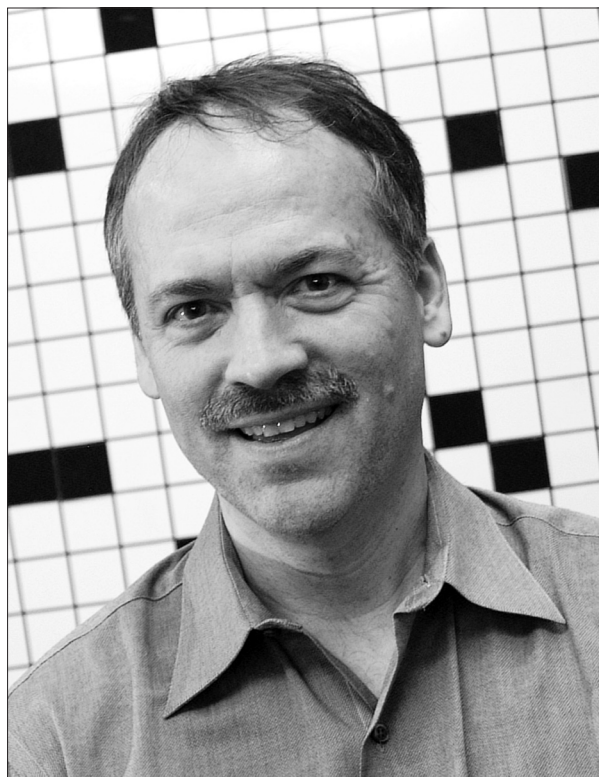


Sunday, November 21, 2010, 7pm
Zellerbach Hall

Strictly Speaking

Will Shortz



An Evening with the Puzzle Master

Cal Performances' 2010–2011 season is sponsored by Wells Fargo.

WHAT'S AN ENIGMATOLOGIST? It's Will Shortz, the only academically accredited puzzle master in the world. He designed his own major program at Indiana University, which in 1974 led to his one-of-a-kind degree in enigmatology, the study of puzzles.

Mr. Shortz has been the puzzle master for NPR's *Weekend Edition Sunday* since the program's start in 1987, crossword editor of the *New York Times* since 1993, editor of *Games* magazine for 15 years and the founder and director of the American Crossword Puzzle Tournament, which has been held annually since 1978. He sold his first puzzle professionally when he was 14 in *Venture*, a denominational youth magazine. At age 16, he became a regular contributor to Dell puzzle publications.

Mr. Shortz received a law degree from the University of Virginia in 1977. He originally entered law school with the intention of practicing law for ten years in order to make enough money to retire and do what he really wanted—create puzzles. However, law was not creative enough for him, and following graduation he skipped the bar exam and began his career in puzzles immediately.

Today, Mr. Shortz relishes his position at the *Times* because he believes the publication garners the most intelligent, educated group of solvers in the country. This allows him to presume a level of culture and solving skill that he could not anywhere else.

Upon starting at the *Times*, Mr. Shortz made modest modifications to the crosswords. Constructor bylines were added to the daily puzzles; previously the contributors had labored anonymously. He had the puzzles become increasingly harder each day of the week to provide something for every skill level. Additionally, the cultural references were broadened to include movies, television and rock music.

The puzzle that Mr. Shortz created which elicited the most response appeared on Election Day 1996. The clue to the middle answer across the grid was "Lead story in tomorrow's newspaper." The answer appeared to be "CLINTON ELECTED." Because of intentional ambiguity in the crossing clues, however, the answer could also have been "BOB DOLE ELECTED"—either fit.

Mr. Shortz founded the World Puzzle Championship in 1992, an event he has directed twice, and co-founded the World Puzzle Federation. Since 2007, he has also directed the Sudoku National Championship. Mr. Shortz wrote the riddles for *Batman Forever* and has guest-starred in episodes of *The Simpsons* and *How I Met Your Mother*, in each case playing himself.

In addition to editing the weekday and Sunday puzzles for the *Times*, Mr. Shortz is the author or editor of over 500 puzzle books. He was the subject of the 2006 documentary film *Wordplay*.