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312.443.5151 or [Press@GoodmanTheatre.org](mailto:Press@GoodmanTheatre.org) **September 28, 2023**

**POETS RESPOND TO EACH PLAY IN SUSAN V. BOOTH’S FIRST CURATED GOODMAN THEATRE SEASON IN A NEW PARTNERSHIP WITH THE POETRY FOUNDATION**

**\*\*\*ARTISTS BARBARA L. McBEE AND ERIKA L. SÁNCHEZ KICK OFF NEW “PLAY ON WORDS” SERIES\*\*\***

(Chicago, IL) Two artforms join forces in a new collaboration with the **Poetry Foundation** during Goodman Theatre’s 2023/2024 Season—**Susan V.** **Booth**’s first to curate as new Artistic Director. In the new program, “*Play On Words*,” a Chicago-based poet is commissioned to engage with each work on the Goodman stage and respond in poetic form. Published writer and storyteller **Barbara L. McBee**, a participant in the Goodman’s GeNarrations and InterGens programs, authors the first poem in response to the play Booth selected to open her first season—*The Nacirema Society Requests the Honor of Your Presence at a Celebration of Their First One Hundred Years*, **Pearl** **Cleage**’s romantic comedy set during the civil rights movement. In the second poem penned by *New York Times* bestselling author of *I Am Not Your Perfect Mexican Daughter*, **Erika L. Sánchez**, finds inspiration in *LUCHA TEOTL*—a one-of-a-kind interactive play about Mexican masked wrestling. Read the poems at [GoodmanTheatre.org/Poetry](http://www.GoodmanTheatre.org/Poetry).

“It’s exciting to forge this unprecedented collaboration to open up the work on our stages to the great world of poetry,” said Artistic Director **Susan V. Booth**. “Our city is rich with talented poets who will add another layer of discovery to our audiences’ performing arts experience, expand perspective and engage curiosity. And there is no better leader than the Poetry Foundation, always forward-thinking in its mission and innovation.”

“It’s the Poetry Foundation’s honor to collaborate with a venerable Chicago arts institution like Goodman Theatre,” said Poetry Foundation President and CEO, **Michelle T. Boone**. “We’re grateful for Susan V. Booth’s commitment to amplify poetry and local poets by commissioning poems to complement these productions. We look forward to cultivating a love of poetry amongst theatergoers in Chicago and beyond through our partnership with Goodman Theatre.”

**Barbara L. McBee** is a Chicago-based published writer and storyteller for more than three decades, a Goodman teaching artist and a former bureau chief, news director, reporter, editor and public relations liaison for the Three Tenors. Recent performances include *All the Sex I’ve Ever Had* (Museum of Contemporary Art); *Fillet of Solo* (Lifeline Theatre); *This Much is True* (GeNarrations, Goodman Theatre); InterGens (Goodman Theatre) and Theatre on the Lake. A piece of her work was included in a Yoko Ono 2019 exhibit in Montreal and Leipzig. Her books include *From a Place to Behold: Goodman Collection* and *The Art of Making Stone Love Stone: Poetry Collection*.

**Erika L. Sánchez** is the daughter of Mexican immigrants and a Chicago-based poet, novelist and essayist.Her debut poetry collection, *Lessons on Expulsion*, was published by Graywolf in July 2017, and was a finalist for the PEN America Open Book Award. Her debut young adult novel, *I Am Not Your Perfect Mexican Daughter*, published in October 2017 by Knopf Books for Young Readers, was a *New York Times*bestseller, a National Book Awards finalist and Tomás Rivera Award winner. *Time* has recognized it as one of the best YA novels of all time. It is now is being made into a film directed by America Ferrera. *I Am Not Your Perfect Mexican Daughter* has also been adapted to the theater at Steppenwolf Theater in Chicago and Seattle Rep Theater. Most recently Sánchez published a critically acclaimed memoir-in-essays titled *Crying in the Bathroom* with Viking Books. It won the Chicago Review of Books Nonfiction award in 2022. Sánchez was a Fulbright Scholar, a 2015 Ruth Lilly and Dorothy Sargent fellow from the Poetry Foundation, a 2017-2019 Princeton Arts Fellow, a 2018 recipient of the 21st Century Award from the Chicago Public Library Foundation and a 2019 recipient of the National Endowment for the Arts Fellowship.

The [**Poetry Foundation**](https://www.poetryfoundation.org/)recognizes the power of words to transform lives. We work to amplify poetry and celebrate poets by fostering spaces for all to create, experience, and share poetry. Located in Chicago's River North neighborhood, the Poetry Foundation houses a 30,000-volume poetry library, exhibition space, and performance space that hosts free public poetry events for all to enjoy. The Poetry Foundation is the home of [**Poetry Magazine**](https://www.poetryfoundation.org/poetrymagazine), published in Chicago since 1912. Poetry publishes contemporary work primarily in English and translations of poets from all over the United States and the world.

Chicago’s theater since 1925, **Goodman Theatre** is a not-for-profit arts and community organization in the heart of the Loop, distinguished by the excellence and scope of its artistic programming and community engagement. Led by Artistic Director **Susan V. Booth** and Executive Director/CEO **Roche Schulfer**, the theater’s artistic priorities include new play development (more than 150 world or American premieres), large scale musical theater works and reimagined classics. Artists and productions have earner two Pulitzer Prizes, 22 Tony Awards and more than 160 Jeff Awards, among other accolades. The Goodman is the first theater in the world to produce all 10 plays in August Wilson’s “American Century Cycle.” Its longtime annual holiday tradition *A Christmas Carol*, now in its fifth decade, has created a new generation of theatergoers in Chicago. The Goodman also frequently serves as a production and program partner with national and international companies and Chicago’s Off-Loop theaters.

Using the tools of theatrical practice, the Goodman’s Education and Engagement programs aim to develop generations of citizens who understand and empathize with cultures and stories of diverse voices. The Goodman’s Alice Rapoport Center for Education and Engagement is the home of these programs, which are offered for Chicago youth—85% of whom come from underserved communities—schools and life-long learners.

Goodman Theatre was built on the traditional homelands of the Council of the Three Fires: the Ojibwe, Odawa and Potawatomi Nations. We recognize that many other Nations consider the area we now call Chicago as their traditional homeland—including the Myaamia, Ho-Chunk, Menominee, Sac and Fox, Peoria, Kaskaskia, Wea, Kickapoo and Mascouten—and remains home to many Native peoples today. While we believe that our city’s vast diversity should be reflected on the stages of its largest theater, we acknowledge that our efforts have largely overlooked the voices of our Native peoples. This omission has added to the isolation, erasure and harm that Indigenous communities have faced for hundreds of years. We have begun a more deliberate journey towards celebrating Native American stories and welcoming Indigenous communities.

Goodman Theatre was founded by William O. Goodman and his family in honor of their son Kenneth, an important figure in Chicago’s cultural renaissance in the early 1900s. The Goodman family’s legacy lives on through the continued work and dedication of Kenneth’s family, including Albert Ivar Goodman, who with his late mother, Edith-Marie Appleton, contributed the necessary funds for the creation on the new Goodman center in 2000. **Julie Danis** is Chair

of Goodman Theatre’s Board of Trustees, **Lorrayne Weiss** is Women’s Board President and **Kelli Garcia** is President of the Scenemakers Board for young professionals.

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