

HOMER'S COAT

**In association with Octopus Theatricals
presents**

AN ILIAD

Written by DENIS O'HARE and LISA PETERSON

Based on HOMER's *Iliad*, translated by ROBERT FAGLES

Directed by LISA PETERSON

Starring DENIS O'HARE

Bassist: BRIAN ELLINGSEN

Scenic Design: RACHEL HAUCK

Costume Design: MARINA DRAGICHI

Lighting Design: SCOTT ZIELINSKI

Composer/Sound Design: MARK BENNETT

Producer: MARA ISAACS/OCTOPUS THEATRICALS

PRODUCTION HISTORY

***An Iliad* was originally developed as part of the New York Theatre Workshop Usual Suspects Program, Off-Broadway premiere produced by New York Theatre Workshop (Jim Nicola, Artistic Director; William Russo, Managing Director) in 2012.**

***An Iliad* was originally produced by Seattle Repertory Theatre (Jerry Manning Producing Artistic Director; Benjamin Moore, Managing Director). It was subsequently produced by McCarter Theatre Center, Princeton, NJ (Emily Mann, Artistic Director; Timothy J. Shields, Managing Director; Mara Isaacs, Producing Director).**

***An Iliad* was developed in part with the assistance of the Sundance Institute Theatre Program.**

***An Iliad* is presented by special arrangement with Dramatist Play Service, Inc., New York**

AWARDS & HONORS (Select)

Drama Desk Nomination (New York) Joseph Jefferson Award (Chicago)

5 Craig Noel Awards (San Diego) Gregory Award (Seattle)

OBIE Award (New York), The Lucille Lortel Award (New York)





PRESS QUOTES

UNITED STATES

“The strength of AN ILIAD resides in the combination of a naturally exciting narrative and **the engaged, virtuosic performance** of...Mr. O’Hare...a **supple, gifted and engaging performer.**” - Charles Isherwood, *The New York Times*

“An Iliad is **pure theater: shocking, glorious, primal and deeply satisfying.**” - David Cote, *Time Out New York*

“A mesmerizing play...a **wrenching theatrical experience**” - Jennier Farrar, *SF Gate*

“The show is a **sweeping, visceral theatrical event** that not only commands attention from start to finish, but can prove to be a touching ode to the tradition of storytelling and an excursion into the magic of simple stagecraft.” - Andy Propst, *TheaterMania*

“Listening to *An Iliad* in a manner that could be breathtakingly close to the way its first audiences heard and saw it is a treat too good to miss.” - David Finkle, *The Huffington Post*

“The irony and heartache of telling Homer’s story as our country continues to be mired in conflict in Afghanistan isn’t lost on the playwrights. It’s clear that their *Iliad* is a **plea for peace and sanity** in a world that’s lost its mind” - David Hurst, *Next Magazine*

“As we teeter on the brink of yet another military clash – this time with Iran – Homer’s grim portrait of the folly of war **couldn’t be more timely.**” - David Sheward, *Backstage*

“A **starkly powerful experience** that leaves you with not just a sense of the horror and absurdity of war, but also — and this part makes the heart sink — its inevitability.” - Don Aucoin, *The Boston Globe*

“Theatrical storytelling at its **most vital**.” - Don Aucoin, *The Boston Globe*

“*An Iliad* is **unquestionably a victory of the theatrical imagination**...At the center of it all is one of the greatest stories ever told.” - Charles McNulty, *Los Angeles Times*

“This is poetry as it was meant to be experienced, primal and **raw, thrilling and transcendent**.” - Jenny Lower, *LA Weekly*

“**The act of combat has never been more piercingly described** (not even by Tolstoy or Mailer, let alone Lone Survivor), nor its qualities of rage, savagery and comradeship more intensely conveyed.” - Myron Meisel, *The Hollywood Reporter*

“This is a **formidably powerful piece of solo theater**, that evokes the rubble of history and of lessons mankind consistently fails to learn.” - Chris Jones, *Chicago Tribune*

“**Explosive, altogether breathtaking**...Brilliantly meshes past and present calamity, with touches of the most caustic dark humor suddenly shifting into unimaginable pathos.” - Hedy Weiss, *Chicago Sun-Times*

“Humor is an invaluable tool in this **riveting** one-actor adaptation of Homer’s epic poem, easing the audience into the Poet’s tale before he takes them on a devastating tour of the Trojan battlefield.” - Oliver Sava, *Time Out Chicago*

“*An Iliad* tells the whole story in an **artfully edited** form that not only hits all the important plot points and set pieces but renders them with a deep consciousness of their ironies, agonies, subtleties, and implications.” - Tony Adler, *Chicago Reader*

“The best theater exists not just as a spectacle kept at distance, but invades and ignites the imagination of the audience. It takes a truly special piece of theater to inspire the audience to really do this, but this is when theater is **transcendent**. It belongs not to the performers, the designers, or the director, but to the audience, becoming larger than any of them could have possibly planned. It is **generous**. This is the level of work happening in *An Iliad*.” - Hank Brunhoff, *Splash Magazine*

“*An Iliad* is **stellar theater**. .. Expect this show to tour, to end up on Broadway (or near it), and to be praised universally.” – John Dalton, *Centerstage!*

As a theatrical experience, *An Iliad* **delivers the power and passion of the saga**. After all, Homer’s *Iliad* was meant to be experienced in a live performance. - Tom Williams, *Chicago Critic*

"A triumph of theater." - Lawrence Bommer, *Chicago Stage Style*

"This is how 'The Iliad' was meant to be heard, a bard binding us with deathless words, as contemporary as the next foolish war that we don't resist." - Lawrence Bommer, *Chicago Stage Style*

AUSTRALIA

"With the article 'an' proposing but a single contribution to the diversity of Iliads, co-writer/performer O'Hare and his artistic team have distinguished their oft-told story amongst its many retellings simply as the moving and thoroughly personal investiture of the unique human who appears on the stage. **How incredibly powerful this work of theatre is as a result.**" - Van Badham, *The Guardian*

"To call this a one-man show is really an understatement, as the scale of this work is **genuinely epic**. There are moments in An Iliad that will make you shed a tear for humankind...An Iliad does a magnificent job of retelling this Greek epic, making it accessible and timeless to the uninitiated; it's **sweeping, sobering, it hits you in the solar plexus**, and it puts into staggering perspective just how obsessed with war-mongering humans have always been and continue to be." - Cicely Binford, *Australian Stage*

"A captivating and engaging adaptation and reinterpretation." - Simon Clark, *The AU Review*

"This juxtaposition of the ancient and the modern, classical and contemporary, us and them, gives An Iliad a **phenomenal pitch and purpose**. It connects Achilles' killing fields with all those other terrible places throughout history." - David Zampatti, *The West Australian*

"The Iliad became **'An Iliad' for our times** – or rather, for our species – and the wrath of Achilles emblematic of that vice in our nature that, uncontrolled, rages across societies and through history."

Humphrey Bower, *The Daily Review*

"A breathtaking tour-de-force that begs the question: Has anything really changed since the Trojan War?" - Stephen House, *AussieTheatre.com*

NEW ZEALAND

"In the inspired hands of Denis O'Hare and Lisa Peterson...we have a chance to hear the story told in such a way it feels **as though we have never heard it before.**" - Elspeth Sandys, *New Zealand Listener*



ABOUT HOMER'S COAT



Denis O'Hare and Lisa Peterson are founding members of Homer's Coat - a creative collective that explores foundational literature. An actor and a director respectively, they both develop, write and edit the pieces they make together. The creative process differs according to subject matter but the lens through which they view the theatrical medium makes for unique, energetic, imaginative performative experiences. Together they created the stage piece, *An Iliad* over a period of five years, utilizing video, video transcriptions, improvisation, original music, and diligent research.

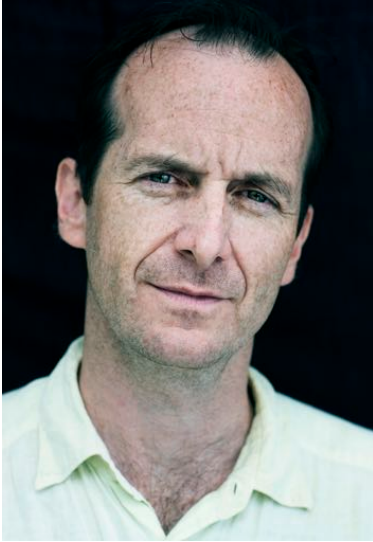
An Iliad has received multiple awards including the Joseph Jefferson Award (Chicago), 5 Craig Noel Awards (San Diego), Gregory Award (Seattle), Drama Desk Nomination (New York), The Obie Award (New York), and The Lucille Lortel Award (New York).

They are developing a new play based on the Bible entitled, *The Good Book*, commissioned by the Court Theatre in Chicago. *The Good Book* tells the story of the chaotic birth of the Christian Bible and how it came to be the most influential text in all of human history.



BIOGRAPHIES





DENIS O'HARE (Actor, Co-Creator)

Denis O'Hare is the co-author with Lisa Peterson of the award winning Solo Performance Play, *An Iliad* (Obie, Lucille Lortel awards). Mr. O'Hare has appeared numerous times on Broadway in such pieces as *Inherit The Wind*, *Sweet Charity* (Drama Desk Award), *Assassins* (Tony Nom.), *Take Me Out* (Tony, Drama Desk awards), *Major Barbara* and *Cabaret*. He has also worked extensively Off-Broadway at the New York Theatre Workshop in *The Devils* and *Vienna Lusthaus*, at the New York Shakespeare Festival in *Into The Woods*, *Helen*, *Take Me Out* (Obie, Lucille Lortel Awards) at CSC in *The Spanish Play* and *Uncle Vanya* as well as at other theatres.

His regional work includes Seattle Rep, Arena Stage, Goodman Theatre, Victory Gardens Theatre, Remains Theatre and the McCarter Theatre. A prolific film and T.V. actor, Denis appeared in 2 seasons of "True Blood" as King Russell Edgington, on the premiere season of "American Horror Story" and as Judge Abernathy on "The Good Wife". Film work includes *C.O.G.*, *The Eagle*, *Changeling*, *Milk*, *Michael Clayton*, *A Mighty Heart*, *Duplicity*, *The Proposal*, *Charlie Wilson's War*, and *Garden State* among others. He is currently writing a new a new stage piece with Ms. Peterson entitled *The Good Book* for The Court Theatre in Chicago. Mr. O'Hare is married to Hugo Redwood with whom he has a son. They live in Brooklyn, NY.



LISA PETERSON (Director, Co-Creator)

Lisa is the co-writer of *An Iliad*, the OBIE and Lortel Award-winning Solo Performance that she created with Denis O'Hare, based on Homer's epic poem. In addition to many classic plays, Lisa has directed the premieres of new works by Donald Margulies, Tony Kushner, Beth Henley, Naomi Wallace, Caryl Churchill, Janusz Glowacki, Marlane Meyer, Culture Clash, Jose Rivera and many others at theaters including NYTW (OBIE for directing *Light Shining in Buckinghamshire*), The Public, Vineyard, MTC, Primary Stages, Mark Taper Forum, La Jolla Playhouse, Guthrie, ATL, Berkeley Rep, McCarter, Arena Stage, Geffen, Hartford Stage, Seattle Rep and many more.



BRIAN ELLINGSEN (Bassist)

Brian Ellingsen is a New York City based double bassist, chamber musician, and soloist. Specializing in contemporary music, the *New York Times* has described his interpretations as, “coaxing an amazing variety of sounds from his instrument.” As a soloist, Brian has been featured at the Perth International Festival, Adelaide International Festival, New Zealand International Festival, and the Spoleto Festival USA. As a chamber musician, he is a standing member of Decoda, and has performed with Ensemble Intercontemporain, International Contemporary Ensemble, Lucerne Festival Alumni Ensemble, Ensemble ACJW, and Gotham Chamber Opera. Brian has also toured the world and received much critical acclaim for his role in *An Iliad*, a play based on Homer’s *The Iliad*. The play features an epic score for solo double bass and electronics, which Brian premiered in 2010 and continues to tour with to this day. Brian holds a bachelor’s degree from The Hartt School, and a master’s degree from Yale School of Music.

RACHEL HAUCK (Scenic Design)

Rachel Hauck *An Iliad* (NYTW, McCarter, Seattle Rep, National and International Tours). Recent New York: *Hadestown* (NYTW); *Tiny Beautiful Things*, *Dry Powder* (Public Theater) *All The Ways To Say I Love You* (MCC) *Antlia Pneumatica*, *Grand Concourse*, *Patron Saint...*, *The Call* (Playwrights Horizons); *Night Is A Room*, *Our Lady of Kibeho*, *And I And Silence* (Signature), *An Iliad* (NYTW) Regional: *Poster Boy*, *And No More Shall We Part* (WTF); *It Can’t Happen Here* (BRT); *Animal* (Studio). O’Neill Playwright’s Conference, Princess Grace and Lilly Awards, Drama Desk and Lortel Nominations. Obie Award for Sustained Excellence.

MARINA DRAGICHI (Costume Design)

NYTW: *Mad Forest*. Broadway: *Fela!* (Tony Award). Off-Broadway: *Cymbeline*, *Mother Courage* (Delacorte Theater); *The Skriker*, *Hamlet*, *Woyzeck* (Public Theater). International: *Les Indes Galantes*, *L’Italiana in Algeri* (Paris Opera), *La Traviata* (Bordeaux Opera), *24 Images Secondes* (Lyon Opera). Film & TV: *Precious*, *Rage*, *Heights*, *Twelve and Holding*, *The Grey Zone*, *Dexter*, *Blue Bloods*, *Homeland*.

SCOTT ZIELINSKI (Lighting Design)

Scott is based in New York and has created lighting designs for theatre, dance, and opera throughout the world. His work in New York includes productions for Broadway, Lincoln Center, and The Public Theatre, among many others and his designs have also been seen extensively at theatres throughout many other cities in the United States. Work outside the U.S. includes

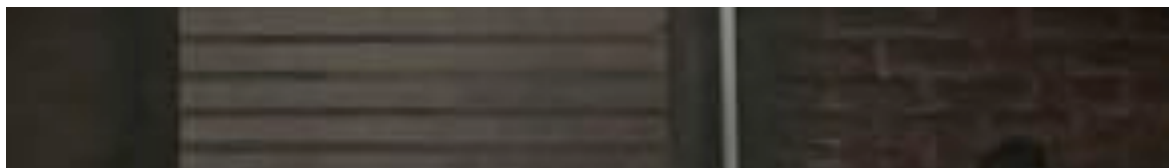
productions in Adelaide, Amsterdam, Avignon, Berlin, Bregenz, Edinburgh, Fukuoka, Gennevilliers, Hamburg, Hong Kong, Istanbul, Linz, Ljubljana, London, Lyon, Melbourne, Orleans, Oslo, Ottawa, Paris, Reykjavik, Rotterdam, Rouen, St. Gallen, Seoul, Singapore, Shanghai, Shizuoka, Stockholm, Stuttgart, Sydney, Tokyo, Toronto, Vienna, Vilnius, and Zurich. His work for dance has been seen at American Ballet Theatre, American Dance Festival, Houston Ballet, The Joyce, San Francisco Ballet, Stuttgart Ballet, and others. For opera he has designed at Opera Australia, Bregenzer Festspiele, Brooklyn Academy of Music, Canadian Opera, English National Opera, Houston Grand Opera, Lithuanian National Opera, Nederlandse Opera, New York City Opera, Opera de Rouen, Royal Opera House London, San Francisco Opera, Spoleto Festival and others. Scott received his Master of Fine Arts in Theatre Design at the Yale University School of Drama. SCOTTZIELINSKI.COM

MARK BENNETT (Composer/Sound Design)

Mark Bennet's Broadway credits include: *Vanya and Sonia and Masha and Spike*, *Driving Miss Daisy*, *A Steady Rain*, *The Coast of Utopia* (2007 Drama Desk Award: Outstanding Music for a Play), *Henry IV*, *Golda's Balcony*, *The Goat*, *Lily Tomlin's "The Search..."*. Mark was composer for the five BAM/OLD VIC *Bridge Project* productions 2009-2012 (Sam Mendes, director), His Off-Broadway credits include: *An Iliad*, (Obie Award), *Mad Forest*, *My Children! My Africa!* (New York Theatre Workshop). Regional productions include *An Iliad*, *Major Barbara*, *Candida*, *The Philanderer*, *The House of Bernarda Alba* (all directed by Lisa Peterson), *Junk*, *King Charles III*, *His Gal Friday*, *Most Wanted* (musical), & *A Midsummer Night's Dream* (Craig Noel Award Outstanding Music for a Play) *Arms and the Man*, and *Pygmalion*. For Theatrigo Orhnintorinco in San Paulo, Brazil Mark composed the score for Caca Rosset's adaptations of Shakespeare's *La Commedia Dos Erros*, and Moliere's *O Avarento*. Mark has received a 1998 Obie Award for Sustained Excellence in Sound Design, a 1998 Bessie Award, Ovation Award, an American Theatre Wing Award, and 14 Drama Desk nominations.

MARA ISAACS/OCTOPUS THEATRICALS (Producer)

Mara Isaacs is a creative producer and founder of Octopus Theatricals, a theatrical producing and consulting company dedicated to fostering an expansive range of compelling theatrical works for local, national and international audiences. Current projects include *Hadestown* (NYTW 2016); Theatre For One *In This Moment* (Signature Theatre 2016); *Our Secrets* by Hungary's Bela Pinter and Company (US Tour January 2017); Fiasco Theater's *Into the Woods* (US National Tour); *Songs of Lear* by Poland's Song of the Goat Theatre (US Tour 2016). Mara is the Project Director for The Springboard Project: Fostering Collaboration in Dance-Driven Musical Theater and Executive Producer for the Opening Weekend of Princeton University's Lewis Center for the Arts in 2017. Additional projects/clients include Phantom Limb Company, The Civilians, Baryshnikov Arts Center, Jerome Robbins Foundation and others. Mara has produced over 100 productions that have been seen on Broadway, off-Broadway, around the U.S. and Internationally, garnering Tony, Obie, and many other awards. She was Producing Director at McCarter Theatre Center in Princeton, NJ for 18 seasons and previously produced new play development programs and productions for Center Theatre Group/Mark Taper Forum in Los Angeles. www.octopustheatricals.com



PRESS REVIEWS



The Boston Globe

O'Hare is spell-binding in 'An Iliad'



By Don Aucoin | GLOBE STAFF APRIL 30, 2013

As “An Iliad” gets underway, a light bulb is burning on the nearly bare Paramount Center Mainstage. The stage is abruptly plunged into darkness. And then, just as suddenly, a spotlight bursts upon a man, seated upon a suitcase.

He is an ordinary-looking fellow in a long overcoat, a hat, and what appear to be army boots, and he is speaking, curiously enough, in ancient Greek. The man soon switches to English and begins to tell a tale — one, it's clear, he's told many times before, and one that, in one form or another, is as old as humanity itself. It's the story of war.

“Every time I sing this song, I hope it's the last time,” he says wearily.

The reluctant raconteur is played by Denis O'Hare, and the solo performance he proceeds to give over the next hour and a half is nothing short of mesmerizing. “An Iliad,” crafted by O'Hare and Lisa Peterson from Robert Fagles's translation of Homer's epic poem, and

presented by ArtsEmerson, is a starkly powerful experience that leaves you with not just a sense of the horror and absurdity of war, but also — and this part makes the heart sink — its inevitability.

Why? Because while O'Hare's narrator vividly brings to life scenes from the Trojan War, especially the climactic battle between Achilles and Hector, the true subject of "An Iliad" is mankind's ineradicable impulse toward violence, an unfathomable yet seemingly bottomless rage that spans eras and continents and cultures. No peace treaty that can fix that.

In one spellbinding scene, O'Hare numbly but relentlessly recites the names of war after war after war, scores of them, underscoring how much of human history has been defined by our attempts to kill one another. It's reminiscent of that hypnotic sequence in Spalding Gray's "Swimming to Cambodia" when Gray spoke of the "invisible cloud of evil," a kind of collective madness that periodically descends upon nations and makes them do terrible things — except that the madness O'Hare describes is a chronic condition.

If "An Iliad" sounds like a didactic screed, rest assured that it's not. Under Peterson's direction, this is theatrical storytelling at its most vital. O'Hare is spookily persuasive in his evocation of the speed with which combat can turn to frenzied bloodlust, especially in depicting the slaughter of Trojans by the Greek soldier Patroclus while wearing the armor of his friend Achilles. Mark Bennett has composed spare and resonant music that, as performed onstage by bassist Brian Ellingsen, ratchets up the dramatic intensity at key moments while at other times subtly commenting upon the events narrated and depicted by O'Hare.

The vernacular language mixed in with the soaring poetry of "An Iliad" collapses any sense of comfortable distance we may feel. O'Hare and Peterson force us to picture the Greeks and Trojans — to see them — not as figures from distant myth but as fundamentally the same as "the boys of Nebraska and South Dakota . . . the twangy boys of Memphis . . . the boys of San Diego, Palo Alto, Berkeley, Antelope Valley . . ." who fight our present wars.

The action in "An Iliad" unfolds in the ninth year of the Trojan War, with Troy under siege by the Greeks. "Fighting on and off, fighting to the wall and back," says O'Hare. "Greeks win one day, Trojans win the next, like a game of tug-of-war, and nothing to show for it but exhaustion, poverty, and loneliness." Emotions are equally raw and specific in a scene, enacted by O'Hare with harrowing force, in which Patroclus is killed by Hector, a prince and the commander of the Trojan army. Upon learning of the death of his friend, the Greek leader Achilles is driven to a fury of revenge.

Not content just to kill his foe, Achilles drags his dead body by chariot around the walls of Troy while Hector's mother, father, and brothers watch helplessly. Before he does that, though, Achilles takes a moment to proclaim to his soldiers that "we have won ourselves great glory." But "An Iliad" makes abundantly clear that when the subject is war, glory is the very last word we should ever use.

Don Aucoin can be reached at aucoin@globe.com.

The New York Times

THEATER REVIEW

Troy... um, War ... You Know

‘An Iliad’ at New York Theater Workshop



Photographs by Sara Krulwich/The New York Times

An Iliad Stephen Spinella, left, and Denis O'Hare alternate performances of this adaptation at the New York Theater Workshop.

By [CHARLES ISHERWOOD](#)

Published: March 7, 2012

Great armies are clashing on the stage of [New York Theater Workshop](#). Sharpened spears fly through the air, tearing into flesh as they strike their targets. Swords clatter on shields, blood soaks the sand, and myriad souls are dispatched to the underworld. Above the fray the gods look on with studied interest, rushing to the aid of their favorites when peril threatens. Gamers looking for a live gore fest should be warned, however, that all this tumultuous violence is evoked merely through the words of a single actor in [“An Iliad,”](#) an adaptation of Homer’s epic by the actor [Denis O’Hare](#) and the director Lisa Peterson, and performed alternately by Mr. O’Hare and Stephen Spinella. Drawing on the muscular translation by Robert Fagles, Mr. O’Hare and Ms. Peterson have telescoped the mighty expanses of Homer’s great poem into an evening that scales the conflict of the Trojan War down to an intimate solo

show illuminating both the heroism and the horror of warfare.

“It’s a good story,” says our narrator, a battered-looking fellow carrying a suitcase who confides that he has been singing this story through the ages: in Mycenae, in Babylon, in Gaul. A cracking good yarn it certainly is. The fierce trash-talking between the Greek leader Agamemnon and the great warrior Achilles; the death in battle of Achilles’ great friend Patroclus; the culminating combat between a raging, mournful Achilles and the Trojan hero Hector: these are tales that captivate in any form and continue to provide meaty fodder for popular culture. (Anyone see the silly “Troy,” with Brad Pitt as Achilles?)

The strength of “An Iliad” resides in the combination of a naturally exciting narrative and the engaged, virtuosic performances of both Mr. O’Hare and Mr. Spinella. But Homeric specialists should be warned that this is not simply a condensed recitation of the poem, but a retelling that emphasizes contemporary vernacular over poetry. Although the narrator throws out snatches of verse at moments of heightened drama, and occasionally even bellows a few lines in the original Greek, most of the story is rendered in casual contemporary language that puts both mortals and gods on our own level.

“What drove them to fight with such a fury?” the narrator asks as he begins the tale. “Oh ... the gods, of course Um ... pride, honor, jealousy ... Aphrodite ... some game or other, an apple, Helen being more beautiful than somebody — it doesn’t matter. The point is, Helen’s been stolen, and the Greeks have to get her back.”

That’s the overriding tone: chatty, informal, occasionally spiced by digressions that, echoing Homer’s brilliant use of simile, seek humble parallels in contemporary life to the passions that inflamed the Greeks and Trojans. Trying to explain why the exhausted Greeks didn’t abandon the battle, weary after nine years of fruitless fighting, our narrator compares their attitude to the frustration you feel in a supermarket line: “You’ve been there 20 minutes, and the other line is moving faster,” he says. “Do you switch lines now? No, goddamn it, I’ve been here for 20 minutes, I’m gonna wait in this line. Look — I’m not leaving ’cause otherwise I’ve wasted my time.” The subtle, dramatic music of Mark Bennett is primarily played live by the bassist Brian Ellingsen, coaxing an amazing variety of sounds from his instrument. Stalking the bare stage, under the nicely varied lighting scheme of Scott Zielinski, the actor mostly narrates the story while occasionally embodying its primary characters, from the major combatants on both sides to supplementary figures like Hector’s devoted wife, Andromache; the diffident, preening and battle-fleeing Paris; and the infamous Helen, self-accused whore whose kidnapping set the whole shebang in furious motion.

Both Mr. O’Hare, a Tony winner for “Take Me Out” who is familiar to television audiences from his appearances on “True Blood” and “American Horror Story,” and Mr. Spinella, who took home not one but two Tonys for the original production of “Angels in America,” are supple, gifted and engaging performers. I am not going to get in the game of choosing one performance over the other; both negotiate the leaps in rhetorical register, from the plain-vanilla vernacular to the robustly lyric, with impressive nimbleness.

Perhaps because he spent so much time on the rampaging-vampires series “True Blood,” Mr. O’Hare seems to relish the battle passages, bringing alive the murderous chaos of battle and the bloodlust it unleashes. Mr. Spinella, on the other hand, seems to channel the grandeur of the conflict in his more august, less contemporary-inflected portrayals of figures like

Agamemnon.

Mr. O'Hare and Ms. Peterson have condensed the long sweep of the "Iliad's" narrative — despite its focus on just a few weeks in a war lasting a decade — with intelligence, naturally eliding much of the endlessly detailed to-ing and fro-ing between the armies and the interfering gods above. Despite being the cuckolded husband whose abducted wife ignited the conflict, for example, Menelaus is scarcely mentioned here.

I might have skipped the passage describing the creation by Hephaestus of a new set of armor for Achilles, which slows the momentum just when this hour-and-40-minute evening should be racing to its climax. The litany of human conflict that the narrator recites — ranging from the Peloponnesian War through the Crusades and including such new-to-me conflicts as the Pastry War and the War of the Two Brothers — is impressive in its inclusiveness, but it seems a heavy-handed attempt to underscore the continuity of humanity's violent impulses through history.

The point is made more subtly, and more effectively, at the top of the show when the narrator confides, with a weary sense of sorrow, "Every time I sing this song, I hope it's the last time."

An Iliad

By Denis O'Hare and Lisa Peterson, based on Homer's "Iliad," translated by Robert Fagles; directed by Ms. Peterson; set by Rachel Hauck; costumes by Marina Draghici; lighting by Scott Zielinski; music and sound by Mark Bennett; production stage manager, Donald Fried. Presented by the New York Theater Workshop, James C. Nicola, artistic director; William Russo, managing director. At the New York Theater Workshop, 79 East Fourth Street, East Village, (212) 279-4200, ticketcentral.com, nytw.org. Through March 25. Running time: 1 hour 40 minutes.

ALTERNATING PERFORMANCES WITH: Denis O'Hare and Stephen Spinella (the Poet).



Review: *An Iliad*

Denis O'Hare and Stephen Spinella alternate in a version of the Homeric epic.



Photograph: Joan Marcus

By David Cote

Thu Mar 8 2012

Rating: 4/5

"You see" are the last words spoken by the Poet in *An Iliad*. It's a fitting end to a piece that consists of a man on a mostly bare stage conjuring images through mere speech. Our storyteller has narrated a 100-minute condensation of Homer's Bronze Age slaughter chronicle, *The Iliad*. The language sears impossible-to-stage tableaux of death and destruction on your mind's eye. So, yes, by listening we *do* see—almost more than our hearts can bear.

The Poet is played in repertory by Stephen Spinella and Denis O'Hare (the latter of whom adapted the script with director Lisa Peterson from a translation by Robert Fagles). Critics have been asked to attend twice, which could be disastrous if you don't like the material first time around. Happily, here are two of our finest actors and the text—recounting the defiance

of Achilles, the killing of Patroclus, the valiant death of Hector and, finally, Priam's nighttime journey to beg for the body of his son—is what you might call time-tested: elemental episodes of heroes and gods balancing honor against the will to live. It's not a straight adaptation; the Poet is presented as a PTSD-addled refugee, dressed in tattered clothes, adding contemporary touches and avoiding parts of the legend that might rip open his psychic wounds. But this isn't a pat jeremiad against war. Sure, we get the message that it is hell (a notion only conservative chickenhawks would take issue with), but also that Hector and Achilles are complex, honorable warriors, and bloodlust is part of human nature.

Enough about the song; which singer should you hear? Although the two soloists share a certain cerebral tartness, watching them back-to-back, you appreciate their broad differences. Spinella is languid, dancery, droll and patrician; O'Hare is spiky, bustling, gallows-humorous and earthy. To her credit, Peterson doesn't force them into the same blocking, but lets the vocal and physical score emerge individually. *An Iliad* is pure theater: shocking, glorious, primal and deeply satisfying. Each actor has unique brushes and paints, but both fill the eye with astounding sights.

Entertainment :: Theatre An Iliad



Denis O'Hare in "An Iliad"

by Robert Israel
EDGE Contributor
Monday Apr 29, 2013

Denis O'Hare stalks about ArtsEmerson's Paramount main stage dressed in a tattered overcoat, beat up laced boots, and a crumpled hat, carrying a cardboard suitcase. When he removes his overcoat, his gray mesh sweater beneath is wrinkled and threadbare. He sports a leather belt wound tightly around his waist. He's Everyman, having just arrived in Boston to tell his tale of woe and war. The play, **An Iliad**, is a solo re-telling of Homer's epic poem. It's being given a powerful, one-of-a-kind production I strongly urge to see before it leaves town on May 4. O'Hare wrote the play with Lisa Peterson, and, echoing its protagonist, it has traveled from Seattle to New York to Chicago with several stops in between. Using minimalist props - a table, chair, a jug of spirits, and a glass housed inside the suitcase - O'Hare is, at turns, haunting, poetic, mesmerizing, and, ultimately, astonishing. He is joined on stage by Brian Ellingsen, a bassist, who plays long, sonorous notes on his instrument that echo throughout the auditorium like the wailing of a human voice. There is much to lament: war has taken its toll, and unlike the line foretold in 1 Corinthians -- "...and the dead shall be raised imperishable and we will be changed" - nothing of the sort occurs. We learn that war changes nothing. War is

senseless, never-ending, and all-consuming; it litters our streets and maims our citizens. War serves no purpose except to glorify the egos of the gods. In perhaps the most astonishing moments in the play, O'Hare, seated on a chair center stage, turns to the audience and recounts the entire catalogue of senseless wars that have been recorded since the dawn of human history. We learn about the "a tug of war" with "nothing to show but pain and loneliness." We find ourselves listening with rapt attention, as if attending a lecture. But this is not an academic exercise, and we are not students in a lecture hall. As members of the audience, as fellow wanderers on a troubled and vulnerable planet, we have borne witness to much of what O'Hare recounts. We carry within us the seeds of these conflicts like viral spores that, despite our pledges to become more peaceful and less bellicose, are released upon all the landscapes we visit or inhabit.

O'Hare takes us through occasional recitations of Greek, a song he croaks here and there that lands on our ears as intelligible, and then, in a most articulate way, in the parlance of today's American English, we learn, in sputters, about the wrath of the gods, "pride, honor, jealousy...Helen is more beautiful than anyone else and she's been stolen, and the Greeks have to get her back." The production makes only occasional use of shadows, as in the scene when O'Hare, as Achilles, projects the image of this towering figure against the Paramount's wall and we feel a shutter pass up our spines as a figure from mythology comes alive before us. I wished for more of these. There is such scant use of stage craft throughout: more is needed to convey, in visual imagery, the pictures conjured by the words that O'Hare pours forth. This would not detract from the message of the play, or from the performer. Rather, it would enhance his work, and return us to the original power of Homer's creativity, namely an oral tradition born from our ancestors who, before the written word was invented, sat around campfires and used shadows to become other characters, and to act out their feats of war, glory, and ruin.

O'Hare uses contrasts - "I wish I could show you Troy before the war," he says at one point, and then describes how it looks after it has been ravaged - a simple device that pulls us back into this oral tradition. It is highly effective; it acknowledges our abilities to see in our minds' eyes, using our own senses. And as the sounds of the bass violin swirls around us, the impossible costs of war, the "terror and strife" become known to us. Indeed, since they are already part of our human inheritance, we relive them. At the play's end, O'Hare, like the Ancient Mariner in Coleridge's poem, continues on his journey to continually tell his tale, passing "like night, from land to land, with a strange power of speech." That gift of speech takes us prisoner but ultimately releases us to tell others, to admonish others we meet on our journeys, in hopes of finally putting a stop to these endless cycles of war.

**** *An Iliad*, by Dennis O'Hare and Lisa Peterson, based on Homer's 'Iliad,' translated by Robert Fagles, directed by Lisa Peterson, is at ArtsEmerson's Paramount Theatre, Boston, through May 4, 2013. For ticket information, visit their website <https://artsemerson.org/Online/iliad>.**



Q&A: An Iliad

Denis O'Hare and Stephen Spinella take turns in an epic solo show.

By Adam Feldman

Tue Feb 21 2012



Stephen Spinella, left, and Denis O'Hare Photograph: Joan Marcus

War can be hell on actors. When Denis O'Hare coadapted Homer's *Iliad* with director Lisa Peterson, they weren't thinking about how arduous it would be to perform the resulting 40-page monologue without getting a little hoarse from the Trojans. "We just made this thing up and then went, 'Huh, I wonder if any human being can do it,'" O'Hare admits. Scheduling problems kept him from performing [An Iliad](#) in two 2010 productions: one in Seattle, and a second at New Jersey's McCarter Theatre. But the latter, which starred Stephen Spinella, gave New York Theatre Workshop's Jim Nicola an idea: What if O'Hare and Spinella split the burden by delivering the piece on alternating nights?

The *Iliad* is more than 15,000 lines long. How do you cram such a huge piece onstage?

Denis O'Hare: We've sort of carved out our version. We've decided to focus on war and its meaning, and the waste of war and the human propensity for violence.

Stephen Spinella: It's an immense narrative, filled with so many stories that it feels like the other texts that have lasted that long, like the Old Testament. You can imbue them with or extract from them what will satisfy you in whatever age you're in.

What were the first choices you made in adapting the play from Robert Fagles's translation?

Lisa Peterson: It seemed obvious to build it around two warriors who finally collide: Achilles and Hector. So the first cut that I did was to take everything else out. But there's this connecting material that you have to have. The first cut had no gods in it—but without the gods you don't have the mystery and the scope, and you lose a lot of the humor.

Spinella: That cosmology is also a narrative device that allows you to add story constantly, embedding story into story into story about how things happened—things that today might just be attributed to serendipity or happenstance.

O'Hare: Patroclus' helmet falls off. Why? It could have been the wind. It could have been a tree branch. But in The ²⁰*Iliad*, it's done by a god.

Is the storyteller in this piece meant to be Homer?

Peterson: Our idea of Homer is as a collective consciousness. I believe that The *Iliad* was composed by many people learning and telling the story. So this is our attempt to imagine what it would be like to hear one of these bards, one of the Homers.

Spinella: But it's profoundly fractured by his constant personal response to the story and his history of telling it. You're always aware of his act of telling the story, and that meta-story becomes the real story of the evening.

Peterson: The character is a being who believes that he's the author of the poem. He describes it like he was there. He can't seem to disappear; he keeps coming to on some stage somewhere. And he's sort of called out by a society that needs to think about war. He can't die and go away. He seems to be immortal.

O'Hare: About a third of [the text] is Fagles's verse, some of which we chopped and edited; a third is transcriptions of improves that [Lisa and I] did together; and a third is original writing to get us from one place to the next.

Denis and Stephen, have you seen each other perform this?

O'Hare: I have this weird position of being a coauthor, so I saw Stephen three or four times at the McCarter. He was fantastic. I haven't stolen too much from him, I don't think.

Spinella: Steal! Steal whatever you want! I haven't seen him yet, because I'm scared. I don't want to watch him do it and feel inadequate...I'm going on the last Friday of the run.

O'Hare: I have the same fear. You hear some of his line readings, and you go, "Oh, that's a really good idea. Why aren't I doing that?"

Spinella: I put my fingers in my ears and go, "Uhnunhnuhnuhnuh."

O'Hare: You just can't get infected by somebody else's point of view.

Spinella: You can! But you mustn't!

O'Hare: It's not being lily-livered or insecure. It's that you have to maintain the integrity of your vision.

Peterson: The idea of sharing it was attractive to both of you—not to watch someone else do it but more to have a conversation with each other.

Spinella: I also have to say that a certain amount of the impulse to switch off was that when I did it at the McCarter, I lost my voice and I was hamstrung for the entire run.

O'Hare: It's this massive athletic achievement that has a huge vocal requirement, and we don't know that it's even feasible.

Spinella: It truly is daunting. We're doing a Greek tragedy, essentially.

O'Hare: When you get to chapter seven and you still have to confront Andromache's grief and Hecuba's grief, you're like [moaning], "There's nothing left! I have nothing left!"

Spinella: And then there's Priam and Achilles! And then you have to do the poet at the end, which is a whole other thing.

O'Hare: Even if you can limp through it eight times a week, why wouldn't you want to give your best-quality performance? So we thought, Let's give us both a chance to give full, passionate performances every time! And give us a fighting chance to not be destroyed.

An Iliad – NZ Festival review

Homer's masterpiece told in such a way it feels as though we've never heard it before.

By Elspeth Sandys In NZ Festival

Print Share

An Iliad. Photo/Joan Marcus

The word ***Iliad*** (<http://festival.co.nz/an-iliad/>) , loosely translated, means “a series of miseries or disastrous events”. This was the story Homer (or Homers) set out to tell 3000 years ago, holding his (their) audience captive with tales of Achilles and his deadly rivalry with Hector amid the “disastrous events” and “miseries” of the decade-long Trojan War.

Now, in the inspired hands of Denis O'Hare and Lisa Peterson, who have adapted Homer's masterpiece to encompass the war-glutted centuries that followed the Trojan campaign, we have a chance to hear the story told in such a way it feels as though we have never heard it before.

As with all great stories, the audience – well, this member anyway – despite knowing the ending, cannot help silently urging Hector not to join the battle but stay with his wife and baby son, while pleading with Achilles to rein in his rage and remain, as he has sworn to do, in his tent. But, as Homer reminds us, there are no binding oaths in wartime. So Achilles leaves his tent, and Hector dies at the hands of his mortal enemy.

O'Hare's performance as Homer (plus a raft of characters from Patroclus, Achilles' bosom friend, to Andromache, Hector's wife) deserves all the accolades it has received since the play's off-Broadway premiere in 2012.

Although at times his voice struggles to embody all the rapid changes of pace and emotion demanded by the script, that is more to do with the fact the Opera House is the wrong venue for a play with its origins in the intimate rituals of campfire storytelling than with any limitations on the actor's part.

What O'Hare gives us, in a performance rich in physical invention and subtle characterisation, is a reluctant narrator, painfully aware of the “series of miseries” he is obliged to unleash, pouncing with glee on whatever humour he can find in his tale of man's inhumanity to man.

On a stage (scenic design by Rachel Hauck) stripped to its surrounding walls, cluttered with the domestic detritus of war – ladders, buckets, ropes, trunks – O'Hare roams like a caged tiger, plunging, when he can no longer avoid the subject, into impassioned retellings of the fight to the death between raging Achilles and doomed Hector, and the roll call of the dead (which cleverly extends to include other roll calls, not least New Zealand's) at the conclusion of that epic struggle.

At the end of the story, and the evening, the city of Troy lies ruined. As, in the future - and it is one of the great strengths of *An Iliad* that it is not just the “disastrous events” of Troy we are asked to imagine but all the wars that have been fought subsequently – will Alexandria, Constantinople, Hiroshima, Dresden, Sarajevo, Baghdad, Kabul...

“Every time I sing this song,” Homer/O'Hare tells us, “I hope it's the last time.” Listening to the litany of wars that have devastated lives and brought down empires in the centuries since Achilles slaughtered Hector, that hope sounds forlorn.

AN ILIAD, by Denis O'Hare and Lisa Peterson, based on Homer's *Iliad*, translated by Robert Fagles, directed by

the guardian

An Iliad – review

Sunken Gardens, University of Western Australia, Perth festival



Homer superior: Denis O'Hare in *An Iliad*. Photograph: Joan Marcus/Perth Festival

Van Badham

Wednesday 19 February 2014 23.59 EST

Denis O'Hare's *An Iliad* belies its grandeur with its self-effacing title. It is, of course, one of many, many adaptations of the great narrative poem, *The Iliad*, by Homer, now dated 760-710 BC.

The poem has endured with the values of the society that facilitated its creation; the threads of Homer's moment in classical antiquity wove themselves into the tapestry that is modern Western civilization. If *The Iliad* is, as claimed, the oldest work of literature in the Western canon, the question to be demanded of any restaging is whether any new insights are possible if adapting it, given that Homer's original work has remained relevant on entirely its own terms for over 2,500 years.

The answer provided this question by Homer's Coat's production of *An Iliad* is luminous in its humanism. With the article "an" proposing but a single contribution to the

diversity of Iliads, co-writer/performer O'Hare and his artistic team have distinguished their oft-told story amongst its many retellings simply as the moving and thoroughly personal investiture of the unique human who appears on the stage.

How incredibly powerful this work of theatre is as a result. O'Hare inhabits Homer's story of the doomed and tragic battles of the Trojan war by portraying himself as a personable, if anonymous, storyteller, travelling ever onward to share the song with the various chapters of his Western tribe. In a text that weaves O'Hare's contemporary American vernacular with the high lyricism of a formal English translation and moments of passionate Greek, he infuses the story with a desperate urgency. Amidst references to the bloody wars that yet rage on the planet, O'Hare's is palpable plea to the cultural descendants of the warring Bronze age heroes to heed the lessons of Agamemnon, Achilles, Hector and Priam - that the price of rage is death, and the cost of male pride unlimited in its capacity for destruction.

O'Hare's performs without a skein on an unadorned stage, open-air at the Sunken Gardens under the same inky sky as hung over Homer, as it may even have the mythical Achilles. He is passionate, present, compelling, extraordinary. The text he's co-authored with his director Lisa Peterson is stunning for its nuance, tenderness and concrete detail. The sparseness of the stage is perfectly judged, as Mark Bennett's sound composition and Brian Ellingsen's virtuoso playing of the double bass furnish an experience of absorbing theatricality - allowing the ancient power of the human voice to sing out to listening crowds the old truths that yet should make us shudder.

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An Iliad | Perth Festival 2014

Written by Cicely Binford

Tuesday, 18 February 2014 06:58



Photo – Joan Marcus

Denis O'Hare and **Lisa Peterson's** powerful adaptation of Homer's epic poem *Iliad* has found an ideal setting in UWA's Sunken Gardens. *An Iliad* is performed outdoors in a small amphitheater on UWA's campus, which has a touch of the Mediterranean about it, and is the perfect size for this grand but intimate one-man-one-muse show. To call this a one-man show is really an understatement, as the scale of this work is genuinely epic, and actor **Denis O'Hare** is accompanied by a haunting muse in the form of bassist **Brian Ellingsen**. Also unseen, but certainly felt, is the invisible hand of **Lisa Peterson's** direction, which moves this piece along boldly and courageously to its heroic end.

Now, I must confess my own gross ignorance on the source material for this adaptation, so I'll avoid any comparison to the original literary work, but I suspect **O'Hare** and **Peterson** have anticipated that much of their audience would be just as rusty on their ancient Greek. They've given the story a modern vernacular, and have taken care to make sure we don't get lost along the way by always relating this ancient story to something a little closer to home. In fact, this seems to be the aim of the work – to bring all this Greek mythology and literature home to us, who think we've lost touch with the 'old gods' and their warring ways. **Peterson** and **O'Hare** very carefully and artfully show us just how little we've changed as a species, century after century; war is an unchanging fact of life, an endless endeavor that sweeps young men up in its glory and lays waste to families and communities.

O'Hare walks us through the tale as a man who exists in a timeless realm; he possesses intimate knowledge of the people and gods he describes and he becomes all of these whenever the 'spirit' takes him. He goes from passive, world-weary commentator to active, impassioned warrior (among many other characters) through the course of the play, and he blends humor and drama, peppering sad moments with touches of comedy, and vice versa. The tonal pendulum swings he sometimes makes are impressive, but it's his perfect, finite gestures and inflections that are most enthralling to witness. Here's an actor that can be still, centered and absolutely clear in his intentions as they are translated through words and movement.

The lighting in this piece, designed by **Scott Zielinski**, is really effective in creating different moods and settings, since there's pretty much just a man with a table and a chair on the scene. The lighting team have made use of the garden surrounds by directing light onto the stone walls when **O'Hare** describes scenes on ramparts; they have lit the three palm trees behind the stage, between which, dead center, there glows a lamp during a few scenes, representing different things, but ultimately achieving an eerie, all-seeing-eye effect.

Bassist **Brian Ellingsen** creates a haunting musical accompaniment, and is really **O'Hare's** non-verbal sidekick. **O'Hare** addresses him and he responds with music. Sometimes it is **Ellingsen's** task to move the story along and prevent **O'Hare** from going off on too much of a tangent. The sounds he creates on his double bass are haunting, jagged, raw, lyrical, and surprising. The two performers have wonderful timing together, and they always seem to be listening and responding to each other.

There are moments in *An Iliad* that will make you shed a tear for humankind. There are moments of deadly seriousness, and there are moments of clever, dark humor. *An Iliad* does a magnificent job of retelling this Greek epic, making it accessible and timeless to the uninitiated; it's sweeping, sobering, it hits you in the solar plexus, and it puts into staggering perspective just how obsessed with war-mongering humans have always been and continue to be.

Homer's Coat

An Iliad

by **Denis O'Hare** and **Lisa Peterson** | based on *Homer's Iliad* | translated by **Robert Faigles**

<http://www.australianstage.com.au/201402176713/reviews/perth/an-iliad-|perth-festival-2014.html>



PERTH FESTIVAL REVIEW: AN ILIAD - SUNKEN GARDENS, PERTH (16.02.14)

February 17, 2014 – 11:18pm — Simon Clark



Heroes and tyrants, Gods and Mortals, and ancient armies all clashed on stage on Sunday night. All of them brought to vivid life by one man, actor and co-writer **Denis O'Hare**, for the Australian premiere of the *An Iliad*. A captivating and engaging adaptation and reinterpretation of Homer's Iliad by US collective Homer's Coat, that forms part of the Perth International Arts Festival this year.

For those of you not up on your Classics, the Iliad is the story of the war between the combined Greek armies and the Trojans, famously started by the "stealing" of Helen. Even if you don't know the story, you'll recognise some of the big names – Odysseus, Achilles and Hector.

Though classicalists and purists should be warned this is not simply a recitation of the Homer's original poem, it is instead a dramatic retelling, a reinterpretation that subtly blurs the contemporary with the classical. Providing an interesting and valuable meditation on the futility, horror and heroics of warfare.

O'Hare and Director **Lisa Peterson**, whilst contemporising the language, have in many ways returned the story to its classical roots in the oral tradition; with O'Hare as the storyteller, narrating the action, and bringing to life each of the characters, both major and minor in their own distinctive way, from the preening Paris, to the tyrannical trash-talking Agamemnon.

The strength of *An Iliad* as a production comes not only from the base excitement of the ancient narrative but also the utterly engaging performance from O'Hare who commanded the audiences' collective attention unequivocally throughout his 90 minutes on stage. This is a show that highlights his versatility and suppleness as an actor, moving from raging battles scenes to mournful regret and remembrance with ease and poise. Despite the relish in which he launches into each battle scene, it is during the more contemplative and quiet moments that O'Hare really shines.

An Iliad is an utterly engaging and interesting production; one that I found to be not only entertaining and riveting but also thought provoking and, in its own way, philosophical. Featuring a standout performance from Denis O'Hare this is sure to be one of the theatrical highlights of this years festival.

An Iliad continues at UWA's Sunken Gardens until Wednesday 26th February before a one off performance at the Albany Entertainment Centre on Friday 28th February as part of the Great Southern Festival.

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FEATURE

An Actor's Odyssey

David O'Hare will bring his one man version of Homer's *The Iliad* to the Australian stages this month. It's a mammoth enterprise that's finally seeing fruition after years of development. By Greg Savelle



42 **THE AD** February 2014



Pedro's first feature film, *Black*, is a dark, atmospheric, and somewhat disturbing portrait of a young man, Pedro, who is struggling to find his way in a world that is both beautiful and terrifying.

The film is a masterpiece of visual storytelling, with a haunting and atmospheric score that perfectly complements the dark and moody visuals.

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Black, 2014, by Pedro Costa

Adelaide Festival 2014

Review - An Iliad

By Fotis Kapetopoulos

David O'Hare is our hero and he has come to our village, dishevelled and worn - he's been doing this for thousands of years.

He is endless wandering around a sparse abandoned stage - "no not again I can't do this" he pleads with us. But, we want him to! We want him to talk about that war, the defining narrative of all our wars, Homer's Iliad, now dated 750-720 BC. Our hymnster, our singer, O'Hare, needs to drink to ensure the this tale of war.

We want to ridhe the blood soaked sands of Troy, the burning of the great city, the bravery, the slaughter - it's our story after all. It's a Greek story, the story of our world.

We know our heroes, Achilles, Ajax, Hector, the arrogant Agamemnon and his weak brother Menelaus, whose wife Helen was 'stolen' by the cowardly Paris. We cry with King Priam as he begs Achilles, for his son's Hector's body. We see the cruelty and fickleness of the gods, Athena, Hermes and Zeus who play with these men like a child plays with his soldiers.

Homer's Iliad's production of An Iliad is distinguished by its humanism, the 'art' makes clear that this is yet another retelling of Homer's 2500 year old story. "Where are the gods?" he asks, "Everywhere, in here, the gin gods, require Athens"

Co-writer and performer, Denis O'Hare weaves between fragments of Ancient Greek, the lyrical postcards of Robert Fagley's English adaptation of Homer's The Iliad and Marlow's American argot. O'Hare is fervent, compelling and astonishing. The text he's co-authored with his director Lisa Peterson is delicate, detailed, yet simple.

O'Hare, the verifier, is weighed down by the story of war he makes us see all the characters as human, full of blood, their faces no different to ours. At one point he conjures a photo of the aftermath of a battle, "Look bodies piled up, you've seen them before," and he reels off names, not ancient Greek ones, current ones. "This is Michael, he was nineteen, he was had a scholarship to Oxford, his father is postman, Michael was the first one in the family to go to university, now he's not" he makes us laugh, like the Ancient Greeks, at humanity's greatness and weakness. Hermes, like a haughty gay New York fashion designer, guides old Priam through the Greek lines to beg for up his dead son's body. On stage, Brian Ellingson supplies sparse, haunting, evocative sounds on a double bass, forming a call and response relationship with O'Hare, fed to different to those singing the Iliad in Homer's time.

O'Hare succeeds in making our story relevant, our Greek frailty, our war, our eternal tragedy that propels civilization forward. The Iliad is about a coalition of free men, not slaves, who decide to go to war for values, love, hubris, conflicted outrage, greed and hubris. O'Hare's adaptation juxtaposes that ancient band of men with the Coalition of the Willing, USA, Australia and Britain, that invaded Iraq in 2003 for equally warm reason.

An Iliad is also about all wars, and O'Hare scats through the never ending shopping list - Troy, the sacking of Constantinople, burning of Alexandria, the Crusades, Vietnam War, Purlo War, American Revolution, Spanish American War, Russian Japanese War, French Revolution, First World War, Second World War, Afghanistan and Iraq, it makes no difference all wars have the same face and never seem to end.

This excellent theatrical production should not be missed.

An Iliad by Denis O'Hare and Lisa Peterson
Homer's God Production
Dunstan Playhouse 4 - 8 March
Adelaide Festival 2014
www.adelaidefestival.com.au

The screenshot shows the homepage of neoskoes.com, which has a purple header with the site's name and a navigation menu. The main content area features a review titled 'Review - An Iliad' by Denis O'Hare and Lisa Peterson. The review text is partially visible, starting with 'David O'Hare is our hero...'. To the right of the review is a photo of a man (likely Denis O'Hare) speaking into a microphone. Further right is a sidebar titled 'Adelaide Business Address' with contact information for 'The Adelaide Festival'.

An Iliad - gripping theatre

By Robert Horne

ADELAIDE FESTIVAL REVIEW | The co-authors of *An Iliad* say they first thought of doing the Iliad after the US (and our) invasion of Iraq in 2003.

Indeed, the themes are all still there, mainly war of conquest on a trumped-up charge (most of Troy was a fabrication up there with reports of mass destruction).

Our war on Iraq was an event that also prompted a production of Euripides' *Trojan Women* a few years ago, but this is a very different show.

Denis O'Hare stars in what is a solo performance apart from the extraordinary evocative double bass playing by Brian Elmgren, which becomes part of the story-telling itself.

O'Hare is *The Poet*, a kind of modern-day channeling of Homer himself, calling on the Muses or whatever inspiration he can find to tell the story of The Trojan War, or a particular part of it that concerned the various wrath of Achilles, Agamemnon and Hector. He dashes ahead using every trick of the stage, speaking sometimes poetically, sometimes colloquially, his telling of Achilles' anger was more convincing to me than Homer's, with excellent use of back-story (which ancient Greeks, of course, would have known).

Some of the script is hilarious – he plays Helen (sworn't) a bitch's), sends up the heroes (and why not?), but always brings it back to the real and tragic reality of war (for example, the scene of Priam coming to Achilles to claim the body of his son Hector), and even's agony and their all-consuming sense of honour. The performance is always engaging, even gripping.

An open stage is filled at the back and sides with lighting and other modern theatrical equipment. It's a tiny pity more lighting or other effects weren't used. When O'Hare stood in an Expressionistic patch of light to recite the names of wars since the time of The Iliad, the change was welcome and effective.

This Iliad is a really great show, deserving of its standing ovation. The acting by O'Hare is mesmerising, and the direction by partner and co-author Gina Robertson very lively. There were a few seats left on opening night. I'd recommend you get in if you can.



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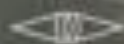
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FESTIVAL



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DENIS O'HARE

reunited

BOOKING INFORMATION



An Iliad is performed by one actor and one live musician and runs 100 minutes without intermission.

Our company consists of a team of 7-8 and we require 2 days of advance work before our first performance.

We travel with no set pieces but create the set at each place we perform out of found objects and elements present in the space. All equipment travels as excess baggage.

We are adaptable to a variety of spaces and have performed outdoors, in prosceniums, opera houses, black box spaces and unconventional venues.

Please contact us for tech rider, video and availability.

