



FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE: December 14, 2022

Contact: Joshua Gailey, 206-676-5559, joshua.gailey@seattleopera.org

Press images: seattleopera.smugmug.com/2223/Bound

Password: "press" (case sensitive)

***Bound*, based on a true story, explores the contradictions of the immigrant experience**

**Composer Huang Ruo makes his Seattle Opera debut
as both composer and conductor**

**June 9–18, 2023
Tagney Jones Hall**

SEATTLE, WA—Continuing its commitment to new works and today's stories, Seattle Opera presents ***Bound***, a chamber opera by composer **Huang Ruo** and librettist **Bao-Long Chu**. Based on true events, *Bound* tells the story of Diane Tran, a 17-year-old honor student who spent a night in jail in 2012 for truancy when she missed too many school days working two jobs to support her family. The child of Vietnamese immigrants, Tran found herself caught between competing obligations to her family, her schooling, and herself. Over the course of Tran's sleepless night in prison, *Bound* explores the struggles common among many first- and second-generation immigrants trying to make lives for themselves in the United States.

The opera's composer, **Huang Ruo**, was drawn to this story for the way it exposed the ambivalence that can result from intersectional identities. "Many second-generation Asian Americans, who were born and raised in America, feel an uncomfortable relationship with their cultural heritage," said Huang, who was born in Hainan Island, China, and came to the United States to study composition. His opera *M. Butterfly* premiered to great acclaim at Santa Fe Opera last summer. "They were born and raised in America, English is their first language, American

culture is their culture—and yet, do they feel like they belong completely? I wanted to use this opera to explore such questions.”

“To me, a Vietnamese refugee living in America, the notion of being bound to one’s culture (and the struggles therein) is not just an idea, but my life writ large,” said librettist **Bao-Long Chu**. “So when I heard Diane’s story, I recognized many aspects of my own family’s journey. I wrote this opera in a way that not only reflects a particular Vietnamese American experience, but also resonates with all of us as human beings.”

Bound will be presented in a new chamber orchestration in Tagney Jones Hall, Seattle Opera’s 200-seat theater. Composer Huang Ruo will conduct his own work, leading an instrumental ensemble that includes two Vietnamese instruments: the đàn bầu, a single-stringed box zither, and the đàn tranh, a 16-stringed board zither.

Directing the production is Seattle theater stalwart **Desdemona Chiang**, making her Seattle Opera debut. Joining Chiang on the creative team are scenic designer **Carey Wong** (*Orpheus and Eurydice*, ’22), costume designer **Deborah Trout** (*Beatrice and Benedict*, ’18), and lighting designer **Geoff Korf** in his Seattle Opera debut. The cast features two returning singers, soprano **Karen Vuong** (*La bohème*, ’21) as Diane Tran and mezzo-soprano **Nina Yoshida Nelsen** (*An American Dream*, ’17) as Khanh, as well as bass-baritone **Daniel Klein** in his Seattle Opera debut as Stanley/Judge Moriarty.

For General Director **Christina Scheppelmann**, *Bound* demonstrates the importance of telling vital, relevant stories. “*Bound* is an excellent piece that, unfortunately, reveals the injustices that immigrants throughout the United States face every day,” said Scheppelmann. “Although this story is specific to one person and her family, I think it provides an important window onto the ways our society must work to become a more welcoming, inclusive, and compassionate place.”

About Huang Ruo

Huang Ruo has been lauded by *The New Yorker* as “one of the world’s leading young composers” and by *The New York Times* for having “a distinctive style.” His vibrant and inventive musical voice draws equal inspiration from Chinese ancient and folk music, Western avant-garde, experimental, noise, natural and processed sound, rock, and jazz. As a member of the new generation of Chinese composers, his goal is not just to mix both Western and Eastern elements, but also to create a seamless, organic integration. Huang Ruo’s diverse compositional works span from orchestra, chamber music, opera, theater, and dance, to cross-genre, sound installation, multi-media, experimental improvisation, folk rock, and film.

About Bao-Long Chu

Chu is a storyteller. Originally from Vietnam, his passion for writing led him to the MFA creative writing program at University of Houston. He has written and presented extensively on writing pedagogy, the connection between art and the refugee experience, and nonprofit programming. Currently, Chu is the Program Director of Arts and Parks at Houston Endowment where he oversees the grants strategy to support and grow Houston's arts, culture, and parks ecosystem. He collaborates with artists and community leaders toward a shared vision of a vibrant city with abundant opportunities to create and connect. The power of art to share and connect human stories inspires his work. Chu's poems and essays have been published in several anthologies, including *The New Anthology of American Poetry: Postmodernisms 1950–Present* and *From Both Sides Now: The Poetry of the Vietnam War and Its Aftermath*. His libretto for the opera *Bound*, composed by Huang Ruo, premiered in Houston in 2014 and in New York in 2019.

About Seattle Opera

Established in 1963, Seattle Opera is committed to serving the people of the Pacific Northwest through music, storytelling, and programs for people of all ages. Each year, more than 80,000 people attend the company's performances, and more than 100,000 people are served through school performances, radio broadcasts, and more. The organization brings opera to life in a number of different ways, offering artistic excellence through national and international collaborations. Seattle Opera strives to create an environment where artists, staff, behind-the-scenes workers, and members of the community feel a strong connection to the company, and to the art of opera. Follow Seattle Opera on Facebook, Twitter, SoundCloud, and on Classical KING FM 98.1.

Performance Information

- Music by Huang Ruo, libretto by Bao-Long Chu
- Sung in English
- Run time approx. 60 minutes with no intermission
- Tickets \$85

Tagney Jones Hall (363 Mercer St, Seattle, WA 98109)

Friday, June 9, 2023 at 7:30 PM

Saturday, June 10, 2023 at 7:30 PM

Sunday, June 11, 2023 at 2:00 PM

Saturday, June 17, 2023 at 7:30 PM

Sunday, June 18, 2023 at 2:00pm

Conductor: Huang Ruo

Director: Desdemona Chiang
Scenic Designer: Carey Wong
Costume Designer: Deborah Trout
Lighting Designer: Geoff Korf

Diane Tran: Karen Vuong
Khanh: Nina Yoshida Nelsen
Stanley/Judge Moriarty: Daniel Klein

Tickets and information at seattleopera.org/bound.

###