

UNDERMAIN THEATRE PRESENTS:

LONESOME BLUES

BY AKIN BABATUNDÉ
AND ALAN GOVENAR

DIRECTED BY
AKIN BABATUNDÉ

The life and songs of
legendary blues singer,
Blind Lemon Jefferson.

Discovered in
Deep Ellum in 1925.

Now we're bringing
him back!

PERFORMED BY
J. DONTRAY DAVIS

LIVE AND
IN PERSON!

September 1-18, 2022

3200 Main St. Dallas TX 75226

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Photo by Poul Ober



UNDERMAIN
THEATRE

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Akin Babatundé



Alan Govenar

About *Lonesome Blues*

Lonesome Blues culminates the more than twenty-five-year collaboration between Alan Govenar and Akin Babatundé in their ongoing quest to unearth the deep truths of the life and music of the ubiquitous Blind Lemon Jefferson. After seeing a workshop of Govenar and Babatundé’s musical *Blind Lemon: Prince of Country Blues*, Pulitzer prizing winning playwright August Wilson said, “I listened to *Blind Lemon Jefferson* every day for five years. *Blind Lemon Jefferson* was the voice of Black America at that moment.”

Blind Lemon; Prince of Country Blues was staged at WaterTower Theatre (2001 Rabin Award for Best Musical or Play) and led to the development of *Blind Lemon Blues*, which was presented in its world premiere in 2004 at the Forum Meyrin (Geneva) and Maison des Cultures du Monde (Paris). The Off-Broadway premiere of *Blind Lemon Blues* in 2007 was produced by the York Theatre and was followed by an international tour organized by the World Music Theatre Festival to nine cities in The Netherlands and Belgium, including Zuiderpershuis (Antwerp), Leidse Schouwburg (Leiden), Regentes (Den Haag), and Oude Luxor (Rotterdam).

Lonesome Blues is a one-person distillation of Govenar and Babatundé’s earlier work that brings to life Blind Lemon Jefferson as he ruminates and reflects on his more than eighty recordings and the people and places he met along the way. *Lonesome Blues* had its world premiere Off-Broadway in 2018 at the York Theatre, starring Akin Babatundé and was directed by Katherine Owens.

UNDERMAIN THEATRE

Presents

Lonesome Blues

By Akin Babatundé and Alan Govenar

Directed by Akin Babatundé

Starring:

J. Dontray Davis*
as Blind Lemon Jefferson

The show will run approximately 90 minutes with no intermission.

Costume Design	Asst. Choreographer and Movement Specialist	Stage Management	Music Supervisor
Amanda Capshaw	Danielle Georgiou	Katie Hamilton*	Jason Johnson-Spinos

Asst. Stage Manager	Scenic Design	Lighting Design
Rob Menzel	Robert Winn	Steve Woods

Premiere Production of *Lonesome Blues* presented at the York Theatre in New York City in June of 2018
Directed by Katherine Owens
Starring Akin Babatundé



* The Actors and Stage Managers employed in this production are members of Actors' Equity Association, the Union of Professional Actors and Stage Managers in the United States. Actors' Equity Association (AEA), founded in 1913, represents more than 49,000 actors and stage managers in the United States. Equity seeks to advance, promote and foster the art of live theatre as an essential component of our society. Equity negotiates wages and working conditions, providing a wide range of benefits, including health and pension plans. AEA is a member of the AFL-CIO, and is affiliated with FIA, an international organization of performing arts unions. The Equity emblem is our mark of excellence. www.actorsequity.org

About the Artists



J. Dontray Davis (*Blind Lemon Jefferson*) is a native of Mexia, Texas where he spent many of his younger years with family before relocating to Waco, Texas where he discovered his love and passion for the art of musical theater in grade school. He was able to sharpen his craft working with Waco Civic Theatre and Waco Children's Theater. He moved to Dallas in 2012 to make his dream of becoming a professional actor a reality and has had

the pleasure of working with some amazing theaters in the DFW area. Past roles include Shrek in *Shrek the Musical*, Mister in *The Color Purple Musical*, Tiny Joe Dixon in *Dreamgirls*, and Audrey II in *Little Shop of Horrors*. He was most recently seen as Snyder in Casa Manana's *Newsies*. "Since moving to DFW I have not only learned so much about my craft, but I've also learned a lot about myself as a person. I'm so grateful to many mentors who've taken me under their wing and helped me along the way." J will be gracing the Undermain Theatre's stage for the first time and he's very excited about it. "Being able to perform this amazing piece just blocks away from the corner where *Blind Lemon Jefferson* actually performed is mind blowing to me." J would like to thank his family and friends for their continuous love and support throughout the years. He would also like to thank Akin Babatundé and Alan Govenar for trusting him with the important task of bringing *Blind Lemon Jefferson* and all the characters to life.



Akin Babatundé, (Playwright/Director) a native of New York City chooses Dallas as his artistic base. He is an accomplished actor, director, coach and writer whose theatrical career spans Broadway, regional theater, film and television. He has been a resident company member of prestigious theatrical institutions throughout the country: Trinity Rep (Providence, Rhode Island), Alley

Theater (Houston, Texas), La MaMa Theater (New York City) and the Dallas Theater Center. He is founder and artistic director of Vivid Theater Ensemble of Dallas and founder of Ebony Emeralds Classic Theater Company. Akin was the first African American to direct for the Dallas Shakespeare Festival in the celebrated diverse production of *Taming of the Shrew* in 1993. As a writer, his work has been commissioned by Florida Stage, La MaMa Theater, the City of Dallas, Office of Arts and Culture, Brown University, the Black Academy of Arts and the Core Ensemble. Akin created *Shakespeare - Midnight Echoes* which toured in Texas paying homage to black performing artists who performed Shakespeare from slavery to the present. He has toured extensively with Core Ensemble in *Of Ebony Embers - Vignettes of the Harlem Renaissance*. Akin wrote and starred in *Blind Lemon Blues*, which toured in Europe (Paris, Geneva, Brussels, Amsterdam) and received rave notices in the New York Times at its 2004 New York premiere at Central Park's Summer Stage. He starred in the 2018 Off-Broadway production of *Lonesome Blues*, directed by Undermain Founding Artistic Director, Katherine Owens. Akin's work has been awarded a Dallas Observer Best Actor Award (the first African-American to

About the Artists continued

receive this distinction), 1991 and 2004 Dallas Critics Forum Award, the 2004 Legacy of Success, and the Alvin Ailey Performing Arts Award. He received the prestigious Individual Artists Grant from the Palm Beach County Cultural Council to create a new work, *Harvest of Voices*, based on oral histories. Theater impresario Ellen Stewart of La MaMa Theater describes him as "one of those rare geniuses who comes into our lives." Mr. Babatundé recently directed *Blue Door* in Delaware and will coordinate the playwrights readers series for the 7th season at the Black Academy of Arts and Letters. In the summer of 2023 he will direct the Southwest premiere of the Broadway hit *Chicken and Biscuits* at Uptown Theater. He holds a Master of Arts degree in Arts and Humanities from the University of Texas at Dallas. He received the prestigious Individual Artists Grant from the Palm Beach County Cultural Council to create a new work *Harvest of Voices* based on oral histories.



Alan Govenar (Playwright) is an award-winning writer, poet, playwright, photographer, and filmmaker. He is director of Documentary Arts, a non-profit organization he founded to advance essential perspectives on historical issues and diverse cultures. Govenar is a Guggenheim Fellow and the author of more than thirty books, including *Boccaccio in the Berkshires*, *Paradise in the*

Smallest Thing, *Lightnin' Hopkins*, *Untold Glory*, *Texas Blues*, *Stompin' at the Savoy*, *Everyday Music*, *Texas in Paris*, and *A Pillow on the Ocean of Time*. His book *Osceola: Memories of a Sharecropper's Daughter* won First Place in the New York Book Festival (Children's Non-Fiction), a Boston Globe-Hornbook Honor; and an Orbis Pictus Honor from the National Council of Teachers of English. Govenar's film, *Stoney Knows How*, based on his book by the same title about Old School tattoo artist Leonard St. Clair, was shown at the Museum of Modern Art in New York and the Centre Georges Pompidou in Paris and was selected as an Outstanding Film of the Year by the London Film Festival. His documentaries *The Beat Hotel*, *Master Qi and the Monkey King*, *You Don't Need Feet to Dance*, *Extraordinary Ordinary People*, and *Myth of a Colorblind France*, are distributed by First Run Features. Govenar's theatrical works include the musicals *Blind Lemon: Prince of Country Blues*, *Blind Lemon Blues* and *Lonesome Blues* (with Akin Babatundé), *Texas in Paris*, and *Stompin' at the Savoy*.

Amanda Capshaw (Costume Design) At Undermain she designed *The Thanksgiving Play*, *Red Chariot*, *so go the ghosts of méxico*, *parts one, two, and three*, *The Lady from the Sea*, *JOHN, Galileo*, *10 out of 12*, *Jonah*, *The Droll*, and *The Fairytale Lives of Russian Girls*. She earned her BFA in Theatre from Baylor University and completed her MFA in Stage Design at SMU. Recent credits include *Drunk Enough to Say I Love You/Here We Go*, *Lela & Co*, *Empathitrax*, *Martyr* (Second Thought Theatre) and *Adding Machine: a Musical* (Theatre 3).

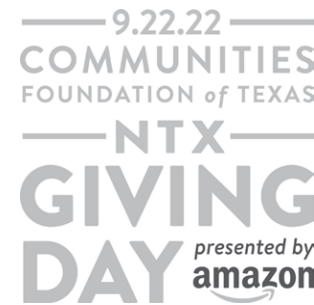
Danielle Georgiou (Asst. Choreographer and Movement Specialist) is a Dallas-based director, filmmaker, and performance artist. Her work has been presented nationally and internationally; most recently, her videos have been screened in New York, New Jersey, Texas, Germany, Italy, and Cyprus. Since 2011, she has been the Artistic Director of the Danielle Georgiou Dance Group (DGDG), an ensemble-based dance theater company that produces original dance plays and musicals. DGDG was selected as Best Dance Troupe of 2020, 2017, and 2015 by the Dallas Observer and Best Dance Company for 2016 by the Readers of D Magazine. At Undermain, Danielle has directed *Stronger Than Arms* (which she co-created with Justin Locklear and DGDG) and *Things Missing/Missed*. She co-directed *so go the ghosts of méxico part 3*, and choreographed *Madame Bovary*, *The Thanksgiving Play*, *so go the ghosts of méxico part 2*, and *Three Sisters*. She made her Undermain debut on stage in *How Is It That We Live or Shakey Jake + Alice*. She has also worked at Theatre 3, Kitchen Dog Theater, Echo Theatre, Dead White Zombies, Stage West, Circle Theatre, and Junior Players. She was the Movement Consultant for the Off-Broadway production of *Lonesome Blues*. She holds a Ph.D. in Humanities-Aesthetic Studies from the University of Texas at Dallas. She is a Professor of Dance, Humanities, and Visual Art at Dallas College-Eastfield campus, and is the former Associate Artistic Director of Undermain Theatre. She is represented by Ro2 Art.

Jason Johnson-Spiros (Sound Designer/Music Supervisor) is a theater and film artist and educator. He designed the sound for the original Off-Broadway production of *Lonesome Blues* and designed sound and projections for the Off-Broadway production of *Texas in Paris* (also by Alan Govenar). As a documentary film editor, he has edited numerous features, shorts, and museum films. He has designed sound for dozens of productions at Outcry Theatre, the company he founded with his wife Becca, where he is the Marketing Director. More info at outcrytheatre.com

Robert Winn (Scenic Design) Robert is a charter Undermain company member, having designed dozens of shows in different capacities throughout the years. Most recently he designed the set for *The Thanksgiving Play*, *The Lady From the Sea*, *JOHN, Really*, and *The Night Alive*. Other favorites include *Goose and TomTom*, *The Anger in Ernest and Ernestine*, *Mad Forest*, *Poor Folk's Pleasure*, and *All Night Long*.

Steve Woods (Lighting Design) is an Undermain Company Member. International work has taken him around the world with stops in Berlin, Moscow, London, Prague, Taipei, Budapest, Amsterdam, Madrid, and beyond. His work has been seen at many of the world's national theaters, the Olympics, and International Festivals including the Festival de L'Imaginaire and the Festival Blues Sur Scene in Paris. New York City credits include work with Lincoln Center, Juilliard, Theatre for a New Audience (Lucille Lortel Award), Riverside, York Theatre, Ohio Theatre, Guggenheim Museum, Summer Stage, Masters of American Dance, and the Joyce Theatre. Since 1988, he has been a frequent designer for the Jose Limon Dance Company where his work has

been seen in the New York, Washington DC, and Los Angeles seasons. His designs include works by Alwin Nikolais, John Cranko, Garth Fagen, Donald McKayle, Martha Graham, and Carlos Orta. Regionally his designs have also been seen at The Shakespeare Theatre (DC), The Kennedy Center for the Performing Arts, Jacob's Pillow, Los Angeles Music Center, American Dance Festival, Dallas Theater Center, Undermain Theatre, Kitchen Dog Theater, Utah Festival Opera, and the Spoleto Festival. His television work includes broadcasts of *Evangeline*, *Lewis and Clark - Passages*, *Rigoletto*, *Heartbeats: The Dances of Donald McKayle*, *Susannah* (conducted by composer Carlisle Floyd), and *Lucia de Lammermoor* with Roberta Peters (PBS) as well as work with the BBC, ESPN, MTV, VH-1, Showtime, and NBC. He is Professor of Theatre and Head of the Stage Design Program at SMU.



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**DIRECTED BY
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Bruce DuBose - Producing Artistic Director



Bruce DuBose is the co-founder and Producing Artistic Director of Undermain Theatre where he has acted, directed, designed and produced with his wife and artistic partner Katherine Owens until her death in 2019. He has directed Undermain productions such as *The Thanksgiving Play* by Larissa FastHorse, *JOHN* by Annie Baker, *Eurydice* by Sara Ruhl, *The Anger in Ernest and Ernestine* by Leah Cherniak and Martha Ross, *The Castle* by Howard Barker and *Swedish Tales of Woe* by Erik Ehn among others. He has performed in recent Undermain productions such as *An Iliad*, Henrik Ibsen's *The Lady from the Sea*, Len Jenkin's *How is it That We Live or Shakey Jake + Alice*, Sara Ruhl's translation of *Three Sisters*, Bertolt

Brecht's *Galileo*, and Harold Pinter's *The Birthday Party* among many others. Sound Design work includes *The Lady from the Sea*, *so go the ghosts of méxico, part one*, *Jonah*, and *The Testament of Mary*. Other area stage work includes *Antony and Cleopatra* at the Shakespeare Festival of Dallas, *Arms and the Man* at the Dallas Theater Center, and *Fool For Love* at Stage West. NYC stage appearances include *Mud into Gold* at HERE, *Swedish Tales of Woe* and *Glamour* at the Ohio Theatre, *The Inner Circle* at the Sande Shurin Theatre and Undermain's tour of *Neil Young's Greendale* at the ICE Factory Festival. He wrote the Undermain original play *Waiting for a Train*; *The Life and Songs of Jimmie Rodgers* and arranged the libretto for the Undermain production of *Neil Young's Greendale*. Independent films include *Spring Eddy*, *I Become Gilgamesh*, *Dusk and Late Bloomers*. Television includes appearances on *Prison Break*, *Walker Texas Ranger*, *The Deep End*, *Dangerous Curves*, and *Friday Night Lights*. Animation voice-over characters include Marcus Kincaid in *Borderlands*, King Neptune in *One-Piece* on the Funimation network, Thor in the video game series *SMITE*, and the Boomer in *Gears of War*. National Documentary voice-over work includes narration for the Emmy-winning PBS documentary series *The US/Mexican War*, and PBS documentary *The Marines*.

Production Staff

Production Manager	Kenneth Bernstein
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Carpenters	Rob Menzel, Jonathan Tovar, Alexi Sinclair
Scenic Artist	Emily Hauelsen
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Undermain Theatre's Founding Artistic Director Katherine Owens



Katherine Owens (10/27/1957 - 7/21/2019), Founding Artistic Director of Undermain Theatre and celebrated artist and director, was known for bringing new and visionary theater to Dallas audiences. Starting in 1984, Katherine, with fellow actor Raphael Parry and her future husband, actor Bruce DuBose, created the Undermain Theatre -- a thriving mid-sized professional theater in a basement space beneath Main Street in Deep Ellum. Katherine and Bruce went on to form a company of longtime collaborators consisting of actors, designers, directors and writers. Central to Katherine's work was forging relationships with American playwrights whose experimental new work came to be Undermain's main focus. The company would also present, and become widely recognized for, stagings

of classic works by writers they saw as key artistic influencers of Undermain's experimental tradition. Widely recognized for her impact on the field, Katherine's awards and honors included Texas Woman of Distinction, Fellow of the Sundance Theater Institute, Dallas Institute of Humanities Fellow, D magazine Best of Dallas and the Dallas 40 Influencers, multiple Dallas Theater Critics Forum Awards for directing and ensemble performance, Dallas Observer and Dallas Morning News Best Of lists, the Dallas Historical Society Award for Excellence, the Ken Bryant Vision Award and the McLean-Paris Award for Artists. She was a member of the SDC. Katherine directed well over a hundred productions in her career. Owens said of her approach, "I think there are two traditions in the theater—the hermetic and the heroic." She received multiple awards for her directing of such notable productions as *An Iliad*, by Lisa Peterson and Denis O'Hare, Sarah Kane's *Blasted*, Young Jean Lee's *The Appeal*, David Rabe's *Goose and Tom Tom* and *The Black Monk*, classics such as *Macbeth*, *Three Sisters* and *Galileo* and world premieres like Gordon Dahlquist's *Tomorrow Come Today*, Len Jenkin's *How is it that we Live, or Shakey Jake + Alice*, Matthew Paul Olmos's Trilog *so go the ghosts of méxico*, and Lynn Alvarez's *The Snow Queen*, among many others. Katherine's work was not exclusive to the Undermain basement. She directed in venues as far flung as Macedonia during the siege of Sarajevo, the Belgrade international theatre festival in Serbia, and in New York. Undermain's Off-Off Broadway productions culminated in a premiere of Bruce's rock opera adaptation of *Neil Young's Greendale* directed by Katherine during a sold-out run at the The Ice Factory Festival. More recently in 2018 she directed the world premiere of *Lonesome Blues*, a play about legendary blues singer Blind Lemon Jefferson Off-Broadway at the York Theatre, a play created by Alan Govenar with Akin Babatundé. Katherine served as a juror for the Asian Film Festival of Dallas, had been a panelist for the Alpert Awards and Texas Commission on the Arts, and was a member of the Booker T. Washington High School for the Performing Arts Artistic Council. Her familiar voice could be heard narrating a number of programs for PBS and KERA 90.1 as well as several documentaries including Mark Birnbaum's *Las Mujeres de Valle* and Judy Kelly's *Frozen Music*, which won an Emmy and a Matrix Award. Undermain Theatre was Katherine's life work and legacy. As Producing Artistic Director Bruce continues their work to lead the Undermain in accordance with her artistic vision.

The Katherine Owens/ Undermain Fund for New Work

The Katherine Owens/Undermain Fund for New Work, managed by Undermain Theatre, provides long-term support to the generation and development of new work in Dallas. This fund was established by gifts made in remembrance of our beloved Founding Artistic Director Katherine Owens and seeks to continue Undermain's ongoing commitment to new work—a pillar of our 38 years. We thank the following supporters of the Katherine Owens/Undermain Fund for New Work:

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If you would like to contribute to the continuation of Katherine and Bruce's vision for Undermain with a gift to this fund, please visit <https://www.undermain.org/fundfornewwork> or email Blair Crane, Director of Development at blaircrane@undermain.org.

The average price of an Undermain ticket is \$20. If we had to charge the full price to cover all of the costs of running Undermain Theatre and producing shows of the highest quality, we would have to charge **\$165 per ticket!**

To fill the gap between our ticket prices and what it costs, Undermain sells concessions, fills out foundation and government grant applications, finds corporate sponsors, requests in-kind support, and solicits contributions from individuals.

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In Memoriam: Katherine Owens, Teddy Davey, Happy Yancey

Undermain Theatre History

Undermain Theatre was founded in 1984 by a group of artists who transformed a warehouse basement under Main Street in Dallas into a performance space and began producing new and experimental plays. Today, Undermain produces its annual subscription season of plays for an audience of 5,500 patrons from throughout North Texas. With heightened attention to language, Undermain premieres new work and revisits seminal modern work while focusing on artistic refinement and using its unique performance space to create intimate theater experiences. Because of its national reputation for artistic excellence, Undermain is nurturing a pool of some of America's best new and experimental writers. American Theatre Magazine has said, "Undermain seeded the ground for a writer-friendly town." Since its inception, Undermain has produced 35 world premiere productions, contributing to the American theatrical canon and introducing new voices to Dallas audiences. At the heart of Undermain Theatre is its company of artists. Today, the company consists of actors, directors, designers, and producers who are deeply embedded in the Theatre's artistic life, appearing in all Undermain productions and serving on each production's creative team. As Undermain expands its audience, it maintains its pledge to keep the highest production values while guaranteeing access to all. Affordable ticket prices are made possible by Undermain's generous donors whose gifts open the Theatre's doors for a diverse audience to experience language-rich, visionary theater.



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Photo Credit: Sylvia Elzafor

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