

arts

I Do Laugh

Kate Clinton laughs at marriage, politics, Viagra, Homeland Security and more

BY E. LYNNE LEMONT

Yup! Kate Clinton, one of the more high profile skeptics when it comes to incorporating a patriarchal concept like "marriage" into lesbian culture, is now "the marrying kind." She's even got the certificate from the Universal Life Church to prove that she can unite couples of whatever gender in marriage.

But then again, she and her "little partner" Urvashi Vaid, have not yet done the deed – at least as of the date of this recording. Clinton says she asked, but Urvashi turned her down. Clinton admits she wanted to do it because "we could use the publicity," and then goes into a riff on *The New York Times'* publication of same-sex wedding announcements. Instead, the two went down to City Hall ("back when it was working") and registered as domestic partners. First among the rights gained? "I could visit her in jail!" Which, considering Vaid's street-demo proclivities, is no small victory. Or so says Kate, who then segues into the then-upcoming Republican National Convention in New York City and a suggestion that the Summer Olympics be combined with the convention and all "performance-enhancing drugs" would be banned ... except, of course, Viagra.

And that's only a few of the topics the fast-talking comedian skewers with her quick jab-jab-jab-BOOM! delivery. She asks a lot of an audience – like that they read the news and follow politics. Anyone who doesn't will be a little lost at a Kate Clinton performance.

She's fairly even-handed, characterizing the Democrats as people "who can't take their own side in a fight," and who, "if they had a photo of George Bush, drunk, naked, and going down on Dick Cheney in the Lincoln Bedroom, wouldn't know what to do with it!"

The Marrying Kind
Kate Clinton
WHYscrack Records

So yes, the content is a little dated, but it's a snicker-producing antidote to the recent election results.

As always, the Catholic Church comes under her laser gaze and whiplash tongue (wait, don't picture that, unless we're talking about Sister Steven), particularly for the child abuse scandals. She has "Father Fondle" and "Monsignor Molesta" holding a press conference while she rebuts (that's *one 't'* if you please) their imagined assertions: Father F: "It's not the abuse, it's the cover-up." KC: "No, it's the abuse." Archbishops, she says, "don't spin well."

The thing about Clinton, a former English teacher and a stand-up comedian for the last 23 years, is that there's hardly a wasted word – even the throw-away asides are devastatingly funny, and you have to be quick to follow them. If you know local and international comedy star Janice Perry's style, you've got it.

The Marrying Kind is Clinton's seventh comedy album, adding to her healthy output that includes a book (*Don't Get Me Started*), and a stack of columns from *The Advocate*, among other outlets. She has performed in clubs and halls coast to coast, off-Broadway, and in films (notably, *The Secret Life of Dentists*). She has, according to her website, "come a long way from those first performances in Unitarian Church basements. She still prays to the Unit."

This is not any kind of traditional set-up, punchline, 'my-girlfriend,' 'airline-food' stand-up comedy. Except that you know it is all carefully planned, it could pass for some kind of hilarious stream of consciousness. Call it 'associative.' One stream begins with Clinton "talking to John Ashcroft. Well I

was talking, he was listening." It travels through her mother's being a pioneer of retinal scanning ("You look me in the eye ..."), the number of carb points in a communion wafer, tongue techniques learned from removing the Host from the roof her mouth, guardian angels, therapists, Jews, Italians, truth and lies, a lesbian health conference, lesbian conference-goers flipping off the presidential motorcade, the intelligence quotient of the Secret Service, and executive colonoscopies – all in about 6 minutes.

Now that we're a market rather than a movement, she imagines Motrin sponsoring the Michigan Women's Music Festival, and Preparation H sponsoring the 'Sodomy Celebrations.' Which she then segues into a long riff on the U.S. Supreme Court decisions upholding affirmative action and overturning sodomy laws, and the resulting homophobic pronouncements of the Axis of Medievals in opposition and of Senator Rick ("the 'P' is silent") "Sanctimoron."

Vice President Dick Cheney is "the Bush Whisperer." Referring to *Queer Eye for the Straight Guy*, Clinton points out that it took "five gay men to replace Martha Stewart." "Over-pectoralized" circuit party guys become "Cornish gay men."

In the Mideast, "the very least they could do is put up the billboards with the suicide prevention hotline numbers."


On gay marriage as a wedge issue: "We are like the butt thong between the cheek of church and the cheek of state."

If you like your humor fast, political, literate, and always slightly outrageous, *The Marrying Kind* belongs on your holiday list – for giving or getting. ▼

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