

EXPERTS AGREE: EVERYTHING IS FINE!

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June 8, 2019

MOBY DICK REHEARSED, Orson Welles' stage adaptation of Herman Melville's high seas saga of the hunt of the great white whale called Moby Dick, performs in repertory at Will Geer's Theatricum Botanicum in Topanga.

The play opens not in the 1850's off the coast of Nantucket, but in a theater setting of now where a group of actors brushing up on a few "sides" of King Lear takes upon themselves to blend into a dress rehearsal telling the legend of Moby Dick. This dress rehearsal turns into a full fledged stage drama of a troupe of sea going men under the leadership of Captain Ahab (Gerald Rivers) who seeks a personal revenge of a great white sperm whale where on a previous voyage, it bit off part of his leg. Now armed with a gallant team who set sail upon his ship *The Pequod*, Ahab and his valiant crew are off to capture this bright beast of the seas, and will do so come hell or high water!

At first, one will witness what appears to be a play within a play, where a group of thespians form to conduct a presentation of Moby Dick where it becomes reshearsed to its fullest. This team isn't presenting an improv version of the whale hunt, but as a stage show that becomes the real deal! That is the general backdrop to the story. By the moment this crew become serious into this mission, it's Moby Dick all the way, rather than as a feeble attempt cast by a group of actors just playing their roles on command from its director. Franc Ross performs as the director and as the character Mapple where he holds a resemblance of the playwright. He doesn't look like Herman Melville, but resembles the Orson Welles version that is far removed from the days when he was once billed as a "boy genius"! (i.e. The era when Citizen Kane became a staple of *The Late Late Show* appearing on after-hours TV, as well as a few revival screenings usually held on a college campus somewhere.)

But getting back to the stage version as performed on the Theatricum Botanicum floorboards. It features a very robust cast that consists of Tavis L. Baker as Stubb, Tim Halligan as both a Carpenter and Pegleg, KiDane Kelati as Pip, Jacob Louis as Elija, Melora Marshall as a Landlady and as Flask, Michael McFall as Queequeg, Dante Ryan as Tashtego, Colin Simon as Starbuck, Isaac Wilkins as Daggoo, Julia Lisa as an unnamed actress, and Dane Oliver as the man who insists you call him Ishmael.

Ensemble players also consist of (as listed in their alphabetical order), Louis Baker, Matthew Domenico, Colin Guthrie, Matt Mallory, Cavin Mohrhardt, and Matthew Pardue.

Ellen Geer once again takes on the director's seat to present a play that is big in scope, complete with intense drama, full fledged action (thanks to Dane Oliver's fight choreography), as well as offering a selection of sea chanties as its musical soundtrack performed for salt-air moodiness. Marshall McDaniel provides an original music score for these ditties showing itself off as the only way to feel the said saltiness of the ocean deep without using water for effectness.

For those that never bothered to actually read this classic novel, *MOBY DICK REHEARSED* will fit the bill. Would it be a spoiler alert to note that Cap'n Ahab finally settles his score with the title whale? And would it be another spoiler that the same title whale is never seen on stage? After all, Mr. Welles got his fame through radio, so let the theater of the mind do its thing to "see" Moby D! Thar she blows indeed!

MOBY DICK REHEARSED, presented by and performs at Will Geer's Theatricum Botanicum, 1419 North Topanga Canyon Blvd, Topanga, until September 29th. Showdates run on Saturdays, June 15th, August 17th, September 7th, and September 15th at 8:00 PM; June 22nd, June 29th, and July 20th at 4:00 PM, and on Sundays, July 14th, August 4th, August 25th, September 22nd and September 29th at 4:00 PM, and September 15th at 8:00 PM. Special Friday night performance takes place on August 9th at 8:00 PM

For ticket reservations and for more details, call (310) 455-3723, or via online at <http://www.Theatricum.com>

One can also follow the Theatricum Botanicum through social media via Facebook , Twitter @Theatricum, and Instagram @Theatricum_Botanicum