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OCTAVIA E. BUTLER'S
PARABLE OF THE SOWER
A CONCERT PERFORMANCE
MUSIC AND LYRICS BY TOSHI REAGON & BERNICE JOHNSON REAGON
DIRECTED BY ERIC TING

A MUSICAL EVENT OF RARE POWER AND BEAUTY FUSING SCIENCE
FICTION WITH 200 YEARS OF BLACK MUSIC

IN BOSTON MARCH 23-26, 2017
EMERSON/PARAMOUNT CENTER'S ROBERT J. ORCHARD STAGE

TICKETS ON SALE NOW

Email for high resolution images, and interviews.

[Boston, MA – January 26, 2017] ArtsEmerson proudly announces a limited engagement of the special concert performance of **Octavia E. Butler's Parable of the Sower** March 23 through 26, 2017. Written by Toshi Reagon and Bernice Reagon Johnson and directed by Eric Ting, this musical event of rare power and beauty, fusing science fiction with 200 years of Black music, will be performed by a large ensemble of singers and musicians. The concerts take place at the at the Emerson/Paramount Center's Robert J. Orchard Stage, located at 559 Washington Street in Boston's historic theatre district. Tickets range from \$10 to \$60 and may be purchased online at www.artsemerson.org or by calling 617.824.8400. Package, group, student, and senior discounts are available.



About Octavia E. Butler's Parable of the Sower

In this genre-defying work of concert performance featuring a powerhouse ensemble of 20 singers and musicians, Octavia E. Butler's Parable of the Sower brings together 30 powerful songs drawn from 200 years of Black music to give musical life to Butler's acclaimed science fiction novel of the same name. Written by Toshi Reagon, who *Vibe Magazine* called "one helluva rock'n'roller-coaster ride," in collaboration with her mother, Bernice Johnson Reagon, the iconic singer, scholar and activist, **Parable**

of the Sower becomes a mesmerizing theatrical work of rare power and beauty that reveals deep insights on gender, race and the future of human civilization.

Parable of the Sower tells the story of young Lauren Olamina, who lives in a not-so-distant America, where climate change has driven society to violence and the brink of extinction. When she loses both family and home, Lauren ventures out unprotected. What begins as a desperate fight for survival leads to something much more – a startling vision of human destiny which births “Earthseed,” a new faith based on the idea that “God is Change”.

“Butler's book is a touchstone in the genre of Afrofuturism,” shares ArtsEmerson co-artistic director P. Carl. “The book explores a future where communities live behind walls, where California is in a deep drought, and only the very few have sufficient economic resources to live. Toshi Reagon and company's allegiance to the source material make Butler's story resonate with urgency and hope.”

“Toshi is a force of nature, arriving right on time in our city,” says ArtsEmerson co-artistic director David Dower. “She was raised on music, she's an innate storyteller, she's a rigorous artist with an incredible team of collaborators on **Parable of the Sower**. She's a clear-eyed humanitarian without a trace of wobble in her activism. It's a ferocious and exhilarating combination and I'm looking forward to the electricity between her company and the audience.”

Click here to view the video trailer:

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=aaSGxfAjv4&feature=youtu.be>

Octavia E. Butler's Parable of the Sower Performance Schedule

Thursday, March 23, 2017	7:30PM
Friday, March 24, 2017	8PM
Saturday, March 25, 2017	8PM
Sunday, March 26, 2017	2PM

Creative Credits

-Music and lyrics by Toshi Reagon and Bernice Johnson Reagon

-Directed by Eric Ting

-Featuring (singers): Tariq Al-Sabir, Heather Christian, Curtiss Cook Jr., Tomas Cruz, Helga Davis, Morley Kamen, Carl Hancock Rux, Karma Mayet Johnson, Josette Newsam Marchak, Diana Oh, Toshi Reagon, Shayna Small, Jason C. Walker

-Featuring (musicians): Bobby Burke, Fred Cash Jr., Juliette Jones, Malcolm Parson, Adam Widoff

-Based on the novels *Parable of the Sower* and *Parable of the Talents* by Octavia E. Butler. Courtesy of the estate of Octavia E. Butler.

-Octavia E. Butler's *Parable of the Sower* is made possible with funding by the New England Foundation for the Arts' National Theatre Project, with lead funding from The Andrew W. Mellon Foundation.

About Toshi Reagon

Toshi Reagon (librettist, composer, music director) is a composer, musician, producer, founder and leader of her own ensemble, Toshi Reagon and Big Lovely. She moves audiences with her cross-genre offerings of blues, rock, gospel and original compositions, and has collaborated with many artists including Carl Hancock Rux, Ani DiFranco, Lenny Kravitz, Elvis Costello, and Nona Hendryx. As a

composer she has worked with Katori Hall, Urban Bush Women and The Jane Comfort Dance Co among others. She is currently touring Bessie Award-winning *The Blues Project* with tap dancer Michelle Dorrance and Dorrance Dance. She is the curator for the Schomburg Center for Research in Black Culture Women's Jazz Festival, and founded WORD*ROCK*&SWORD, a community festival that takes place throughout New York each September. Together with her mother Bernice Johnson Reagon, she has created two operas with director Robert Wilson, *The Temptation of St. Anthony* and *Zinnias, the Life of Clementine Hunter*. She has performed in venues and festivals throughout New York and the world, including Joe's Pub, CBGB's, Madison Square Garden, BAM, Lincoln Center, Paris Opera House and Melbourne Arts Festival. Toshi is a 2015 Ford Foundation Art of Change Fellow.

About Bernice Johnson Reagon

Bernice Johnson Reagon (librettist, composer) is a scholar, singer/songleader, and activist. She performed as a member of the SNCC Freedom Singers during the 1960s; she founded an all women acappella ensemble, The Harambee Singers during the Black Cultural Movement; she founded and led the internationally acclaimed Sweet Honey In The Rock for 30 years until retirement. Reagon is one of the leading authorities in African American Cultural History, she is a recipient of the Heinz Award for Arts and Humanities, a MacArthur Fellowship and the Presidential Medal and Charles E. Frankel Prize for Contributions to the Public Understanding of Humanities.

About Eric Ting

Eric Ting (director) is an Obie Award-winning director and Artistic Director of California Shakespeare Theater. Recent directing credits include *The World of Extreme Happiness* by Frances Ya-Chu Cowhig (MTC / Goodman), Branden Jacobs-Jenkins' *Appropriate* (CTG), Nora Chipaumire's *Miriam* (BAM Next Wave), Jackie Sibblies Drury's *We are Proud to Present...* (Soho Rep / Victory Gardens) and *Rising Son* (Singapore Rep). Ting was Long Wharf's Associate Artistic Director for ten years.

About Octavia E. Butler

Octavia E. Butler (June 22, 1947 – February 24, 2006). Octavia Estelle Butler is often referred to as the "grand dame of science fiction," was born in Pasadena, California. She received an Associate of Arts degree in 1968 from Pasadena Community College, and also attended California State University in Los Angeles and the University of California, Los Angeles. During 1969 and 1970, she studied at the Screenwriter's Guild Open Door Program and the Clarion Science Fiction Writers' Workshop, where she took a class with science fiction master Harlan Ellison (who later became her mentor), and which led to Butler selling her first science fiction stories. *Parable of the Sower* (1993), the first of her Earthseed series, was a finalist for the Nebula Award as well as a *New York Times* Notable Book of the Year. The book's sequel, *Parable of the Talents* (1998), won a Nebula Award. A full listing of her work can be found at www.octaviabutler.org.

The 2016-2017 ArtsEmerson Stage Season

Octavia E. Butler's Parable of the Sower: A Concert Performance is the eighth production in the 2016/2017 Season. The season continues with **17 Border Crossings** by Thaddeus Phillips, and **How To Be A Rock Critic** by Jessica Blank & Erik Jensen (May 11-21, 2017).

About ArtsEmerson

ArtsEmerson is the professional presenting and producing organization of the Office of the Arts at Emerson College, and aims to address gaps in Boston's cultural landscape by putting the world on stage

and inviting diverse audiences from across the region into its historic downtown venues. Founded in 2010 by Robert J. Orchard under the auspices of Emerson College, ArtsEmerson quickly established a reputation for putting great work from diverse cultures on its stages — work that emanates from the language of theater, yet pushes the boundaries into dance, music, and opera. The organization is committed to building a cultural institution that embraces and reflects the changing demographics of the City of Boston. ArtsEmerson operates from the core belief that the arts are for everyone. In 2015, Orchard moved into the role of Creative Consultant. Currently ArtsEmerson is led by Co-Artistic Directors, David Dower and P. Carl, and Executive Director, David Howse. This shared leadership model reflects the organization’s values — that multiple voices are essential to leading a 21st century arts organization. Click [here](#) for more information.

About Emerson College

Based in Boston, Massachusetts, opposite the historic Boston Common and in the heart of the city’s Theatre District, with sites in the Netherlands and Los Angeles, Emerson College educates individuals who will solve problems and change the world through engaged leadership in communication and the arts, a mission informed by liberal learning. The College has 3,750 undergraduates and 750 graduate students from across the United States and 50 countries. Supported by state-of-the-art facilities and a renowned faculty, students participate in more than 90 student organizations and performance groups. Emerson is known for its study and internship programs in Los Angeles, Washington, D.C., the Netherlands, London, China and the Czech Republic. The College has an active network of 32,000 alumni who hold leadership positions in communications and the arts. Click [here](#) for information.

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