

The Cold War in Hindsight

. . . Then peace will guide the planets
And love will steer the stars

“The Age of Aquarius” – *Hair* *

What happened when the youthful idealists of the sixties grew up to become leaders of the world? Did they usher in a ‘season of change’--an era of acceptance, tolerance and peace? Or did they grow weary of stargazing when the realities of adulthood set in? Did they, as countless generations before them, discard their idealism for more “practical” concerns like power, prestige and security?

A Walk in the Woods is a poignant tug of war between hope and cynicism, between idealism and despair. Blessing’s 1988 cold war drama is more resonant than ever, partly because we know what the characters don’t: that the Berlin Wall was about to crumble, that the age of communism was about to give way to unforeseen freedoms—of markets, of technology, of information. Now, in an age of homegrown terrorists and sophisticated cyber-warriors, world peace seems just as tenuous as it was then, if not more.

Speaking in Berlin on June 19, President Obama suggested the dissolution of the Soviet Union has brought “a sense that the great challenges have somehow passed.” In order to “move beyond cold war nuclear postures” Obama called for reducing the number of deployed U.S. strategic nuclear warheads by one-third if the Russian government agrees to a similar cut.

In Moscow, Russian Deputy Prime Minister Dmitry Rogozin quickly responded saying: “How can we take seriously this idea about cuts in strategic nuclear potential while the United States is developing its potential to intercept this strategic potential?”

And so it continues.

How can we achieve lasting progress without trust, without the ability to look across the negotiating table and recognize ourselves in one another? How can we break through the gridlocks, both at home and abroad, brought on by our individual and collective needs for power and security?

Botvinnik’s and Honeyman’s conversations among the trees mirror the political agendas and cultural biases of the superpowers they represent. In Blessing’s world, the obstacles to peace can only be exposed away from the public eye. Only under the cover of nature can these men muster the courage to trust each other on a *personal* level and dare to hope for peace. Despite its geopolitical implications, *A Walk in the Woods* is, at its core, a journey of friendship.

Harrison Long – Director, *A Walk in the Woods*

(Director’s Notes Published in the Serenbe Playbill Summer 2013)

*NOTE: *Hair* was the musical offering in the Serenbe Playhouse Summer 2013 “Season of Change.”