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Bill Harley's brilliant interpretation of The Iliad

Theatre Review by DON FOWLER

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Chances are you have either read, studied, or heard about "The Iliad" by Homer.

The always-innovative Burbage Theatre has brought in storyteller extraordinaire Bill Harley to perform Lisa Peterson and Denis O'Hare's 100 minute "Cliff Notes" version of the classic.

I started to write "An Iliad For Dummies," but this is no dumb version. It has depth, historical facts, passion, humor, and pathos.

It is told by "the poet," an old man filled with a passion for storytelling as only an accomplished storyteller can do.

We remember Harley from his younger days, holding young children spellbound, telling fascinating stories with messages to them...and their parents.

Harley is one of Rhode Island's treasures, sharing his gifts around the world and returning home to do this difficult play using every inch of his body and soul.

I will admit to losing myself at times as wars waged on and on, Gods and humans clashed, names like Hector, Agamemnon, Hercules, Helen and other Greek and Roman legends were tossed around. Ancient History was never my favorite subject, but the writers, with Harley at the helm, have made it contemporary and exciting. And more important, accessible.

At one point, Harley recites every war that was ever waged with rapidity and anguish, reminding us that war is always with us.

Enhancing Harley's performance is violinist/cellist Cathy Clasper-Torch as the Muse, adding her talents to the poetic atmosphere of a mesmerizing performance.

"An Iliad" is at Burbage through Nov. 24.

If you want to witness storytelling at its best, go online at burbagetheatre.org for tickets.