



2023 2024 SEASON

WHAT THE CONSTITUTION MEANS TO ME BY HEIDI SCHRECK

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

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"Equality of rights under the law shall not be denied or abridged by the United States or by any state on account of sex." – Section 1, Equal Rights Amendment

A Note from the Managing Artistic Director

Welcome to SLO REP's production of Heidi Schreck's What the Constitution Means to Me!

This play took the theatre world by storm when it premiered on Broadway in 2019, garnering two Drama League Awards, two Drama Desks, an Outer Critics Circle Award, and a Lucille Lortel Award. When theatres began to reopen their doors in 2021, *Constitution* began playing regionally to soldout houses and extended runs across the nation. SLO REP is thrilled to have been given the rights to produce it in our intimate venue in 2024.



What the Constitution Means to Me centers around Heidi

Schreck's own experiences participating in constitutional debate competitions as a teenager. Drawing from her personal history, Schreck offers a candid and intimate reflection on the Constitution's evolving significance in her life and in the lives of American citizens. As she revisits her past performances and engages in contemporary discussions about constitutional law and justice, the play deftly navigates themes of gender, race, privilege, and the enduring struggle for equality.

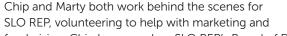
We invite you to engage with the ideas and questions raised by Heidi Schreck's powerful exploration of American democracy. Through laughter, tears, and moments of profound insight, our hope is that this production inspires you to consider the significance of the Constitution in your own life and in the ongoing pursuit of justice and equality for all. Thank you for being a part of this vital conversation.

Thank you for coming to the theatre today!,

Kevin Harris (Managing Artistic Director) grew up on the Central Coast performing with many local theatre groups, including the San Luis Obispo Little Theatre. He went on to study at the Tisch School at NYU and at the Atlantic Theatre Company. He was the Artistic Director of San Luis Obispo's first professional theatre, Centerpoint Theatre Group and the Theatre Manager of the Contemporary Art Center in New Orleans. He received his Master of Fine Arts in Directing from the University of Iowa and worked throughout the country and in the Middle East directing and as a collaborator on original plays. He has taught at the University of Iowa, University of Chicago, and has led dozens of workshops on *A Practical Handbook for the Actor* across the country. Kevin feels privileged to be part of bringing live theatre to San Luis Obispo.

Show Sponsor Marty Claus & Chip Visci

In their careers as newspaper journalists, Chip and Marty lived in Detroit, Miami and San Jose, appreciating the vibrant arts scene in each city. Having made their home in Shell Beach since 2005, they appreciate the "unforgettable characters and extraordinary stories" in SLO REP's Mainstage productions and UBU's staged readings.



fundraising. Chip has served on SLO REP's Board of Directors since 2017.

They enthusiastically support SLO REP's plans to build a new theatre. And they agree that "live theatre's powerful storytelling connects people in ways that open the mind, nourish the soul and illuminate our shared humanity."

Thanks to SLO REP for putting on shows that make us think, laugh, and sing along – with extra applause for Kevin Harris, who makes every season better than the last.

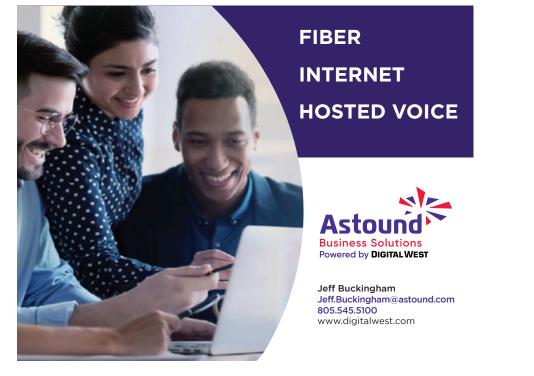


Michael & Maryellen Simkins

Maryellen and Michael Simkins have been Los Osos residents since 1987. Michael served nine years as principal of Baywood Elementary School before being lured away to Silicon Valley to help schools and hightech companies figure out how to best use technology to improve education. Maryellen spent over 16 years as the administrator at local law firm Andre, Morris & Buttery. Though retired from their full-time careers, both remain very active. Maryellen is an emeritus board member of both the PCPA Foundation (PCPA – Pacific Conservatory Theatre) and the Foundation for



the Performing Arts Center (FPAC). She currently serves on the board of directors for Orchestra Novo. Michael enjoys his current work as Executive Director of Spokes, San Luis Obispo County's nonprofit support center. He is immediate past president of the SLO REP board of directors and continues to serve on the SLO REP board and Campaign Steering Committee.







About the Author

Heidi Schreck is a playwright, screenwriter and performer living in Brooklyn. Her most recent play *What the Constitution Means to Me* was named a Pulitzer Prize finalist and won the New York Drama Critics' Circle Award for Best American Play. Schreck also received two Tony Award nominations for *What the Constitution Means to Me* for Best Play and Best Performance by an Actress in a Leading Role in a Play, the 2019 Smithsonian Magazine American Ingenuity Award, the Horton Foote Playwriting Award, the Hull-Warriner Award, and an OBIE. *A filmed version of What the Constitution Means to Me*, starring Schreck, premiered exclusively on Amazon Prime Video, and was nominated for a Critics Choice Award, a PGA Award, and a DGA Award. Heidi's other plays include *Grand Concourse, Creature, Mr. Universe*, and *There Are No More Big Secrets*. Her screenwriting credits include *I Love Dick, Billions*, and *Nurse Jackie*. Schreck has taught playwriting and screenwriting at NYU, Columbia, Kenyon College, and Primary Stages.



About the Show

Author Heidi Schreck first thought about writing a play like *What the Constitution Means to Me* in the 1990s. Although the premise of the play is based on Schreck's own life, she did not initially set out to write a role for herself. Her initial motives included getting Americans to consider contemporary judicial issues through the lens of the Constitution itself, and to provide grounds for conversation of those issues facing women today. When asked about the concept of victimhood in her play, Schreck stated, "...stories hold our cure."

"A brilliantly crafted show, harrowing and funny and humane, that accesses the political through the deeply personal."

– New York Magazine

What the Constitution Means to Me was first produced at the Wild Project, in Summerworks, Clubbed Thumb's (New York City) festival for new plays in June to July 2017 in a co-production with True Love Productions. In 2018, the play was presented at Berkeley Repertory Theatre with direction by Oliver Butler. An Off-Broadway production of the play premiered at the New York Theatre Workshop on September 12, 2018, before moving to the Greenwich House on November 27, where it closed on December 30, 2018. A limited Broadway run of the play began on March 14, 2019, at the Hayes Theatre. The run was extended twice with a final closing date of August 24, 2019.

"A charming and incisive analysis of gender and racial biases inherent to the U.S. Constitution that examines how this living document could evolve to fit modern America."

– 2019 Pulitzer Prize Committee

Nominated for two Tony Awards and winner of an OBIE for Best New American Play, *What the Constitution Means to Me* was a finalist for the 2019 Pulitzer Prize for Drama.



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Guest Artist Housing Program

SLO REP's Guest Artist Housing Program matches our incredible actors and directors with generous hosts in our area for the duration of their time working at the theatre. Actors, directors, and other guest artists travel to San Luis Obispo from all over the country to appear on our stage. From the first rehearsals through closing weekend, our guest artists need a place to stay. Guest Artist Hosts provide comfortable housing for our artists for stays of two weeks to two months while these individuals share their time and talents with our community.

Our Guest Artist Hosts play a crucial role in keeping alive the vision of our vibrant performing arts organization and become an integral part of a guest artist's experience by welcoming them into their home or property, often forging lifelong friendships in the process. We truly cannot thank our hosts enough for making our visiting artists feel at home on our stage and in our community.

We are grateful for these individuals and families who have so generously opened their homes to our guest artists and supported this program in our 77th Season.

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If you would like more information about housing a SLO REP guest artist or supporting this program, please contact Suzy Newman, Production Manager.

suzy@slorep.org // (805) 781-3889, ext. 17.

A Message from Heidi Schreck and Zakiya Thomas

Did you hear the good news? In January 2020, Virginia became the final state needed to ratify the Equal Rights Amendment. The Constitution requires three-fourths of the states to ratify, and Virginia put us over that threshold. But before Virginia's historic vote, other states sued to stop the process. The Department of Justice under President Trump supported blocking the ERA, a position that continues to this day. Our hope is that the White House or Congress will direct the U.S. Archivist to certify the ERA, or that she will certify under her own authority. (The Archivist is the government official who tracks amendments to our Constitution.)



Heidi Schreck

For an equitable future, we need our foundational document to include all of us. "Equality of Rights under the law shall not be denied or abridged by the United States or by any state on account of sex." That's the language proposed by Congress in 1972 and approved by the necessary number of states. Your pocket constitution should include this new amendment!



Why is certification important? Think about birth certificates. Your existence is the best proof that you were born, but you still need to provide your birth certificate to access certain fundamental things like state IDs or marriage licenses. Similarly, we know the requirements of Article V have been fulfilled, but we need the Executive Branch (the Archivist specifically) to certify and publish the ERA as part of the Constitution. Then, this new tool can be used by lawyers and advocates like you to fight for equal rights for everyone. Imagine the possibilities! What next? Either the President directs the Archivist to publish, or Congress passes a resolution telling the Archivist to publish. The ERA Coalition endorses calling on both our President and Congress to affirm that the Equal Rights Amendment is fully ratified and must be certified. In other words, Congress or the President can declare that the ERA is now an active part of our Constitution.

Learn more at www.eracoalition.org/take-action

We hope you enjoy the show!

Heidi Schreck Advisory Board Member, ERA Coalition Playwright, *What the Constitution Means to Me*

zahize (13

Zakiya Thomas President and CEO, ERA Coalition

What is the full text of the Equal Rights Amendment?

SECTION 1

Equality of rights under the law shall not be denied or abridged by the United States or by any state on account of sex.

SECTION 2

The Congress shall have the power to enforce, by appropriate legislation, the provisions of this article.

SECTION 3

This amendment shall take effect two years after the date of ratification.

Zakiya Thomas

WHAT THE CONSTITUTION MEANS TO ME

BY HEIDI SCHRECK

Original Broadway Production Produced by Diana DiMenna, Aaron Glick, Matt Ross, Madeleine Foster Bersin, Myla Lerner/Jon Bierman, Jenna Segal/Catherine 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 produced by Berkeley Repertory Theatre, Berkeley, CA, Tony Taccone, Artistic Director | Susan Medak, Managing Director.

What the Constitution Means to Me had its Off-Broadway premiere in New York City at New York Theatre Workshop, Jim Nicola, Artistic Director / Jeremy Blocker, Managing Director, 2018

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

Setting

An American Legion Hall in a small, rural town. The present and 1989.

Cast of Characters

Heidi Suzy Newman
The LegionnaireMike Mesker
The DebatorJamie Collins

This performance will run approximately two hours including a 10 minute intermission.

Production Team

Director	Kevin Harris
Stage Manager	Gigi Bjork-Nelson
Costume Design	Barbara Harvey Abbott
Scene Design	Dave Linfield
Sound & Lighting Design	Kevin Harris
Additional Material	Danny Wolohan
Production Manager	Suzy Newman
Set Construction & Painting	Lisa Langere, Greg Peters,
	Bob Rice, Larry Bolef, Valerie Pallai
Volunteer Director & House Manager	Brian Lampert

Special Thanks

Thank you to the League of Women Voters SLO County for their generous support in underwriting the pocket Constitutions distributed during the show.

The videotaping or making of electronic or other audio and/or visual recordings of this production and distributing recordings or streams in any medium, including the internet, is strictly prohibited, a violation of the author's rights and actionable under United States copyright law.For more information, please visit: https://concordtheatricals.com/resources/protecting-artists.

About the Cast



Suzy Newman (Heidi) was last seen earlier this season as the singing, dancing Sister Hubert in Nunsense. Other credits on the SLO REP stage (literally in her top 3 places on Earth to be) are Nora in A Doll's House, Hazel in the nuclear power plant comedy The Children, The Complete Works of William Shakespeare (abridged), Always, Patsy Cline (Louise), Blithe Spirit (Madame Arcati), The Glass Menagerie (Amanda), The House of Blue Leaves (Bananas), The Search for Signs of Intelligent Life in the Universe, Annie (Miss Hannigan.) Other West Coast credits: Oregon Cabaret Theatre, PCPA - Pacific Conservatory Theatre, and a long history with The Great American Melodrama. Suzy will direct the upcoming production of 9 to 5: The Musical; the final show of SLO REP's 77th Season. She also has a writing collaboration opening down the road at The Melodrama in May. Thank you so much for coming to the theatre today, and for telling your friends to follow in your footsteps.

About the Cast





Jamie Collines (The Debator) is so excited to return to the SLO REP stage! She made her SLO REP debut last summer playing Ugly's mother, Ida, in the ACT production of Honk! Jr. Credits at SLO High School include Mamma Mia (Tanya), Sense and Sensibility (Fanny) and The Little Mermaid (Sebastian). She recently rediscovered her passion for the arts and is eager to take any opportunities that present themselves! She gives a big thanks to her family for supporting her, and her friends for always making her feel welcome in the theatre community!

Mike Mesker (The Legionnaire) is really missing his mom who would've loved this show. A 23-year veteran of the SLO REP stage, his favorite productions include A Christmas Story, The Fantasticks, A Funny Thing Happened on the Way to the Forum, The Producers, The Drowsy Chaperone, The Foreigner, The 25th Annual Putnam County Spelling Bee, Take Me Out, My Fair Lady, The Full Monty, and Cabaret. He encourages a repeal of the Patriot Act for a deeper appreciation of the Constitution and, as always, sends love and thanks to The Clapper!



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About the Production Team



Gigi Bjork-Nelson (Stage Manager) is a local Stage Manager/ Artist and a recent graduate of the Cal Poly Theatre and Dance department. She has been working with SLO REP as a Stage Manager for a few years now and some of her recent credits include *Steel Magnolias* (2022), *Xanadu* (2022), and *Beehive – The 60's Musical* (2024). She is grateful to be a part of a show as important as *What the Constitution Means to Me* with these incredible people, and she hopes you enjoy the show!



Barbara Harvey Abbott (Costume Design) designed the fun and fabulous *Beehive* cast and band and is excited to be continuing in the SLO REP 2023-2024 Season! She received her MFA in Costume Design and Technology from Indiana University. Locally, Barbara has also designed for Opera SLO and Central Coast Gilbert & Sullivan and worked as a Cutter/ Draper at PCPA. She currently teaches costume construction at Cuesta College. In addition to costuming, she enjoys raising her four young daughters with her husband, Ben Abbott, and has a passion for fermenting foods and exploring the art of hand sewing and visible mending.



Dave Linfield (Scenic Design) has designed and built nearly all of SLO REP's Mainstage productions over the past 15 years. The theatre bug bit him in 1990 when an audition notice for a community theatre production caught his fancy. Over the years, he migrated from performing onstage to working behind the scenes, embracing technical stagecraft as his true calling. Dave's educational background in graphic design and his work experience in retail display and housing construction have blended together in distinctive ways to fuel his passion for designing and building sets.



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Many thanks to these generous donors supporting SLO REP's Capital Campaign to build a new theatre in downtown San Luis Obispo. Your generous donations mean the world to us. We are so excited about the positive impact our new downtown theatres will have, and we are incredibly grateful to have you standing by our side.

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All donations listed have been pledged or received as of March 4, 2024.

For more information, please contact Patty Thayer at (805) 781-3889, ext. 15 or email patty@slorep.org.

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Every effort has been made to ensure the accuracy of this list. If you have any questions about your listing, please contact Patty Thayer at **patty@slorep.org**.

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Annual Fund – Ticket sales provide only about 60% of what it takes to make live, local theatre thrive. Your generous gifts support professional live theatre and vibrant educational programs through ACT all year long.

A New Stage – We're building A New Stage in downtown SLO! Play a part in building the future of live theatre on the Central Coast and help make this dream a reality.

Donors of \$1,000 or more will receive an invitation to our Annual Donor Reception and Season Preview on March 17, 2024.

For more information, please contact Patty Thayer at **patty@slorep.org** or call (805) 592-3190.

Find out more and donate



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Special Remembrances



In Memory of Dr. Brendan "Ben" McAdams Ben McAdams served on SLO REP's Capital Campaign Steering and Lead Gifts Committees. He was a generous supporter and fearless fundraiser for SLO REP and many, many other nonprofit organizations in SLO County. His smile, his presence, his sense of humor, his no-nonsense manner and his big, big heart will be extraordinarily

> In Memory of John Baer Becky Baer Patty & David Thayer

missed by all who knew him.

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Everyone can leave a legacy. Great or small, planned gifts through your financial or estate plans make a big difference. Your future gift may provide tax benefits for you or your loved ones and will ensure that the enjoyment and enrichment you've experienced at SLO REP is available to our community for years to come.

Please join us in a round of applause for our Legacy Society members whose foresight and generosity will keep live theatre going strong in downtown San Luis Obispo for years to come.

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Choosing the right planned gift depends on your personal circumstances and goals. Please consult your financial advisor, then contact us about joining SLO REP's Legacy Society. Benefits include exclusive invitations to special events, priority seating for all shows with personal assistance from SLO REP staff and a listing in our playbill. If you've already included SLO REP in your future plans, please let us know. We want to honor and celebrate your generous gifts TODAY!

Building the Future

Thanks to the foresight, generosity and determination of Dr. Bernhard Singsen, SLO REP has established an endowment fund for the future of live theatre in downtown SLO. This fund will grow as we grow, providing security and future funding, ensuring that this organization continues to survive and thrive for years to come.

Endowment Fund Donors

Pam & Mitch Nichter Dr. Bernhard Singsen

For more information about how you can build the future of live theatre in downtown SLO, please contact **Patty Thayer** at **(805)592-3190** or **patty@slorep.org**.

_O REP's Academy of TIVE THEATRE

GET INTO THE ACT!

RINKLE IN TIME - 2023

Imagination. Expression. Connection. Register at slorep.org or call (805) 781-3889 x 14 Generous tuition scholarships always available.

SLO REP's Academy of Creative Theatre offers year-round professional theatre arts training and performance opportunities in a lively, supportive, and challenging environment for students of all skill levels ages 3-18. All ACT programs are taught by professional teaching artists, and promote the emotional, physical, educational, and social development of young people.

And this season, we have MORE camps and classes than ever before!

All ACT classes and camps take place at our new headquarters at 3533 Empleo Street in San Luis Obispo.

- * Pre-K drama classes
- * After-school classes for ages 5-18
- School-break and summer camps
- **ACT Season Sponsors** Ann Robinson Catherine & **Richard Luckett**
- * Two full productions on the SLO REP stage
- * Specialized workshops
- * And more!

* Additional performance

ACT Technology Sponsor

Susan Minker

opportunities

* Teen internships

ACT Scholarship Support

San Luis Obispo lechanics Bank



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...and more!

Members

Jay Beck Jerry Chirpich **Keith George Richard Luckett Kevin Magon** Susan Minker

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Patty Thayer Director of Development & Capital Campaign

Suzy Newman **Production Manager**

Dave Linfield

Scenic Designer

Manager

Contact

Box Office: (805) 786-2440 boxoffice@slorep.org Business Office: (805) 781-3889

Box Office Hours

Wed-Fri 3 pm – 6 pm Show Saturdays 3 pm – 5 pm Will Call open 1 hour before every show

Mission

SLO REP strengthens theatre's cultural influence and enriches the Central Coast by producing professional theatre, nurturing artists and providing theatre education for children and adults.

Downtown Venue Address

San Luis Obispo, CA 93401

Empleo Street Headquarters

San Luis Obispo, CA 93401

San Luis Obispo, CA 93406

888 Morro Street

3533 Empleo Street

Mailing Address

PO Box 122

Our Belief

Live theatre's powerful storytelling connects people in ways that open the mind, nourish the soul and illuminate our shared humanity.

Vision

To be a nationally recognized regional theatre that:

- Produces professional theatrical productions in a state-of-the-art facility.
- Strengthens the cultural vitality of the Central Coast, entertains audiences, nurtures artists, and cultivates future generations of theatre enthusiasts.
- Creates a strong and sustainable economic impact, attracting residents and visitors to downtown San Luis Obispo.

Our Commitment

Theatre plays a vital role in our culture and our community and has a responsibility to enact positive change through its work, practices, educational programs and policies. We at SLO REP are committed to diversity, equity and inclusion in all aspects of our work. To learn more about our commitment to you, our community and to ourselves, visit our Diversity, Equity and Inclusion webpage at www.slorep.org/about/diversity-and-inclusion

Land Acknowledgement: San Luis Obispo Repertory Theatre acknowledges with respect that the place we work and gather is located on the traditional land of the Northern Chumash people.

SLO REP is a proud member of:



Artwork: Subplot Studio Photos/Video: RyLo Media Design, Ryan Loyd

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Technical Director/

Brian Lampert Volunteer Coordinator & Front of House

> **Carey Blauvelt Aaron Jackson** Box Office Staff



FORGET TOMORROW

BY BRIAN NEWMAN



SAN LUIS OBISPO REPERTORY THEATRE Michael Siebrass Artistic Director

UP NEXT "I remember today to forget tomorrow, and somehow temper true love's sorrow..." APRIL 19-20, 2024

THANKSGIVING

by LARISSA FASTHORSE

COMING SOON "Very, very funny... this clever satire is something for which to be truly thankful." — Hollywood Reporter

MAY 3-19, 2024

(805) 786-2440 | slorep.org