

what the constitution means to me

BY HEIDI SCHRECK

DIRECTED BY JEN UPHOFF GRAY



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FORWARD THEATER COMPANY

presents

WHAT THE CONSTITUTION MEANS TO ME

by **Heidi Schreck**

Directed by **Jen Uphoff Gray**

Scenic Designer
Lisa Schlenker**

Lighting Designer
Noele Stollmack**

Costume Designer
Ren LaDassor

Composer & Sound Designer
Joe Cerqua**

Props Master
Pamela Miles

Stage Manager
Rivka Kelly*

Assistant Director
Orion Risk

What the Constitution Means to Me is generously sponsored by:



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& Ben Marcus**



THE CAP TIMES

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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.

 * Member of Actors' Equity Association, the union of professional actors and stage managers in the United States.

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FROM THE DIRECTOR...JEN UPHOFF GRAY

Welcome to Forward Theater's production of *What the Constitution Means to Me* by Heidi Schreck. Since first reading this electric script, I've been determined to bring this story to the Playhouse stage. It's a piece that engaged **all** of me – my brain, my heart, my gut. As I made my way through it the first time, I couldn't believe it was making me **feel** so much. "I laughed, I cried." Sure. But I also felt rage. And sympathy. And curiosity. And giddiness. And frustration. And at the end I felt – to my surprise – hope. That's what I wish for you: here in the audience, here in our community. Hope. Hope for the future and maybe, just maybe, even some hope for the present.

Heidi Schreck knew – as a teenager competing for American Legion scholarship money and as a playwright wrestling with her legacy as a woman in this country – that the stories we tell can change the world. I think this one certainly holds that potential. I look forward to hearing what you think of it.

Thank you for joining us today. Thanks as well to our friends at the League of Women Voters for helping register voters in our lobby during the run of *What the Constitution Means to Me*. The League has been registering voters, providing voter information, and advocating for voting rights for over a century. My grandmothers would have called that "doing the Lord's work."

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FROM THE ADVISORY COMPANY...DEPUTY JONO DE LEON

The Constitution is a document that affects our daily lives. It governs from hundreds of years ago and continues to dictate our beliefs, what we hold to be true, and lays out what we wish to protect as a nation. It lays out guidelines that we continue to build our society upon and relies on representatives to interpret not only its intent, but the intent of those who elected them.

Similarly, Forward's Advisory Company is composed of many individuals whose lived experiences and backgrounds in theater help determine our values and inevitably what shows we put on each season. Each member has their own thoughts and relationships to this document and we feel that this play explores many of them. It is a discussion that still permeates the fabric of this country even today. We continue to question whether a document written by a group of homogenous individuals who no longer represent the diversity of modern America should be allowed to dictate our life, love, and pursuits of happiness.

Heidi Schreck decides to tackle a few of these questions by debating herself (her younger self) and opening up the conversation to another student who will tackle what the Constitution currently means to them. My hope (as AC Deputy) is that you take away a lot of questions tonight. Consider how this document, which was written without the knowledge of your existence, now governs how elected officials deem your worth to society as a whole and how that interpretation can change, based on how far removed you are from the description of the original authors.

Can we use this document to govern modern beliefs/ideologies/identities and continue to use its tenets as a foundation? Or do we need to consider a new document written by a modern America? We hope that this play outlines some of these thoughts and ideas and provides a springboard for future discussions as we move closer to deciding our next round of representatives. Thank you for joining us during this milestone season. Please take a look at our 2024/2025 Season and consider buying season tickets, which is the best way to support Forward Theater.

A CLOSER LOOK...ADVISORY COMPANY MEMBER MIKE FISCHER

We the People

What does the Constitution mean to you?

As playwright Heidi Schreck suggests through the very title to the play you're about to see, that's a more radical question than you might think.

The first word in Schreck's title is an interrogative pronoun; the last word makes her query personal, underscoring that the Constitution can mean different things to different people. "The constitution" that's embedded within Schreck's title is literally surrounded.

Contrary to what the benighted originalists on the U.S. Supreme Court might believe, Schreck's title suggests that what this piece of paper might mean at any given time is up for grabs, depending on who's interpreting it. It's worth noting in this context that among the meanings of "constitute," as defined by the OED, are "make," "form" and "determine." All of them are strong, active verbs.

"The Founding Fathers," writes historian Howard Zinn in *A People's History of the United States* (1980), had created a constitution designed to preserve "a balance among the dominant forces at that time." They certainly didn't "want an equal balance between slaves and masters, propertyless and property holders, Indians and whites."

Moreover, Zinn continues, "as many as half the people" in 1787 America weren't considered by the Founding Fathers at all. "They were not mentioned in the Declaration of Independence," Zinn notes. "They were absent in the Constitution, they were invisible in the new political democracy. They were the women of early America."

Hear Me Roar

The character of Heidi – embodied in Forward's production by the great Colleen Madden – is anything but invisible, and she's willing to reshape the rules to ensure she gets heard.

Sure: when we first see her 15-year-old self competing for scholarship money in Legion halls by giving speeches involving the meaning of the Constitution, she's scrupulously adhering to contest rules regulating when and how she can speak to the legionnaires assembled before her, while surrounded by photos of past legionnaires on the walls.

But even as one of those legionnaires stands on stage with Heidi, monitoring her adherence to this time-honored contest procedure, Schreck's initial stage directions give a hint of what's to come.

"A live plant lurks in a corner," she writes, as "a reminder that although this place is filled with ghosts, it also welcomes the living." In welcoming teenaged Heidi into their hallowed hall, the legionnaires have – perhaps inadvertently – made room to tell old stories in a new way.

In revising those old stories by telling her own, young Heidi doesn't just gradually alter the rules of the game under which she must compete. More radically, her adult self – the actor and writer creating this play – draws on her own experience to suggest that the game itself is rigged against women.

I'll let Madden's performance on stage reveal the often harrowing details of the family history within which Schreck experiences what it means to be a woman in America; as in every such story, those details are both intensely personal and distressingly familiar.

What Schreck's story makes clear is that the meaning of the U.S. Constitution can evolve; "who we are now," she tells us at one point, "may not be who we will become." But as she also reminds us – driving home what's been made even more clear by the Supreme Court's shameful *Dobbs* decision two years ago – "progress doesn't only move one way."

Constituting History

The frequently depressing background against which Schreck's story emerges renders all the more inspiring her decision to tell it at all; ditto the decision by companies like Forward and actors like Madden to embody that story for us. Their presence – and this play – are testament to our ability to persevere. Do better. And re-constitute what this country means.

"Maybe," Schreck suggests at one point, "we could all just imagine that we're somewhere else. Maybe we could imagine *something* else."

Releasing the audience from its initially imposed duty to imagine themselves as male legionnaires passing judgment on a 15-year-old girl, Schreck challenges us mid-play to instead imagine that we might come into our own and be ourselves – much as we watch her morph from the 15-year-old girl she once was into the full-fledged adult she now is.

If we could join her in learning from who we once were to imagine all we could be – if, as Schreck beautifully suggests at one point, we might imagine the Constitution as holding the memory of our future – might we not thereby honor and incorporate all that is best in our collective past, even as we imagine a better version of who we could yet become?

Might we perhaps see the Constitution as less a settled proposition than a promise, in which our understanding of what "we the people" means becomes still more expansive and inclusive depending on how we live and what we decide, individually and as a community?

"Why," Schreck asks late in her play, "not just think of the Constitution as a human being," imperfect but also "growing and changing. Learning." And, Schreck continues, therefore "capable of getting better," if we'd but open our minds to that possibility – and recognize that we must fight to make our dreams come true.

Toward the beginning of Schreck's play, the legionnaire will sternly instruct the audience to hold our applause and behave. Before the play concludes, that same audience will be encouraged to actively participate in determining how it ends; as always, content dictates form.

"Democracy," Schreck tells us, "is something we have to make happen, we have to fight for, every single day," because "no one's coming to save us." "Start with your own personal Constitution," she implores us, "and build your way out."

What does the U.S. Constitution mean to you?

As we anxiously slouch toward November's elections, that question has never mattered more. Schreck's play won't tell you how to answer it. But it just might inspire you to ask it with the urgency and care it deserves.

*In loving memory of Shirley S. Abrahamson.
Milwaukee, March 4-5, 2024*

A CONSTITUTION TIMELINE

- 1781:** The Articles of Confederation are ratified. Under these Articles, the United States federal government consists of a legislature, the Congress of the Confederation, with no executive or judicial branch.
- 1787:** Delegates to the Constitutional Convention in Philadelphia, Pennsylvania sign the Constitution
- 1791:** The ten amendments in the Bill of Rights are added to the Constitution.
- 1796:** 11th amendment. All suits between states are under Supreme Court jurisdiction.
- 1804:** 12th amendment. How to elect the president and vice president of the United States.
- 1865:** 13th amendment. Abolishes slavery.
- 1868:** 14th amendment. Deals with citizenship rights, equal protection of the laws, apportionment, and Civil War debt.
- 1870:** 15th amendment. The right to vote cannot be denied based on race, color, or previous conditions of servitude.
- 1913:** 16th amendment. Gives Congress the power to impose a national income tax.
- 1913:** 17th amendment. Voters, instead of state legislatures, to select Senators.
- 1919:** 18th amendment. Enacts a national prohibition on the “manufacture, sale, or transportation of intoxicating liquors.”
- 1920:** 19th amendment. Forbids preventing any citizen to vote “on account of sex.”
- 1933:** 20th amendment. Adjusts timing of swearing-in of Congress and inauguration of the President.
- 1933:** 21st amendment. Repeals Prohibition.
- 1951:** 22nd amendment. Installs a two-term limit on presidential office.
- 1961:** 23rd amendment. Gives the residents of Washington, D.C. the right to choose electors for presidential and vice-presidential elections.
- 1964:** 24th amendment. Abolishes poll taxes.
- 1967:** 25th amendment. Clarifies what should be done if the President is unable to fulfill the office.
- 1971:** 26th amendment. Lowers the legal voting age to 18 in all U.S. elections.
- 1992:** 27th amendment. Prohibits any salary changes for Congress from taking effect before the start of a new Congressional session.

ACCESSIBILITY AT FORWARD THEATER

Forward Theater's mission is to expand the cultural life for Madison-area audiences, which means inviting *all* of our community in to access and enjoy live, professional theater.

Forward is proud to provide:

- [Assistive Listening Devices](#), which amplify sound through either a receiver and headphones, or a T-coil/Induction Loop (for those with compatible hearing aids or cochlear implants).
 - Tip: Come early to sit and test your device, and keep your phone away from the device to avoid interference.
- [ASL-interpreted performances](#), offered on the third Saturday matinee of each production. Designated seating that offers an unobstructed view of the ASL interpreter is available as a ticket option.
- [Audio Description](#) - Exact dates TBD. Please contact us if interested.
- [Large print programs](#).
- [Courtesy wheelchairs](#).
- [Family Assist/Gender Neutral Restrooms](#).

You can access these devices and services at the coat check in the Playhouse lobby.

We are continuing to add services to enhance the experience of live theater for guests with disabilities, through realistic action steps and authentic relationship building. Would you like to utilize or learn more about these services? Have feedback or suggestions? Contact us: Audience Services 608-234-5001 x1 | Email: bcollins@forwardtheater.com

LAND ACKNOWLEDGEMENT

Acknowledging Ho-Chunk Nation's ancestral lands, Forward Theater and Overture Center for the Arts celebrate the rich traditions, heritage, and culture that thrived long before our arrival. We respectfully recognize this Ho-Chunk land and affirm that we are better when we stand together.

We encourage you to visit ho-chunknation.com to learn more.

FTC'S 2023-2024 SEASON BUDGET

Thank you for purchasing a ticket to this production!

We are grateful to everyone who supports our work through ticket sales and other financial gifts. Key among our founding values is transparency. To that end, we share with you our annual budget, as an organization's budget is its clearest expression of its priorities. Producing professional theater is not inexpensive, but we consider carefully how we spend each dollar. And we are proud that such a significant amount of our spending is done locally, in support of local artists and local businesses. Thank you for your part in making it all possible!

People

Artistic personnel & benefits \$210,518
(93 actors, directors, designers)

Production personnel \$173,890
(62 crew and technical support)

Staff, benefits, payroll taxes \$543,659
(6 full-time, 1 part-time)

Accounting staff & consultants \$32,730

Community Connections \$10,680
(La Follette HS teaching artists; EDI & Anti-Racism efforts; other Engagement Programming)

Playwright Royalties \$64,862

Productions

Sets \$20,500

Costumes \$8,550

Lighting \$2,800

Props \$10,800

Sound \$270

Playbills \$9,600

Storage space \$4,200

Set building space \$8,944

Miscellaneous \$10,350
(scripts, auditions, transportation)

Venue

Theater rental \$69,656

Rehearsal space rental \$14,611

Venue equipment rental \$10,800

Security fees \$3,520

Box office fees \$114,399
(includes sales taxes)

Company Expenses

Artist housing \$4,350

Hospitality \$6,015

COVID-19 Safety expenses \$6,000

Operations

Office space rental \$45,500

Operational expenses \$19,828
(copier, internet, phone, database, supplies)

Insurance \$15,500

Payroll & Audit services \$19,700

Banking \$16,265
(incl. credit card processing fees)

Organizational memberships \$4,620

Marketing/Development

Marketing \$86,650
(advertising, graphic design, etc.)

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Donor Engagement \$50,250

Total 2023-2024 Operating Budget: \$1,600,017



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WHAT THE CONSTITUTION MEANS TO ME

by Heidi Schreck

CAST

Heidi..... Colleen Madden*
Legionnaire..... Casem AbuLughod
Debaters (alternating performances) Alliae Krueger, Caroline Talis

Understudies:

Liz Cassarino (Heidi) and Stephen Montagna (Legionnaire/Danny)

*Performers appear courtesy of Actors' Equity Association, the union of professional actors and stage managers in the United States.

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Casem AbuLughod (Legionnaire/Danny) is a Madison based performer and human. A graduate of University of Wisconsin - Madison, he also

holds a Master of Arts in Applied Theatre from the City University of New York. A proud member of Forward's Advisory Company, he is also an improv performer and instructor with the Monkey Business Institute, an actor and teaching artist with Whoopensocker, and has performed with several Madison area theaters, including CTM, Are We Delicious?, VACT, and Strollers. His most recent role with Forward was as Igor in *Russian Troll Farm*. His favorite role to date is AbuMack. He would like you (yes, you reading this right now) to know that you are awesome. All of his love to his LifeBoo and sweet baby boy. www.rhymeswithawesome.com.



Alliae Krueger (Debater) is currently a junior and forensics captain at Sauk Prairie High School. Some of her favorite performances include

Puffs, Sauk Prairie Theatre Guild; *She Kills Monsters*, *The Laramie Project*, Sauk Prairie High School. Alliae would like to acknowledge all the directors, teachers, coaches, and theater community members that have supported and encouraged her as she makes her debut with Forward Theater!



Colleen Madden (Heidi) is delighted to be back on the Forward stage! Previous productions with Forward include: *Why Torture Is Wrong* and the

People Who Love Them, *Going to St. Ives*, *Love Stories*, *Or,, Silent Sky*, and *Heisenberg*. Colleen is a Core Company Member at American Players Theatre in Spring Green. Regional theater: Seattle Repertory Theater, Milwaukee Repertory Theater, Chicago Shakespeare Theater, Alliance Theatre, Virginia Stage Company, Two Rivers Theater, Pittsburgh Irish and Classical Theater, as well as NYC's Irish Repertory Theater. Television: ABC's *All My Children*; NBC's *Chicago PD* and *Chicago Fire*. You can see her in the streaming films *Brutal Season* and *Aquarians*. Thank you for supporting live theater.



Caroline Talis (Debater) started acting as a toddler at the Madison Pinney Library story hour. She played Bagheera in a Disney in Schools

production of *The Jungle Book* at Nuestro Mundo Elementary School and has performed in *Clue*, *Radium Girls*, *Mamma Mia*, and *Mean Girls* at La Follette High School. She was nominated for a Jerry high school musical award for her portrayal of Rosie in *Mamma Mia*. She plays the piano and viola. Caroline also works part-time in a lab at the UW Carbone Cancer Center. She has spent many hours with her mom doing shoe-leather campaign work in her east Madison neighborhood and will vote for the first time in November 2024. Caroline will graduate in 2025. She hopes to build a life of art, science, music, and tennis.



**Liz Cassarino
(Understudy/Heidi)**

is delighted to have been brought on board as Ms. Madden's understudy for this wonderful production

of *What the Constitution Means to Me*. You may have seen her in past productions with Forward Theater including *Silent Sky* and *The Farnsworth Invention*. Other Madison credits include *To Kill a Mockingbird*, *Tibet Through the Red Box*, *The Two Gentlemen of Verona*, *You Can't Take it With You*, *The Threepenny Opera*, *Valparaiso*, and *Into the Woods*. Regional credits include *Oklahoma* (American Theatre Company); *Lysistrata*, *Chess*, *Baby*, *The Diary of Anne Frank* (national tour). She has served as vocal/dialect coach for Children's Theater of Madison and Four Seasons Theatre and is currently teaching voice for actors at UW-Madison. Liz received her MFA in Acting at UW-Madison and happily resides here with her husband and two children.



**Stephen Montagna
(Understudy/
Legionnaire)**

is thrilled to be working with Forward again! A native of Massachusetts,

Stephen received his MFA in Acting at UW-Madison in 1994. Previously, he worked with Forward in *Uncivil Disobedience*, and its inaugural *Monologue Festival*. Over the last three decades, Stephen has been seen in *Six Degrees of Separation*, *Beast on the Moon*, *Wit*, and *Our Town* at Madison Repertory Theatre; *Glengarry Glen Ross*, *Equus*, *Lonely Planet*, *The Goat, Or Who is Sylvia*, *After the Revolution*, and *Straight White Men* with local theatre groups. He has also directed in the community, including *The Living* for First Banana; *Fuddy Meers* for Mercury Players; and *The Laramie Project* for Regent Drama at West High School. When not on-stage, Stephen plays Ultimate Frisbee, holds a second-degree blackbelt in Aikido, and works as a facilitator in the violence prevention movement, which he has been a part of since 1991.

Joe Cerqua (Sound Designer/Composer) is a freelance composer, producer, vocalist and sound designer. He is thrilled to be the Resident Composer and Sound Designer at Forward Theater where he has previously composed and designed sound for *Clyde's*, *Artemesia*, *Airness*, *Feeding Beatrice*, *Russian Troll Farm: A Workplace Comedy*, *The Amateurs*, *46 Plays...*, *Lewiston/Clarkston*, *Lifespan of a Fact*, *Every Brilliant Thing*, *For Peter Pan*, *Mary Jane*, *Life Sucks*, *Skeleton Crew*, *Marjorie Prime*, *Learning to Stay*, *Outside Mullingar*, *4000 Miles*, *Mr. Burns*, *The Flick*, *Silent Sky*, *Vanya and Sonia...*, *The Other Place*, *From Up Here*, *Or, Red*, *Sons of the Prophet*, *Good People*, *44 Plays for 44 Presidents*, *Love Stories*, *In the Next Room...*, *Going to St. Ives*, *Why Torture is Wrong...*, and *The Farnsworth Invention*. He has composed music and/or designed sound for over 300 productions in Chicago, nationally, and internationally. Recent projects include original music and sound design for 2 Crows Theatre, Next Act Theatre, American Players Theatre, The Clarence Brown Theater, and Forward Theater. Joe is the Producing Director/Composer in residence for the Cerqua Rivera Dance Theatre, a critically acclaimed 13-piece jazz orchestra and 10-member dance company. He is the Creative Director and Producer for the Music Department at Columbia College Chicago.

Abbi Hess (Assistant Stage Manager) is grateful to be back for a fourth season with Forward Theater Company! Past favorite credits include: *Bare* and *The Amish Project* (Outskirts Theatre Co.); *Mamma Mia* (Lake Country Playhouse); *Next to Normal* and *Hamlet: A Cover* (Carroll University); *2 Pianos 4 Hands*

and *The Legend of Georgia McBride* (Milwaukee Rep); *Every Brilliant Thing* and *Imbroglia* (Great River Shakespeare Festival); *Airness* and *Artemesia* (Forward Theater). Thank you to friends, family, and the companies/SM teams that allow her to live this magical, theatrical life!



Rivka Kelly (Stage Manager) is excited to be working with Forward Theater for the first time. She is a traveling Stage Manager, who grew

up in California but is now based in the Midwest. Previous Midwest theatre credits include Milwaukee Rep, Skylight Music Theatre, Yellow Tree Theatre, Commonwealth Theatre, Two Crows Theatre, and 5 seasons with American Players Theatre. Favorite productions have included APT: *The Liar*, *Romeo & Juliet*, *Twelfth Night*, *A Flea in Her Ear*, *Eurydice & Arcadia*; Commonwealth: *Bernhardt/Hamlet*, *The Mystery of Edwin Drood & Dancing Lessons*.



Ren LaDassor (Costume Designer) is an Arkansas native and a graduate of the University of North Carolina School of the Arts. She worked in

New York City for seven years, on and off Broadway, before moving to Wisconsin and is proud to now call Madison home. Some of her Forward Theater shows include: *Russian Troll Farm*, *Feeding Beatrice*, *Learning to Stay*, & *Mr. Burns - A Post-Electric Play*. Off-Broadway Credits: *Love, Loss, And What I Wore* (Daryl Roth Productions), *Post No Bills* (Rattlestick Theatre). Regional & NY Credits: *Glass*

Menagerie (American Players Theatre), *Camp Wanatachi* (La Mama), *My Name is Asher Lev* (Roundhouse Theatre/ Delaware Theatre Company). Film: *Cruzando* (Those Guys That Girl Film Production).

Pamela Miles (Props Master) is delighted to return to Forward for her eleventh season. She is so proud to be a part of this generous and courageous company. Pamela lives in Spring Green, WI where she has worked in the paint shop at American Players Theatre for fifteen seasons. Some other regional theaters she has painted for include: Arizona Broadway Theatre, Children's Theater of Madison, Madison Ballet (*Dracula: A Rock Ballet*) and Madison Opera (*She Loves Me, Tahiti/Sins*). She completed her first outdoor mural in Spring Green during the summer of 2021 on the side of the Slowpoke Lounge & Cabaret. Pamela has previously performed the role of Props Master for the Black Theatre Troupe in Phoenix, AZ and for American Players Theatre's 2016 production of *Mary's Wedding*. She would like to extend a hearty THANK YOU to everyone who continues to support the arts throughout this pandemic!



Orion Risk (Assistant Director) is a PhD Candidate in Interdisciplinary Theatre Studies at the University of Wisconsin–Madison.

Forward Theater work includes directing in the 2023 monologue festival and serving on the literary and finance committees. Previously, Orion created TransTheatreFest–Madison, crafted the

virtual play *GenderTalks* from real conversations between trans and nonbinary people (Fringe PVD; Free Fringe Philly; Minnesota Fringe), and produced and directed as founding artistic director of Scene D Theatre Project in Iowa's Cedar Valley. Orion's theatrical career started with Lampost Theatre Company in Cedar Falls, Iowa; over seven years, they assistant directed original musicals, led acting workshops, and toured nationally. Orion's artistic trajectory has been honored with UW–Madison's Lyman S.V. Judson and Ellen Mackechnie Judson Award in the Creative Arts. MA degrees earned from UW–Madison in Interdisciplinary Theatre Studies, Gender and Women's Studies. They/them/he.



Lisa Schlenker (Scenic Designer) is delighted to return to the Forward Theater family to participate in this timely discussion. By day,

Lisa serves Northern Sky Theater as Resident Designer and Production Manager, telling stories in the north woods of Wisconsin. For over three decades Lisa has devoted time and passion to advancing skills in prop making, scenic design, and production management. Lisa earned her BA in Music and Theatre from Augustana College and is an alum of the UW–Madison MFA program in Theatre Technology, studying with Dennis Dorn, John Ezell, and Peter Beudert. A proud member of the Production Managers Forum, the Society of Prop Managers, and United Scenic Artists Local 829 IATSE, Lisa keeps work interesting through curiosity and a passion for

learning; new things. Lisa's book with co-author Sandra Strawn: *The Properties Director's Tool Kit* is available through Focal Press and on Amazon.com. Recent scene design credits: *The Fish Whisperer, When Pigs Fly* (Northern Sky); *The Salon Du Marie Antoinette* (Opera Lafayette at NYC's Museo del Barrio and the Kennedy Center); *The Mystery of Irma Vep* (Third Avenue Playworks); *Mousetrap* (Next Act Theatre); *A Moon for the Misbegotten* (MCT); *L'Elisir d' Amore, Songbird* (Florentine Opera). Projects coming soon: *Hells Belgians, Fisherman's Daughters, Girls on Sand, and Reality Trip* (Northern Sky); *Almost Maine* (Next Act).

Heidi Schreck (Playwright) 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 this past October 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.

Noele Stollmack (Lighting Designer)
Noele Stollmack's lighting has appeared onstage at The Brooklyn Academy of Music, Sydney Opera House, Carnegie Hall, The Library of Congress Theatre, as well as the opera companies of Santa Fe, Ontario, Houston, Portland, Vancouver, New Orleans, Nashville, Madison and Milwaukee. Regional design for the theatre includes Jeff Daniels Purple Rose Theatre, Baltimore Center Stage, Houston's Alley Theatre, Wisconsin's Milwaukee Rep, Chamber Theatre, Renaissance Theaterworks, Skylight Music Theatre, American Players Theatre, Forward Theater and First Stage. As Lighting Director for Houston Grand Opera, she supervised the lighting and special effects for over 50 productions along with designing the lighting for such productions as Andrei Serban's *Elektra*, Dr. Jonathan Miller's *Der Rosenkavalier*, *Aida*, and the world premieres of *Harvey Milk, Desert of Roses,* and *Dracula Diary*. Her AIA award winning architectural and public space lighting is installed throughout the Midwest. Member: United Scenic Arts Local 829.

Jen Uphoff Gray (Director) is the artistic director of Forward Theater Company – this is the 29th production she has directed here. Regionally, she has directed for Madison Rep (*The Diary of Anne Frank*), Milwaukee Shakespeare (*Love's Labors Lost*), and Four Seasons Theatre (*1776*). She mounted the National Tour of Michael Frayn's *Copenhagen*, and during twelve years working On- and Off-Broadway Jen served as Associate Director for: *Copenhagen*, Sam Mendes' *Cabaret*, *The Blue Room* (starring Nicole Kidman), and *The Life*. Jen grew up in the Madison

area and holds a degree in Dramatic Literature & Stage History from Harvard College. *This one is dedicated to my late mentor Michael Blakemore, with deep gratitude for his generosity and care. He made it all possible.*

Kevin Zimmer (Technical Director) is a Master Craftsperson/Scenic Engineer who has worked with Forward since 2009 season and a Core Tech Member at APT since 2010 as Scene Shop Supervisor. Madison Credits: Madison Repertory Theater and Children's Theater of Madison (Master Carpenter and Deck Chief), Madison Opera (M. Carp/ATD), Madison Ballet (Carp), Four Seasons (TD), FTC (M. Carp). My dark years was Arizona Broadway Theater (TD and Shop Supervisor). Other Credits: St. Louis City Museum (Welder/Sculptor); St. Louis Shakespeare Company (Scenic Charge Artist); St. Louis Black Repertory, and The MUNY. Was a Former Member of IASTE B-2 and has been overhire for Local 251 and 6. Some fun Backstage Roles: Snoring Drunk: *Or*; Thief: *Diary of Anne Frank*; Bus Boy: *Fully Committed*. Work Hard and Play Hard. Thanks to all for supporting the Arts. 70.



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What an incredible season this has been – and it's not over yet! From garbage and diners to romance and the Constitution, we've taken you on a fantastic journey these past eight months. We'd like to thank our subscribers and welcome those of you who have purchased tickets for the last staged show of our 15th year. You have helped us break ticket sales and attendance records; we're genuinely grateful. Thanks to your support, local professional theater is alive and well in Madison. We recently announced our 24-25 season and couldn't be more excited to carry the momentum into next year's productions, so please renew your tickets when you get the season brochure in the coming weeks. We know consistent patrons are the backbone of our success. If you're not one already, we're thrilled to announce new incentives for our 24-25 season, including a package for first-time subscribers.

On behalf of the board of directors, thank you for your ongoing support. It's vital for the cultural vibrancy of our community. Beyond mere entertainment, Forward Theater serves as a mirror reflecting our values, struggles, and triumphs. By attending performances, subscribing, and contributing philanthropically, you're ensuring the continuation of artistic expression brought to you by Forward Theater and fostering a sense of community in Dane County. Theater enriches our lives, sparking dialogue and empathy. Our stage is a platform for diverse voices, nurturing creativity and understanding. Your support extends beyond ticket sales; it's an investment in the soul of our community, encouraging its cultural growth and vitality. And while the curtain's nearly down on this season, we still have the Wisconsin Wrights New Play Festival coming up in May, so be sure to support the featured playwrights whose work may someday wind up in front of you.

Thank you, and I look forward to seeing you for our 24-25 season this fall.

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As we celebrate our 15th Season we are so grateful to all who make Forward Theater possible. Our community partnerships, innovative programming and artistic quality would not happen without the support from our generous donors. Whether you have made a first-time gift or you have faithfully supported Forward Theater throughout the years, you are part of our theater community and Forward's history. Thank you.

We are pleased to recognize contributions to the annual fund received between March 1, 2022 – March 8, 2023. If you notice any errors in acknowledgement or have questions about donation options, please contact Sarah Milestone at 608-234-5001 or smilestone@forwardtheater.com. To make a tax-deductible donation to Forward Theater online or learn about donor benefits, visit our website at forwardtheater.com. To mail in a contribution, please use the following address: Forward Theater, P.O. Box 14574, Madison, WI 53708.

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If you have named Forward Theater as a beneficiary in your will or estate plan, or if this is something you would like to consider, we would welcome the opportunity to talk with you about what you'd like to achieve with your gift – the legacy you'd like to leave for audiences, artists, and our community for generations to come. Please contact Sarah Milestone at 608-234-5001 or smilestone@forwardtheater.com for more information.

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Volunteers help Forward Theater by staffing events, helping with mailings and other office support. If you would like more information, please visit our website at Forwardtheater.com or contact Company Manager Celia Klehr at 608-234-5001.

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A standing ovation to Nate, Ben, Leo, and everyone at 107 State for generously providing the Opening Night Party.



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2024 FEAST FORWARD

15th Anniversary Gala

HONORING

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Monday, June 10 at Full Compass Systems

Tickets at ForwardTheater.com

FORWARD THEATER

2024-25 SEASON



KING JAMES

By Rajiv Joseph
Directed by Mikael Burke

SEPTEMBER 12-29, 2024



MURDER GIRL

By Heidi Armbruster
Directed by Jen Uphoff Gray

NOVEMBER 7-24, 2024



SUMMER, 1976

By David Auburn
Directed by Laura Gordon

JAN 30 - FEB 16, 2025



A CASE FOR THE EXISTENCE OF GOD

By Samuel D. Hunter
Directed by Jen Uphoff Gray

MAR 27 - APR 13, 2025

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