

Todd Blakesley Rules. He's back for the 2019 San Diego Fringe Festival with a gentle look at the fate of a Trump voter and, though the Fringe's movement to Balboa Park has caused some confusion, he's worth it.

Todd Blakesley Sighs Over Trump Voter in Fringe Show at Balboa Park

by Welton Jones - June 11, 2019



Todd Blakesley is a priceless treasure of, in, from and for San Diego theatre. Anybody truly knowledgeable knows that or is in the process of learning it. My own relationship with Todd, to get the disclaimers neatly stowed away, goes back a half century and includes reviewer, interviewer, director, shipmate and friend. I am on the record copiously as one of his biggest admirers dating from the legendary Theatre: Research and Development at the 20-seat Crystal Palace Theatre in Mission Beach.

One of his specialties is making ponderous constructions float effortlessly, which he did for the first several seasons of the San Diego Fringe Festival. Now, at festival time again, there's good news and bad:

Blakesley has left the Fringe management. But he's back with a show of his own, *Crapshoot! Or Why I Voted for Trump: a love story* and it's just terrific. You will want to know that there are **only a couple of performances left, in Balboa Park's Marie Hitchcock Puppet Theatre, at 7:30 p.m. Thursday (June 13) and Sunday (June 16).**

(Fringe boss Kevin Charles Patterson has led his forces out of downtown this year and into the park's Palisades area. Headquarters and box office are at the historic Starlight Bowl and performances are spread across the Puppet Theatre, Centro de la Raza, World Beat Center and some out-of-park locations. The list of shows is shorter than usual and there's a definite handmade aura to the proceedings, as Patterson et al adjusts to the move, but the good news is that the Fringe lives and its friends care.)

Probably no politician in American history has been more examined by satirists than Donald Trump. But he's just a supporting character in *Crapshoot!* Al Stone, a vague, sweet naïf dreaming of a career writing fortune cookie inserts, is the picaresque hero created and performed by Blakesley in the grotesque shadow of the president.

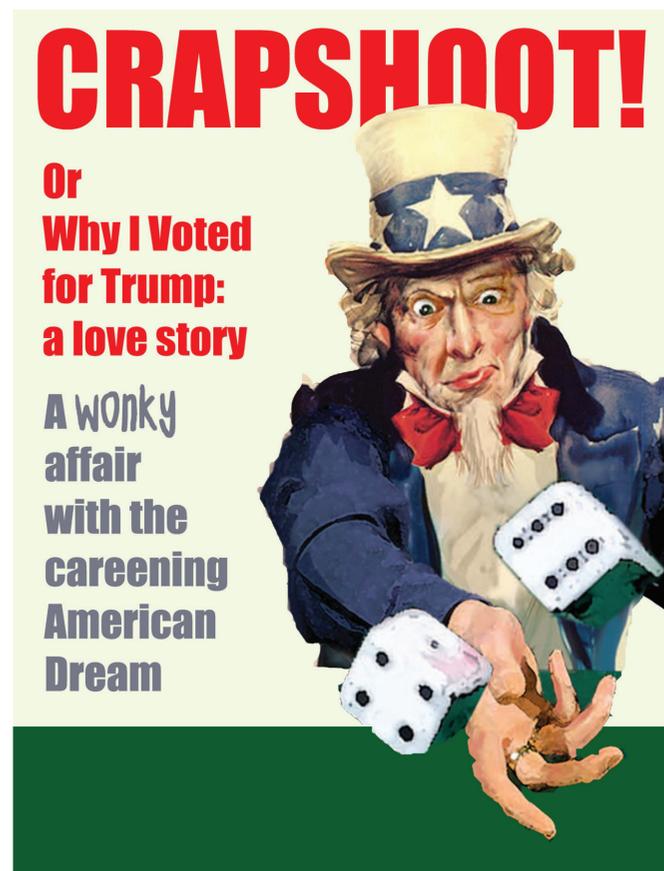
This Stone didn't know from politics before the 2016 election but, encouraged by his multi-ethnic colleagues in the shipping department, he reads up and listens around, then casts his ballot for the candidate who most impresses him. And that's when the trouble starts.

The next day after the election, he's the only one smiling. No good losers in the fortune cookie shipping department. Somehow, his every scrap of modest pride is taken the wrong way, followed by anger, scorn, enmity and outrage. In a dizzy dissent, his life spins downward into a toilet of depravity, deceit and despair until, abruptly, it reverses. And powerfully. An idea he wrote has been noticed by the man himself ("...such soft, delicate hands!"). Al becomes another imprisoned martyr for He Who Must Get All Credit. ("This must be how Joan of Arc felt!") and the ascent spins ever higher until...

But that would be telling. I prefer to let Blakesley deliver his treasure in person. I won't be the one to throw the monkey into the wrench. (Sorry, some thefts are irresistible.)

As vivid as Blakesley usually is on stage, he is good at playing the political Everyman. And Rhianna Basore, the director of *Crapshoot!*, seems to know just how to channel his drives. This is a one-person-one-chair show for those of us who are tired of the format. And the bonus is a short and useful civics lesson, individualized for every patron.

The show is worth the effort, of which there is some. Tickets are not sold at the door but instead at the Starlight Bowl nearby. And there are other worthy entries available too, though this year's master program is not printed but confined online in a tiresome format. Try <http://sdfringe.org/shows-sch/>



Only 2 performances left.

Thursday, June 13

Sunday, June 16

Both are at 7:30PM

at the Marie Hitchcock Puppet Theatre



TICKETS:

www.sdfringe.org

www.toddblakesley.com



Welton Jones has been following entertainment and the arts around for years, writing about them. Thirty-five of those years were spent at the UNION-TRIBUNE, the last decade was with SANDIEGO.COM.