



Octavia E. Butler's
Parable of the Sower:
The Concert Version

Music & Lyrics by **Toshi Reagon** and **Bernice Johnson Reagon**
Directed by **Eric Ting**

Cast: **Bertilla Baker, Helga Davis, Karma Mayet Johnson,
Tamar-kali, Morley Kamen, Marcelle Davies Lashley,
Josette Newsam Marchak, Shayna Small and Jason C. Walker**

Musicians: **Robert Burke, Fred Cash, Juliette Jones and Adam Widoff**

PROGRAM

There will be no intermission.



Thursday, October 1 @ 7:30 PM
Friday, October 2 @ 8 PM
Saturday, October 3 @ 2 PM
Saturday, October 3 @ 8 PM

Prince Theatre

PROGRAM NOTES

Tonight we are in exploration of family. The one you are born into—the one you choose—the one you find—the one that finds you.

Sometime in the future, we meet Lauren Olamina, a 15 year old girl living inside the remnants of a walled community kept secure by a locked gate. This is a community being held together by her father's will and vision. A community that did not choose to be together, but is forced to work together because of the massive deterioration of the world around them: a widening economic gap, privatization of what was once public resources, rampant corporate take-over, 21st century sharecropping, drugs, violence and an overwhelming disregard for life.

All these things chip away at what little sense of security Lauren feels. She comes to know that she is not safe behind that wall. She comes to know that the god of her father is not her god. And so, even as she prepares to leave, she begins to create her own religion: Earthseed—The Books of the Living.

When the wall comes down, Lauren loses her family. She leaves home with a few old maps, and starts out on an unknown journey north out of the suburbs of Los Angeles passing as a man with two wounded friends at her side, gathering more along the way. Finding love, finding comrades. Finding Earthseed.

All that you touch
you Change.

All that you Change
Changes you.

The only lasting truth
is Change.

God
is Change.

ABOUT THE ARTISTS

Toshi Reagon (Librettist, Composer and Music Director) is a singer, composer, musician, producer and founder and leader of her own ensemble, Toshi Reagon and BIGLovely, described as a one-woman celebration of all that's dynamic, progressive and uplifting in American music. Taking the stage at 17, singer, songwriter and guitarist Reagon moves audiences with her cross-genre offerings of rock, blues, folk, sacred music and incredible original songs. Reagon has shared the stage and collaborated with many artists including Lizz Wright, Michelle N'degeocello, Carl Hancock Rux, Ani DiFranco and Nona Hendrix. As a composer she has worked with the Brooklyn-based dance company LAVA, Urban Bush Women and The Jane Comfort Dance Co. Reagon and BIGLovely are currently touring The Blues Project with world renowned tap dancer Michelle Dorrance and Dorrance Dance. She is the curator for the Schomburg Center for Research in Black Culture Women's Jazz Festival. Reagon also founded WORD*ROCK*&SWORD: A Festival Exploration of Women's Lives—All Are Welcome, a community festival that takes place throughout NYC every September. Her favorite collaborator is her mother Bernice Johnson Reagon, the co-librettist and composer of *Parable of the Sower*. These two socially-conscious women artists have collaboratively created two operas, *The Temptation of St Anthony* and *Zinnias*,

The Life of Clementine Hunter; the music score for *Africans in America* on PBS and *BEAH: A Black Woman Speaks* for HBO; and numerous studio recordings.

Bernice Johnson Reagon (Librettist and Composer) is a scholar, singer/songleader and activist. For over half a century, she has been a profound contributor to African American and American culture. Born in Southwest Georgia, her singing style and traditional repertoire is grounded in her experiences in church, school and political activism. As a composer, she has created a narrative of her social and political activism through her songs and larger compositions. She performed as a member of the SNCC Freedom Singers during the sixties and founded the all-women a cappella ensemble, The Harambee Singers. She also founded and led the internationally-acclaimed a cappella group **Sweet Honey In The Rock** for 30 years until she retired. Paralleling her work in music, 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, the Presidential Medal and the Charles E. Frankel Prize for Contributions to the Public Understanding of Humanities.

Octavia E. Butler (Author of the novel *Parable of the Sower*), born on June 22, 1947 and passed away on February 24, 2006, was often referred to as the “grand dame of science fiction.” 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. From 1969–1970, 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. Ellison later became her mentor and helped lead Butler to sell 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.