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Composer Huang Ruo conducts *Bound*, a true story of navigating life as a second-generation immigrant

**Acclaimed local stage director Desdemona Chiang
leads new production for West Coast premiere**

**June 9–18, 2023
Tagney Jones Hall**

SEATTLE—Seattle Opera closes its 2022/23 season with the West Coast premiere of [*Bound*](#), a new chamber opera from composer **Huang Ruo** and librettist **Bao-Long Chu** that premiered at Houston Grand Opera in 2014.

Based on true events, *Bound* tells the story of Diane Tran, a 17-year-old Texas honor student who spent a night in jail for truancy after missing school to work two jobs in support of her family. The child of Vietnamese immigrants, Tran finds 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 Asian American immigrants trying to make lives for themselves in the United States.

Chinese-born composer **Huang Ruo** was drawn to Diane's story for its stark illustration of how such contradictory expectations force many immigrants to make impossible choices in a society that is stacked against them. "I wanted to use opera as the platform to tell a human story, a true story about young Asian Americans

and their struggles in America today,” said Huang. “I am very interested in Asian American stories not only because of my own cultural background, but also because of these experiences of young second-generation Asian Americans who were born and raised in America. *Bound* explores how these young people are often pulled between competing duties: to their schoolwork, to provide for their families, and to the harsh realities of life. It’s a vivid reflection of American society.”

For Taiwanese-born American director **Desdemona Chiang**, *Bound* is a model for self-actualization in the face of oppressive structures. “I’m really interested in stories about people who have to survive inside systems, whether it’s a family system, a financial system, or a sociopolitical system,” said Chiang, a stalwart on the Seattle theater scene whose adaptation of Amy Tan’s *The Bonesetter’s Daughter* premiered at Book-It Repertory Theatre in July 2022. “In Diane’s case, it’s clear the system is flawed, because even though she technically broke the law, she had really done nothing morally wrong. So by the end, Diane has to find a way to liberate herself from all these competing burdens—to detach herself from her mother’s legacy as well as from this ‘crime’ that she’s committed—and to strive to be accountable for her own life.”

Karen Vuong plays the role of Diane Tran, a role she hopes will bring broader awareness to the oppressive structures faced by many second-generation immigrants. “Diane Tran’s story highlights the lack of humanity in many of our social systems,” said Vuong, who last appeared at Seattle Opera as Mimì in *La bohème* (’21). “We must make room for stories like Diane’s, so I feel a deep sense of responsibility in telling her story to increase its reach and relatability to audiences at large.”

Joining Vuong in the cast are mezzo-soprano **Nina Yoshida Nelsen** (Hiroko Kobayashi, *An American Dream*, ’17) as Khanh and bass-baritone **Daniel Klein** in his Seattle Opera debut as Stanley/Judge Moriarty. The creative team includes scenic designer **Carey Wong** (*Orpheus and Eurydice*, ’22), costume designer **Deborah Trout** (*A Thousand Splendid Suns*, ’23), and lighting designer **Geoff Korf** in his Seattle Opera debut.

Bound is conducted by composer **Huang Ruo**, leading an instrumental ensemble that features two Vietnamese instruments: the đàn bầu and đàn tranh, both played by Emmy Award-winning composer and multi-instrumentalist **Vân-Ánh Vanessa Võ**.

Special events for *Bound* include **post-show talkbacks** after every performance, each with members of a different Seattle-based Asian American support or cultural organization. Talkbacks will address themes raised by the production and explore

how those issues have impacted Seattle's youth and Asian American communities. Additionally, the performance on Friday, June 16, is **Teen Night**. Admission to that performance is reserved for groups of teens, teens with a parent/guardian, or school groups, and all tickets for teens are \$15.

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 50,000 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, \$15 for teens on June 16

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

Friday, June 16, 2023 at 7:30 PM (Teen Night: reserved for Seattle-area teenagers)

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 Korft

Diane Tran: Karen Vuong

Khanh: Nina Yoshida Nelsen

Stanley/Judge Moriarty: Daniel Kleint†

† = Seattle Opera debut

Tickets and information at seattleopera.org/bound.

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