



AN ILIAD

Adapted from Homer
By Lisa Peterson and Denis O'Hare
Translation by Robert Fagles
Directed by Charles Newell

November 13 – December 8, 2013 at Court Theatre

-STUDY GUIDE-

ABOUT THE PLAY

Characters

The Poet: Storyteller, narrator, Homeric voice

Story

An Iliad is a one-actor adaptation of Homer's *The Iliad* created by Lisa Peterson and Denis O'Hare and originated at the Seattle Repertory Theatre.

The Iliad (sometimes referred to as the "Song of Ilion" or "Song of Ilium") is an epic poem traditionally attributed to Homer. Set during the Trojan War, a ten-year siege of the city of Troy (Ilium) by a coalition of Greek states, it tells of the battles and events that took place during the weeks of a disagreement between the Greek King Agamemnon and the warrior Achilles.

Although the story covers only a few weeks in the final year of the war, *The Iliad* mentions or alludes to many Greek legends about the siege: earlier events, such as the gathering of warriors for the siege; the cause of the war; and future events, such as Achilles's looming death and the sack of Troy. In total, the poem tells a more or less complete tale of the Trojan War.

Along with *The Odyssey*, also attributed to Homer, *The Iliad* is among the oldest works of Western literature, and its written version is usually dated to around the eighth century BC. *The Iliad* contains over 15,000 lines and is written in Homeric Greek, a literary amalgam of Ionic Greek with other dialects.

Though it tells the story of *The Iliad*, *An Iliad* is not an exact adaptation of Homer's text. Instead, it is a version of the story told by a modern narrator who is just as familiar with current events as his ancient story, and often tries to help us understand the Trojan War by putting it into a present-day context.



Major Characters in *The Iliad*

Gods and Goddesses

Zeus – King of the Greek gods and husband of Hera. He alternates between supporting the Greeks and the Trojans.

Hera – Goddess of women and fertility, wife (and sister) of Zeus. Hera is often jealous and vengeful of Zeus's lovers. She hates the Trojans.

Athena – Greek virgin goddess of the discipline and art of war, wisdom, and truth; patron goddess of Athens and supporter of the Greeks. She is thought to be the daughter of only Zeus, and to have sprung from his head full-grown and in full armor.

Aphrodite – Greek goddess of love, beauty, and sexuality. She is also the unhappy and unfaithful wife of Hephaestus. She supports the Trojans.

Apollo – God of the sun, medicine, archery, and the arts. Apollo is the son of Zeus and Leto, and has a twin sister, Artemis. He supports the Trojans.

Ares – Ruthless god of war/slaughter, courage, masculinity, and brother of Athena. Loves war itself and supports the Trojans.

Hephaestus – God of smiths and metal working; husband of unfaithful Aphrodite. Son of Zeus and Hera. He was raised by Thetis (mother of Achilles), and he crafts Achilles' brilliant armor. He supports the Greeks.

Hermes – Described as a guide and giant-killer, son of Zeus. He is Zeus' messenger—swift, shrewd, and cunning.

Poseidon – God of the sea and younger brother of Zeus. Though he primarily interferes on the side of the Greeks, he backs down at Zeus' behest.

Thetis – A sea goddess and the mother of Achilles. Zeus fell in love with her but could not marry her due to a prophesy.

Greeks (Achaeans)

Leadership

Agamemnon – King of Mycenae, husband of Clytemnestra, brother to Menelaus, supreme commander of all Achaea's armies. The conflict of *The Iliad* begins when he angers Achilles by taking Briseis, Achilles' lover.

Helen – The daughter of Zeus and the wife of Menelaus. The Trojan War begins when Paris abducts her from Sparta.

Menelaus – King of Mycenian Sparta, husband of Helen (stolen by Paris of Troy). Brother of Agamemnon.

Warriors

Achilles – Son of Peleus and Thetis, commander of the Myrmidons, Achaean allies. He is the champion of the Greeks, but his rage is the source of much of the conflict in *The Iliad*.

Briseis – Captive and lover of Achilles. She is taken by Agamemnon, causing Achilles to fly into a rage.

Diomedes – King of Argos. One of the strongest fighters for Achaea.

Great Ajax – Commander of the contingent from Salamis. A champion for the Achaean army second only to Achilles.

Odysseus – King of Ithaca and protagonist of Homer's epic poem *The Odyssey*. Odysseus is known for his cunning; the Trojan Horse is his idea.

Patroclus – Achilles's best friend; borrows Achilles's armor to fight in the war. His death inspires Achilles to return to battle.

Other Characters

Peleus – Father of Achilles. His first marriage is to Antigone.

Menoetius – Father of Patroclus.

Atreus – Father of Menelaus and Agamemnon.

Nestor – A former Argonaut. He is old at the time of the Trojan War, in which his sons fight. He offers counsel to Agamemnon and Achilles, and leads troops, but does not fight himself. He is the oldest of all the chieftains.

Trojans (Dardans)

Priam and his Family

Priam – King of Troy, father of Hector and Paris. He goes to Achilles himself to request the body of Hector.

Hecuba – Priam's wife and Hector's mother.

Hector – Priam's oldest son, Paris's brother and Troy's supreme commander. He kills Patroclus which spurs Achilles to return to war.

Paris – Son of Priam and younger brother of Hector; a coward. He kidnaps Helen and begins the Trojan War.

Andromache – Hector's wife. She asks him not to return to war on his brief visit home.

Astyanax – Hector's baby son, eventually killed at the hands of the Greeks.

Cassandra – Daughter of Priam and prophetess.

Other Characters

Aeneas – Son of Anchises and Aphrodite; favorite of Apollo.

Anchises – Aphrodite's mortal lover with whom she fathered Aeneas.

How the Trojan War Began

Legend has it that at the wedding of Peleus and Thetis (Achilles' parents), Eris, a troublemaking god who was not invited, threw an apple into the party for "the most beautiful woman" there. The goddesses Hera, Athena, and Aphrodite all claimed it. The women asked Zeus to decide which of them was the most beautiful, but wanting nothing to do with the decision, Zeus passed the task along to Paris. All the goddesses offered Paris gifts if he chose them, but he selected Aphrodite who promised him the love of the most beautiful woman in the world, Helen. Unfortunately, Helen was already married to the Greek king Menelaus, and when Paris stole Helen from her husband, Menelaus and his brother Agamemnon joined forces to declare war on Troy. The arrival of the Greek army at Troy marked the beginning of a ten-year siege that finally ended in the sacking and burning of Troy.



The Procession of the Trojan Horse into Troy,
Giovanni Tiepolo, 1760

Homer

Homer is the author of *The Iliad* and *The Odyssey* and is revered as the greatest ancient Greek poet. His work has had an enormous influence on the evolution of literature. When he lived is controversial: Herodotus (an ancient Greek historian who lived in the 5th century BCE) estimates that Homer lived 400 years before his own time, which would place Homer at around 850 BCE. Other ancient sources claim that he lived much nearer to the supposed time of the Trojan War, in the early 12th century BCE.

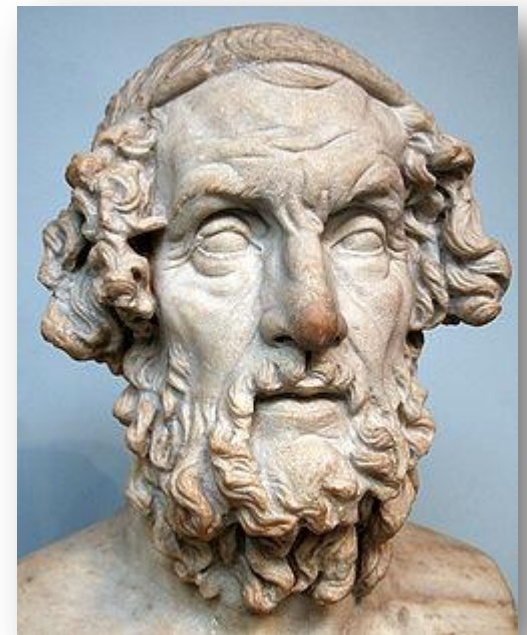
For modern scholars, “the date of Homer” refers not to an individual, but to the period when his epics were created. The consensus is that *The Iliad* and *The Odyssey* date from around the 8th century BCE (*The Iliad* being composed before *The Odyssey*, perhaps by some decades), although some scholars argue that the Homeric poems developed gradually over a long period of time. The debate over who Homer the individual was, known as the “Homeric question,” is fueled by the fact that we have no reliable biographical information handed down from classical antiquity. Homer’s poems are generally seen as the culmination of many generations of oral story-telling, in a tradition with a well-developed formulaic system of poetic composition. Some scholars, such as Martin West, claim that “Homer” is “not the name of a historical poet, but a fictitious or constructed name.”

“The Homeric Question”

By Evan Garrett, Court Theatre Dramaturgy Intern

The formative influence played by the Homeric epics in shaping Greek culture was widely recognized, and Homer was described as the teacher of Greece. Homer's works, which are about fifty percent speeches, provided models in persuasive speaking and writing that were emulated throughout the ancient and medieval Greek worlds. Fragments of Homer account for about half of all ancient Greek papyrus discoveries.

Homer is undoubtedly the most well-known author from Ancient Greece. At the same time, he also remains one of the most mysterious authors of current scholasticism. Partly, this is due to the substantial distance between our modern times and when he wrote. This distance has created a question of authorship notoriously known as “the Homeric question.” We do not know who, truthfully, wrote *The Iliad* and *The Odyssey*: it may have been a group of poets, a poor and blind nomad, a woman, an aristocrat, anyone—we simply do not have the information to make a solid claim. However, we can make hypotheses, use our imagination, and perform some impressive detective work to make a best guess—that is to say, to do what classical historians do. If (and what a big “if” that is!) Homer were to exist as a single person, we would be able to use historical records, archaeology, and geographical evidence to make educated claims of what type of person he would be.



Bust of Homer dating to the Hellenistic Period, on display at the British Museum

Currently, it is thought that Homer must have composed his famous poems sometime in the 8th Century. The epic style of the poems hints that they would have needed to be composed sometime after 750 B.C.E. when Pan-Hellenic festivals celebrating poetry became popular. If this were the case, Homer would have been traveling through the larger Greece, delivering his poems to adoring and upper-class fans. While this is our best guess based on archeology, one cannot ignore the fact that ancient authors dated Homer much earlier than this relatively late date. Herodotus claimed that Homer lived 400 years before he did—dating Homer to around 850 B.C.E. Other ancient authors claimed that Homer must have existed even closer to the Trojan War, sometime around 1200 B.C.E. Thus, it appears that there is a 500-year span of when Homer may have lived, with a larger likelihood on the later dates.

The next unsolved mystery is determining where Homer would have lived. Much of the geology and flora described in *The Iliad* would make it seem that Homer had intimate knowledge of Ionia (roughly modern day Turkey). This would seem to place him somewhere where Ancient Troy would have been. However, Homer also illustrates a great deal of knowledge of island geography in his *Odyssey*, which would support the fact that he spent much time on various Greek isles. Many of the cities existing in Attica (the area around Athens) and even Laconia (Greece's Southern Peninsula) made claims that Homer rested in their town while composing his epic, which provides evidence (albeit weak) that Homer may have actually been a wandering poet traveling throughout Greece. These records are probably false, however—created by towns wanting to attract tourism and fame. Who wouldn't want to spend a night in the same town as history's greatest poet? Despite nomadic legends, it is important to note that Homer's dialect was Ancient Ionic Greek, making the case, once again, for his more eastern roots.

Why does there exist this idea of Homer as a “blind poet”? Most likely, it derives from his name “Ὅμηρος,” which in Ancient Greek roughly translates to “follower.” In the Eastern dialect of Greek, however, this word takes on the second and literal meaning, “blind.” Additionally, much has been written about the blind poet, Demodocus— appearing in Book 8 of *The Odyssey*—who recounts the story of the Trojan War to a disguised Odysseus. This has been described as a self-referential moment in the story where Homer powerfully illustrates the power and importance of epic poetry as a tool for recording history and catharsis.

This theory is acceptable, but must be taken with a grain of salt: not all great authors intentionally write themselves into their story. In general, modern scholars have no reason to think Homer was blind, especially since his poems include such strikingly visual descriptions. If anything, Homer's “blindness” is another fiction we recount in order to maintain a mystery around the masterworks he created. While these are some of the knowns and unknowns of this ancient author, one is forced to acknowledge a very simple fact: our information of the ancient world is incomplete.

Indeed, it is very likely that Homer is a fictive personage created by stringing together dozens of ancient poets' renditions of war stories. We are so distanced from Homer's time that we will probably never know for sure whether he actually existed. However, one may look at the evidence we have so far and make the case that his poetry does seem to come from a common experience, from a common culture, and from a common style. It is for this reason one should have no qualms stating that Homer, either the person or the idea, remains to be one of the most masterful authors standing the tests of time.



Paintings discovered in the Lascaux Caves, a cave complex in southwestern France, on September 12, 1940. Described as the “prehistoric Sistine Chapel.”

A History of Storytelling

At the turn of the 20th century, a group of French children discovered drawings of extinct animals in caves in the Pyrenées Mountains. The 35,000-year-old paintings on the walls of the Lascaux Caves are the earliest recorded evidence of storytelling.

Since this discovery, archaeologists have found dozens of other examples of primitive storytelling. These caves (and others from the same period) represent not only the earliest recorded storytelling art, but also the first instance of visual art of any sort, precursors to modern cartoons, slide shows, and photo albums. While today’s technology may be modern, our storytelling methods have their roots in ancient traditions.

To primitive humans, storytelling was magic. There was little separation between imagined and actual events; in this stage of cultural development, humans believed that it should be possible to describe an event in great detail in order to make it happen in the future.

In ancient times, different stories – or different ways of telling the same stories – helped to shape and distinguish cultures. In fact, many believe that culture is rooted in storytelling; while our stories may be similar, the way in which we tell them is distinct and unique to our particular background. With storytelling came cultural and societal bonding. Many modern disciplines, including psychology, religion, and science, have their roots in the oral tradition.

Early Civilization

Civilization arose many thousands of years after storytelling, with the development of agriculture and a more sedentary lifestyle. Humans began to settle in various regions in order to farm; subsequently, farms grew into hamlets, hamlets to villages, and at last the first cities were born. With the rise of cities also came local priests, who can be described as the first

professional storytellers.

The first short stories were written down over 4,000 years ago in Egypt (*Gilgamesh* is thought to be the first written epic). A similar pattern can be seen in China and India, with ancient stories written down long after they were apparently first composed. There are many common themes that span different civilizations, such as catastrophic floods, creation myths, and fables explaining how things came to be. According to researchers like Joseph Campbell, this is partly evidence of common experiences and partly evidence that stories had spread widely long before they were written down.

Not only had the most ancient of stories and story forms been developed by the time they were written down, but genres had differentiated, though some were specific to their own cultures. Epic tales like *Gilgamesh* and some of the stories of the gods were sung or spoken to a rhythm by professional storytellers similar to bards. The more formal tales of the gods were told at religious ceremonies through hymns and lectures.

The Dark Ages

The Dark Ages – a period in European history between the 5th and 15th centuries CE, following the collapse of the Roman Empire – were a time of “intellectual darkness” in Europe, though not in rest of the world. The Middle East, for instance, was experiencing a brilliant renaissance, and China and India were experiencing stable, growing cultures punctuated by periods of war with the Mongols and the same plagues that devastated Europe. Storytelling matured and changed during this time period, shaping cultures while also being shaped by them.

Drawing on ancient Greek traditions of live theater, mystery plays were invented by the Catholic Church. These were a dramatic method for telling the morality stories the Church wanted to spread. Since commoners generally could not read or understand the Latin in which services were conducted, mystery plays allowed ordinary people to hear the stories of the Bible. By allowing and even encouraging mystery plays (which traveled from town to town), the Church ensured that the same story was told in the same way through the Catholic world.

While illiteracy was common in Europe, it was quickly becoming uncommon in the Near East. Oral storytelling still had its place, even though Islamic teachings frowned upon it. The teachers and leaders of Islam encouraged all Islamic converts to learn to read, at least in order to read the Quran. This, like mystery plays in the West, encouraged a homogeneousness of culture that bound together most of the Muslim people.

The New World

In the Americas, stories were recorded in stone and on perishable materials such as hides and paper. Unfortunately, the Jesuits, who came to America determined to convert the natives to Christianity, burned all of these perishable documents and broke the stones left by early Central Americans. As a result, much of the culture of the Aztecs, Mayans, and related cultures was lost. However, because of pictograms, we do have an idea of what some of the lost stories were. Quetzalcoatl, for example, was a Jesus-like figure to the Aztecs; he created man, according to legend, by descending to the underworld and gathering the bones of the ancient dead and anointing them with his blood.

Modern Day

Today, most of the industrialized world is populated by literary cultures. Stories are recounted in books, in movies, and online. One of the main venues of storytellers today is the stand-up comic stage. Though not all comics are storytellers, enough are to keep the comedic story tradition alive. And this is especially true for storytellers in the American South, where storytelling traditions are kept alive in more isolated communities throughout the Appalachians and rural communities. You can also find storytellers at a variety of cultural events.

In much of the less-developed world, it is still possible to find local storytellers who sometimes travel to tell their tales. Stories today are told for a variety of reasons, including to provide entertainment, to engender pride in one’s personal and familial history, and to educate new generations about important cultural traditions.

A Story for the Ages: *An Iliad* director Lisa Peterson shares why now is the best time to revisit the Trojan War

Originally Published in *Seattle Repertory Theatre Magazine*

In books, on film, and now on the stage, the story of the Trojan War has been experiencing a renaissance in recent years. But what is it about a war that occurred thousands of years ago that remains so resonant today? *An Iliad* director Lisa Peterson supposes that there's never really a wrong time to take a new look at the world's oldest war story. "Somewhere in the world, people are always at war," says Peterson.

However, some times are more right than others to revisit the infamous conflict—particularly as it's told through Homer's classic tale, *The Iliad*. "This particular moment, I think, is unique," Peterson says. "*The Iliad* begins nine years into a war that may have lost its underlying meaning." It's a situation that mirrors what many see in the current American military engagements in Iraq and Afghanistan.

In the midst of the second Iraq war, Peterson found her own interest in dramatic responses to war sparked anew. As she was researching the topic and discussing it with colleagues, a friend made the argument that *The Iliad* was not a poem but a dramatic work. "It was a remnant of the oral tradition, it was an out-loud story; it was never intended to be something that you just read on paper. And I was really interested in that," says Peterson. "I had studied *The Iliad* in college, but... I had never thought of it as a play, and I don't think most people do."

Peterson was also intrigued by the opportunity to put a unique theatrical spin on a literary classic. After taking a long hiatus from helming the adaptations that marked her early career as a director, she was eager to return to adapting work, though not in a traditional manner. "I wanted to work on something as an adapter, and I was really interested in working directly with an actor instead of with a writer," Peterson says. "I was interested in the idea of Homer as a traveling storyteller, as opposed to someone who sits and writes, and so it made more sense to go to an actor friend."

Peterson began collaborating on the work with friend and performer Denis O'Hare, initiating a multi-year process. Last spring, *An Iliad* premiered at Seattle Rep. While their original idea was an improvisational piece that would change slightly with every performance, "It did end up getting written down and codified...and now it is a script, but we are still trying to capture that sensation that he's making it up on the spot," Peterson says. "We're trying to create the kind of feeling that might have been in the room thousands of years ago when Homer was telling the story."

Instilling that sense of awe at the spoken word in a modern audience is no small order. Peterson and O'Hare's adaptation emphasizes the wide-ranging appeal of the tale and of storytelling, making *An Iliad* a bridge of sorts between the ancient and the modern. "We are imagining that our poet...has been around for millennia. He was there during the war, and he is doomed to walk the earth and tell his story. And over the years, he has adapted, always, to be wherever he happens to be."

As the development process on *An Iliad* moves ahead, the original continues to surprise Peterson. "Almost every day I find something...that I feel like I've never read," Peterson says. But not every surprise can be brought to the stage. In crafting a 90-minute one-person show from an epic poem, choosing what aspects of the story to explore can be difficult. Ultimately, *An Iliad* focuses on exploring the source material's meditations on the nature of war. "We dug until we found the core of the story," Peterson says, "and for us that core is the conflict between two great warriors, Hector and Achilles."

The One-Person Show

Lisa Peterson and Denis O'Hare's adaptation of *The Iliad* is a one-person show, a term that originated primarily in reference to comedians who stood on stage alone and entertained audiences for an extended period of time. While a one-person show may be the musings of a comedian on a theme, the form also includes "solo performances," which are dramatic works performed by one person, though not necessarily by someone with a background in comedy. In the preface to *Extreme Exposure: An Anthology of Solo Performance Texts from the Twentieth Century*, editor Jo Bonney explains that "at the most basic level, despite their limitless backgrounds and performance styles, all solo performers are storytellers." This assumption is based on her assertion that a number of solo shows have a storyline or a plot.

Bonney also suggests that a distinctive trait of solo performance is the lack of a "fourth wall" separating the performer from the audience. She states that a "solo show expects and demands the active involvement of the people in the audience." While this is often the case, as in the shows of performers coming directly from the stand-up comedy tradition, it is not a requirement.

As one-person shows began in the comedy realm, prominent solo performers include comedians Lily Tomlin, Andy Kaufman, Eric Bogosian, Whoopi Goldberg, John Leguizamo, and Lenny Bruce. Several performers have presented solo shows in tribute to famous personalities, including Julie Harris in *The Belle of Amherst* (a biography of Emily Dickenson); Tovah Feldshuh as Golda Meir in *Golda's Balcony*; and Ed Metzger as Ernest Hemingway in *Hemingway, On The Edge*.

One-person shows (such as *An Iliad*) may be personal, autobiographical creations like the intensely confessional but comedic work of Spaulding Gray or the semi-autobiographical *A Bronx Tale* by Chaz Palminteri. Other types of one-person shows may center on a certain theme, such as pop culture in Pat Hazel's *The Wonderbread Years*; the history of the New York City transit system in Mike Daisey's *Invincible Summer*; or rebelling against 'the system' in Patrick Combs' *Man 1, Bank 0*. Sometimes, however, solo shows are simply traditional plays written by playwrights for a cast of one, such as *I Am My Own Wife* by Doug Wright.

Other art forms also find representation in the solo performance genre; poetry pervades the work of Dael Orlandersmith, sleight-of-hand mastery informs Ricky Jay's self-titled *Ricky Jay and His 52 Assistants*, and magical and psychic performance skills are part of Neil Tobin's *Supernatural Chicago*.

The "Fourth Wall"

In theatre, the "fourth wall" refers to the imaginary wall at the front of the stage in a proscenium theatre through which the audience sees into the world of the play. The term also applies to the boundary between any fictional setting and its audience. When this boundary is "broken" (for example, by an actor speaking to the audience directly), it is called "breaking the fourth wall."

The term was made famous in the nineteenth century with the advent of theatrical realism. The critic Vincent Canby described it in 1987 as "that invisible screen that forever separates the audience from the stage."

The term "fourth wall" stems from the absence of a fourth wall on a three-walled set where the audience is viewing the production. The audience is supposed to assume there is a "fourth wall" present, even though it does not physically exist.

The term "fourth wall" has also been adapted to refer to the boundary between the fiction and the audience. "Fourth wall" is part of the suspension of disbelief between a fictional work and an audience. The audience accepts the presence of the fourth wall without giving it any direct thought, allowing them to enjoy the fiction as if they were observing real events, but without interaction with or acknowledgment from any of the characters on stage.

The presence of a fourth wall is an established convention of fiction and drama; this has led some artists to draw direct attention to it for dramatic or comedic effect, thus "breaking the fourth wall" and addressing the audience directly.

About the Artists

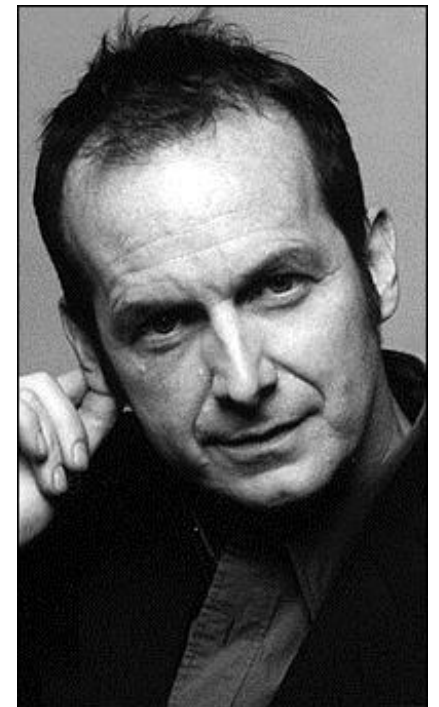


Lisa Peterson (Playwright/Director)

Recent credits: *An Iliad* (Seattle Rep), *Surf Report* (La Jolla Playhouse) and *Romance* (Bay Street). NY credits: *The Poor Itch*, *Tongue of a Bird* and *The Square* (Public Theater); *Shipwrecked* and *Model Apartment* (Primary Stages); *Tight Embrace* (INTAR); *Birdy* and *Chemistry of Change* (WPP); *The Fourth Sister* and *The Batting Cage* (Vineyard); *Collected Stories* (MTC); *Sueno* (MCC); *Bexley, OH*, *Slavs!*, *Traps*, *The Trestle at Pope Lick Creek*, *Light Shining in Buckinghamshire* (OBIE award) and *The Waves*, which Lisa adapted from the novel with David Bucknam (all at NYTW). Regional work: Mark Taper Forum, La Jolla Playhouse, Guthrie, Hartford Stage, OSF, Berkeley Rep, Cal Shakes, Yale Rep, Arena Stage, Huntington, Actors Theater of Louisville. Yale College graduate, SDC executive board member.

Denis O'Hare (Playwright)

Denis O'Hare is an actor and writer who lives in Fort Greene, Brooklyn. This is his first collaboration and his debut as a writer for the theater. He has written two screenplays as well as short stories and poetry. While at Northwestern pursuing an acting degree, Denis followed the poetry writing program for two years and studied poetry under Alan Shapiro, Mary Kinzie and Reginald Gibbons. He has appeared on Broadway and Off-Broadway numerous times as well as in many regional theaters, including McCarter, where he was seen in Brian Friel's *Wonderful Tennessee*, directed by Doug Hughes. He has appeared in many films including *Milk*, *Michael Clayton*, *Charlie Wilson's War*, *A Mighty Heart*, *Duplicity*, *An Englishman in New York*, *21 Grams*, *Garden State*, and the upcoming *Eagle*. His TV work includes roles on *Brothers and Sisters*, *CSI Miami*, and all of the *Law and Order* franchises. Recently, he completed Season 3 of *True Blood* as the Vampire King Russell Edgington.



Discussion & Follow-up Questions

1. Co-authors Lisa Peterson and Denis O'Hare chose to title their play *An Iliad* to show that this is not THE *Iliad*, but rather one possible re-telling of it. Consider Peterson and O'Hare's intentions when you see the play; what aspects of the production (including staging, story structure, dialogue and exposition, etc) support this intention? Why?
2. Does *An Iliad* condemn warfare? Why or why not?
3. What similarities, if any, do you see between the Trojan War as described in *An Iliad* and the modern wars in Iraq and Afghanistan?
4. The character of the Poet, played by Timothy Edward Kane, seems to exist outside of a specific time in history. Based on your experience of the play, in your opinion, where did he come from? Why is he telling this story to the audience at this specific moment in time?
5. Director Lisa Peterson has been quoted as saying that *An Iliad* is more about Homer than it is about the Trojan War. What do you think she means by this comment? What aspects of the production support your hypothesis?
6. One-man shows often require actors to assume not only different characters, but also the role of "omniscient narrator." How does this compare to the tradition of oral storytelling (as described earlier)? What are the main differences and similarities between the two genres?
7. While watching *An Iliad*, were you more engaged intellectually or emotionally? Why?
8. In your opinion, was *An Iliad* an effective piece of theater? Why or why not? (Concurrently, what constitutes an effective piece of theater?)