

THEATER

Bonding during 'A Walk in the Woods'

By Richard Guzman

richard.guzman@langnews.com
@Richword on Twitter

A summer stroll in the woods could have global implications if two men don't overcome political differences in Lee Blessing's acclaimed play "A Walk in the Woods."

The Pulitzer Prize and Tony Award-nominated play comes to Long Beach's International City Theatre stage Friday through May 22 with two preview performances set for Wednesday and Thursday.

It deals with very serious political topics as two arms negotiators; a Soviet diplomat named Andrey Botvinnik and his American counterpart John Honeyman, try to bring their nuclear capable countries to a peaceful understanding in order to secure the future of mankind.

But after long and frustrating hours at the negotiating table they decide to take a walk in the woods outside Geneva to talk things through in hopes of achieving a breakthrough.

If all this seems too serious or like you'll need to enroll in a college government course to be able to enjoy the play, don't worry there's no need to be a political junky to get it because this story is a surprisingly personal tale about the emotional connection between two people, despite the possible impact on the future of the world.

"It's both a human story and a political story. You have these two people who are very different at negotiating and it's partly an investigation into the dynamics of their very unique relationship as they try and figure out who is going to say what, who's going to reveal secrets, who is going to get to the other person," said John Henry Davis, who is directing the dramatic comedy.

And yes, Davis assures, nuclear talk can be funny.

"There's a lot of humor and they're playing off each other," Davis said. "There's a lot of funny moments. It seems like a grim story but it doesn't play like that at all."

The story is based on true events that happened back in the 1980s during negotiations between the U.S and the Soviet Union in Geneva.

The two characters and the details in the story how-



PHOTO BY TRACEY ROMAN

Tony Abatemarco, left, and David Nevell take "A Walk in the Woods."

A WALK IN THE WOODS

When: Opens 8 p.m. Friday. Performances 8 p.m. Thursdays-Saturdays and 2 p.m. Sundays through May 22. Previews 8 p.m. Wednesday-Thursday.

Where: Center Theater, Long Beach Performing Arts Center, 300 E. Ocean Blvd.

Tickets: \$55 opening night, \$47-\$49 thereafter. \$35 for previews.

Information: 562-436-4610, www.internationalcitytheatre.org.

ever are fictionalized versions.

"It's based on something real but it really goes beyond that," Davis said.

The play was produced on Broadway in 1988 and was a nominee for the Pulitzer Prize for Drama and Tony Award for Best Play. It was also made into a movie that aired on PBS.

Two ICT veterans star in the leading roles.

Tony Abatemarco, who recently portrayed real life figure Judge Francis Biddle in ICT's "Trying," plays Botvinnik, the cynical Soviet diplomat.

David Nevell, who recently appeared as Alan in ICT's "God of Carnage," is Honeyman, the idealistic American negotiator.

"He's a really complex artful dodger. He spends a lot of time beating around the bush and dissembling, he's not a straight shooter at all," Abatemarco said of his character, who has been in the game a while and uses sly moves to get what he wants.

That plays well off Honeyman, who is idealistic and optimistic about his chances of getting things done, Nevell noted.

"The play is much much more about the relationship these characters forge," Nevell said.