

A Constant question of marriage

Preview: *The Constant Wife*

Written by W Somerset Maugham
Starring Brenda Robins and Fiona Reid
Directed by Bob Baker
Runs until 4 March
Citadel Theatre

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Arts & Entertainment Staff

Long before the women of *Sex and the City* or *Desperate Housewives* were born, there lived a woman named Constance Middleton. Constance's husband cheated on her. Everyone but Constance was aware of this, and they debated whether she should know and whether to tell her.

The characters in the Citadel Theatre's *The Constant Wife* debate the drama that often surrounds marriage and the standards of fidelity set for women and men. On one side of the argument is Mrs Culver (played by Order of Canada recipient Fiona Reid), who feels that it's all right for a man to have a little fling, as long as he continues to provide for his wife and take care of her. On the other side is Martha Culver, Constance's younger sister and Mrs Culver's daughter, who argues that both men and women should be faithful.

"If a woman [had a fling], Mrs Culver wouldn't think that was right," says Vanessa Holmes, who plays Martha Culver.

Holmes' character, along with others, point out the sexism in Mrs Culver's belief, asking her why it's all right for a man to stray, but not a woman. The play has a feminist bend, and Holmes thinks that even though *The Constant Wife* was written in 1926, it's a reflection of our day and age.

"I think what's fascinating about this play is that it's written in the '20s, but it was so ahead of its time in its opinions on men and women and their relationships and what marriage is," Holmes says. "[The play] is about smart women and women who, in Constance's respect, take control of their lives, regardless of what the men in their lives are doing."

Holmes thinks that just like in the play, people nowadays also have differing attitudes about marriage. And even though Holmes herself agrees



with her character's belief that people in a marriage should be faithful, she mentions that the debate in the play has helped her see the validity of the other perspective. For instance, Holmes admits to thinking, "Hmm ... she's got a bit of a point," when hearing another character presenting an opinion different from her own.

"[The play makes] you see the arguments for both sides of the story; whether you think they're right or wrong, it's easy to see people's reasoning for whatever they do in relationships sometimes," Holmes says.

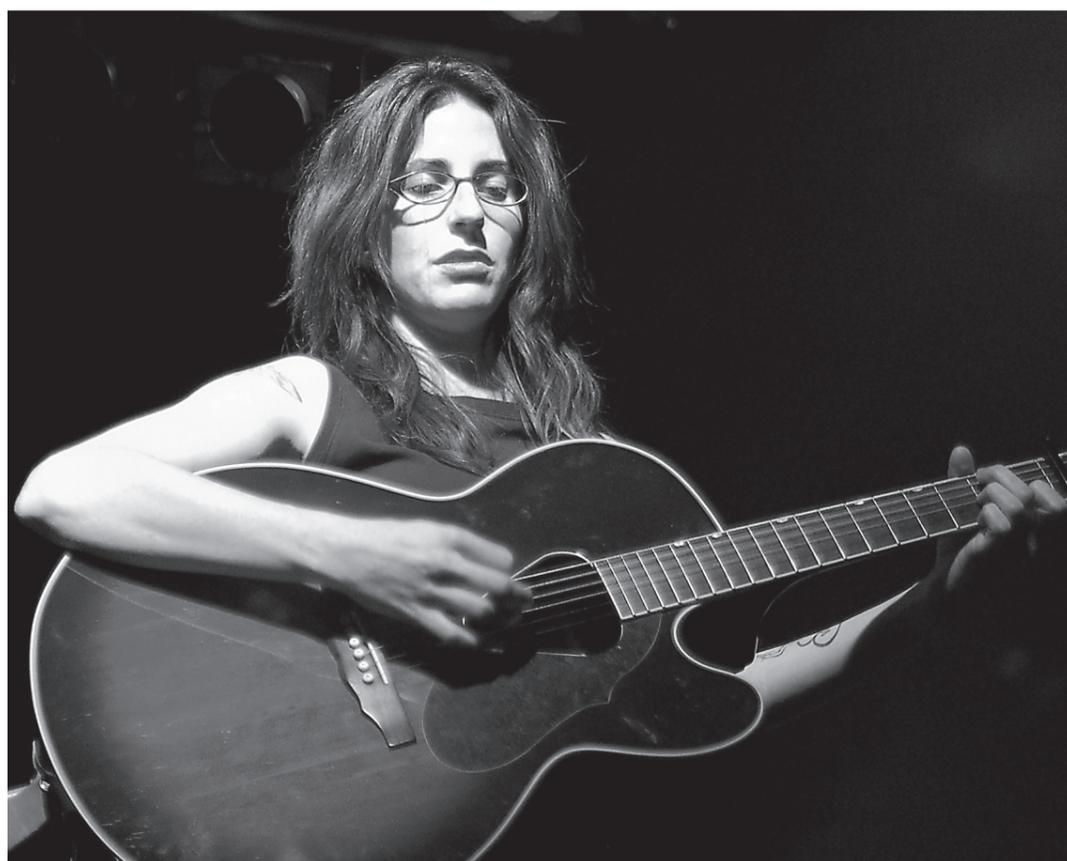
But with that in mind, Holmes thinks most people in the audience will agree with her character's view of

marriage, even if they don't approve of the approach she takes. Holmes thinks that her character is a bit of a troublemaker, especially since she's someone who doesn't accept a double standard of behaviour for married men and women.

"If people are hiding something, she's going to try and point it out," Holmes says.

Holmes says that her character is a younger sister of a sibling who has always done well, and takes pleasure in looking for flaws in other people, especially when she thinks she's right.

"She's not quite tactful at times," says Holmes. "She wreaks a bit of havoc."



AMANDA ASH

SWEET SOMETHIN' STEADY Winnipeg's Romi Mayes sung her country blues on Friday night at the Starlite Room. Although most of her music has dark, depressing edge to it, her performance was upbeat and highly contagious.

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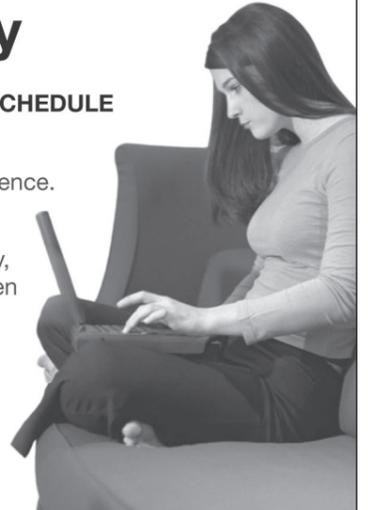
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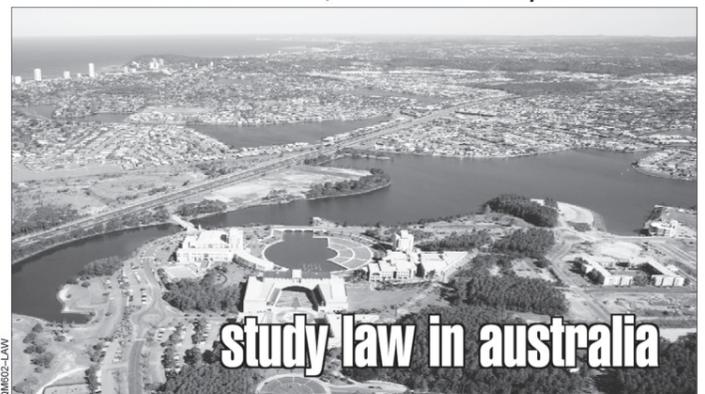
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