

# Theatre Review: "An Iliad" At Chester Theatre

CHESTER – The Chester Theatre Company ends its summer season with Lisa Peterson's and Denis O'Hare's "An Iliad", an adaptation of Homer's classic developed for a solo performer. For the original production of "An Iliad", highly regarded in New York and other cities, that performer was Denis O'Hare. At Chester, Steve Hendrickson takes center stage in a 90-minute mini-epic telling of tales of Achilles, Hector, Helen, and other Trojans; gods and goddesses, wars and passions, and more.

It takes a well-trained, highly disciplined, and multi-faceted actor to make a solo performance more than a recitation. It's a major challenge. Steve Hendrickson, agile in voice and movement, long on energy, and engaging in his audience interaction, gives the character of the story teller, known as "The Poet", a solid balance of art and craft. He can easily join the ranks of Hal Holbrook in "Mark Twain Tonight", Jefferson Mays in "I Am My Own Wife", and Tovah Feldshuh in "Golda", all actors who have raised the craft of solo performance to art.

Sheila Siragusa's staging supports Hendrickson's performance, giving him opportunities for subtle and nuanced moments as well as high-energy flashes.

The small Chester Town Hall auditorium is transformed into a



Steve Hendrickson stars in "An Iliad" at the Chester Theatre Company.

non sight-specific staging area that looks like a space under renovation with lots of shoes strewn about (designed by Vicki R. Davis). Davis also designed costumes, and she has Hendrickson dressed in a well-worn khakis, shirt and vest ensemble that is often seen on long-standing professors on many a college or prep school campus. Lara Dubin's lighting amplifies some of the more dramatic stories in Hendrickson's performance. Tom Shread's sound design is a mixed blessing. The musical accompaniments, which seem Aegean in tone, compliments Hendrickson's performance, but it's sometimes very difficult to hear Hendrickson in his quieter segments.

If you like serious theatre and the solo performance, "An Iliad" is revelatory look at Steve Hendrickson's technique as actor. If you like epic theatre and spectacle, this isn't your show. If you like an intimate performance space and a good series of stories told well, "An Iliad" delivers.

The Chester Theatre Company presents "An Iliad" by Lisa Peterson and Denis O'Hare based on a translation of "The Iliad" by Robert Fagles. Directed by Sheila Siragusa. Scenic and costume design by Vicki R. Davis. Lighting design by Lara Dubin. Sound design by Tom Shread. Cast: Steve Hendrickson as "The Poet". The Chester Theatre Company, Chester Town Hall, 15 Middlefield Road, Chester, MA. Through August 25, 2013. Tickets: 800-595-4TIX or [www.chestertheatre.org](http://www.chestertheatre.org)

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