

# Community REPORTER

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## 1968 Comes Alive at the History Theatre

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At a time when we have almost forgotten the sins of our past (at least the sins of mini-skirts and go-go boots) the History Theatre of St. Paul reminds us that, in addition to the drugs and bad fashion choices, the 1960s also taught us some important lessons. Their current show, *1968 The Year that Rocked the World* is a series of seven short plays that dramatize the important events of 1968 in a unique way.

The production begins with the story of a Vietnam War veteran and ends with the Apollo 8 mission on Christmas Eve. Between those two striking events it touches on Bobby Kennedy, the sanitation strike in Memphis, TN, the creation of the American Indian Movement, the Mexico City Olympics and, of course, Richard Nixon. All the while it infuses the transitions from each play with pop culture references and the sobering death toll figures from the Vietnam War. It playfully and seriously looks at this tumultuous year that has shaped our nation and created unmistakable images and phrases. The writers, all veterans of the Playwrights' Center in Minneapolis, have taken the dramatic experiences of 1968 and created plays that resonate with modern day affairs.

And, in the true spirit of the History Theatre, the writers even manage to have a little fun at the expense of Minnesota natives Eugene McCarthy and Hubert Humphrey. While the audience (mostly old enough to remember the events of 1968 from their own lives) lightly laughed at the 60s references and jokes, they roared at the treatment of Minnesota by Dominic Orlando's piece "John Mitchell's Private Moment." To continue the fun, the anchors of WCCO even stopped by for a somewhat gimmicky introduction to Kim Hines' "Smith & Carlos," thus bringing familiar faces to the already familiar events.

But even with all of the fun there were a few rough spots during the production. These will most likely smooth out as the cast becomes more comfortable with the piece, and it should not deter you from taking a short jaunt back in history to remember just why the 60s are so infamous.

The production's choice to conclude with the Apollo 8 mission helps the year (and the play) end on an uplifting note. It was just one small reminder that 1968 (forgive the cliché) had a silver lining and we still managed to have fun. Even amidst turmoil, there is always hope. If we lived through Vietnam then we can live through Iraq. And if we lived through burning bras we might just make it through Facebook.

