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## THEATER

# Long Beach Connection offers insight into 'A Splintered Soul'

By Harry Saltzgaver  
[editor@gazettes.com](mailto:editor@gazettes.com)

Belmont Shore's Alan L. Brooks says he is a doctor, not a playwright — and he has a 40-year career as a radiologist to prove it.

Still, he has spent many of those years exploring his Jewish heritage, particularly among Holocaust survivors. He tried writing a book about it.

"I always liked to write; it was easy for me," Brooks said. "As a doctor, I did a lot of writing ... I wrote a book, but it wasn't working. My daughter, a singer-songwriter, inspired me and I tried putting it in a play."

That it is an exploration of the struggles Holocaust survivors face, Brooks said he grew up with survivors from Poland (he was born in 1942), and his wife came from Holland's Jewish community.

"It seems to me that those who survived were the real victims," Brooks said. "The trauma of the experience reverberates."

Brooks said he started trying to shape the saga five years before the first draft came out. "A Splintered Soul" won the 2005 Moondance International Film Festival Award for the best stage play drama, and it premiered at Los Angeles's Odyssey Theatre in 2007. It had a successful off-

'SOUL' » PAGE 13

## 'Soul'

FROM PAGE 3

Broadway run in 2011, and a Midwest premiere at Chicago's Stage 773 in 2016.

International City Theatre opens the play today at the Beverly O'Neill Theater in downtown Long Beach, and Brooks said it is a different play than the one that opened 11 years ago in LA.

"A playwright has a chance to get it right," Brooks said. "That's r-i-g-h-t. You try different things, make changes here and there. I'm trying to put something out there that will survive, that people will see 20 or 30 years from now, and it will mean something."

"We say it has legs," said Marya Mazor, the play's director for ICT. "There's something there for today's audiences. The history of the rise of fascism is relevant now. When do you know it's right to work outside the law? We're living in a time when someone takes a docu-

ment off the president's desk. Who gets the power to decide what's right and what's not?"

Mazor also lives in Long Beach now (Bixby Knolls), and is a prolific director who started her career in New York. She founded the Voice & Vision theater there, running it for 10 years — and showed her versatility by directing Disney stage shows for six years.

Both Mazor and Brooks have known Caryn Desai, ICT's producing artistic director, for years. The partnership to produce the play in Long Beach seems natural, Brooks said.

"We (Brooks and Mazor) have a bond, and not just because we live in Long Beach," he said. "We have a similar family background. We've lived with these questions."

Those questions surround the people in "A Splintered Soul" — a group of Polish Holocaust survivors resettled in 1947 San Francisco trying to come to terms with what they had to do to sur-

vive. Then there's the question of how to move on in a new land.

"There's a lot to talk about with this play, just with what's going on in Israel these days," Brooks said. "I think it is relevant to anyone who has a connection with immigrants, especially with what's going on in society today."

"This is a top-notch L.A. cast, too," Mazor added. "They have a depth of understanding of the material that helps us to understand."

"A Splintered Soul" opens at 8 tonight at the Beverly O'Neill Theater in the Long Beach Performing Arts Center. It continues Thursday through Sunday until Nov. 4; curtain is at 8 p.m. except for 2 p.m. matinees on Sunday.

Tickets are \$47-\$49 except for opening night (\$55). Call 562-436-4610 or go to [InternationalCityTheater.org](https://www.InternationalCityTheater.org) for advance tickets.

Tickets at the door are available at the theater box office.