

January 30, 2018 - For Immediate Release

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Pittsburgh Opera presents *Moby-Dick*, Herman Melville's tragic tale about the price of obsession

What:	Jake Heggie & Gene Scheer's Moby-Dick
Where:	Benedum Center for the Performing Arts, Downtown Pittsburgh
When:	Saturday, March 17 - 8:00 PM Tuesday, March 20 - 7:00 PM Friday, March 23 - 7:30 PM Sunday, March 25 - 2:00 PM
Run Time:	2 hours and 49 minutes, including one intermission
Language:	Sung in English with English texts projected above the stage
Tickets:	Single tickets for adults start at \$12 for all performances; tickets for children 18 and under start at \$6. Group Discounts available. Call 412-456-6666 for more information or visit pittsburghopera.org/tickets .
Media Events	<i>Please contact ccox@pittsburghopera.org for reservations</i> Photo Call (3/5, 12:30 PM) – location TBA Full Dress Rehearsal (3/15, 7:00 – 10:00 PM), Benedum Center
Related Events <i>See pages 7-8 of this release.</i>	Film Series Screening (3/1) Mt. Lebanon Library talk and performance (3/3) Opera Up Close (3/4) WQED Preview (3/10 & 3/16) Meet the Artists (3/20) Audio Commentary (3/20) Brown Bag concert (3/10)



Campaign by Crème Fraiche Design. Illustration by John Hinderliter.

Pittsburgh, PA...

As part of Pittsburgh Opera's commitment to bring new, American operas to the Benedum Center stage, we are very proud to announce the Pittsburgh premiere of [Jake Heggie](#) and [Gene Scheer](#)'s critically acclaimed opera **Moby-Dick**.

The opera is based on the famous novel of the same name by Herman Melville, about Captain Ahab's monomaniacal pursuit of the legendary white whale in his ship the *Pequod*.

Pittsburgh Opera will be performing an exciting new production of **Moby-Dick**, which we co-produced with Utah Opera and which debuted in Salt Lake City this January. The [Salt Lake Tribune](#) praised that "Erhard Rom's abstract set design, Jessica Jahn's exhaustively researched costumes and Kristine McIntyre's authoritative stage direction pull the audience into the action."

The world-class cast includes two singers making their Pittsburgh Opera debuts plus some returning favorites.

Canadian tenor [Roger Honeywell](#) returns to Pittsburgh as the obsessed Captain Ahab, who will stop at nothing to wreak his revenge on the giant whale that previously took off his leg. Honeywell also sang the role in Salt Lake City this January, where his "fierce performance brought Ahab to terrifying life" according to the [Salt Lake Tribune](#).

Former Pittsburgh Opera Resident Artist [Sean Panikkar](#), last seen here in the world premiere of **The Summer King – The Josh Gibson Story**, sings the role of whaling neophyte Greenhorn, aka Ishmael in the book.

Texas baritone [Michael Mayes](#) brings his "powerful" voice and "arresting stage presence" to his Pittsburgh Opera debut as Starbuck, the *Pequod*'s First Mate, who is torn between his duty to his captain and his duty to himself.

Also debuting is [Musa Nggungwana](#), a South African bass-baritone, as tattooed harpooner Queequeg, who befriends Greenhorn. The *Dallas Observer* called him a “powerful presence” when he portrayed Queequeg in 2016, and *Limelight Magazine* said he was “gorgeously resonant” in Utah this January.

Malcolm MacKenzie and Eric Ferring sing the roles of bloodthirsty Second Mate Stubb and Third Mate Flask, respectively, while Jacqueline Echols is the ill-fated Cabin Boy, Pip.

Antony Walker conducts. Kristine McIntyre directs. Dancers provided by [Attack Theatre](#).

On stage March 17, 20, 23 & 25, **Moby-Dick** delivers an incredible combination of astounding visuals and spellbinding music you won't want to miss. Adult tickets start at just \$12 – with Children's tickets for those ages 18 and under starting at just \$6 - and are [available online](#).

Fun facts about Moby-Dick

1. The character called Ishmael in the book, the rookie whaler who serves as its narrator, is called “Greenhorn” in the opera. A greenhorn is “a person who is new to or inexperienced at a particular activity.” The expression “green with envy” originally referred to new whalers and sailors who, prone to turn green in the face from sea-sickness, would envy veteran sailors who did not get sea sick.
2. Often called “the greatest novel in American literature”, *Moby-Dick* was a commercial failure during Herman Melville's lifetime.
3. The only female cast member plays the role of a boy. Jacqueline Echols, who sang the role of Helen Gibson in Pittsburgh Opera's world premiere of **The Summer King – The Josh Gibson Story** in 2017, returns in a pants role as cabin boy Pip.

The story, in brief

Act 1

Scenes 1 to 4. Day One: The whaling ship Pequod has been at sea for one week

Captain Ahab stands alone on deck in the hours before dawn. Below deck, while most of the crew sleeps, the harpooner Queequeg prays and wakes Greenhorn, a loner and newcomer to whaling. Dawn breaks and the call is made for "All Hands!" While the crew is raising the ship's sails, Starbuck, Stubb, and Flask talk about Ahab, whom no one has seen since the ship left Nantucket.

The crew sings of whales, wealth, and home until suddenly, Captain Ahab appears. He tells them of Moby-Dick, the white whale that took off one of his legs, then nails a gold doubloon to the mast and promises it to the man who first sights him. This is the real reason they have sailed, he explains: to search the globe to find and destroy this one whale. His rousing call of "Death to Moby-Dick!" excites everyone but the first mate, Starbuck. To no avail, he confronts Ahab about what he sees as a futile and blasphemous mission.

Starbuck instructs Greenhorn about the dangers of whaling. When he ponders never again seeing his wife and son, he is overcome with emotion and orders Queequeg to complete the lesson. Stubb sights a pod of whales, but Ahab will not allow the eager crew to hunt since they have not yet found Moby-Dick. Starbuck orders the crew to sail on and sends Greenhorn up to the lookout on the masthead, joined by Queequeg.

As the sun begins to set, Ahab looks over the wake of the ship and mourns that his obsession deprives him of any enjoyment of beauty. All is anguish to him. At the masthead, Queequeg and Greenhorn look over the world, while Starbuck, on deck, bemoans Ahab's madness.

Scenes 5 to 7. Day Two: Three months later

After three months without a single whale hunt, Stubb jokes with the young cabin boy Pip about the sharks circling the ship. The song ignites a dance for the full crew, but rising tensions take over and a dangerous racial fight erupts. When Greenhorn suddenly sights a pod of whales, Starbuck is at last able to persuade Ahab to let the men hunt. Starbuck and Stubb harpoon whales, but Flask's boat is capsized and Pip is lost at sea.

On board the *Pequod*, an enormous whale is being butchered and the oil rendered in the burning tryworks. Flask tells Ahab that the search for Pip is under way, but Ahab thinks only of finding Moby-Dick. As they butcher the whale, the crew imagines Pip lost and struggling in the heart of the sea. Flask tells Starbuck that many oil barrels are leaking. Concerned, Starbuck goes below to tell Ahab they must find a port for repairs.

Ahab is unmoved by Starbuck's report, and is concerned only with the white whale. When Starbuck refuses to leave, Ahab grabs a musket and orders him to his knees. From afar, Greenhorn shouts that Pip has been found. Ahab orders Starbuck out of the cabin. On deck, the crew listens to Greenhorn describe how Queequeg rescued Pip. As the men return to work, Greenhorn pleads with Starbuck to get help for Pip, who has gone mad. But, the first mate ignores him. Greenhorn observes how life really works on the ship and decides to befriend Queequeg.

Starbuck returns to Ahab's cabin, where he finds the captain asleep. He picks up the musket with which Ahab had threatened him and contemplates what he should do. Pull the trigger and he may survive to see his wife and child again. When Ahab cries out in his sleep, Starbuck replaces the musket and leaves the cabin.

Act 2

Scenes 1 to 3. Day Three: One year later

An enormous storm is approaching, but Stubb, Flask, and the crew sing a jolly work song. From the mastheads, Greenhorn and Queequeg talk of traveling together to his native island. Greenhorn wants to learn Queequeg's language and write down their adventures. Suddenly, Queequeg collapses. The crew gets him down and Ahab announces he will take the masthead watch himself, as he wants to sight Moby-Dick first.

Below deck, Queequeg tells Greenhorn that he is dying and asks that a coffin be built for him. Pip enters from the shadows and sings a lament, joined by Greenhorn.

The massive storm now surrounds the *Pequod*. As Ahab sings defiantly to the heavens, bolts of lightning engulf the ship and the masts glow with St. Elmo's fire. Ahab demands that the men hold their posts, promising them the white flame is a sign from heaven to guide them to the white whale. The crew is inspired once again by the captain, much to Starbuck's distress.

Scenes 4 to 7. Day Four: The next morning

The ship has made it through the storm. From afar, the voice of Gardiner, captain of the *Rachel*, calls out. He pleads with Ahab to help him search for his 12-year-old son who was lost in the storm, but Ahab refuses. Pip shouts to Gardiner of the *Pequod*'s own lost boy. Pip cuts himself and gets blood on Ahab's clothes. The captain orders the ship to sail on, leaving Gardiner behind. Ahab contemplates the heartless God who devastates so many lives and baptizes his new harpoon with Pip's blood.

Below deck, Greenhorn sees Queequeg's newly-built coffin and contemplates the madness that seems to surround him.

On deck, Ahab and Starbuck gaze over the horizon. Ahab describes his forty years at sea and all he has left behind. And why? To what end? He cannot say. But he sees in Starbuck's eye a human soul and it touches him deeply. Starbuck seizes the moment and persuades Ahab that they should return to the wives and sons who wait for them in Nantucket.

Just as Ahab appears to relent, he sights Moby-Dick on the horizon. Great excitement ensues and the whale boats are lowered. Ahab looks again in Starbuck's eye and orders him to stay on board. The crew declares its loyalty to Ahab. During the chase, Moby Dick destroys two whaleboats in succession, drowning their crews. Then, the *Pequod* is rammed and sunk, killing all aboard. Ahab's boat is then attacked and all but the captain jump or fall off. Finally alone with the white whale, Ahab cries out and stabs at Moby-Dick before being dragged down into the sea.

Epilogue: Many days later

Greenhorn floats on Queequeg's coffin, barely alive, softly singing his lost friend's prayer. Gardiner calls from afar, thinking he has at last found his missing son. Instead, he learns that Ahab and all the crew of the *Pequod* have drowned, except for this one survivor.

~from [Wikipedia](#)

For more complete plot information, plus videos, musical samples, and cast biographies, visit <https://www.pittsburghopera.org/show/moby-dick>.

Tickets and Group Discounts

- Tickets to all performances of **Moby-Dick** start at \$12; tickets for children 18 and under start at \$6.
- All performances are at the [Benedum Center](#), 7th Street and Penn Avenue, in Pittsburgh's Cultural District
- To purchase tickets, call 412-456-6666, visit the Theatre Square Box Office, or buy online at https://opera.culturaldistrict.org/production/51760/list_performances.
- Group discounts are available. For discounted group tickets (6 or more), contact Regina Connolly at 412-281-0912, x 213

Sponsors

- [PNC](#) is the 2017-18 Pittsburgh Opera Season Sponsor
- [WQED-FM](#) is Pittsburgh Opera's Media Sponsor
- Tuesday performance sponsor: [Ambridge Regional Distribution and Manufacturing Center](#).

Cast and Artistic Team: *Moby-Dick*

Captain Ahab
Starbuck
Greenhorn
Queequeg
Pip
Flask
Stubb

[Roger Honeywell](#)
[Michael Mayes](#)⁺
[Sean Panikkar](#)^{**}
[Musa Ngqungwana](#)⁺
[Jacqueline Echols](#)
[Eric Ferring](#)^{*}
[Malcolm MacKenzie](#)

Conductor
Stage Director
Wig and Make-up Designer
Choreographer
Dancers
Stage Manager
Set Designer
Costume Designer
Lighting Designer
Asst Conductor
Chorus Master
Associate Coach/Pianist
Asst Stage Director

[Antony Walker](#)
[Kristine McIntyre](#)
James Geier
Daniel Charon
Provided by [Attack Theatre](#)
Cindy Knight
[Erhard Rom](#)
[Jessica Jahn](#)
[Marcus Dilliard](#)
[Glenn Lewis](#)
[Mark Trawka](#)
[James Lesniak](#)
[Frances Rabalais](#)^{*}

+ Pittsburgh Opera debut

* Pittsburgh Opera Resident Artist

** Pittsburgh Opera Resident Artist alumnus

Related Events for Moby-Dick

Film Series - *In the Heart of the Sea*

Thursday, March 1, 7:00 PM

Melwood Screening Room, Pittsburgh Filmmakers, 477 Melwood Avenue

Pittsburgh Opera's Film Series, held on selected dates during the season, pairs films with the current season's operas. Our film pairing for **Moby-Dick** is *In the Heart of the Sea*.

In 1820, crewmen (Chris Hemsworth, Benjamin Walker, Cillian Murphy) aboard the New England vessel *Essex* face a harrowing battle for survival when a whale of mammoth size and strength attacks with force, crippling their ship and leaving them adrift in the ocean. Pushed to their limits and facing storms, starvation, panic, and despair, the survivors must resort to the unthinkable to stay alive. Their incredible tale ultimately inspires author Herman Melville to write *Moby-Dick*. Learn more at <https://www.pittsburghopera.org/calendar/detail/film-series-in-the-heart-of-the-sea>

Moby-Dick - Mt. Lebanon Library event

Saturday, March 3, 7:00PM

Mt. Lebanon Public Library, 16 Castle Shannon Blvd.

Join us at the [Mt. Lebanon Public Library](#) for a musical preview and lively discussion about the opera's story and what it takes to bring it to life on stage. Speakers will include stage director [Kristine McIntyre](#), fresh off [rave reviews](#) for her Moby-Dick stage direction in Salt Lake City, plus representatives from Pittsburgh Opera's cast, music staff, and artistic team. The event is free and open to the public. Learn more at <https://www.pittsburghopera.org/calendar/detail/moby-dick-mt.-lebanon-library-event>

Opera Up Close: Moby-Dick

Sunday, March 4, 2:00 PM - 3:30 PM

Founders' Room, Pittsburgh Opera Headquarters, [2425 Liberty Avenue](#)

Opera Up Close is an in-depth look at the music and story of Jake Heggie's [Moby-Dick](#), with singers, the production's conductor, and more. Admission is \$5; free to members of [FRIENDS of Pittsburgh Opera](#) and \$50+ donors. Handicapped parking is available by reservation. For more information: 412-281-0912 or <https://www.pittsburghopera.org/calendar/detail/opera-up-close-moby-dick>

Moby-Dick - Previews on WQED-FM 89.3 and WQED.ORG

Saturday, March 10, 12:30 PM - 1:00 PM and

Friday, March 16, 7:00 PM - 7:30 PM

Hosted by WQED's Anna Singer, and broadcast over the airwaves on WQED-FM 89.3 as well as the WQED website, the **Moby-Dick Preview** gives listeners an engaging introduction to the

singers, music, and story of the opera. For more information:

<https://www.pittsburghopera.org/calendar/detail/wqed-preview-moby-dick>

Pre-opera Talks for Moby-Dick
One hour prior to each performance
Benedum Center

Ticketholders are invited to attend a free [Pre-Opera Talk](#) one hour before each performance's curtain in the Main Floor/Orchestra section of the Benedum Center. Learn about the composer, the story, and some juicy details about the opera!

Pre-Opera Talks are free to all ticketholders at all performances.

Audio Commentary: Moby-Dick
Tuesday, March 20, 7:00 PM
Benedum Center

Ticketholders with visual impairments are invited to use [Pittsburgh Opera's Audio Description service](#) at our Tuesday performances. Trained volunteers describe the supertitles, scenery, costumes, and stage action. The listeners hear these descriptions via assistive listening devices. Those wishing to use Audio Description should reserve seats to the Tuesday, March 20th performance by contacting Regina Connolly at 412-281-0912, ext. 213 or groups@pittsburghopera.org. Braille and large-print programs are also available.

Meet the Artists of Moby-Dick
Tuesday, March 20
Immediately following the performance, in the Benedum Center's Lower Lobby

Ticketholders for the Tuesday, March 20th performance of **Moby-Dick** are invited to gather in the Benedum Lower Lobby immediately following the performance when [General Director Christopher Hahn](#) interviews the stars of the opera. This event is free to all Tuesday performance ticketholders. Learn more at <https://www.pittsburghopera.org/calendar/detail/meet-the-artists-moby-dick>

March Brown Bag concert
Saturday, March 10, Noon - 1:00 PM
George R. White Opera Studio, Pittsburgh Opera Headquarters, [2425 Liberty Avenue](#)

You're invited to Pittsburgh Opera's free March Brown Bag concert. The program includes some of our 2017-18 Resident Artists' favorite selections. The concert is free and open to everyone. Bring a friend and bring a lunch! Meet the Resident Artists afterward at an informal reception.

Doors open at 11:30 AM. Handicapped parking is available by reservation. For more information: 412-281-0912 or <https://www.pittsburghopera.org/calendar/detail/march-brown->

[bag-concert2](#)

COMING UP NEXT for Pittsburgh Opera:

Donizetti's classic comedy [The Elixir of Love](#), April 21-29, 2018

Pittsburgh Opera celebrates its 79th season in 2017-18. Established by five intrepid women in 1939, Pittsburgh Opera is viewed as one of the most vibrant opera organizations in the U.S., with a rich artistic tradition, outstanding educational programs, an acclaimed artist training program, and a progressive outlook toward the future. Its green initiative culminated in LEED® Silver certification for its Strip District headquarters, and its capacity as a true community partner has increased significantly under General Director Christopher Hahn's leadership.

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