



Courtesy Lucy Pollak Public Relations

Tony Schwartz was considered the father of the “Daisy” ad

INTERNATIONAL CITY THEATRE

ICT streams performance of ‘Daisy,’ starting Oct. 24

A little girl plucks petals from a daisy, counting out of order. After the last one is pulled, another voice, a man’s, begins a countdown that ends in a mushroom cloud. Then: “These are the stakes: To make a world in which all God’s children can live, or go into the dark. We must either love each other, or we must die.”

The screen goes black, and the words “VOTE FOR PRESIDENT JOHNSON ON NOVEMBER 3” appear, recited by another, somber-sounding man.

This was the first political “attack” ad, created by New York agency Doyle Dane Bernbach in 1964. It aired just once, during “The NBC Monday Movie” on Sept. 7 of that year. And it’s the inspiration behind “Daisy,” a historical play written by Sean Devine that debuted at Seattle’s ACT Theatre in

2016. It ran there during Donald Trump’s race against Hillary Clinton, and now it’s being presented by Long Beach’s International City Theatre (ICT) during his campaign against Joe Biden.

Available for streaming via www.InternationalCityTheatre.org, the Caryn Desai-directed production focuses on the creative process behind the so-called “daisy” ad, as well as the impact such an undertaking has on the people behind the scenes as well as those viewing the finished product. “There’s something noble about crafting an ideal that we can cast our votes for,” Devine recently told ICT. “But when you begin to see how much science goes into designing every element of that ideal, into designing and packing the charismatic figurehead at the forefront of that

ideal, it starts to feel less genuine.”

David Nevell plays Tony Schwartz, based on the agoraphobic media guru considered the father of the “daisy” ad; other real-life characters include agency head Bill Bernbach (Ed F. Martin), art director Sid Myers (Alex Dabestani) and television producer Aaron Ehrlich (Matthew Floyd Miller). Rounding out the cast are Erin Anne Williams as fictional copywriter Louise Brown and Phillip Lewis, who plays White House lawyer Clifford Lewis, who is based on presidents John F. Kennedy and Lyndon B. Johnson’s African-American legal counsel, Clifford Alexander Jr.

The live performance premieres Saturday, Oct. 24, at 7 p.m. and will be recorded to be available for viewing on demand through Nov. 7. Tickets are \$20.