MEDIA RELEASE
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SYRACUSE STAGE OPENS 50TH ANNIVERSARY SEASON WITH HILARIOUS AND HOPEFUL ‘WHAT THE CONSTITUTION MEANS TO ME’

Directed by Syracuse Stage associate artistic director Melissa Crespo

First performed off-Broadway in 2018, “What the Constitution Means to Me” was nominated for two Tony Awards and was a finalist for the Pulitzer Prize for drama. The play follows Schreck’s sometimes humorous – often profound – journey as she investigates what protections are promised by the U.S. Constitution, and questions who is protected and who is not.
As a high school student in Washington state, Schreck toured American Legions and gave speeches about the Constitution for college scholarship money. Her oration, which likened the Constitution to a crucible, praised the Founding Fathers for leaving room for interpretation. But soon Schreck, who moved to New York to pursue a career in acting, entered a period of growing disillusionment with the document, and began reflecting on the limits made by the men who authored the Constitution, and by those in power who interpret its words for all Americans. In an interview with NPR, Schreck described the process of writing “What the Constitution Means to Me” as a sort of “reckoning.”

“I’m honored to helm one of the most important theatrical pieces of our current times,” said director Melissa Crespo. “Heidi Schreck’s play breathes new life into the Constitution and will leave audiences smarter and more connected to each other, and our great country.”

Reviewing for The New York Times, Ben Brantley called the play “an endlessly open-ended conversation.” At Syracuse Stage this conversation is brought to life by Mel House (Heidi), Phillip Taratula (Legionnaire), and current Syracuse University Department of Drama students Emily Castillo-Langley and Malaika Wanjiku, who will alternate the role of The Student. The production team, which includes both Broadway veterans and Syracuse Stage resident artists, is led by Kathy A. Perkins (lights), Ann Beyersdorfer (sets), Carmen M. Martinez (costumes) and Jacqueline R. Herter (sound).

“I felt strongly that this was a great play for Syracuse Stage when I saw the Broadway production four years ago,” said Bob Hupp, Syracuse Stage artistic director. “I loved how Heidi Schreck personalized our nation’s founding document and used humor to explore such a timely subject matter. With a stellar cast and our insightful creative team, I look forward to seeing ‘What the Constitution Means to Me’ come to life for our Central New York audience.”

All evening performances begin at 7:30 p.m. while all matinee performances begin at 2 p.m. Tickets start at $40 with discounts available for students and groups. Tickets may be purchased online at SyracuseStage.org, by phone at 315.443.3275, or in person at the Syracuse Stage Box Office.

Pay-What-You-Will performances for “What the Constitution Means to Me” are Sept. 13 - 17 inclusive; Prologue conversations, three pre-show discussions that take place one-hour before curtain time on Sept. 17, 23 and 28; the Post-show Talkback will take place on Sunday, Sept. 17 after the 7:30 performance. Syracuse Stage has its open-captioned performances scheduled for Sept. 20 and Oct. 1 at 2 p.m. and Sept. 30 at 7:30 p.m., as well as an audio-described performance on Sunday, Sept. 30 at 2 p.m.

A special sensory friendly and open captioned performance is scheduled for September 26 at 7:30 p.m. The sensory friendly performance provides a welcoming environment that lets all patrons enjoy themselves freely without judgment or inhibition. This live theatre experience invites autistic individuals, as well as those living with ADHD, dementia and other sensory sensitivities, to enjoy a performance in a “shush free” zone. House lights will be dimmed, but not turned out completely, patrons may move about as necessary for their comfort and patrons will not be discouraged from vocalizing during the performance. Fidget toys and other materials will be provided for patrons. All tickets to the sensory friendly performance are $35 and include a 100 percent refund right up to the start of the show.

In addition to scheduled performances and programming, “What the Constitution to Me” will feature events in conjunction with the 2023/24 Syracuse University Humanities Center Syracuse
The Slutzker Family Foundation is the Presenting Sponsor for the 50th Anniversary Season. Additional season support comes from the Dorothy and Marshall M. Reisman Foundation and Advance Media New York. The community partner for “What the Constitution Means to Me” is the Hiscock Legal Aid Society.

What the Constitution Means to Me
Written by Heidi Schreck
Directed by Melissa Crespo
Scenic design by Ann Beyersdorfer
Costume design by Carmen M. Martinez
Lighting design by Kathy A. Perkins
Sound design by Jacqueline R. Herter
Emotional Support Coach: Adam Stevens
Production Stage Manager: Stuart Plymesser
Casting: Bass/Valle Casting

About Syracuse Stage:
Founded in 1974 and celebrating its 50th Anniversary Season, Syracuse Stage is the non-profit, professional theatre company in residence at Syracuse University. It is nationally recognized for creating stimulating theatrical work that engages Central New York audiences and significantly contributes to the artistic life of Syracuse University, where it is a vital partner in achieving the educational mission of the University’s Department of Drama. Stage’s mission is to tell stories that engage, entertain, and inspire people to see life beyond their own experience. Each season, 70,000 patrons enjoy an adventurous mix of new plays, and bold interpretations of classics and musicals, featuring the finest theatre artists. In addition, Stage maintains a vital educational outreach program that annually serves more than 15,000 students from 14 counties. Nationally, Syracuse Stage is a member of the Theatre Communications Group (TCG), the national organization for American theatre; The League of Resident Theatres (LORT), the largest professional theatre association in the country; the Professional Non-Profit Theatre Coalition (PNTC), independent venues, promoters, and festivals representing every state, Washington, D.C., and Guam. Regionally, Syracuse Stage is a member of the Arts and Cultural Leadership Alliance (ACLA), Center State CEO, the University Hill Corporation, and the East Genesee Regent Association.

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Syracuse Stage  I  Artistic Director: Robert M. Hupp  I  Managing Director: Jill A. Anderson