

WAM & BTG, Stockbridge, MA

What the Constitution Means To Me by Heidi Schreck.

Directed by Kristen van Ginhoven.

Reviewed by J. Peter Bergman.

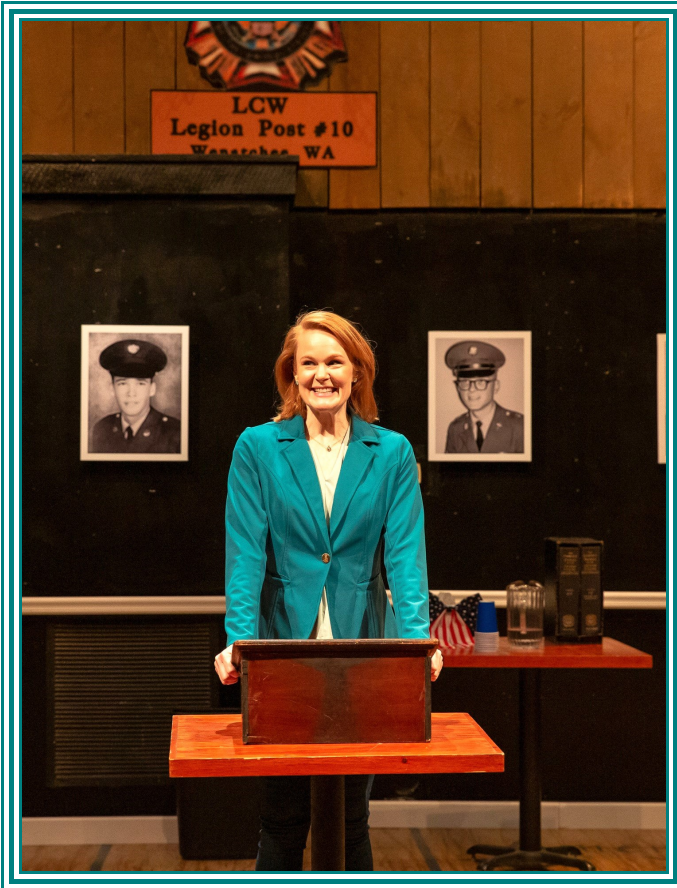
“I loved it as a fifteen-year-old.”

Not exactly a play; more a polemic: “What the Constitution Means To Me” is a very theatrical experience about one woman’s lifelong interest in, and belief in, and obsession over the USA’s masterwork. Kate Baldwin plays Heidi Schreck and plays her as an honest-to-God real life character, a woman who can talk, or argue, the document and its history, its meaning, its value and its values all night long. In Baldwin’s playing the woman is endlessly fascinating. She is also monomaniacal. After an hour and twenty minutes she begins to get repetitious and boring. Bring in another character and let them verbally swing at each other for a while. That should enliven the proceedings. It actually does just that and Baldwin, now Kate not Heidi, and Zurie debate the topic for a while, then they answer questions posed by the previous night’s audience. The End.



Jay Sefton, Kate Baldwin, Zunie Adams; Photo: David Dashiell

It is Kate Baldwin’s stage from beginning to end. That’s not a bad thing, not by a long



Kate Baldwin; Photo: Emma K. Rothenberg-Ware

shot. She is an actress about whom I have said she could read the phone book and keep me interested. Now I know she actually could. Her Heidi has made the document her touchstone And used it as a conveyance through life, winning money with it to take her through college, keeping her interest alive to get her through the inconveniences of a life with little else to make her happy (oh, there is a stuffed toy monkey as well.

She is joined on stage by Jay Sefton as the moderator. He is all business and like Baldwin, he reverts to himself before the show ends. This final, scripted change is quirky and odd, especially on a very realistic set designed by Juliana von Haubrich. The introduction of a young woman, played by and as, Zurie Adams, completes the picture. It is proclaimed that the final confrontation between Baldwin and Adams is improvised and real, but if so the dialogue sounds just like the rest of the script.

Kristen van Ginhoven has directed the piece in as natural and realistic a manner as possible so when Baldwin reverts to her true self there is no surprise in it. Instead there is a comfort in knowing this is not going to be a show we have to judge. Instead it is just a welcome warning about a subject that is even more relevant today than it was when the show was first produced. It is a time when the constitution is under a death-watch promoted by the most recent former President. You might say that what it means to me is the preservation of the country I grew up in and love and am trying to keep hold of every day, not just the night I saw this piece of theater.

What the Constitution Means To Me is a co-production of WAM Theatre and Berkshire Theatre Group. It plays at the Unicorn Theatre on Route Seven in Stockbridge, MA through June 4. For information and tickets call 413-997-4444 or go to www.berkshiretheatregroup.org.



Jay Sefton; Photo: David Dashiell