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All this should spell out that "Steel Hammer" is certainly no straightforward play. From one point of view, this is a showcase of impeccably crafted and executed artistry from a multitude of fields delivered by a finely tuned ensemble.

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the cast runs in a circle for five to 10 minutes and you are expected to abide.

At an hour and 55 minutes of performance (without an intermission), this is not an easy piece, but also not a love-it-or-hate-it piece. The textures and styles are so well-integrated and the pacing so carefully managed that there is some part to appeal to every sensibility. While the gentleman to my left would slump, check his watch and raise his eyes to the sky at a few of the more esoteric moments, he would (presumably) unconsciously bob along to the infectious groove of the ensemble's percussive riffing at other points. A good measure of a show's power for me is how much I squirm over the course of the production. I barely moved.

It is tricky and counterintuitive to single out members of an ensemble whose mission statement - and success - is based around the effort of the collective. But a show about man and myth needs an actor who can embody the full spectrum in between, and **Eric Berryman** does marvelous work showing the full gamut of experience and emotions that turns a man into a folktale. He is ably joined in his work by the SITI Ensemble of **Patrice Johnson** Chevannes, **Akiko Aizawa**, Gian-Murray Gianino, Barney O'Hanlon and **Stephen Duff Webber**, who demonstrate beguiling diversity of skill and commitment to their ensemble effort throughout.

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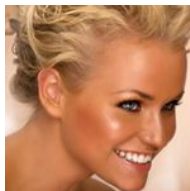
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