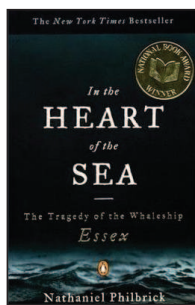# Big Read continues Fishtrap's look at **RESILIENCE**

ENTERPRISE — Fishtrap's Big Read 2021, which is online-only again this year, centers on a true tale of resilience and survival — "In the Heart of the Sea: The Tragedy of the Whaleship Essex" by Nathaniel Philbrick. The month-long event kicked off last week.

The National Book Award-winning tale is the story of the whaleship Essex, which in 1820 was the target of a sperm whale attack. The 85-foot long whale — perhaps the largest of that species anyone had witnessed — rammed the ship and stove it in. The attack and the sinking of the Essex were the basis of Herman Melville's ending for his 1851 novel, "Moby-Dick."

Under a grant from the National Endowment for the Arts, Fishtrap has created a month of free online events for readers, students and families to learn about whales and the history of whaling in America.

The Big Read's events are free and open to all, and reading the book is not required. All Big Read events may be experienced either as a livestream or afterward on Fishtrap's website.

The first event of the 2021 Big Read was Wednesday, Feb. 17, a livestreamed presentation by Dr. Lisa T. Balance, director of Oregon State University's Marine Mammal Institute and endowed chairwoman of marine mammal research. If you missed the live event, the talk may be watched at fishtrap.org/the-big-read-2021.

The book takes place in 1819, when the Essex set sail to hunt whales, leaving Nantucket, Massachusetts, for the South Pacific in what was to be a routine voyage. Instead, the crew found itself part of one of the most horrifying maritime disasters in American history when the massive whale rammed and sunk their vessel.

For 90 days the crew drifted in small boats with only some sense of where they were in the vast ocean. Facing starvation, disease, brutal weather and a near loss of hope, they succumbed to drastic measures as they fought to stay alive.

The Big Read continues with a series of educational events in partnership with The Columbia River Maritime Museum, including on how to make your own hardtack, sailor superstitions, whaling in Oregon and more. The Big Read finale is March 17 featuring the author, Philbrick, streaming online from his home on Nantucket.

Since 2006, Fishtrap has brought the Big Read to the community by highlighting a great work of literature, hosting events, discussions and providing hundreds of free books to schools, libraries and community members.

In addition to the National Endowment for the Arts, the program is supported locally by neighborhood businesses and individual donations. Special thanks are offered to community sponsors Art Center East, Community Bank, The Bookloft and the Oregon Arts Commission.