

**Leslie Berman**, producer and principal of AlterEgo Productions, is an attorney focusing her practice on arts and entertainment transactions and criminal defense. Berman has produced, directed, programmed, emceed and publicized concerts, coffeehouses, music festivals, touring multi-arts works, and theatre projects for more than 40 years. A former music critic for such publications as *Rolling Stone*, *The Village Voice*, and *New York Newsday*, Berman writes the biweekly music column, "Eclectic Company," for Lake Charles' *The Jambalaya News*.

**Allegra Kaough** is administrator for the company.

**Kitty Schweitzer** and Seams Unlimited built our costumes.

**Courtney Hebert's** Judith Shakespeare Designs created our website and our Louisiana Women logo. **Kathy Heath** designed our print materials.

**Tesa R. Pace** created educational materials for teachers to use "Louisiana Women" in the classroom. A seasoned educator, Pace currently teaches eleventh and twelfth grade English at LaGrange High School in Lake Charles. She considers the classroom her stage and inspires and motivates her students through drama. Pace's students prefer lively plays to dry books, so she they read scripts in her classroom when possible.

The "Originals" sister company, "**Louisiana Women: Visionaries**," illuminates three women's lives: **Caroline Dornon, Clyde Connell** and **Kate Chopin**, in its own tour to cities across Louisiana in Fall 2010. For more information

[www.louisianawomenonstage.com](http://www.louisianawomenonstage.com)

about all the "Louisiana Women" performances, or ticket sales, go to [www.louisianawomenonstage.com](http://www.louisianawomenonstage.com).



presents

"Originals"

three solo plays from

Carolyn Woosley's 12-plays cycle

"Louisiana Women"

Act I

"Marie Thérèse" ..... Kendra Cherié Gray

or Sharon Penson

15 minute intermission.

Act II

"Clementine" ..... Angelique Feaster

or Wilma Moore Young

15 minute intermission.

[www.louisianawomenonstage.com](http://www.louisianawomenonstage.com)

## Act III

“Nellie” .....Neverlyn Townsel

Wilma Moore Young

Carolyn Woosley’s “**Louisiana Women**” is a cycle of 12 one-woman plays exploring the lives of extraordinary women during extraordinary times. They are women of complexity, grave challenges, passion, vision, talent and, often, action.

For this production, we’ve selected three of the cycle’s solo plays, and named the grouping “**Originals**,” as this quality is exemplified in the lives and works of “Clementine,” “Marie Thérèse,” and “Nellie.”

**Marie Thérèse Coincoin**, freed African slave, was a free médecine (usually translated as unlicensed doctor), planter, businesswoman, and eventually, herself a slave owner, who grew prosperous by her own industry and the efforts of her freed children, beginning on land along the Cane River given by her white French second “husband,” Pierre Metoyer. Their son Louis Metoyer developed Yucca Plantation, which was in later days known as Melrose Plantation, after its transfer to new owners. Coincoin is known as the matriarch of the Cane River colony of the “gens du couleur libre” – the Free People of Color – whose descendants today are rumored to number in the thousands.

Marie Thérèse Coincoin is portrayed alternately by **Kendra Cherié Gray** and by **Sharon Penson**. **Kendra Cherié Gray**, who also serves as the company’s Wardrobe Mistress, is a product of Shreveport schools. Gray credits her Montessori beginnings and her Caddo Magnet High School years with

[www.louisianawomenonstage.com](http://www.louisianawomenonstage.com)

fostering her passion for theater and the arts. Since 2007, she’s worked with Theatre Performing Arts and YAZZY (Youths Celebrating Jazz Music), where she inspires children ages 6 to 18. Gray’s credits include “Yazzy Presents Swing with a Salute to James Brown,” “Monstrous Joys,” in collaboration with the Booker T. Washington Drama Department, and “Cadillac’s Spare Tire: A Salute to Michael Jackson.” Gray is currently working toward a double major in history and theater at LSU Shreveport.

**Sharon Penson**, Projects Manager for the Shreveport Airport Authority, manages to balance her acting career with her business acumen. Most recently, she played Mamie in “The Face of Emmett Till” with the Extensions of Excellence, the Lady in Blue in “For Colored Girls Who Have Considered Suicide When the Rainbow is Enuf” with the Mahogany Ensemble Theatre, and Rhea Daye in “Righteous Saints of Greater Faith” with the LaElite Players. Penson was awarded the 2009 Best Leading Actress Award at the Southern Black Theatre Festival.

**Clementine Hunter**, born into a life of manual labor, picking cotton, and becoming first a maid and then the cook at Melrose Plantation, ended her days as a well-known and highly regarded primitive painter whose distinctive works are so numerous, collectible, and valuable, that they’ve spawned a small industry of alleged forgers, some of whom are currently under indictment by the federal government. One reason for Hunter’s popularity as an artist is her subject matter – her memories of the minutiae and activities of daily life in a rural community informed all her paintings, which are rare visual records of driving cotton to the gin and other long-gone types of farm work. She was a woman of faith,

[www.louisianawomenonstage.com](http://www.louisianawomenonstage.com)

frequently painting images of angels and of the religious ritual of baptism, one of her most popular subjects.

Clementine Hunter is portrayed by **Angelique Feaster**, the artistic director of the Mahogany Ensemble Theatre in Shreveport, and founder of the biannual Southern Black Theatre Festival. She collaborated with Shreveport's most recognized actors, choreographers, and directors to mount "Waiting to be Invited" and "CROWNS." Her directing credits also include "The Drum and Indigo Blues" by Judi Ann Mason, "Ritual Murder" by Thomas Dent, and a staged reading of "For Colored Girls" by Ntozake Shange. Feaster's acting credits include television (a co-starring role on the Lifetime Television series *THE DIVISION*), industrial documentary film (she starred in "The Early Bird" cancer video produced by Feist-Weiller Cancer Center), and regional and local commercials; her stage roles include "CROWNS," "Frankenstein," "Having Our Say", and "The Women." Feaster is a State-certified creative educator and a motivational speaker on the topics of the arts, etiquette, communication, empowerment, and self-enhancement. Feaster is a Centenary College graduate with a B.A. in Speech and Theater, and a Masters in Education Administration. In addition to portraying Clementine Hunter, Angelique Feaster is the **Director** of the "Originals" Company.

**Nellie Lutcher** began her music career as a pianist in Lake Charles, regularly invited to perform for luncheon guests at the Majestic Hotel by its proprietor Emma Michie. Lutcher's father played bass in Clarence Hart's Imperial Jazz dance band, her brother Bubba was a well-known disc jockey on regional radio, and another brother, Joe, known as "Woodman," played saxophone. Lutcher moved to Los

[www.louisianawomenonstage.com](http://www.louisianawomenonstage.com)

Angeles and there developed the unique piano and vocal style that influenced Nina Simone, among many others. Lutcher's recordings charted on the R&B lists in the 1940s and '50s, including in a duet with Nat "King" Cole. She later became the first African American woman on the board of the American Federation of Musicians, and advocated for better conditions and rewards for working artists. "Nellie" was premiered by AlterEgo Productions and Lake Charles' Imperial Calcasieu Museum under the direction of Brenda Bachrack in 2007, as part of a city-wide celebration.

Nellie Lutcher is portrayed alternately by **Neverlyn Townsel** and **Wilma Moore Young**. **Neverlyn Townsel**, a popular actor and vocalist in the Shreveport area has appeared as the lead in James Baldwin's "The Amen Corner," a performance that won her the Best Actress Award at Wiley College in Marshall, Texas. Recently, she performed to rave reviews in Regina Taylor's "CROWNS," for which she again won Best Actress. Townsel has performed in numerous Mahogany Ensemble Theatre Productions, including "Roll of Thunder, Hear My Cry," "The Bluest Eye," and "The Madam C.J. Walker Story." She has also performed in productions with Extensions of Excellence, including "A Song for Coretta," "Livin' Fat," and "Papa's Blues." Townsel is a gifted speaker and vocalist and currently performs with the Adoration Gospel Ministries.

**Wilma Moore Young**, and actor and vocalist, is known for her portrayals of strong African American women, among them Mrs. Breedlove in Mahogany Ensemble Theatre's production of "The Bluest Eye," and Mama in "A Raisin in the Sun," and she played Ms. Hattie in Angels of Faith Theatrical Productions's "I Don't Want To Go To Heaven." Her writing, directing and producing credits include "The Hour Glass,"

[www.louisianawomenonstage.com](http://www.louisianawomenonstage.com)

"The Role of Della," and "United We Stand." Young is also understudy for Clementine Hunter.

**Carolyn Woosley**, retired financial planner and Lake Charles-based playwright, is also an activist involved in environmental, educational, inner city, and cultural nonprofit work. Her efforts helped return public radio KRVS to Southwest Louisiana's airwaves, restored the 75-acre rustic campus of Camp Fire SWLA's Camp Wi-Ta-Wentin, was instrumental in forming the Music Museum of SWLA, which is currently archiving the region's music. She is raising awareness of coastal erosion issues of SWLA's Chenier Plain, Her solo plays have been produced at the Lake Charles Little Theatre and other full-length plays have been workshopped by The Readers' Theatre. "Fanny," her screenplay about Felix Mendelssohn's older sister, is optioned. She is currently revising her produced, former one-act play "Walking On Air" as a full-length screenplay.

Beverly Hills-based autograph authenticator **Sara Willen** was editor of the "Louisiana Women" scripts prior to their production in 1999.

**Marie Anne Chiment** has created sets and costumes for hundreds of productions across America for opera, theatre and dance, including for [Santa Fe Opera](#), [Chicago Lyric Opera](#), Kennedy Center, Wolftrap Opera and [Broadway's Minskoff Theatre](#). She has designed national tours of "Grease" and "Carousel," as well as the GLAMA award-winning world premiere of "[Patience & Sarah](#)" for the [Lincoln Center Festival](#). Chiment received her MFA in 1981 from NYU's Tisch School of the Arts, winning the J.S.

[www.louisianawomenonstage.com](http://www.louisianawomenonstage.com)

Seidman Award for design excellence. She is the Theater Department Chair of Temple University in Philadelphia.

**Adley Cormier** designed the sets for "Louisiana Women: Originals," and with his artist wife **Melinda Antoon Cormier**, built the sets and props. Cormier, a Breaux Bridge native, avid Southwest Louisiana historian, and a longtime champion of his adopted city, serves as Chair of the Lake Charles Downtown Development Association. His directing credits span 40 years, 35 as Lake Charles Little Theatre's principal director and designer. He directed five of six currently touring "Louisiana Women," and as well as other Woosley plays – "Rosa" [Hart], "Celine" [Fremaux Garcia], and "Walking on Air." He has been a Guest Director at McNeese State University, of his translation of Moliere's "The Imaginary Invalid." Cormier's original plays were produced by Lake Charles Little Theatre. Cormier's work has also been seen off-Broadway.

**Philip Gould's** photograph of a Louisiana live oak tree forms the backdrop to all "Louisiana Women" performances.

**Charles Montgomery**, the "Originals" Technical Director, first found his way into theater when he heckled an actor's rehearsal performance, and was instantly tapped by the director to fill the role. Montgomery swears he had no thought of acting prior to that moment, but from the first, he was infected with the theater virus, soon finding his niche behind the scenes, while continuing to act, and eventually to branch out into stand up comedy. Montgomery's technical theatre credits include "Fences" at the Shreveport Little Theater, "A Raisin in the Sun" and "Five Women in the Same

[www.louisianawomenonstage.com](http://www.louisianawomenonstage.com)

Dress" at LSU Shreveport. He enjoys designing, building, and lighting sets.

**Roshanda Spears** fills the role of Front of House Manager for the company, but her day job uses all her creative skills: Spears is a dancer, dance instructor, and choreographer. Spears is the owner of Shufflin' Along, and teaches dance and choreography. She is also Dance Professor at Southern University at Shreveport. Originally from Los Angeles, Spears earned a B.A. and two Master's degrees from Grambling State University. Future projects include a residency at the Alvin Ailey Dance Company in New York.

**Alynetta Beck** alternates with Roshanda Spears as Front of House Manager.

**Samuel Harris** is the company's stagehand, photographer and videographer. His plans include graduate social work.

**Lexton Feaster** is the company's leaf wrangler.