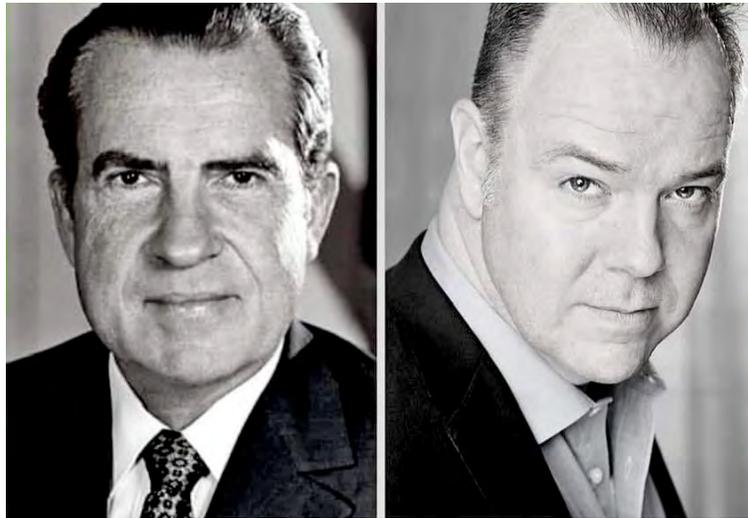




'Nixon on Nixon' kicks off The Blank Theatre's 30th Anniversary Online

By **Shari Barrett** - May 28, 2020



Rob Nagle masterfully takes us inside Richard Nixon's psyche as the president sits alone in his office just days after having resigned from office. Photo courtesy of Blank Theatre.

With "safer at home" guidelines currently preventing social gatherings, The Blank Theatre in Hollywood is kicking off its 30th anniversary season by presenting two live-stream shows: an LRS Plus production of **Nixon on Nixon**, a new play by Sean Waldron, featuring Rob Nagle and directed by Bree Pavey (with dramaturgy by Shelagh McFadden); and 'Nathan C. Jones: A Love Story?', a world premiere musical with book by Vanessa Claire Stewart, music by Brendan Milburn, and lyrics by Milburn and Stewart, featuring Amir Levi and directed by Daniel Henning.

For those too young to remember Richard Milhous Nixon, he served his home state of California as a representative and senator before becoming our nation's 36th vice president from 1953 to 1961, during which time he took on major duties in the Eisenhower Administration. Nominated for President by acclamation in 1960, he lost by a narrow margin to John F. Kennedy. In 1968, he again won his party's nomination, and went on to defeat Vice President Hubert H. Humphrey and third-party candidate George C. Wallace, becoming the 37th President of the United States.

Nixon's accomplishments while in office included revenue sharing, the end of the draft, new anticrime laws, and a broad environmental program. As he had promised, he appointed Justices of conservative philosophy to the Supreme Court. One of the most dramatic events of his first term occurred in 1969, when American astronauts made the first moon landing. Some of his most acclaimed achievements came in his quest for world stability during a time of great social turmoil, most notably during the anti-Vietnam War protests at Kent State on May 4, 1970 during which four college students were killed by the Ohio National Guard. Choosing to focus on an international stability, during visits in 1972 to Beijing and Moscow, Nixon reduced tensions with China and the U.S.S.R., perhaps his greatest accomplishment.

But no doubt Nixon is most remembered when, due to his efforts to cover up illegal activities by members of his administration in the Watergate scandal, he resigned as president on August 9, 1974, in the face of almost certain impeachment and removal from office, the only U.S. president ever to do so. I always wondered how Nixon could live with himself after such disgrace. No doubt playwright Sean Waldron's thorough research and insightful imagination now offers intriguing answers to that question.

In 'Nixon on Nixon,' the president sits alone just days after having resigned from office, drowning his sorrows in alcohol, medication, and memories. Desperate to reclaim some version of glory, he must face the ghosts of his past as he grapples with whether he deserves to have a future. And thanks to Rob Nagle's brilliant performance as a man losing his grip on reality, the play took on a very surreal aspect to me since I vividly remember when Nixon resigned, then flashed his trademark double-handed peace signs as he boarded a plane to leave Washington, D.C.

While adopting Nixon's trademark speech patterns to perfection during his 75-minute monologue, Nagle takes us inside Nixon's psyche as he makes and takes calls on his signaturered telephone from those closest to him, including his long-suffering wife, Pat, daughter Julie, Henry A. Kissinger, Elvis (who he thought would help assist with the "youth" vote), Frank Sinatra (with whom he chats about the mob's involvement with Washington politics), and most importantly, Charles Gregory "Bebe" Rebozo, a Florida banker and businessman who was Nixon's long-time friend and confidant and had been with him when the decision to resign was made. Directed to perfection by Bree Pavey in a small, claustrophobic office, Nagle brings heart and sensitivity to a man that always appeared cold and narcissistic, revealing his dependence on alcohol and pills as depression invades his soul, taking Nixon to the brink of suicide with a handgun.

'Nixon on Nixon' premiered on Friday, May 22 and will remain available for two more weeks at www.youtube.com/TheBlankTheatreCo, with the one-person dark comedic musical 'Nathan C. Jones: A Love Story?' premiering on the same site on Thursday, May 28 at 5 p.m. and remaining available for three weeks. There is no charge to view either show, but all donations received will be shared equally among the artists involved in their creation.