



Paul Norwood in "Faith Healer" at Odyssey Theatre. (Enci Box)

BY PHILIP BRANDES

## 'Faith Healer' at the Odyssey

**The essentials:** Desperate, despairing and derelict — such are the easy marks seeking divine intervention in Brian Friel's 1979 masterpiece about a morally conflicted, alcoholic faith healer scavenging the outskirts of the United Kingdom. The "Fantastic" Frank Hardy may be a con man, but his performances succeed just often enough to lace his self-loathing with the possibility of a genuine gift. Frank (Paul Norwood), his long-suffering wife (Diana Cignoni) and their unshakably perky manager (Ron Bottitta) trace the contours of Frank's tawdry life through the prisms of their respective struggles and damaged psyches.

**Why this?** Friel's elegant script embodies the Irish gift for storytelling, packed with character-illuminating details, metaphysical mysteries and poetic self-reflections that defy easy classification. Odyssey Theatre Ensemble founder Ron Sossi revisits the play he last directed in 1989.

**Details:** An Odyssey Theatre Ensemble production at Odyssey Theatre, 2055 S. Sepulveda Blvd., West Los Angeles. 8 p.m. Fridays-Saturdays, 2 p.m. Sundays (see website for additional weeknights), through May 12. \$32-\$37. (310) 477-2055, [odysseytheatre.com](http://odysseytheatre.com)