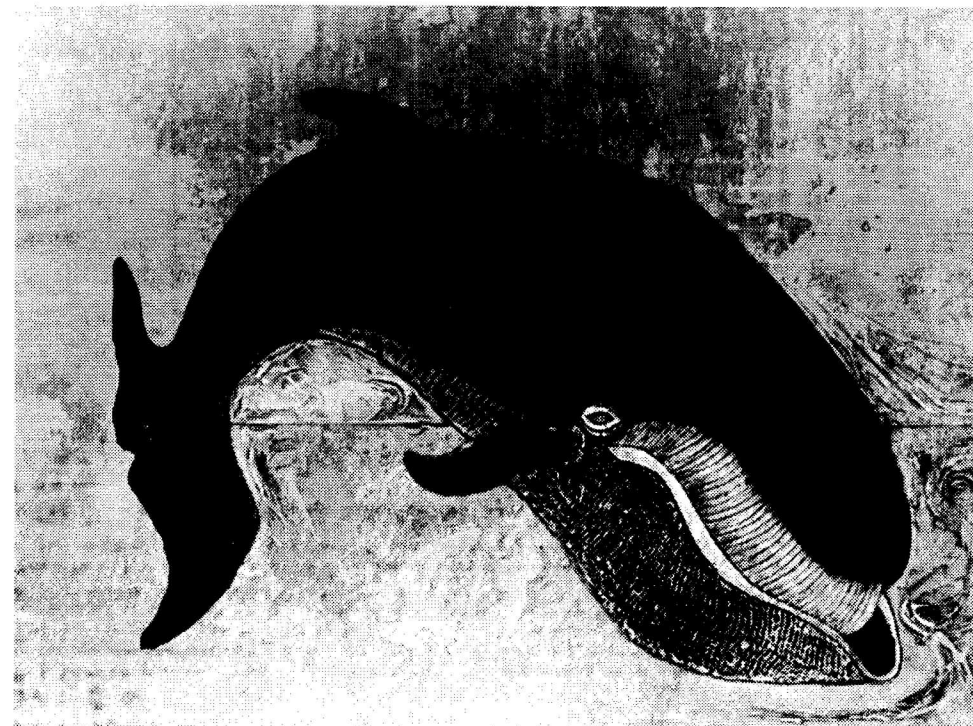
Special Thanks to **Jay McAdams**, head of 24th Street Theatre, his associate **Debbie Devine** and staffer **Meropi Peponides** for their enthusiastic efforts in helping to produce this version of *WHALES*.

#### ATTENTION UNDERGRADS! MELVILLE WRITING COMPETITION

All undergraduates in English and American Literature, Creative Writing and Comparative Literature are invited to compete for two \$225 prizes to be award in two categories:

- The **BEST CRITICAL ESSAY** written on any work by Herman Melville OR the best critical essay written on an artistic endeavor inspired by Melville's example (from Benjamin Britten's opera *Billy Budd* to Laurie Anderson's *Tales from Moby-Dick*, from the French avant-garde film *Pola X* [based on *Pierre*, or the *Ambiguities*] to the musical inspirations featured in this year's "Melville Project" program.
- The **BEST CREATIVE ENDEAVOR** taking its inspiration from a Melville text or Melvillean motif that shows a serious engagement with the author.

Deadline for submission to the competition is **MAY 1, 2010**, English Department Main Office, Taper Hall. Prizes will be announced by graduation. Entrants are strongly encouraged to attend one of our two Melville Project events!



# AND GOD CREATED GREAT WHALES

*Written, Composed and Performed by*  
**RINDE ECKERT**

*Featuring* **NORA COLE**  
*Directed by* **DAVID SCHWEIZER**

**Thursday, September 10, and Friday, September 11, 2009**  
**24th Street Theatre**

*the first event of*  
**THE MELVILLE PROJECT**



## PRODUCTION HISTORY OF *WHALES*

*AND GOD CREATED GREAT WHALES* was commissioned and produced in New York (and on tour nationally and internationally) by The FOUNDRY THEATER, MELANIE JOSEPH, Producing Artistic Director. An extended run in New York was produced in association with ALAN BUSHMAN and the CULTURE PROJECT at the Bleecker St. Theater. *WHALES* was originally designed with sets and lights by Kevin Adams, costumes by Clint Ramos and sound design by James Ratazzi. Original production stage manager was Scott Pegg.

\* \* \* \*

## THE MELVILLE PROJECT

*WHALES* is presented as part of a two-part series "The Melville Project," sponsored by Visions and Voices: The USC Arts and Humanities Initiative. This spring, *WHALES* director David Schweizer returns to the 24th Street Theatre to direct the premiere of *CON-MAN*, a musical inspired by Melville's darkly satiric, ultimately apocalyptic riverboat novel, *The Confidence-Man, His Masquerade*. Given that the action of Melville's novel occurs on April Fools Day, just before the outbreak of the War Between the States, it is appropriate that *CON-MAN* will be presented on April 1, 2009. *CON-MAN* is composed by Benjamin Boone and written by Joseph Boone, USC Professor of English and faculty sponsor of "The Melville Project." The Musical Theatre Repertory undergraduate organization of the USC Theatre School will co-sponsor the production.

\* \* \* \*

*WHALES* will be performed without an intermission.

## BIOGRAPHIES OF THE ARTISTS AND PRODUCTION CREDITS

**RINDE ECKERT (Nathan; Composer and Writer).** The 2009 recipient of the Alpert Award in the Arts for Theatre and finalist for the 2007 Pulitzer Prize in Drama, Eckert is a writer, composer, performer and director. Celebrated for his remarkably flexible and inventive singing voice combined with an electric physical presence, Eckert's Opera/New Music Theatre productions tour throughout America and to major festivals in Europe and Asia. Recent writing and performing credits include the plays *Horizon* (2007–2008 Drama Desk nominee for Best Play), *Orpheus X*, *Highway Ulysses* and the Obie Award-winning *And God Created Great Whales*. The American Repertory Theatre, the Foundry Theatre, Culture Project, Center Stage in Baltimore, Dobama Theatre Company and Berkeley Repertory Theater have produced his work. Current writing and directing projects include *Slide* with composer/guitarist Steven Mackey and eighth blackbird; *Imaginary City* with So Percussion; and *The Schick Machine* with virtuoso percussionist Steven Schick in a solo-theater work composed/produced by Paul Dresner. Eckert received the American Academy of Arts and Letters 2005 Marc Blitzstein Award and is a 2007 Guggenheim Fellow.

**NORA COLE (The Muse).** Ms. Cole's recent credits include August Wilson's *Fences* at the GEVA Theatre Center, her second solo show based in part on her Kentucky family slave history, *Voices of the Spirits in My Soul*, at the 2009 National Black Theatre Festival and directing George Bernard Shaw's *The Black Girl in Search of God* at Eastern Connecticut State University. Along with originating the role of the Muse in tonight's show, she also originated the role of The Bride in Rinde Eckert's *Highway Ulysses* at the American Repertory Theatre. Other outstanding credits include her work with George C. Wolfe in *Caroline or Change*, Royal National Theatre, and *Jelly's Last Jam*, Broadway opposite Gregory Hines and National Tour opposite Maurice Hines, *Doubt*, Milwaukee Rep, *Jacques Brel is Alive and Well . . .*, Santa Fe Stages (directed by David Schweizer), *The Colored Museum* (Hartford Stage), *The Good Times Are Killing Me*, *Joe Turner's Come and Gone*, *Avenue X* and her role as Coretta Scott King in *I Have a Dream*. She has singly performed the epic Langston Hughes poem, *Ask Your Mama: 12 Moods for Jazz*, with an original score by Hale Smith. Her first solo show, *Olivia's Opus*, is a multimedia adult ode to adolescence. For more than fifteen years she was a company member of Vinnette Carroll's Urban Arts Corp in NYC and repertory company in Ft. Lauderdale, Florida. Outstanding performances included the title role in *Medea*, *Singing Mary* in the Broadway, National and European Touring productions of *Your Arms Are Too Short to Box with God* and the pre-Broadway Kennedy Center production, *When Hell Freezes Over I'll Skate*. Ms. Cole earned a BFA from the Goodman School of Drama at the Art Institute of Chicago and attended Beloit College and Chicago Conservatory. She is a recipient of the first Spencer Cherashore Fund Individual Artist Grant and Hedgebrook Women Writers Retreat alumni.

Continued ⇨

# "Call me Ishmael."

The opening line of Herman Melville's *Moby-Dick*

## "Your name is Nathan."

You are suffering memory loss. You are listening to a set of instructions you put together to help you continue. Do not take the tape out of this machine for any reason. Do not take this tape recorder from around your neck . . . Today you will continue to work on your opera, *Moby Dick*. Look around the room. There is a woman. She is a product of your imagination. Listen to anything she has to say about music, or art, or the dark night of the soul, or whatever . . . She will be helping you continue work on your opera, *Moby Dick*. It is the tale of one man's obsession with a large white whale."

The opening lines of **And God Created Great Whales**

### The Foundry Theatre's Production of **And God Created Great Whales**

Conceived, composed, and  
produced by Rinde Eckert

With Nora Cole

will be performed at Center Stage  
May 10 - June 16, 2002

#### THE NEXT STAGE

at Center Stage  
700 North Calvert St.  
Baltimore, MD 21202

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Artistic Director

Nancy Roche  
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Bill Geenen  
Art Direction/Design

Kate Gust  
Design

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The Aaron Straus & Lillie Straus Foundation;  
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# Genius or Insanity?

**And God Created Great Whales** is the story of one man's obsession, just like the landmark novel that inspired it. Nathan is a piano tuner. He is also a composer with one *overwhelming* goal. He is trying to complete his great life's work, an opera based on Herman Melville's great American novel *Moby-Dick*. The odds against Nathan's success are staggering, and he has at least two enormous obstacles in his path:

1) Nathan is losing his memory, fast. Get the opera down on tape, or lose it forever.

2) *Moby-Dick*. Only a genius or a madman would try to create an opera based on *Moby-Dick*, because the novel is so complicated, and *Moby-Dick* is so famous, a cultural icon. It would be impossible to create an opera based on *Moby-Dick*. *Shakur, and*

But, even though, Nathan has help. He has a few recorded messages, and even better, he has someone (or something) to encourage and advise him, and even help him sing some of his new operatic compositions. **Nathan's got himself a**

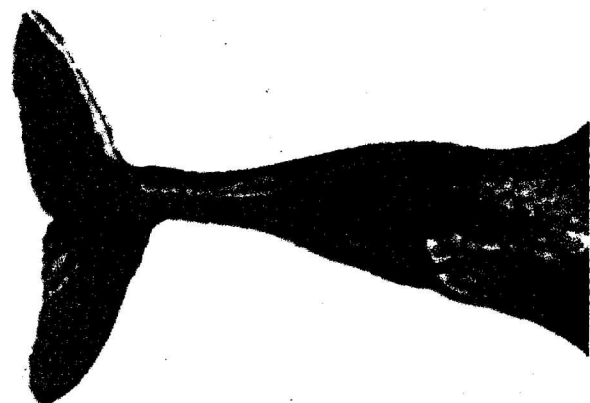
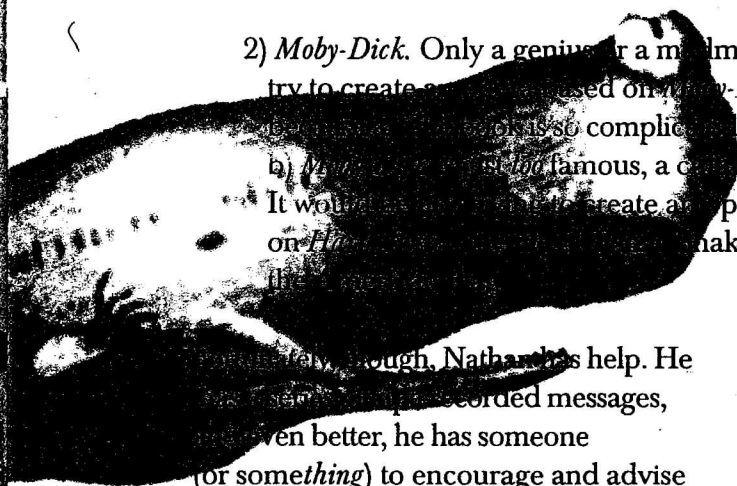
## MUSE

According to Greek mythology, the nine Muses were goddesses of the arts and sciences.

In modern usage, a "muse" refers to a person who inspires another's work, often by providing ideas or inspiration.

In the modern business world, a "muse" is often a person who provides ideas or inspiration, often by providing ideas or inspiration.

In **And God Created Great Whales**, Nathan and his muse perform many of Nathan's songs as a way of rehearsing his opera and inspiring him further. Their practice in private turns out to be a performance for us—we get to hear Nathan's composition while watching his creative process unfold. Does this make **And God Created Great Whales** an opera? A play with music? Hard to say. Much like *Moby-Dick*, **And God Created Great Whales** is made up of many different forms, which leaves it open to many different interpretations. Everyone sees something different. So instead of asking, "What is it?" the better question to ask is, "What do you see?"



# Welcome

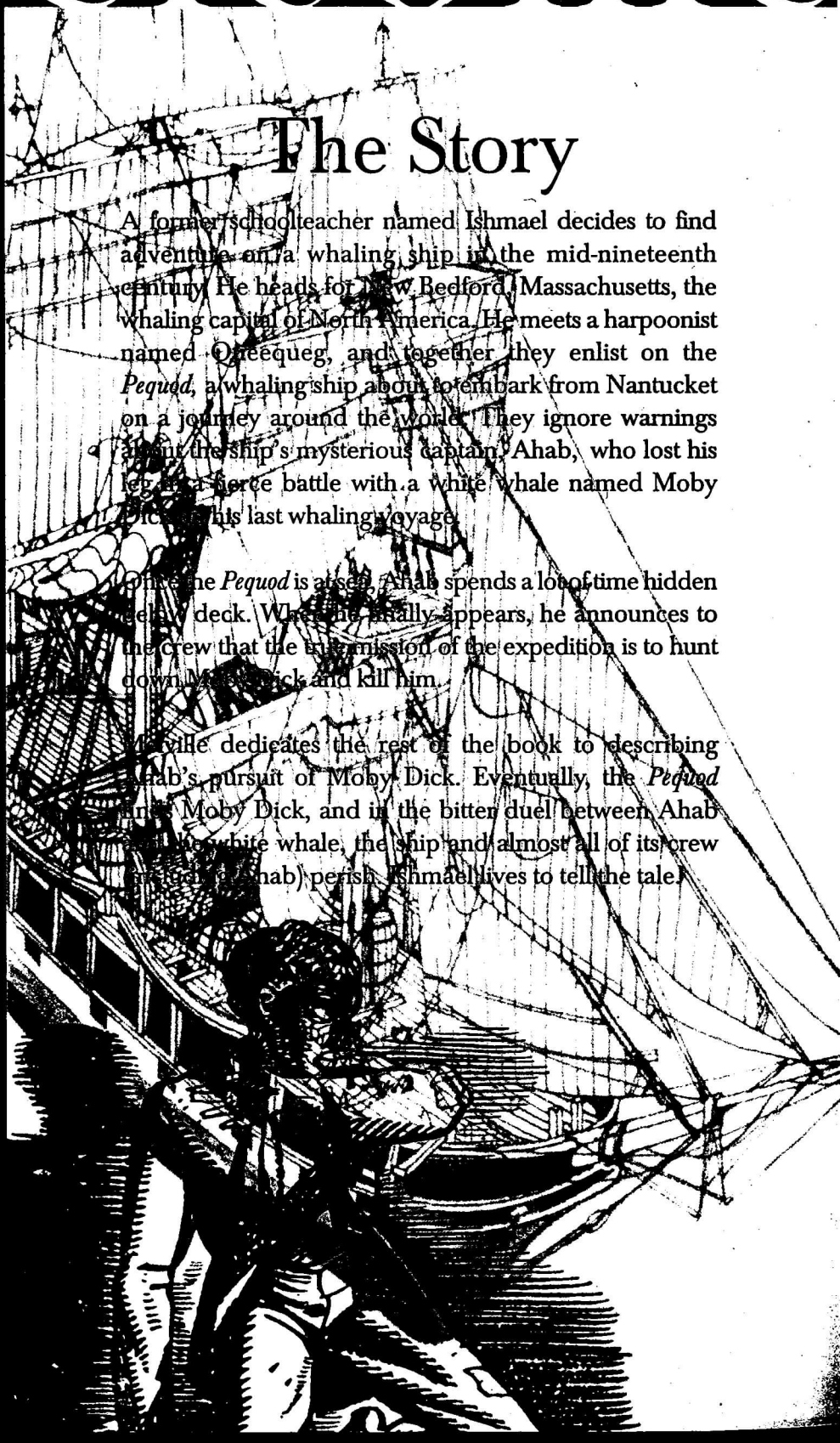
In case you haven't finished all 135 chapters of *Moby-Dick*, here is a quick and easy guide to some of the references that Nathan and his muse make to Melville's mighty novel.

## The Story

A former schoolteacher named Ishmael decides to find adventure on a whaling ship in the mid-nineteenth century. He heads for New Bedford, Massachusetts, the whaling capital of North America. He meets a harpoonist named Queequeg, and together they enlist on the *Pequod*, a whaling ship about to embark from Nantucket on a journey around the world. They ignore warnings about the ship's mysterious captain, Ahab, who lost his leg in a fierce battle with a white whale named Moby Dick on his last whaling voyage.

Once the *Pequod* is at sea, Ahab spends a lot of time hidden below deck. When he finally appears, he announces to the crew that the true mission of the expedition is to hunt down Moby Dick and kill him.

Melville dedicates the rest of the book to describing Ahab's pursuit of Moby Dick. Eventually, the *Pequod* finds Moby Dick, and in the bitter duel between Ahab and the white whale, the ship and almost all of its crew (including Ahab) perish. Ishmael lives to tell the tale.



# Aboard

## The Crew



**Ahab** – The *Pequod's* peg-legged captain, and one of the most famous figures in all of American fiction. He's the type of person *People* magazine calls "intriguing." He turns a routine whaling expedition into a crazy pursuit for revenge and immortality.

**Ishmael** – A former schoolteacher and citizen of Manhattan, he pulls double-duty as the tale's narrator and a crewman of the *Pequod*. Easy-going and agreeable, the only thing Ishmael enjoys more than observing the universe is explaining it to you. He is the sole survivor of the doomed whaling ship.

**Queequeg** – The tattoo-covered harpoonist of the *Pequod*. Upon first meeting him, Ishmael doesn't know quite what to make of the South Sea Islander, but Ishmael quickly sets aside cultural differences, and he and Queequeg become the best of friends.

**Father Mapple** – A former whaler and harpoonist, he is the chaplain of the Whaleman's Chapel in New Bedford. Father Mapple leads his congregation in a powerful hymn and then delivers a hair-raising sermon about Jonah and the Whale.

**Tashtego** – One of Queequeg's fellow harpoonists, he is a Native American from Martha's Vineyard who memorably nails Ahab's flag to the mast of the sinking ship in the end.

**Pip** – The young ship-keeper whose descent into madness after a fall overboard echoes that of Ahab's. In an uncharacteristic gesture of humanity, Ahab welcomes Pip, an African American, into his own cabin, showing him a kindness formerly unseen by the other members of the crew.



## Java and the Whale

Starbucks founder Gordon Bowker consulted with his creative partner, artist Terry Heckler, about a name for the new store. Gordon had pressed to call it *Pequod*, the name of the ship in Melville's *Moby-Dick*. But Terry recalls protesting, "You're crazy! No one's going to drink a cup of *Pee-quod*!"

The partners agreed that they wanted something distinctive and tied to the Northwest. Terry researched names of turn-of-the-century mining camps on Mt. Rainier and came up with "Starbo." In a brainstorming session, that turned into "Starbucks." Ever the literature lover, Terry made the connection back to *Moby-Dick*. The first mate on the *Pequod* was, as it happened, named Starbuck. The name evoked the romance of the high seas and the seafaring tradition of the early coffee traders.

*Pour Your Heart Into It—How Starbucks Built a Company One Cup at a Time* by Harold Schultz



# The Melville *Moby-Dick*

The history of Herman Melville and *Moby-Dick* amounts to one of America's great comeback stories. The book's journey from its early financial disaster to its present stature is an adventure that almost rivals that of Ishmael.

## 1851

Melville is already a successful author. Based in part on his own experiences at sea, his novels *Typee* and *Omoo* are popular with readers and critics, who respond to the books' romanticism. Critics assume Melville's new novel, *Moby-Dick*, will be pretty much like his others. It isn't.

Critics do not think too highly of Melville's new stew. They have the most trouble with *Moby-Dick*'s radical style. The book begins more or less like any other adventure novel, but then the narrative stops and Ishmael digresses. In other words, he tells us everything he knows about how to get oil from a whale, or delivers a long meditation about the creepiness of the color white. This genre-busting mixture of adventure and metaphysics is new to American fiction, and many of Melville's readers have a problem with it. **The book is a financial disaster.**

## 1866-1890

Melville's follow-up novels, *Pierre or the Ambiguities* (1852) and *Mardi* (1847), are rejected by his readers and critics alike. His literary reputation is **diminished**. Melville works as a customs inspector in New York City to support himself.

## 1891

**Melville dies**, believing he was a failure as a writer. There is little if any public mourning for this mostly forgotten literary figure.

## 1891-1916

The new works of authors like James Joyce, Virginia Woolf, and Ezra Pound herald a **shift in Western literature toward more experimental structures and techniques**, some of which—the mixing of genres, the changes in narrative voice—were the controversial aspects of *Moby-Dick*. The very things that people thought were negative and sloppy about the book are now seen as positive and deliberate. One of *Moby-Dick*'s admirers is the creator of *Peter Pan*, J. M. Barrie, who models the evil Captain Hook after Captain Ahab.



# 1917- 1921

The one-hundred-year anniversary of Melville's birth is celebrated in 1919, and many articles and essays are written about Melville's life and works. *Moby-Dick* begins to achieve status as a Great American Novel. Essays by the noted scholar Charles Van Doren and famous authors like E. M. Forster and D. H. Lawrence push *Moby-Dick* further into the limelight.

# 1940- 1969

Scholars and critics advocate strongly for America's literary tradition. They argue that early authors like Melville, Hawthorne, and Emerson equal their European counterparts. *Moby-Dick* is now seen as a masterful American novel, full of symbolism and meaning about the American experience. The book is viewed as **the tragedy of Ahab, who, despite all of his baggage, is seen as an heroic American figure.**

# 1990- 2002

**Artists continue to find inspiration in *Moby-Dick* and Herman Melville.**

The Grammy-winning musician Moby, born Richard Melville Hall, claims to be a direct descendant of Herman Melville (although Melville's biographer is not so sure).

The multimedia artist Laurie Anderson begins touring in 1999 with a new performance piece called *Songs and Stories from Moby-Dick*. Some of the items on her play list are: "Sermon," "Queequeg," "Enter Ahab," and "Pip's Song."

Solo performance artist Mark Kenward's show *The Yoga of Moby-Dick* is a hit of the 1999 San Francisco Fringe Festival.

In June of 2000, The Rounder Theatre premieres Rinde Eckert's *And God Created Great Whales* at New York's Dance Theatre Workshop.

# 1969-1990

With contemporary critical focus on the method of storytelling instead of on plot and characters, **scholars begin to study Ishmael the storyteller, rather than Ahab the character.** Typical questions of this kind of criticism are: Why is the narrator telling me this? What is the narrator *not* telling me? In an age where the narrator is king, Ishmael proves to be one of literature's all-time most interesting narrators. *Moby-Dick* holds as much interest for the new scholars and critics as it did for those of previous generations.

