

May 18–June 3
at The Unicorn Theatre
The Larry Vaber Stage
BTG's Stockbridge Campus
6 East Street, Stockbridge



WHAT THE CONSTITUTION MEANS TO ME

written by Heidi Schreck
directed by Kristen van Ginhoven

A Co-Production with

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What The Constitution Means to Me

by Heidi Schreck
directed by Kristen van Ginhoven +

CAST

Kate Baldwin* as Heidi
Zurie Adams as debater

Jay Sefton* as the Legionnaire
Isabella Brown as debater (alternate)

CREATIVE TEAM

Lara Dubin^
LIGHTING DESIGNER

Caroline Eng
SOUND DESIGNER

Juliana von Haubrich
SCENIC DESIGNER

Kathleen Keane
PRODUCTION ASSISTANT

Talya Kingston
DRAMATURG

Samantha Leahan*
STAGE MANAGER

Shivanna Sooknanan
COSTUME DESIGNER

PRODUCTION TEAM:

Amy Avila
COSTUME COORDINATOR

Cat Cochran
CO-LIGHTING SUPERVISOR/HOUSE ELECTRICIAN

Hope Rose Kelly*
REHEARSAL STAGE MANAGER

Jen Flowers
COMPANY MANAGEMENT ASSOCIATE

Adam Lewis
AUDIO AND PROJECTION SUPERVISOR, IT

Charlotte McGaughy
ASSISTANT COMPANY MANAGER

Wesley Miller
TECHNICAL DIRECTOR

Randall Parsons
PROPS SUPERVISOR

Clara Rimes
SCENIC CHARGE

Kennedy Wilcher
CO-LIGHTING SUPERVISOR

Taneal Williams
COMPANY MANAGER

* member of Actors Equity Association, the Union of Professional Actors and Stage Managers in the United States.

+ member of Stage Directors and Choreographers Society

^ member of United Scenic Artists



What The Constitution Means to Me is presented by arrangement with Concord Theatricals on behalf of Samuel French Inc. www.concordtheatrical.com

Original Broadway Production Produced by:

Diana DiMenna, Aaron Glick, Matt Ross, Madeline Foster Bersin, Myla Lerner, Jon Bierman, Jenna Segal, Catering Markowitz, Jana Shea, Maley-Stolbun-Sussman, Rebecca Gold, Jose Antonio Vargas, Level Forward Cornice Productions, Lassen Wyse Balsam Nederlander Productions, Kate Lear.

What The Constitution Means to Me was commissioned by True Love Productions.

This production originated as part of Summerworks in June and July 2017, produced by Clubbed Thumb in partnership with True Love Productions.

West Coast premiere by Berkeley Repertory Theatre, Berkeley, CA, Tony Taconne, Artistic Director / Susan Medak, Managing Director.

Jim Nicola, Artistic Director, Jeremy Blocker, Managing Director, 2018.

Special thanks to: Turn Hall in Adams, Jayne Benjulian, Len Berkman, Sue Baudoux, and David Dashiell.

Content Advisory: *What the Constitution Means to Me* contains mentions of domestic violence, sexual assault, human trafficking, and discussions of abortion and its stigmatization. For immediate help call the Elizabeth Freeman Center 24/7 toll-free hotline: 1-866-401-2425.

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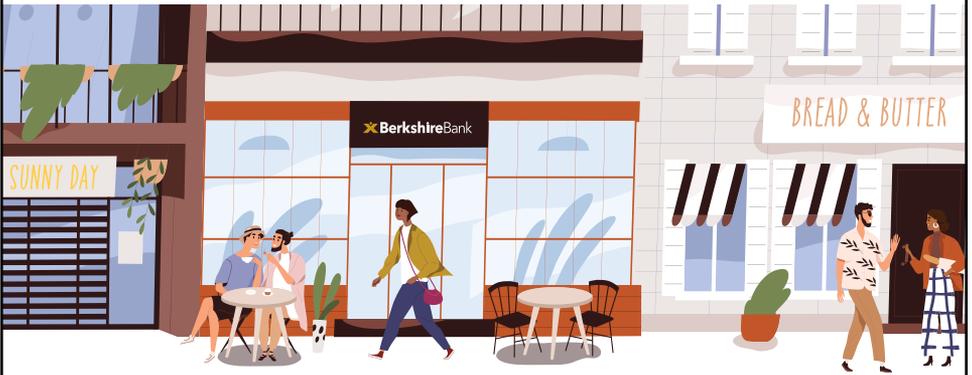
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Land Acknowledgement

As part of WAM Theatre's commitment to acknowledging and working towards building relationships with the Indigenous Tribes, Nations and Peoples on whose land we live and work, we begin all our public gatherings with a land acknowledgement.

It is with gratitude and humility that we acknowledge that we are working, performing, and gathering on the Ancestral Homelands of the Mohican people, who are the Indigenous peoples of this land. Despite tremendous hardship in being forced from here, today their community resides in Wisconsin and is known as the [Stockbridge-Munsee Community](#).

We pay honor and respect to their Ancestors past and present, as we commit to building a more inclusive and equitable space for all.

Do you know about the Indigenous lands you live and work on?

Find out at: <https://native-land.ca/>

Please join us in taking action steps in reparation and solidarity.

Some suggestions can be found on WAM's [Land Acknowledgement webpage](#).



Kristen van Ginhoven's Notes on *What The Constitution Means To Me*



Everything in my career has led to me directing this play at this time.

I used to have a business card that said "Kristen van Ginhoven, human being."

I thrive on theatre experiences that feel alive.

I believe in art as a powerful tool for social justice.

I see theatre as a political force.

I have learned, as Heidi says in the play, that who we are now may not be who we will become.

I trust the future is up to us and our engagement as citizens.

I am convinced we all have the ability to participate in the national dialogue in healthy and productive ways.

I recognize the future is better for being diverse and inclusive and led by people like Zurie and Izzy, our extraordinary debaters.

In Heidi Schreck's play the simple, generous act of storytelling creates a world of curiosity and openness, where debate is a laboratory for activism, where a deeply personal story sets its sights on both necessary ancestral healing and matters of civic importance.

When WAM Theatre received the rights to this play, I knew I wanted to direct it myself.

I am so grateful to be co-producing with Berkshire Theatre Group and for the enthusiasm of Kate Maguire and her staff, and for the talent of these extraordinary artists, led by the luminous Kate Baldwin.

We are grateful for this connection with you. We hope this play gives you hope about the survival of our democracy and faith in our future.

Thank you for being part of this civic act with us. The rest is up to us.

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Molly Merrihew's Welcome from WAM



Hello Friends and Collaborators,

WAM Theatre is thrilled you are joining us for this trail-blazing and timely piece of theatre. It has been a joy partnering with Berkshire Theatre Group to bring it life here in the Berkshires, especially in this intimate space. We are also honored to uplift the life-saving work of the Elizabeth Freeman Center through telling this story, and by donating a portion of our box office to their vital work.

We hope you will join WAM next for our 2023 Fresh Takes Play Reading Series, three new groundbreaking plays to be performed on Sunday afternoons this July at The Mount in Lenox. These dynamic new works by women (including our very own Associate Artistic Director Talya Kingston!) explore complex and intersectional identities that make up contemporary America. Finally, this fall we will host a special cabaret at Shakespeare & Company in Lenox. This one-week-only event will feature Broadway tunes that highlight the dreamers and change-makers who inspire us to move mountains and tap our toes.

WAM turns 15 next year! Can you believe it? Traditionally celebrated as the crystal anniversary symbolizing lightness, clarity, and durability, it's a fitting and beautiful touchstone for WAM as we enter this next phase of growth and embody that enduring luminescence.

Our mission is to create theatre with a focus on the stories of people who identify as women and to use that art as activism to support opportunities for women and girls. This work has never been more vital. Thank you for helping us create those opportunities for women and girls by being here today.

With gratitude,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Molly". The script is fluid and cursive.

Molly Merrihew,
Managing Director, WAM Theatre



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Activities, Resources & Post-Show Conversation Starters as found in our production study guide:



Playwright Heidi Schreck Invites you into the Conversation.

What the Constitution Means to Me is a memoir play that actor-playwright Heidi Schreck wrote in 2017 to perform herself. As a teenager she had earned money for college by giving speeches and engaging in debates about the U.S. Constitution in American Legion Halls across the country. The play starts in a hall in Heidi's hometown of Wenshatche, Washington, where she attempts to recreate her writing speech and to understand what made her love the Constitution so much. Heidi starts to inhabit her teenage self and gives her stump speech, but eventually her adult self's need to comment and explain breaks through.

In the published script, Heidi encourages other actors performing the role to "establish a genuine and spontaneous connection with the audience." This open structure leads into a second part of the play which is a live debate. At this point the "fourth wall" between the actors and audience breaks down and the actors become their real selves in the present time. Heidi encourages performers to "allow whatever might be happening in the country that day to affect their performance." After the live debate, each audience is asked to vote on whether or not we should abolish the constitution and start again.



Somebody actually said to me, "Your play's really radical when people abolish the Constitution, and it feels less radical when they don't." So don't you want to try to control that in some way? And I was like, "The whole point of the play is that I don't control it. It's a civic act. We decide as a community how to move forward. So I don't get to decide whether it's more or less radical as the end." Heidi Schreck (quoted in Culture Magazine, March 3, 2018)

A video interview with Heidi Schreck can be found at: wamtheatre.com/production-programming

This study guide is made possible by the generous support of our funders including



Scan for study guide

The Constitution of the United States of America.

The Constitution of the United States was adopted in 1789 as the supreme law of the United States of America. Originally comprising seven articles, it delineates the national framework and constraints of government. The Constitutions first three articles embody the doctrine of the separation of powers, whereby the federal government is divided into three branches: the legislative (the congress), the executive (the president), and the judicial (the federal courts). Articles 4-6 describe the rights and responsibilities of state governments in relation to the federal government, and the shared process for constitutional amendment. Article 7 establishes the procedure that was used by the original 13 states to ratify it.

The United States Constitution is the oldest and longest-standing written and codified national constitution in force in the world today. Since the constitution was ratified in 1789, it has been amended 27 times. The first ten amendments, known collectively as the Bill of Rights, offer specific protections of liberty and justice and place restrictions on the powers of government within the US States. The majority of the 19 later amendments expand individual civil rights protection. The last time the constitution was amended was in 1992 and there are currently six unratified amendments (including the Equal Rights Amendment that would prohibit discrimination on the basis of gender).

The Ninth Amendment (Ratified and certified in 1791) states that the list of rights enumerated in the Constitution is not exhaustive, and that the people retain all rights not enumerated. In other words, the rights of the people are not limited to just the rights listed in the Constitution. The Ninth Amendment hasn't often been the basis for Supreme Court decisions, but when it has, it often centers on issues of privacy, such as marital privacy and contraception in Griswold v. Connecticut (1965). The Ninth Amendment has also been criticized for being so vague that it is unhelpful in identifying and affirming which rights should be included in its protection.

The Fourteenth Amendment was ratified and certified in 1868, after the Civil War, to protect the citizenship rights of formerly enslaved people by declaring that all persons born or naturalized in the United States are citizens. The Fourteenth Amendment addresses many aspects of birth and frequently litigated – phrase in the amendment is "equal protection of the laws", which figures prominently in a wide variety of landmark cases, including Brown v. Board of Education (racial discrimination), Roe v. Wade (reproductive rights), Bush v. Gore (election recount), Reed v. Reed (gender discrimination), and University of California v. Bakke (racial quotas in education).

"The Constitution is a living document. That is what is so beautiful about it. It is a living, warm-blooded, steamy document. It is not a patchwork quilt. It is hot and sweaty. It is a crucible."

A constitution quiz, word search, and crossword puzzle can be found at: constitutionfacts.com

Crucible: (1) a ceramic or metal container in which metals or other substances may be melted or subjected to very high temperatures, or as a figurative sense: "a crucible cauldron" (2) a situation or event that leads to or in which different elements interact, leading to the creation of something new or as Heidi states "It's a severe test of patience or belief."

QUESTION: One of Heidi's competitors describes the Constitution not as a crucible, but as a patchwork quilt. Which of these do you feel is the most compelling analogy? What image(s) would you use to describe the US Constitution?

Positive Rights versus Negative Rights

A **Positive Right** requires others to provide a service or act in a certain way towards you. For example: right to information, right to employment, right to housing, right to social security, consumer rights, right to health care.

A **Negative Right** ensures the individual's natural freedom to act while not requiring anyone to act on behalf of another. For example: right to freedom, right to live with dignity, rights against torture, rights related to justice, rights against exploitation.

The United States Constitution is primarily a negative rights constitution.

Activity

Choose one of the amendments to the US Constitution and think of a way that it has affected your life or the lives of your family members.

Do you feel included in and protected by the amendment or not?

Write a story or monologue explaining this connection.

Theatre as Civic Engagement

Early in her play, Heidi Schreck notes that in the set - constructed from her memory of the American Legion Hall in Wenatchee, Washington - she “forgot” to put in a door. This seemingly small comic detail has larger implications: the only exit available to her is through the audience. In other words, once the story has begun, her only way to get through it is to trust the audience and democratic process to receive the story and be activated. Art meeting activism... it’s the perfect WAM play.



Look carefully at the scenic model depicted above; you’ll notice the lack of doors. Exits and entrances are one of the key elements that scenic designers have to consider in crafting pathways through the space for the director and actors to use. The doorless set upends and constrains the story. Heidi’s self-deprecating description of the space as “like one of those crime-victim drawings” later takes on a haunting relevance. In one of our first design meetings, Scenic Designer Juliana von Haubrich set out her vision of the space as not just a literal reconstruction of an American Legion Hall, but as a reconstruction of Heidi’s memories or dreams (with all the incongruities that this implies).

Heidi enters the stage with the seemingly simple motivation: to recreate her winning teenage Constitutional debate speech in order to reclaim her trust in the United States founding documents, a trust that has been undermined in the intervening years. For those of us who have experienced similar feelings, this production creates a vital civic space for us to reflect on the protections of the constitution and whether they hold space for all of us or just for the minority of white male property owners who wrote it. By sharing her family's personal stories, Heidi cracks open a space for all of us to consider our responsibility to uphold, improve and re-constitute the democracy we live in.

Without putting us on the spot, this production slowly permeates the audience - bringing a young person from our community for a live debate, asking us to interact with the debaters and act as judge, handing out constitutions for us to take home to continue to think about, and even giving us a space to influence the following night's performance. The message is clear: it is not enough to listen, you are part of the story, and we all leave through the same exit - together.

As part of WAM's ongoing activism, we are proud that this co-production with Berkshire Theatre Group will be raising awareness and funds for the Elizabeth Freeman Center. This social-justice organization provides vital resources for people experiencing domestic and sexual violence in our region. Survivors of the kind of domestic violence that Heidi shares in the play often feel invisible and gaslit by a society that would rather not see. Thank you for taking the time to listen, to engage and to share stories in community.



**Talya Kingston, Production Dramaturg
& WAM Theatre Associate Artistic Director.**

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playreading series



hollow roots

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Sunday July 16



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by *Talya Kingston*

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by *Jessica Kahkoska*

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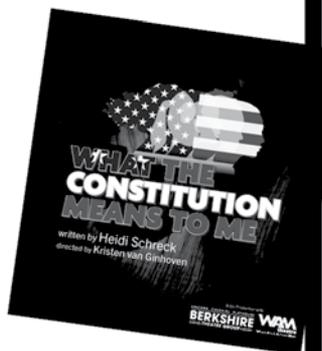


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*"We are honored to be the recipient of a portion of WAM's proceeds for *What the Constitution Means to Me*," Executive Director Janis Broderick said. "Elizabeth Freeman Center envisions a community free from domestic and sexual violence in which all people live in safety and justice with dignity, and we are fortunate to be able to do this work with the support of great community partners like WAM and Berkshire Theatre Group."*



Each year since its inception in 2010, WAM has donated a portion of the proceeds from ticket sales from their main stage production to an organization(s) whose mission connects to the theme of the play. Even at the height of the pandemic when productions moved online, WAM remained committed to fulfilling this key element of their mission. They are thrilled that for *What the Constitution Means To Me*, Berkshire Theatre Group will join in making a gift to Elizabeth Freeman Center in honor of the Center's wonderful work, especially with women and girls of Berkshire County.



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ABOUT WAM THEATRE



WAM Theatre is a professional theatre company based in Berkshire County, MA, that operates at the intersection of arts and activism. WAM creates theatre for gender equity and has a vision of theatre as philanthropy. In fulfillment of its philanthropic mission, WAM donates a portion of the proceeds from their Mainstage productions to carefully selected beneficiaries. Since WAM's founding in 2010, they have donated more than \$85,000 to 25 local and global organizations taking action for gender equity in areas such as girls education, teen pregnancy prevention, sexual trafficking awareness, midwife training, and more. For more information, visit www.wamtheatre.com



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The Colonial Theatre, founded in 1903, and Berkshire Theatre Festival, founded in 1928, are two of the oldest cultural organizations in the Berkshires. In 2010, under the leadership of Artistic Director and CEO Kate Maguire, the two organizations merged to form Berkshire Theatre Group (BTG). Berkshire Theatre Group's mission is to support wide ranging artistic exploration and acclaimed performances in theatre, dance, music and entertainment. Every year, BTG produces and presents performances to over 68,000 attendees and, through our Educational Program, serves over 11,000 Berkshire County school children annually. In July 2020, Berkshire Theatre was the first company in the United States to earn approval from Actors' Equity Association to produce a musical (Godspell) in the wake of the COVID-19 Pandemic.

JUNE 15–JULY 1
at The Unicorn Theatre
The Larry Vaber Stage



PHOTOGRAPH
51

by Anna Ziegler
directed by David Auburn
featuring David Adkins and Rebecca Brooksher

JUNE 27–JULY 16
at The Colonial Theatre



MILLION DOLLAR QUARTET

inspired by ELVIS PRESLEY, JOHNNY CASH,
JERRY LEE LEWIS and CARL PERKINS
direction and choreography by Greg Santos
music direction by Colin Summers

WORLD PREMIERE
JULY 12–29
at The Unicorn Theatre
The Larry Vaber Stage



THE SMILE OF HER

written and performed by Christine Lahti
direction and dramaturgy by Robert H. Egan

JULY 29–30
at The Colonial Theatre



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direction by Katie Birenboim
music direction by Jacob Kerzner

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WORLD PREMIERE
AUG. 12–SEPT. 2
at The Unicorn Theatre
The Larry Vaber Stage



On Cedar Street
a Musical

music direction by Kristin Stowell
choreography and associate direction by Terry Berliner
direction by Susan H. Schulman

DECEMBER 7–23
at The Unicorn Theatre
The Larry Vaber Stage



A Christmas Carol

by Charles Dickens
adapted by Eric Hill

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by Rajiv Joseph
July 6 - 16



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