



For immediate release

A Play for the Ages

Alaska Native play goes back 10,000 years to seek adventure, romance, and difficult lessons of growing into a leader

Anchorage, AK (October 9, 2019) - Over 10 millennia ago, a giant sea creature – the Devilfish – destroys an entire village, and a young girl is the only survivor. She must make her way to a new village and figure out how to survive in a time when glaciers covered Alaska, mammoths wandered the land, and humans could still transform into animals at will.

In a vibrant, lyrical adventure, the new play *Devilfish* written by Tlingit/Dena'ina artist Vera Starbard and directed by Artistic Director Leslie Ishii, heads to Anchorage on October 25. Produced by Perseverance Theatre, *Devilfish* showcases new music by Tlingit musician Ed Littlefield, and choreography by Tlingit artists Lyle and Kolene James. Dozens of authentic Alaska Native art pieces were created for the play, and a creative team from around the country brought together to create this ethereal world.

“We truly have a creative dream team on this production,” said Starbard. “It’s a really ambitious play in that it’s almost a musical – the dance sequences are fully a third of the story. And on top of that we are needing to imagine an origin story for a very real people.”

The play is the culmination of over a decade of story work by Starbard, first completing a *Devilfish* novel through a Rasmuson Foundation Individual Artist Award in 2009. Starbard is now the Playwright in Residence at Perseverance Theatre through the Andrew W. Mellon National Playwright Residency Program, and the development of the play has reached from small communities in the state to across the country in Boston.

Devilfish’s reception in Juneau has garnered rave reviews and full audiences. Much of the effort around the production revolved around “indigenizing” as much of the process of the play as possible. The Tlingit culture has produced dynamic performing arts for thousands of years. Combining that theatricality into a Western theatre space was both a challenge and an opportunity.

The production features an all-Indigenous cast from across the state and country. Tlingit actor Erin Tripp plays Aanteinatu, the only survivor of the Devilfish’s destruction.

“Before we opened, I didn’t know how the community would respond,” said Tripp. “It’s been such a wonderful experience seeing how many people are showing up and having them vocalizing their reactions throughout the performance. We’re sharing this story together and it’s never the same night to night. I feel so proud of my people and the opportunity to lift up our stories and traditions every night.”

Also featured are Allison Hicks (Prairie Band Potawatomi/Choctaw), Emily Sera (Shoshone/Dine), Jennifer Bobiwash (Ojibway), Skyler Ray Benson-Davis (Tlingit), Rio Alberto (Chicanx), and Kenny Ramos (Barona Band of Mission Indians – Diegueño lipay/Kumeyaay.)

Devilfish runs in Anchorage from Oct. 25 through Nov. 3 in the Sydney Laurence Theatre at the Alaska Center for the Performing Arts. Please visit ptalaska.org/devilfish for tickets and information.
