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# 'Albatross' opens at Gloucester Stage

A famous poet writes an epic work about an ancient mariner. Seventy years later the poet meets the mariner. During "Albatross," the imaginative one-man show that re-interprets Samuel Taylor Coleridge's "Rime of the Ancient Mariner," that's exactly what happens. In Benjamin Evett...

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Benjamin Evett as The Mariner in a scene from 'Albatross' at Gloucester Stage Company through July 3. Courtesy photo/ Andrew Brilliant

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Benjamin Evett as The Mariner in a scene from 'Albatross' at Gloucester Stage Company through July 3. Courtesy photo/ Andrew Brilliant

**By Keith Powers / Correspondent**

Posted Jun. 15, 2016 at 9:50 PM

GLOUCESTER

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GLOUCESTER

**If you go...**

**WHAT:** "Albatross," at the Gloucester Stage Company

**WHERE:** Gorton Theatre, 267 East Main St., Gloucester

**WHEN:** through July 3

**TICKETS:** \$20-\$38. Visit [www.gloucesterstage.com](http://www.gloucesterstage.com) or call 978-281-4433.

A famous poet writes an epic work about an ancient mariner. Seventy years later the poet meets the mariner.

During "Albatross," the imaginative one-man show that re-interprets Samuel Taylor Coleridge's "Rime of the Ancient Mariner," that's exactly what happens. In Benjamin Evett and Matthew Spangler's vision, the mariner, who has been doomed to tell his tale of guilt and hardship forever, is doing exactly that, wandering the world and reciting his story. That he would meet the author of his story decades later is only part of the fantastical re-working of Coleridge's epic.

Evett stars in "Albatross," which has had two previous stagings to marvelous reviews, at the Gorton Theatre, the Gloucester Stage Company's second work of the season, through July 3. Rick Lombardo directs the production.

Evett and co-author Spangler have done much more than re-tell the narrative poem. They've transformed it into a look at contemporary issues, through the lens of the hard-bitten mariner.

"I knew I wanted to do something with powerful language, that could explore the relationship between live solo performance, and digital and video possibilities," Evett says. "When Matthew suggested Coleridge's poem, I really hadn't read it since I was in school. I was really stunned, not just by the extraordinary imagery, but by the hallucinogenic fantasy and power. And especially its message about mindfulness, and the impact on our world."

And so a collaboration was born. The two worked on the script together—"Matthew sketched out the arc, and did most of the writing," Evett says. "I have more experience in the nautical world, and my pieces are the ones that connect to contemporary issues."

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Don't expect a recitation of Coleridge's narrative, which intentionally uses language that was archaic even in the 1790s.

"The poem is a jumping off point," Evett says. "As much as I love it, I knew it would be too much of a challenge for people. The way it's framed, the mariner meets Coleridge 70 years later. Coleridge is the wedding guest (a part of the original poem), and the mariner grabs him and tells him his story. Coleridge goes off and writes the poem, and then the mariner uses it to help him tell the story as he wanders around.

"In fact, the mariner bristles at the fact that Coleridge has only told part of the story."

In the original "Rime," the mariner inexplicably kills an albatross that has led his ship to safety. As a result, the rest of the crew dies, and although the mariner survives, he is doomed to wander the world and re-tell his story forever.

"The mariner enters the set, and erects these three makeshift sails," Evett says. "They become unconventional video screens. There's an expressionistic, metaphorical videoscape, and complex soundscape, that accompany his words. I could just as easily do this show in someone's living room with nothing else, but the video and audio are an opportunity to enhance the audience's experience.

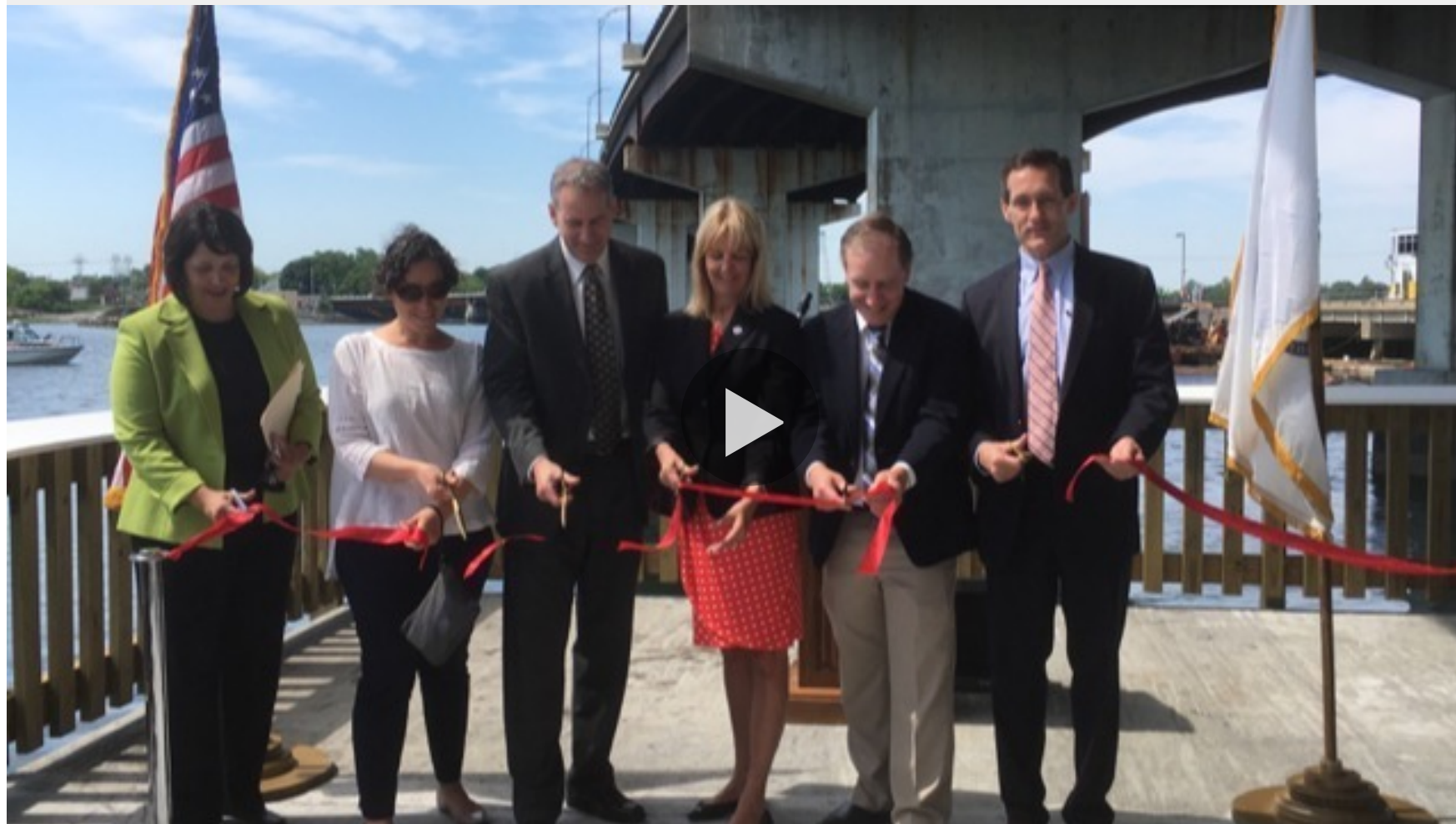
"It's been a year since I've done it last," he says. "It's a little different each time — some parts taken out, some new parts added. I'm a little different too, with a new understanding of it. I feel like I'm more in command, and I'm looking forward to sharing it."

"Albatross" opens June 16 in the Gloucester Stage Company's Gorton Theatre, and runs through July 3. For tickets and information visit [www.gloucesterstage.com](http://www.gloucesterstage.com) or call 978-281-4433.

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