

a world premiere by STEVE H. BROADNAX III and CHARLES DUMAS

directed by STEVE H. BROADNAX III



STREAMING EXTENDED THRU FEBRUARY 27, 2022

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Thanks to Our Donors

Lawrence Stallings as Robert Johnson All Lantern production photos by Mark Garvin Program editing/design by Anne Shuff

Lantern Theater Company respectfully acknowledges that it is situated on Lenapehoking, the ancestral and spiritual homeland of the Unami Lenape.

WELCOME 3



Charles McMahon ARTISTIC DIRECTOR **Stacy Maria Dutton** EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR

presents



AND Charles Dumas

James F. Pyne, Jr. SCENIC DESIGNER Marla Jurglanis COSTUME DESIGNER

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Isabella Gill-Gomez ASSOCIATE LIGHTING DESIGNER Curtis Craig SOUND DESIGNER & MUSIC ARRANGER

Rebecca Smith ASSOCIATE PRODUCER

DIRECTED BY Steve H. Broadnax III

This world premiere play with music was filmed in June 2021 at St. Stephen's Theater in Center City Philadelphia.

We are deeply grateful to all the artists, staff, and medical experts who helped make it possible for us to safely create this production.

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About the Lantern

Lantern Theater Company produces plays that investigate and illuminate what is essential in the human spirit and the spirit of the times. We seek to be



a vibrant, contributing member of our community, exposing audiences to great theater, inviting participation in dialogue and discussion, and engaging audience members about artistic and social issues.

Illumination Education Program

Our *Illumination* education program complements and expands on the work of classroom teachers to bring an essential artistic lens to curricular material, allowing students to connect to classic stories in a dynamic way and empowering teachers with new approaches to traditional literature. Our lessons are designed to support student development in three key areas: the ability to think critically and problem solve, the ability to communicate effectively, and the ability to collaborate. Following a decade of providing arts-integrated instruction in the classroom, we have found that exposure to the theatrical discipline deepens student understanding of assigned material and fosters empathy and positive collaborative habits – essential skills that will provide long-term benefits to students into their adult lives.

We are deeply grateful to the individuals, foundations, corporations, and government partners listed here and on the following pages whose generosity provides critical support for our award-winning artistic, education, and community programming. Please consider making a tax-deductible donation by visiting us online at lanterntheater.org/support.

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The Man and the Myth

Robert Johnson was an extraordinary American blues musician whose life and legend are shrouded in mystery. Johnson's playing was revolutionary, considered by many to be the basis for rock and roll. But his early death in 1938 and a lack of reliable records from the Jim Crow era mean that we know more of his legend than of the man himself.

Robert Johnson was born in 1911 in Mississippi, but spent much of his early childhood in Memphis, Tennessee, where he attended school and first fell in love with blues music. Around the age of nine he moved back to be with his mother in Arkansas and Mississippi, and it is there he discovered the Delta Blues style and learned to play harmonica.

Other Delta blues artists like Son House remember a young Robert Johnson as eager but unskilled. Son House claimed audiences at juke joints would beg him to get Johnson to stop playing the guitar. But after a stay in Arkansas – accounts differ, but it was anywhere from six months to two years – Johnson returned to the Delta Blues scene with a deep mastery of the guitar that had been unimaginable just months earlier. This sudden explosion of skill and creativity fed the myth that outlived the man: that at a lonely crossroads at midnight, Robert Johnson sold his soul to the devil in exchange for incredible talent at blues guitar.

DELVE INTO ME AND THE DEVIL WITH LANTERN SEARCHLIGHT

The enduring legacy of Robert Johnson • Behind the scenes interviews with the artists • Pioneers of the Delta Blues scene • The pursuit of glory • Much, much more!

Lawrence Stallings

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FROM THE DRAMATURG 6

Johnson completed just two recording sessions in his life - 29 songs for two albums recorded in 1936 and 1937. One of those songs, "Terraplane Blues," was a modest hit, the only one during Johnson's short life. The albums caught the attention of John Hammond, a talent scout for Columbia Records. He was working to bring Johnson to perform at Carnegie Hall as part of his "Spirituals to Swing" concert, but Johnson died at 27 before he could perform there. His death, like his life, was mysterious. The official cause of death was complications from syphilis, but his friends maintained he was poisoned with strychnine by the jealous husband of one of his lovers.

Nearly 25 years after his death, Johnson's music had a major resurgence. John Hammond would again champion Robert Johnson by reissuing 16 of his recordings in 1961 with an album called "King of the Delta Blues Singers." At the time, the record label did not even have a picture of Johnson to put on the cover. But it introduced Johnson and his innovative playing to a new generation of guitarists - many British and white - who fell in love with his music. Johnson was inducted into the Blues Hall of Fame in 1980 and the Rock and Roll Hall of Fame in 1986. In 1991, his songs were reissued again; the album sold half a million copies and won a Grammy. But despite being foundational for a generation of rock and roll superstars and his enduring influence, Robert Johnson himself remains a mystery.



Robert Johnson in 1936 – one of just three verified photos of him



FROM THE DRAMATURG 7

BROTHER ROBERT JOHNSON



The third confirmed photo of Robert Johnson, taken around 1930. His stepsister Annye Anderson revealed it in 2020 and used it as the cover of her book about him.

 Avid "Honeyboy" Edwards in 2006; Edwards

generation of Delta Blues players

"Everybody should know about Robert Johnson...You want to know how good the blues can get? Well, this is it." –*Keith Richards*

His Playing

As captured on his recordings, Johnson's playing was revolutionary; he was using elements of what would become rock and roll a full two decades before the genre was invented. His chord structures were innovative, and his tunings were unique as well – he used four tunings as well as a capo to blend modern and traditional styles to his liking.

He also had exceptionally long fingers, which allowed him more dexterity than his peers. He played rhythm lines as well as melody lines on the same instrument at the same time, and could play chords, bass, and fills all at once - also while singing - while his contemporaries could usually only strum and sing at the same time. He also incorporated piano rhythms and bass riffs into his guitar playing, becoming the first to play the piano boogie walking bass line on the guitar (while simultaneously playing chords and singing). This technique convinced many later listeners that there were actually two guitars being played at once, as pioneered in the Memphis Blues style, but there was truly only one: Robert Johnson's.

"Robert was the only guitar player with a little different style than all the other guys had." –David "Honeyboy" Edwards

FROM THE DRAMATURG 8

The Delta Blues

The Delta Blues was a unique style developed in the Mississippi Delta, prominently featuring acoustic guitar and harmonica. Slide guitar was a distinguishing element of the genre, and the singing style ranged from quiet introspection to passionate cries. Most Delta Blues musicians were itinerant, traveling the region to perform wherever they could find an audience.

Johnson serves as a fulcrum on the blues continuum: He is the product of the Delta Blues musicians who came before him, but his innovations to that form helped launch a new generation of blues artists and a new genre for them to play.

These innovations were made possible by the musicians he came up around and admired. Johnson was most influenced by Delta Blues musicians of 1920s and '30s Mississippi and Arkansas, including "Father of the Delta Blues" Charley Patton, Willie Brown, and Son House; he inspired contemporaries like David "Honeyboy" Edwards and Johnny Shines. We know these names and celebrate their music, but the persistent ambiguity around the details of their lives begs the question: How many other Black blues artists are there whose names – but not their influence – have been lost to history?



Son House, 1964

"He was a guy that could find a way to make a song sound good with a slide, regardless of its contents or nature. His guitar seemed to talk – repeat and say words with him like no one else in the world could." *–Bluesman Johnny Shines*

Looking Ahead

In the mid-20th century, Chicago was one of the largest and fastest growing cities in the United States. During the Great Migration, many Black Americans moved north to escape the sharecropping system and Jim Crow laws of the south and to seek better economic opportunities. Among them were Delta Blues musicians, who found that Chicago could offer a home base for recording and playing gigs, enabling them to stay mostly in one place rather than living the traveling lives of itinerant Delta Blues musicians like Robert Johnson.

The Chicago Blues scene was populated by crowded and noisy city streets and clubs, a far cry from the juke joints of the Delta. The need for amplification drove the development of the Chicago Blues style. The basic facets of Delta Blues remained – a focus on harmonica and slide guitar, alongside passionate and personal lyrics and singing – but they were now augmented with electric guitars rather than acoustic, and full bands rather than single players or trios.

The tropes and licks of Delta Blues that Johnson mastered, developed, and expanded can be heard throughout Chicago Blues, newly electrified and amplified. Delta Blues luminaries – including Johnson's contemporaries Sonny Boy Williamson II and Honeyboy Edwards – were among the thousands that arrived in Chicago from Mississippi for recording and performing opportunities, bringing the foundations of Delta Blues with them. They also brought with them the knowledge and memory of Robert Johnson's revolutionary use of these tropes and licks, expanding what was possible with a clear and well-defined form.

Though he never lived there, one of Robert Johnson's most enduring songs is "Sweet Home Chicago," featuring many of the sound tropes that recur again and again in both Delta and Chicago Blues, including the defining sound of the slide guitar. Chicago Blues musicians like Howlin' Wolf and Muddy Waters would take these sounds into the next generation, where pioneers like Chuck Berry would transform them into the earliest examples of rock and roll.

—Meghan Winch

Muddy Waters

"Robert Johnson was one of the most inventive geniuses of all time. We still haven't caught up with him." —Bob Dylan

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MUSIC IN THE PLAY 10

THEY'RE RED HOT ME AND THE DEVIL BLUES LOVE IN VAIN CROSSROAD BLUES I'M A STEADY ROLLIN' MAN SWEET HOME CHICAGO TERRAPLANE BLUES

> All songs written by Robert Johnson

> Music performed by Curtis Craig

Vocals performed by Lawrence Stallings

Why is Robert Johnson's story so enduring?

It plays on an ancient story architecture: a human being makes a deal with supernatural forces so he can excel beyond human capability, but he pays a heavy price for it. There are examples of this kind of story around the world, among all peoples and all eras, but there is something utterly compelling about this one for us.

Perhaps it is because Johnson's story forms a kind of bridge between the mythic past and the modern world. Unlike Achilles or Faust, Robert Johnson was a real person. However he came by his unique abilities, we know that they were real and that they were every bit as good as myth would have it because we have the recordings of his songs.

In Steve Broadnax's telling of this tale, there is an extra dimension that makes it particularly satisfying. We see the hero not just as a figure who has adventures and overcomes obstacles but as a moral agent who grows before our eyes from a callow child to an admirable man, capable of great empathy and self-sacrifice.

The blues is an art form that takes suffering and transforms it into something good – into wisdom, humor, and perseverance. The version of Robert Johnson that Steve Broadnax has imagined understands that his suffering in this world has meaning if he can pass on his hard-won wisdom to a world full of people he will never meet.

Each new generation rewrites the hero's journey to fit its own needs. Ours is an age in desperate need of wisdom, empathy, maturity, patience, and generosity of spirit. It is a great joy for us at the Lantern to bring you Steve's telling of this classic American story that so embodies these qualities.

-Charles McMahon



MEET THE PLAYWRIGHT/DIRECTOR 12



Steve H. Broadnax III

Directing credits include *Thoughts* of A Colored Man (Broadway), Katori Hall's Pulitzer Prize-winning *The Hot Wing King* at Signature Theatre (NYC Premiere), Lee Edward Colston's *The First Deep Breath* at Chicago's Vineyard Theatre (Premiere and winner of Best New Work at the Jeff Awards), Dominique Morisseau's *Blood at the Root* at the National Black Theatre (Winner of The Kennedy Center's Hip Hop Theater Creator Award), and William Jackson Harper's *Travisville* at Ensemble Studio Theatre (NYC Premiere).

Additional credits include Actors Theatre of Louisville; Hattiloo Theatre; Syracuse Stage; Chautauqua Theatre Company; People's Light; The Apollo Theater, NYC; Classical Theatre of Harlem; Atlantic Theater, NYC; Detroit Public Theatre; Baltimore Center Stage; Cleveland Play House; The Black Theatre Troupe in Phoenix, AZ; Arkansas Repertory Theatre; Moore Theatre in Seattle; Market Theatre in Johannesburg, SA; The Edinburgh Fringe Festival in Scotland; National Arts Festival in South Africa; and The Adelaide Festival of Arts, Australia.

Writing credits include *The Hip Hop Project* – an award-winning, full-length original play directed, choreographed, and conceived by Steve that has toured nationally and was showcased at The Kennedy Center in Washington, D.C. – and *Bayard Rustin Inside Ashland*, which had its world premiere at People's Light in 2021.

As a member of Actors' Equity Association (AEA) and Stage Directors and Choreographers Society (SDC), Steve has worked nationally and internationally. Steve is also a member of the Ensemble Studio Theatre and serves as the resident director at People's Light. Originally from Little Rock, AR, Steve is currently a Professor of Theatre at Penn State University; Co-Head of MFA Directing. Learn more at www.stevebroadnax.com.



LAWRENCE STALLINGS (Robert Johnson and

others) *Me and The Devil* marks Lawrence's third production at the Lantern, so it's no wonder he feels right at home. Having spent the last five years in LA focusing on film, television, commercials, and creating his own content, Lawrence is honored that his return to the stage is at <u>this</u> theater with this incredible production of *Me and The Devil*. Special thanks to the Lantern staff and crew for their incredible support on this journey, Q. Smith and Caleb for your love and

believing in me always, and to Steve Broadnax III whose leadership, friendship, and faith have been invaluable during this process. You're one of kind, brotha. We did it! Joshua 21:45! Favorite credits include: Broadway: *The Book of Mormon* (Original Broadway Cast), *Hair, Passing Strange* (standby). National Tour/Off-Broadway: *Hair, Passing Strange* (The Public Theater), *Shafrika White Girl*. Regional: *My Mañana Comes, Family Album, Sizwe Bansi Is Dead, Sam Cooke: Forever Mr. Soul* (One-Man Show), *From My Hometown, Death and the King's Horseman*. Film/TV: *The Rebound, About A Boy, Grey's Anatomy*. Web Series: *I Take Thee Zoe, Dirty White, Couples Therapy, Diagnosis X, A Royal Birthday*. IG: imstallings



EBONY PULLUM (The Woman) is an actress, singer, and teaching artist based out of Philadelphia. She is excited for the opportunity to work with the Lantern again after this time away from theater. Some of her regional credits include Putana in '*Tis A Pity She's A Whore* at Philadelphia Artists' Collective; Shug Avery in *The Color Purple* at Theatre Horizon (Barrymore Award-winner); Paulina in *The Winter's Tale* at Curio Theatre Company; *Red Velvet* at Lantern Theater Company; *Cristal Palace* at The Kimmel Center;

Quintessence Theatre: *My Fair Lady, The Broken Heart, Love's Labour's Lost, Mother Courage and her Children.* New York: *The Bride of Frankenstein* (Robert Moss Theater), *Freedom Riders* (June Havoc Theatre).



JAMES HERB SMITH (Guitar Stand-in) Born and bred in Philadelphia, James "Herb" Smith has had a successful career as a guitarist since the age of 14, touring and performing with major artists around the world. He played guitar with Patti LaBelle for over 20 years from 1980-2002, and has played guitar on stage with many renowned performers including Mariah Carey, Luther Vandross, Michael McDonald, David Sanborn, and The Stylistics, to name a few. He has played many live venues including Carnegie

Hall and various Broadway theaters including The Minskoff Theatre, The Gershwin Theatre, and The St. James Theater. He has also forged a career as a songwriter, session guitarist, and composer. He started his own business through which he now plays cruise ships, restaurants, and backing tracks for other artists, as well as playing piano at his church. www.herbsmithguitar.com



CHARLES DUMAS (Co-Playwright) is a professor in the School of Theatre at Penn State University. Formerly he was director of the Acting in Media program at Temple University and associate professor in PSU's Department of African and African-American Studies. He was a Fulbright Fellow at The University of Stellenbosch. Dumas is a professional actor, director, and writer and the artistic director and cofounder (1986) of The Loaves and Fish Traveling Rep Company. Most recently Dumas could be seen

as Colin Powell in ACT Seattle's *Stuff Happens*, as Polonius in Pennsylvania Shakespeare Festival's *Hamlet*, and Troy in Center Stage's *Fences*. Dumas has directed many of August Wilson's plays including *Fences* at Pennsylvania Stage, *Seven Guitars* for Kuntu Rep, *Ma Rainey's Black Bottom* for Temple Theater, and *Joe Turner's Come and Gone* for the Wilson Festival. Dumas' *9/11 - A Day in The Life of A People* was chosen for Philadelphia Fringe and performed at the National Constitution Center. His *Wolf By The Ears* was one of the five finalists as the best play written by an African-American. Dumas is a past recipient of a Pennsylvania Council on the Arts playwriting grant and a multiple AUDELCO nominee. He was chosen best lead actor by the Beverly Hills/Hollywood NAACP for his portrayal of MUSA in *B.C. Historia*. He has had recurring roles on *Ed*, *100 Centre Street*, *Law and Order*, and *Homefront*.

JAMES F. PYNE, JR. (Scenic Designer) last worked at the Lantern on *Othello*, which played to one extremely enthusiastic audience before Covid-19 closed all of us down. James is honored to be a part of the amazing production team that created *Me and the Devil*. James served as Director of Design for 40 years at People's Light and designed some 300-plus shows earning 10 Barrymore nominations with two wins for Outstanding Scenic Design. Next up is *The Plague* at the Lantern.

MARLA JURGLANIS (Costume Designer) has designed costumes for Lantern Theater Company productions of *Othello* and *The Heir Apparent*. Other recent regional designs include *Our Town* at People's Light and *Three Sisters* for Hedgerow Theatre Company. Marla's designs have also been seen at Pennsylvania Shakespeare Festival, Arden Theatre Company, Philadelphia Theatre Company, Delaware Theatre Company, and Villanova Theatre. Marla has received the Barrymore Award in costume design for *Bach at Leipzig*, *Pride and Prejudice*, and *Sense and Sensibility*.

SHON CAUSER (Lighting Designer) is excited to be back with the Lantern and to be part of this awesome project. Previous Lantern designs: *Don't Dress for Dinner, The Tempest, The Gospel According To..., Oscar Wilde: From the Depths* (Barrymore nomination), *Photograph 51, Doubt, A Child's Christmas in Wales* (Barrymore nomination), *The Liar, The Beauty Queen of Leenane,* and *A Skull in Connemara*. Other recent designs: *A Woman of No Importance* and *God of Carnage* (Walnut Street Theatre); *Annie* and *I Love a Piano* (Maples Rep); *Arsenic and Old Lace* (Fulton Theatre); *Driving Miss Daisy* and *I Am My Own Wife* (Penobscot Theatre Company); *Oliver!* (Gretna Theatre). MFA in lighting design, Temple University. Many thanks to Charles, Steve, Iz, Stacy, Beckah, and the whole Lantern family. Love to Christine.

CURTIS CRAIG (Sound Designer and Music Arranger) *Pipeline* (Cleveland Play House, Actors Theatre of Louisville, Detroit Public Theatre); *Indecent* at Denver Center for the Performing Arts; world premiere of Dominique Morriseau's *Mud Row* at People's Light; world premiere of *The Great Leap*, Denver Center Theatre Company; *The Bacchae* with Classical Theatre of Harlem; and *How to Catch Creation* at Baltimore Center Stage and Philadelphia Theatre Company. Additional work heard at the Denver Center, Actors Theatre of Louisville, Detroit Public Theatre, Clarence Brown Theatre, Seattle Rep, Chautauqua Theater Company, the world-famous Apollo Theater, New York Fringe, and the Dallas Theater Center. In 2017, his sound design and composition from the Denver Center production of *All The Way* was awarded the Silver Medal in Sound Design at the World Stage Design exposition in Taipei, Taiwan. He previously won the Gold Medal in Sound Design for *Pentecost* in 2009 in Seoul, South Korea. His work can be heard at www.curtiscraig.com.

ISABELLA GILL-GOMEZ (Associate Lighting Designer) is a freelancer and recent Temple University graduate. This is her first professional show and will definitely not be her last. She'd like to thank the Lantern, Shon, and her loved ones for the endless love and support.

REBECCA SMITH (Associate Producer) has been the stage manager at the Lantern for 14 years, although none have been quite like this. A proud member of Actors' Equity Association, she has previously worked with Theatre Exile, New Paradise Laboratories, and Brat Productions, among others. She is a graduate of Temple University with a BA in European history and a minor in theater.

CHARLES MCMAHON (Artistic Director) co-founded Lantern Theater Company in 1994 and serves as artistic director in addition to directing, acting, and writing for the company. He has directed all but one of the Lantern's annual Shakespeare productions, including recent productions of *Othello*, Measure for Measure, The Tempest, Coriolanus, and As You Like It. Other Lantern directing credits include The Resistible Rise of Arturo Ui, The Taming of the Shrew, Henry V, New Jerusalem, Romeo & Juliet, A Midsummer Night's Dream, Hamlet, Othello, La Ronde (also translator and adapter), Richard III (Barrymore Award, Outstanding Production of a Play), The Comedy of Errors (Barrymore nomination, Outstanding Direction of a Play), Much Ado About Nothing, King Lear, The House of Bernarda Alba, and A Doll's House. His acting credits include reprising the role of Heisenberg in *Copenhagen*, and his writing credits include Oscar Wilde: From the Depths and co-creating an original adaptation of Dylan Thomas' A Child's Christmas in Wales, which was honored with two Barrymore Awards and five nominations, including a nomination for Outstanding New Play. A native Philadelphian, he is a graduate of New York University's theater department where he studied acting and directing.

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STACY MARIA DUTTON (Executive

Director) has served as executive director of Lantern Theater Company since 2016, after serving on the company's Board of Directors for over a decade. Her prior career in investment management spanned 25 years, including serving as managing partner of Brandywine Global Investment Management and as co-founder and chief operating officer of Hygrove Partners. She served on the Board of Directors of the Philadelphia Orchestra Association from 2007 to 2019, including service as Audit Committee Chair and Investment Committee Chair. In 2011, she was named Business on Board Member of the Year by the Arts & Business Council of Greater Philadelphia. She earned an MBA from the Wharton School of the University of Pennsylvania, a BA in philosophy from the University of Chicago, and pursued graduate studies at the Nitze School of Advanced International Studies (SAIS) of the Johns Hopkins University.



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2021/22 Season Professional Apprentices	Leah Brockman, Maria Carroll,
	Gabe Moses, Jennifer Spencer

PRODUCTION for *ME AND THE DEVIL*

Technical Director	Stephen Peterson
Production Management Fellow	Isabella Gill-Gomez
Video Production	Natural Light Films
Video Director and Editor	Andrea Campbell
Audio Recordist and Sound Mixer	Chad Kinsey
Cameras	Andrea Campbell, Marlin Bert
Assistant to the Associate Producer	Alex Donnelly
Scenic Charge	Brian McCann
Master Electrician	Alex Dossantos
Audio Engineer	John Kolbinski
Carpenter	Nick Schwasman
Electricians	Stephen Minder, Michaela Navarro

THANK YOU!

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