

The Play - The Pentagon Papers: Never forget

March 21, 2012

12:31 PM MST



 [View all 3 photos](#)

Pentagon Papers cast: Stephen Juhl, Serena Dolinsky, Brian Sounalath, Mark Jacobson, Amanda Martindale, Jeffrey Ashkin, Caroline Do, and Dave Kirkpatrick.
Laura Ann Tull 2012

This year marks the 40th anniversary of the Watergate break-in and the Pentagon Papers are what led to that event. "The Pentagon Papers," playing at the **Santa Monica Playhouse** is closing this Sunday at 3:30 pm. The author and director J Powers asked his cast if they knew what the Pentagon Papers were, and they did not. For those of you reading this, the Pentagon Papers were a Defense Government Document officially titled "United States – Vietnam Relations, 1945–1967: A Study Prepared by the Department of Defense" and covers the History of the United States involvement in **Vietnam War**. As one watches this play one is taught how the seeds for the world involvement in Vietnam grew out of the end of World War Two. The play is also meant as a reminder and tribute to the **Veterans** who died, and those who still survive. As stated by Powers in his introduction: "The consequences of that war still lives with us today."

The play is actually taken from the very text of the Papers themselves, a version leaked by a Senator from Alaska, Gravel. The play is not your normal presentation. It is more of a performing art education piece, laced with drama and at times comedy. The set consists of several chairs and black boxes of different sizes that can be stacked or used as a means to express emotion as the actors spin, tilt, walk, sit or straddle them to express the feeling conveyed by the papers themselves. Hooks on the walls hold costume pieces and the ensemble of eight actors (Jeffrey Ashkin, Caroline Do, Serena Dolinsky, Mark Jacobson, Stephen Juhl, Dave Kirkpatrick, Amanda Martindale, and Brian Sounalath) switch jackets, hats, or other clothing or prop items as they recreate the figures of history. The director told his actors to treat the dialogue as if one were a Stand Up comic and break the fourth wall. At times, though the subject matter is incredibly intense, the actors achieve this end and find moments of comedy, or perhaps farce and the audience cannot help but laugh.

This play teaches the religious, criminal and political entanglements of the war and how this war grew from old reasons repeated through time, two different groups with different beliefs and raging jealousies. The audience also becomes aware of the contrast that existed between what was happening in Vietnam and what the United States reported was or would happen. By the end of the play one becomes very aware of how and why the US government became involved and how the situation went from hope to despair. How efforts for peace were created and torn asunder.

Powers wrote this play for one major purpose so "Never again would one generation of Veterans abandon another." The local chapter of the "Vietnam Veterans of America," **Chapter 53** has been supporting his efforts. Powers intends to produce the second part of this story for his next project- a look at Nixon. As he states "You have to keep the whole story going."

(Note the author of the article apologizes to the cast and production, she became very ill with a fever and misplaced the notes while trying to get better.)

SUGGESTED LINKS

- **"Detroit Blues" a family and the impact of the 1967 Riots**
- **"Three Weeks In January" a Performance to End the Violence and Shame of Rape**
- **Sandy Brown breathing the legacy of Women's History Month in theater PART ONE**

Sponsored Content



In Search of Montana's Hidden Secrets

By *Montana* - Sometimes, you have to get a little lost before you can find yourself.



Laura Tull
LA Performing Arts Examiner

© 2006-2015 AXS Digital Group LLC d/b/a Examiner.com