

DOUBTING THOMAS

Secret Rose Theatre

Reviewed By Robert Axelrod



Art Shulman - Ted Ryan

DOUBTING THOMAS, Art Shulman's latest play currently at The Secret Rose, is a good try. The prolific playwright explores dramatic territory with this story of a big money inheritance and what members of a tired family will do around it.

John and Marilyn are a married couple with a drug addicted son named Dylan. Their home is about to be foreclosed as John has been out of a job (in advertising), for over a year, the family cat is dying, and Marilyn's nerves are frayed. Just when things seem to be at their dimmest, John learns that his absentee father, Woodrow, has been killed in an accident and has left him \$500,000.00! Marilyn is ecstatic, but John is reticent because he never really knew his Dad, and is amazed that Dad could have amassed that sum of money. John also needs to fulfill a weird request delineated in the will. Woodrow wants to be buried lying on a park bench!

John goes to the local park in order to measure a bench there, when he meets Thomas, who is sleeping on the bench John chooses to measure. Turns out, Thomas claims to have known Woodrow well, and divulges some truths that cause John to suspect that Thomas actually is Woodrow! Is it true or is it just wishful thinking on behalf of John because he wants the father he never had as a kid? Of course, if Thomas is really Woodrow, the will leaving that chunk of money to John

is null and void. Thus, the dilemma is at the root of this piece's theme.

John brings Thomas home to dinner, introducing him as "Uncle". Thomas takes a liking to son Dylan as they both care for cats. As the play wears on, John keeps waffling between believing Thomas to be Woodrow and Thomas to be Thomas to the point of tedium. Marilyn is upset at the prospect of losing the money, which she's earmarked for paying the mortgage and sending Dylan to rehab and a hotsy private school. Who's who?...that's the game afoot.

Ted Ryan brings a certain poignancy to John and his dilemma. Nancy Van Iderstine is appropriately caustic as Marilyn, as she too gets caught up in the predicament. Adam Simon Krist is excellent as Dylan; never getting bratty or putting on the "stoned act". This leaves us with Art Shulman, the play's author and producer as Thomas. Mr. Shulman is no actor. He stumbles over lines, is awkward in his body language, and presents no clear through line for this very pivotal character. Mr. Ryan could have been more effective had he had a skilled actor to play off of. Director Stan Mazin does a good job of staging the piece, and the set, by the ever present Chris Winfield, is quite good in its simplicity, but the production suffers at the hands of the miscast Shulman.

DOUBTING THOMAS plays now through June 21, 2015, Fridays and Saturdays at 8:00 PM, Sundays at 2:00 PM, at the Secret Rose Theatre, 11246 Magnolia Boulevard, NoHo 91601.

Call (818) 465-3213 or visit <http://www.DoubtingThomasPlay.com> for tickets and information.