

Theater Review: ROE (Fountain Theatre)

 stageandcinema.com/2022/06/30/roe-fountain

William C.

June 30, 2022



On a beautiful breezy Sunday evening, my husband and I sat down in the parking lot of the Fountain Theater embracing ourselves to an emotional night. In this LA premiere hyper-stage reading of the play *Roe*, a gregarious and eager audience congregated at the theater. This is a timely piece of art that I think all of us have been looking forward to. I personally came to seek a moment of solace by coming to review this show. It felt good. It felt like an act of resistance in the wake of the recent news. Perhaps, this deep dive of the historical past would help ground my anger and give me language to speak about the current event. And, I was not disappointed.

The two act plays consist of the first act, the history and select reenactments of Roe V. Wade case, the edutainment portion of the evening if you will, and second act, the person and the fundamental shift in the woman that came to be known in history as Jane Roe. Lisa Loomer, the playwright, examines Roe V. Wade through the lens of the two lead characters. There is Roe V Wade, the case, the issue, as represented by Sarah Weddington, played by Christina Hall. On the other hand, there is the real human being, Norma McCorvey, played by Kate Middleton.

Kate Middleton's portrayal of Norma McCorvey is very funny and human. Norma is down on her luck, but she responds to the world with her sharp wit and rugged manners. Kate is astounding in this role. She showed a deep emotional range and great comedic timing.

Christina Hall's portrayal of Sarah Weddington, the budding lawyer representing Roe to the Supreme Court is solid and grounding. Sarah plays the straight professional woman with such care and slow burning energy. Her monologue about 'the angry woman', where the character ruminates on the binary nature of public opinion on women, has stuck with me. There is something especially regal in Christina Hall's presence on stage. That lends strength to the gravitas of the story.

Rest of the ensemble is fantastic. Each character takes on roles on both sides of the argument. I would like to especially highlight the superhuman feat of Pamela Dunlap, who played convincingly in multiple roles including but limited to, Norma McCorvey's horrible mother as well as a budding feminist who just found her cervix for the first time. She is funny, scary and just a force to be reckoned with on stage. I can not get enough of her presence on stage.

Director Vanessa Stalling has done a fantastic job in presenting this hyper-staged reading. I am certain, under the current climate, there must be an enormous pressure to do right by the work. The play's energy is focused and timing, crisp. I certainly do hope that she gets a chance to direct a fully staged version of this work in Los Angeles.

It is kind of funny to think that Lisa Loomer, the play right, had wondered if Roe would make good drama. From what I can tell, she documented and created a profound piece of literature. She found the human in the story. There is some uneven handness in dealing with the issue, but they do not subvert the urgency of the message.

I do not want to spoil the newly updated ending, but I do want to highlight its importance. Kenya Alexander's character in a heartfelt performance became an embodiment of every woman. She was our sisters, daughters, mothers, friends and other people you care about. It was moving and brought tears to the audience.

This is some damn good storytelling. Regardless of your stance on the recent Supreme Court decision, I recommend every American to go watch this play, which closes July 10, Fri to Sun at 8pm. Visit [Fountain Theatre](#) for tickets.