

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, unbearable challenges, passion, vision, talent and, often, action.

For this production, we've selected three of the cycle's solo plays, and named the grouping "**Visionaries**," as this quality is exemplified in the lives and works of "Caroline," "Clyde," and "Kate."

**Caroline Dormon**, the nature and forest preservationist, author, educator and artist, gave her family's acreage – Briarwood – to become a nature preserve which would showcase Louisiana's native plants, especially its lilies and pine trees, in order that future generations would learn to respect and enjoy the natural beauty of the State. She was named by Franklin Delano Roosevelt to the forestry commission, making Dormon the first woman to be so honored, and she was responsible for the founding of Louisiana's Kisatchie National Forest, a replanted pine forest in the middle of the State.

Caroline Dormon is portrayed by **Molly L. Markwick**, currently from DeRidder, who has most often been associated with DeRidder's Impromptu Players, the area's highly popular community theater group, where she wears many hats, including that of company secretary. Markwick has graced the stage in memorable roles, including Aunt Martha in "Arsenic and Old Lace," Hazel Nutt in "Radio Gals" and Vesta Poteet in "Radio Station T.B.S." Molly's talents span the spectrum of theater credits: acting, directing, stage managing

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and costuming. She recently expanded her Abita Springs, but he retains his board membership in nearby Covington's "Playmakers' Theatre," one of the oldest community theaters in the State. Leonard's impressive theatrical accomplishments include a Theater Arts M.F.A. from the University of Mississippi, Oxford, and certification from the University of California, Los Angeles in both Professional Screenwriting and Novel Writing. He is an active member of the California Scriptwriters Association and the Dramatists Guild, and a published novelist and short story writer. It is the "Visionaries" Company's good fortune to have him as our Technical Director.

**Diane McCarthy**, the Company's front of house manager, moved to Lake Charles in the 1980s and opened an Arthur Murray Dance Studio, in which she trained a whole generation of residents in the ; of ballroom and social dance. For many years, she has been an actor and has held many volunteer administrative positions with the Lake Charles' ACTS Theatre group. She is president of the Southwest Louisiana Historical Association, and is the 2009 recipient of the Lake Charles Mayor's Keystone Arts Award.

New York native, producer and principal of AlterEgo Entertainment, **Leslie Berman**, has spent four decades in the music and nonprofit arts industries wearing many hats. These days she is primarily an arts and entertainment and criminal defense attorney. A former freelance music critic, who wrote frequently for *The Village Voice* and *Rolling Stone*, she currently writes "Eclectic Company," a music column, for Lake Charles' *The Jambalaya News*.

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**Allegra Kaough** is administrative assistant for the company, and is preparing for the rigors of graduate school.

**Marie Anne Chiment** has created sets and costumes for hundreds of productions across America for opera, theatre and dance, including for the [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. Seidman Award for design excellence. She is currently the Theater Department Chair of Temple University in Philadelphia.

**Adley Cormier** designed the sets for the "Louisiana Women" companies, and with his artist wife **Melinda Antoon Cormier**, built the sets and props. Cormier, a Breaux Bridge native and avid Southwest Louisiana historian, 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. In 1999 and 2001, he directed five of six currently touring "Louisiana Women," and as well as Woosley's "Rosa" [Hart], "Celine" [Fremeaux Garcia], and her one-act play, "Walking on Air." He has been Guest Director at McNeese State University, using his own translation of Moliere's "The Imaginary Invalid." Others of Cormier's own plays were produced by LCLT, and he has also worked off-Broadway.

**Philip Gould's** photograph of a Louisiana live oak tree provides the backdrop for all of our "Louisiana Women."

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**Mark Thompson Leonard's** resume in theater covers the waterfront, from playwrighting to stage managing and all points in between. Leonard has recently relocated from horizons to venture into independent filmmaking as assistant to Carol Anne Gayle in her 2008 film "Good Boy."

**Clyde Connell**, the Presbyterian Women's leader, civil rights activist, and abstract expressionist artist and sculptor, ended her years at Lake Bistineau, creating arresting works that expressed her feelings about social and civic concerns, especially the division of the races in Churches and in public life. Connell's discovery and love of abstract expressionism was born during her annual pilgrimages to Presbyterian Church Women's council meetings in New York, and grew with her emergence as a highly regarded artist in the field. Connell's fame came quite late in her life; she was in her 70s when she had her first show in Dallas, and in her 80s when she had her first New York show. Today her work is found in the collections of many discerning art buyers, public buildings, and museums.

Clyde Connell is portrayed by **Carol Anne Gayle**, artist and actor, originally from Cape Cod, where she learned her craft at the Provincetown Playhouse, and later, in New York, in the company of such luminaries as Diane Keaton, from Sanford Meisner at the Neighborhood Playhouse school of acting. After moving to Lake Charles some years ago, Gayle became a fixture on the theatre scene, acting, directing, and creating works of passion and substance for the Lake Charles Little Theatre and others. Gayle's work includes numerous film credits, as an actor, artist and scenic designer, and at present, she works as Exhibit and Program Specialist for Lake Charles'

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Historic City Hall Museum. Lake Charles Little Theatre and Gayle's own production company premiered five of the currently touring "Louisiana Women," plus "Rosa" [Hart] and "Celine" [Fremaux Garcia] in 1999 and 2001, under the direction of Adley Cormier. In addition to portraying Clyde Connell, Carol Anne Gayle is the **Director** of the "Visionaries" Company.

**Kate Chopin**, social critic and early feminist author, moved from society in New Orleans to the rural life of a family plantation in Cloutierville, Louisiana, and ultimately back to her family in St. Louis, Missouri. There, after the sudden death of her cotton broker husband, she raised her children and earned her living by managing real estate. She wrote popular, then controversial, short stories and novels which explored the universal conditions of women and race. With her words she carved portraits of the inner life and mind of women wrestling with the constraints and restrictions of life in post-Civil War Louisiana.

Kate Chopin is performed by **Donna Rigdon Jones**, an actor, director, teacher and mezzo-soprano, who has performed as an actor/singer/narrator with the Great Lakes Shakespeare Festival Company, Oberlin Music Theatre, La Comedia Dinner Theatre, May Festival (Robert Shaw conducting), Louisiana Choral Foundation, Lake Charles Symphony, and the Piccolo Opera Company. She appeared in the PBS American Playhouse production of *Playboy of the Western World*. Jones has directed for university, community, high school and church theatre productions. She holds a Bachelor of Music degree from Georgia College, graduate degrees in Theatre from the Cincinnati College Conservatory and a PhD from

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Florida State University. Jones lives in Lake Charles where she directs and performs with the Patrick Street Players and is a member of the Louisiana Choral Foundation.

**Kathy Lynn Heath** understudies all three roles, and in addition is the company's Wardrobe Mistress. Heath's talents lie on both sides of the stage – she recently won first prize for her playwrighting as author of "Ebay Blues," for A Lakeside Theater's 10- Minute Play Competition. She recently directed a lively production of "All I Really Need to Know I Learned in Kindergarten" for Lake Charles's A Lakeside Theater. In 2004, Heath lent her costuming talents to the Lake Charles Little Theater's "Crimes of the Heart." Her acting credits are diverse, ranging from Aunt Eller in "Oklahoma!" to Francesca in "The Taming of the Shrew." Heath is a graphic designer, and has created the print materials for "Louisiana Women."

**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, and were 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 one-actor one-act plays have been produced at the Lake Charles Little Theatre and several of her 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 play "Walking On Air,"

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which premiered at the Lake Charles Little Theatre, from one-act to a full-length screenplay.

Beverly Hills-based autograph authenticator **Sara Willen** was editor of the “Caroline” and “Kate” scripts prior to their production in 1999.

**Kitty Schweitzer**’s Seams Unlimited built the costumes.

**Waverlyn Bayard** provided additional costume and set fabric constructions.

**Courtney Hebert**’s Judith Shakes Designs created our website and the Louisiana Women logo.

**Kathy Heath** designed our print materials.

**Tesa R. Pace** created educational materials that enable 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 reads scripts in her classroom whenever possible, as even the most reluctant readers will participate in the democratic process of reading a script.

The “Visionaries” sister company, **Louisiana Women: Originals,**” explores three different women’s lives: fieldhand, cook, and primitive painter **Clementine Hunter**, freed slave, plantation owner, and matriarch of the Cane River colony of [www.louisianawomenonstage.com](http://www.louisianawomenonstage.com)

Free People of Color, **Marie Thérèse Coincoin**, and jazz pianist, singer and composer, and first African American woman on the board of the American Federation of Musicians, **Nellie Lutcher**, in its own tour to cities across Louisiana in Fall 2010. For more information about all the “Louisiana Women” performances, go to [www.louisianawomenonstage.com](http://www.louisianawomenonstage.com).



presents

## “Visionaries”

three solo plays from

Carolyn Woosley’s 12-play cycle

“Louisiana Women”

directed by

Carol Anne Gayle

Act I

“Kate” ..... Donna Rigdon Jones

15 minute intermission.

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Act II

“Caroline” ..... Molly L. Markwick

15 minute intermission.

Act III

“Clyde” ..... Carol Anne Gayle