

AISLE SAY San Francisco

SECRET ORDER

By Bob Clyman

Presented by San Jose Repertory Theatre

Directed by Chris Smith

At San Jose Repertory Theatre

101 Paseo de San Antonio, San Jose, CA / (408) 367-7255

Reviewed by [Judy Richter](#)

If a researcher discovered a way to cure cancer, untold riches and acclaim would await. But wait. What if he discovered that the cure didn't work in its present form? Then what? These are some of the issues raised in "**Secret Order**" by Bob Clyman, being given its regional premiere in a sharp production by **San Jose Repertory Theatre**.

After presenting a paper outlining a theoretical cure, young researcher William Shumway (**James Wagner**) is lured away from his Midwestern lab to a prestigious cancer research institute led by Robert Brock (**Robert Krakovski**). William moves to the company's lab in New York and begins his promising studies on mice. Robert is so mesmerized by the possibilities that he arranges for William to present his findings at a prestigious conference and publish them in the New England Journal of Medicine.

Robert, a fast-talking man not given to listening, brushes aside some of the problems that have arisen. William, a nice but naive man who apparently doesn't want to spoil Robert's good mood, isn't assertive enough to insist that they need to go slower while he tries to resolve some problems. Also figuring into the action is a brash but extremely bright Harvard junior, Alice Curiton (**Kathryn Tkel**), who becomes William's valuable assistant. In the background but eventually pulling strings is 67-year-old Saul Roth (**Julian López-Morillas**), a longtime researcher whom Robert wants to dump. In the end, no one comes out looking very good.

Playwright Clyman raises some important issues as he explores the potential conflicts between pure science and profit, especially since research often takes lots of time and money before an effective, profitable product emerges. And sometimes "effective" and "profitable" are at odds with each other, too.

Director **Chris Smith** and his sharp cast keep the action moving well, especially in the second act as tensions rise. **David Lee Cuthbert**'s scenic and media designs lend a high-tech feel to this staging in the heart of Silicon Valley. Costumes by **B. Modern**, lighting by **Pamila Gray** and sound by **Steve Schoenbeck** also enhance the production.