

Art Shulman's *THE RABBI AND THE SHIKSA*, a dramedy about the titled "man of the cloth" and the relationship he has with the labeled woman, opens at North Hollywood's Secret Rose Theatre.

Rabbi Jacob Persky (*Art Shulman*) is the spiritual leader of a medium sized synagogue located in a large urban setting. He's been head of this temple for nearly three decades, running the weekly services as well as keeping the trusts and beliefs of the Jewish culture to his congregation. His "right hand man" is Hanna (*Ellen Bienenfeld*) the secretary of this order safekeeping everything in check. Once in a while, the good Rabbi locks horns with Maury Plotkin (*Henry Holden*) a temple board member over elements one would note in a place of worship, including the balancing of finances.

When the time comes to obtain bids on new carpeting for the place, one of the bidders is Theresa Genovese (*Rebecca Westberg*), who runs a carpeting company founded by her late husband. The Rabbi, a widower himself, discovers that Theresa finds interest in some of the cultural events that take place at the temple. Soon, a relationship begins in spite of the fact that she is a "shiksa"; a woman not of the Jewish faith! Can this difference make a difference between the two, or will diverse credences get in the way?

This play can be called a romantic comedy in the traditional sense. Unlike romantic comedies depicted in selected media of recent date, this one holds an abundance of charm and wit, rather than an overload of obnoxious antics associated with said comedies of this genre. The characters are genuine and downright believable. Some may be a bit over-the-top, but delivered in a pleasing way.

Playwright Art Shulman, who also performed the lead role, composes his circumstances and dialogue that slowly build up to its quick wittiness; the total opposite of a standard sitcom pattern where joke upon joke is uttered forcing its banter.

Within this production, the pacing takes its time for its series of climaxes to bloom without the notion of becoming draggy. Mike Rademaekers directs the cast of five that proves that comical plays can be just as amusing as they can become rather touching and even bittersweet.

Rounding out the noted cast of five is Sam Aaron as Al Goldbaum, a character that stands out as the major comedy relief playing the Rabbi's best pal, holding on to a not so secret desire of becoming a Jewish cowboy; riding the range while strumming out tunes that sport his passion. The songs, although rather short in length, features a musical score by Aaron with lyrics by Shulman, creating a theater device that can blossom into a full stage musical--or at least a play with musical interludes!

*THE RABBI AND THE SHIKSA* is one of those comical gems that should not be missed. And it doesn't matter if one is Jewish or gentile. There are plenty of moments of repartee and drama for everyone, no matter what faith one subscribes to! It's all about the charisma that sets the pace!

*THE RABBI AND THE SHIKSA*, performs at The Secret Rose Theatre, 11246 Magnolia Blvd., (one block west of Lankershim Blvd.), North Hollywood, until November 18th. Showtimes are Thursday through Saturday nights at 8:00 PM, with Sunday matinees at 2:00 PM. For reservations and information, call (818) 782-4254, or via <http://www.SecretRose.com>