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DOUBTING THOMAS by Art Shulman

Indefatigable playwright Art Shulman (*The Rabbi & the Shiksa*, *Rebecca's Gamble* etc.) has a starring role in his latest opus. He plays a tipling bum who sleeps in the park with his cat, Midnight. He is a man with a past, which is revealed in often unexpected ways. This could be a typical Hallmark Channel offering, which is not meant in a detrimental way, about a middle-class family in dire financial straits. John (Ted Ryan) has lost his job and is behind in his mortgage, which weighs heavily on his part-time working wife, Marilyn (Nancy Van Iderstine). Their son, Dylan (Adam Simon Krist alternating with Ian Hamilton), a typical sullen teenager, is a problematic druggie who needs therapy. To their surprise, they've been left half a million dollars by John's father, who abandoned the family when John was only two years old and hasn't been heard from since. The road to this small fortune is a crooked one, however and comprises the gist of the story.

Directed by Stan Mazin, the action moves easily from the couple's apartment to the park (set by Chris Winfield) and gives the actors plenty of opportunities to display their talents. Shulman is delightful as the feisty geezer who treasures his independence and knows exactly what he wants. Ryan, the husband and father, is a man of honor but is emasculated as the non-breadwinner and frustrated by his boy's behavior. Van Iderstine has the unenviable role of the hard-nosed wife, anxious to become rich and elevate her social status - and who can blame her? Young Krist, who loves his sick kitty, Alfred, more than his immediate family, unexpectedly takes a shine to the old man. He has a terrific scene with Shulman's Thomas, exchanging stories about their pets. This is a well thought-out work, with a heartwarming denouement, which will appeal to all ages in an old-fashioned sort of way, something rare on local stages. It will be treasured by anyone weary of foul language, enigmatic plots and gratuitous violence.

Secret Rose Theatre. 11246 Magnolia Blvd., 1 1/2 blocks west of Lankershim, North Hollywood 91601. Friday & Saturday 8 pm, Sunday 2 pm. \$24, seniors \$ 18, students under 26, \$10. Street parking. (818) 465-3213 or [Doubting Thomas](#) ends 6/21

REVIEWED BY INGRID WILMOT