

ANCRAM OPERA HOUSE

Jeffrey Mousseau & Paul Ricciardi
Directors

PRESENTS



AN ILIAD

October 15 - 24, 2021

by

Lisa Peterson and Denis O'Hare

based on Homer's The Iliad, translated by Robert Fagles

with MaConnia Chesser*
as the Poet

Time: Now

Place: A theatre

An Iliad has a running time of approximately 100 minutes and is performed without an intermission.

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 Dramatists Play Service, Inc., New York.

*member of Actors' Equity Association, the union of professional actors and stage managers.



**Council on
the Arts**

Angram Opera House Theater's 2021 season made possible through a grant from the NY State Council on the Arts (NYSCA). AN ILIAD has also been made possible through additional support from a NYSCA Restart NY: Rapid Live Performance Grant.

PRODUCTION TEAM

SARAH EDKINS
Set Design

JAMES McNAMARA
Lighting Design

DENISE R. MASSMAN
Costume Design

ALEXANDER SOVRONSKY
Original Music & Sound Design

VANESSA BAER
Production Dramaturgy

HANNAH SCHIFFER
Stage Manager

JEFFREY MOUSSEAU
Director

ABOUT THE AUTHORS

LISA PETERSON is a nationally renowned director who works in NYC and regional theatres around the country. She was for ten years Resident Director at the Mark Taper Forum. She won an Obie Award for her direction of Caryl Churchill's *Light Shining* in Buckinghamshire at New York Theatre Workshop.

DENIS O'HARE is a writer and Tony Award-winning actor who has performed on Broadway and off-Broadway as well as in numerous regional productions and in film and television. His TV work includes roles on HBO's *True Blood* and FX's *American Horror Story*.

ROBERT FAGLES was an American professor, poet, and academic, best known for his many translations of ancient Greek and Roman classics, especially his acclaimed translations of the epic poems of Homer. He taught English and comparative literature for many years at Princeton University.

ABOUT MACONNIA CHESSER

This is **MACONNIA CHESSER'S** third project with Ancram Opera House, having performed virtually in the *Crystal Radio Sessions* twice in 2020. NEW YORK THEATRE: Ensemble Studio Theatre, York Shakespeare Company. REGIONAL THEATRE: Shakespeare & Company (company member), Actors' Shakespeare Project, WAM Theatre, Berkshire Playwrights Lab, Chester Theatre, Kennedy Center, NJ Rep (company member), Theater Alliance (*Insurrection: Holding History*, Helen Hayes nomination), Tennessee Shakespeare, African Continuum Theatre, Totem Pole Playhouse, & Folger Theatre. FILM/TV: *The Shape of Destiny* (Official selection, 2018 Women in Comedy Festival), *Nothing But the Truth*, *Ghosts of Hamilton Street*, *Diseasels*, HBO's *The Wire*. EDUCATION: Shakespeare & Company, National Conservatory of Dramatic Arts, Alcorn State University.

AOH PRODUCTION TEAM for AN ILIAD

VANESSA BAER (dramaturg) is a recent graduate of Western Connecticut State University, and is thrilled to be making her professional debut as a production dramaturg at the Ancram Opera House. Vanessa has been involved with AOH productions since 2018, when she started as a production intern. Upcoming dramaturgy projects include *She Kills Monsters* at the Center for Performing Arts at Rhinebeck and *Project G: My Love Letter to Godzilla* at SUNY Purchase.

SARAH EDKINS (scenic designer) Great to be back in the theater, especially this one! *An Iliad* has been a particularly intriguing piece to explore. Before the pandemic, Sarah designed sets for numerous shows at Ancram Opera House. With her design work put on hold, during the pandemic, Sarah has been in her studio, working on many charcoal drawings and paintings. For other examples of Sarah's work, please visit her website: SarahEdkinsDesign.com.

DENISE R. MASSMAN, MFA (costume designer) has been specializing in all aspects of theatre design for over 40 years. She has presented work nationally and internationally. She designs sets and costumes and teaches at Siena College. She designed costumes for *Cymbeline* for Montana Shakespeare in the Parks which was part of a global project called Cymbeline Anthropocene that addresses the contemporary ecological crisis through Shakespeare's plays. After Ancram her designs will be part of an international, 10-episode "soap opera" in Norway.

JAMES McNAMARA (lighting designer)) is the Professor of Light/Sound Design at Westfield State University. He is also an Associate Artist/Designer at The Chester Theatre Company, where he has designed for the last 16 seasons. Professional Design: LaMaMa ETC, CompanyOne, Lost Nation Theater, Pilgrim Theater Company, New Century Theatre, Strong Coffee Stage, New World Theater, Vermont Commons Group, Sankofa Dance Project, World Myth and Music and The Calvin Theater. Assistant design: The Guthrie Theatre Center, The McCarter Theatre, Yale Repertory Theatre, The Clarence Brown Theatre and Bard SummerScape. James received his MFA in Theatre Design from The University of Massachusetts, Amherst.

JEFFREY MOUSSEAU (director) is co-director of Ancram Opera House and has helmed several AOH productions including *The Snow Queen*, *Homebody* by Tony Kushner (Berkshire Theatre Critics Award, Outstanding Solo Performance), the American premiere of *In Praise of Elephants*, Young Jean Lee's *We're Gonna Die* and *Aunt Leaf* by Barbara Wiechmann which was also performed in Aquascalientes, Mexico. Regionally, his work has also been seen at Stageworks, Hudson Opera House and Proctors Theater. Other credits include The Kennedy Center in Washington, numerous productions as founding artistic director of the Elliot & IRNE award-winning Coyote Theatre in Boston and HERE Arts Center in NYC where he is an alum of the HERE Artist Residency Program.

HANNAH SCHIFFER (stage manager)) is excited to be back at the Ancram Opera House for her second year as Production Stage Manager. Her previous credits at AOH include *The Snow Queen* (Stage Manager) and *The Brothers Size* (Assistant Stage Manager), as well as being a production intern for the summer of 2019 and production assistant for the summer of 2020. She attended SUNY Fredonia, where she received degrees in Theatre Arts and Arts Administration, as well as a minor in Dance.

ALEXANDER SOVRONSKY (original music/sound) - This is Alexander's third show for Ancram Opera House, having created the original music/sound for *Homebody* and assisted with sound design for *The Snow Queen*. Career highlights include performing in and co-creating the live music for the Broadway production of *Cyrano De Bergerac* starring Kevin Kline, and creating the original music/sound for The Public Theatre's production of *Mother of the Maid* starring Glenn Close. Additionally, Alexander is an award-winning music director that has worked extensively at various Off-Broadway, regional, and international theatres. For a good time, visit www.AlexanderSovronsky.com or on IG @Alexander.Sovronsky

Up next at AOH



October 30 at 7pm

At Hilltop Barn, Roe-Jan Park
9140 NY-22, Hillsdale

Crystal Radio SEANCE! An evening of stories by local authors, exploring the eldritch, uncanny and sublime in the beauty of an autumn night at the Roe Jan Park.

November 20 at 3pm

Presented Virtually

AOH is leading storytelling workshops with the 4th, 5th & 6th graders at Taconic Hills School. Join us for a free livestream when students share their true, personal narratives.

**REAL
PEOPLE
REAL
STORIES**

An Iliad

GLOSSARY OF CHARACTERS

The Gods

Athena– daughter of Zeus, goddess of wisdom. Hates the Trojans because of Paris's decision against her in a beauty contest. Team Achaeans. Advises Achilles not to kill Agamemnon. Fights on the battlefield for the Greeks, injuring her brother, Ares.

Aphrodite– goddess of love and beauty. Favors Paris because he chose her in a beauty contest. Team Trojans. Physically removes Paris from the battlefield to save him.

Apollo– son of Zeus, god of archers and medicine, also known as the sun god. Team Trojans. Brings a plague upon the Greek warriors, knocks Patroclus's armor off on the battlefield.

Ares– son of Zeus, god of war. Team Trojans.

Hermes– son of Zeus, god of mischief. Team Achaeans. Delivers King Priam to Achilles.

Zeus– king of the gods, husband to Hera. Officially neutral in the Trojan War. However, at the request of Thetis, Zeus aids the Trojans to help Achilles exact revenge against Agamemnon.

The Greeks (Achaeans)

Achilles– demi-god son of king Peleus and sea nymph Thetis, commander of the Myrmidons. The most powerful warrior in Greece. It is prophesied that the Greeks would not be able to win the Trojan War without him. Known for his headstrong behavior due to a conflict with Agamemnon.

Agamemnon– king of Mycenae, brother to Menelaus, commander of all of Greece's armies. His conflict with Achilles is what causes Achilles to withdraw from the Trojan War.

Briseis– taken captive by the Greeks as a spoil of war and claimed by Achilles. She is taken from Achilles by Agamemnon after relinquishing his own slave, which sends Achilles into a pride-fueled rage.

Menelaus– king of Sparta, brother to Agamemnon, husband to Helen. The abduction of his wife, Helen, by Paris is the inciting incident for the Trojan War.

Odysseus– king of Ithaca, protagonist of Homer's The Odyssey. Credited for coming up with the Trojan Horse.

Patroclus– Achilles' closest companion. His death is what drives Achilles to return to battle.

The Trojans (Dardans, Dardanians)

Andromache– wife to Hector, urges Hector to withdraw from the war.

Astyanax– Hector's newborn son.

Hector– prince of Troy and commander of the Trojan army. First-born son of King Priam and Queen Hecuba. The most powerful warrior on the Trojan side, a favorite of Apollo. Kills Patroclus in battle, which provokes the conflict between him and Achilles.

Hecuba– queen of Troy, wife to King Priam, mother of Hector and Paris.

Helen– former wife to Menelaus, taken by prince Paris of Troy. Reputed to be the most beautiful woman in the world, also known as “the face that launched a thousand ships.” The Trojan War begins when Paris takes her from Sparta.

Paris– prince of Troy, son of King Priam and Queen Hecuba. Hector's younger brother. Paris's abduction of Helen from King Menelaus ignited the Trojan War. With the assistance of Apollo, he fatally wounds Achilles' heel with an arrow.

Priam– king of Troy, husband to Queen Hecuba, father of Hector and Paris. Approaches Achilles in supplication, asking for the return of his son's body.



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Additional Staffing for *An Iliad*

Voice and Text Coach

Paul Ricciardi

Scenic Carpenter

Doug Diaz

Production Assistants

Raphael Elmasri
Joey Taylor

SPECIAL THANKS

Suzan & Jonathan Flamm, Em Setzer and Cherie Schiffer



ABOUT ANCRAM OPERA HOUSE

AOH offers an annual season of theatre, cabaret, literary, storytelling and community programs.

AOH's theatre productions include *Homebody* (Berkshire Theatre Critics Award for Outstanding Solo Performance); *We're Gonna Die*; *The Brother's Size* (Berkshire Theatre Critics nominations for Outstanding Ensemble and Outstanding Production of a Play); the American premiere of *In Praise of Elephants*, *Performing Olana*, an original site-specific piece staged at Olana; *Aunt Leaf*, also presented in Aguascalientes, Mexico and, most recently, reprised as part of Festival Universitario de Teatro, Baja California, Mexico; and the premiere of a new musical adaptation of *The Snow Queen*.

As an incubator of new performance, AOH hosts *Summer Play Lab* which supports the creation of innovative productions by theatre-makers including Heather Christian and Frank Boyd and presents early editions of new, alternative cabaret performances with acclaimed artists such as Taylor Mac in *Holiday Sauce* which went on to NYC's Town Hall and San Francisco's Curran Theater, Diana Oh who was subsequently produced at The Bushwick Starr in Brooklyn, and Stew and longtime collaborator Heidi Rodewald in *Staged Dives* which was then performed at Joe's Pub in NYC.

Crystal Radio Hour features new short stories written by Hudson Valley and Tri-state regional writers, including Jo Ann Beard, Wesley Brown, David Rabe and Courtney Maum, that are read by professional actors.

Community engagement is very much at the heart of AOH's programming. *Real People Real Stories* (RPRS), presented twice a year, features local residents sharing personal, authentic narratives. *Local Characters* showcases community members in fun, free-wheeling short form conversations. AOH leads storytelling workshops for young people at the Northeast Community Center and 4th, 5th and 6th graders at the Taconic Hills School. For adult learners, AOH also offers free writing and theatre-making workshops each year.

AOH MISSION

Ancram Opera House creates meaningful encounters through the performing arts that forge connection. Through its productions, AOH offers a unique opportunity to directly experience, up close, visionary theatre artists at the top of their field yet seldom seen in the region. AOH's community-based arts and storytelling programs with local residents encourage day-to-day participation in the performing arts. AOH seeks to foster a sense of place for a rural region and contribute to a healthier and happier community.

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Friends of Ancram Opera House will be thanked in printed programs, and also receive invitations to special Friends' events. Most importantly, by becoming a Friend of AOH, you join a very special group of individuals ensuring that our activities can benefit all in the area through a range of community arts programs.

Ancram Opera House is a 501c3 nonprofit organization; contributions are tax-deductible as allowed by law. All funds raised go directly to support annual programming costs. Thank you for whatever you can do!

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