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Internationally acclaimed composer Huang Ruo named Seattle Opera's first Composer-in-Residence

**Huang Ruo's three-year residency begins with *M. Butterfly* in 2027
and culminates in world premiere of *The Wedding Banquet***

SEATTLE—General and Artistic Director **James Robinson** announced today that **Huang Ruo**, an internationally renowned composer whose opera *The Monkey King* became a sensation when it premiered in San Francisco last year, will serve as Seattle Opera's first **Composer-in-Residence** beginning in 2027.

"Huang Ruo is one of the foremost composers of opera in the United States, and I couldn't be prouder to announce his residency with Seattle Opera," said **Robinson**, who has directed several of Huang Ruo's operas, beginning with the North American premiere of *Dr. Sun Yat-sen* at Santa Fe Opera in 2014. "Beyond his accomplished record as a composer, Huang Ruo is also a compelling advocate for opera who believes deeply in the art form's power to bring people together. He's one of the most engaging and enthusiastic people I know, and I think Seattle Opera audiences will be fascinated by his perspectives."

"I'm deeply humbled and honored by this invitation to serve as Composer-in-Residence for Seattle Opera," said **Huang Ruo**, who conducted his chamber opera *Bound* at Seattle Opera in 2023. "It is rare for opera companies to engage Composers-in-Residence, so I think this partnership demonstrates both Seattle Opera's bold vision for the future of the art form and an exciting model for how opera companies can work with living creators to create, present, and engage the community around new opera. I am excited for this new adventure and I feel a sincere responsibility as an artist and educator to help people better understand both ourselves and our world through opera."

Huang Ruo's residency, which will last for three years, will begin at the start of the 2027/28 season with the Seattle premiere of his opera ***M. Butterfly***. Based on the Tony Award-winning play by **David Henry Hwang**, the opera tells the true story of a fateful relationship between a French diplomat and a Chinese opera singer. By turning traditional power dynamics on their head, the opera raises questions about the fluid nature of desire and the West's cultural assumptions about the East. *M. Butterfly* debuted at Santa Fe Opera in 2022 and made its UK debut at Barbican Hall in 2024.

During his time with Seattle Opera, Huang Ruo will bridge the gap between audiences and the creators who put opera on stage by curating performances of new music and participating in the company's

community engagement efforts. He will also work with local opera composers as a guest mentor for Seattle Opera's new-works incubator program, the [Jane Lang Davis Creation Lab](#).

The residency will culminate in the world premiere of [*The Wedding Banquet*](#), a new rom-com opera inspired by the beloved 1993 film directed by Ang Lee and the re-imagined version by director Andrew Ahn that debuted to widespread acclaim in 2025. James Schamus, who co-wrote both films, will write the libretto. *The Wedding Banquet* will be featured at the [VOX: American Voices Opera Lab](#) in New York on April 1, 2027.

"When I was young and Philip Glass invited me to work with him, I took a lesson and decided that if I was fortunate to have a long career, I too would work with a younger artist who impressed and inspired me. In Huang Ruo, I've been lucky to find a brilliant partner," said **playwright David Henry Hwang**, with whom Huang Ruo has collaborated many times. "The range and depth of his talent, skill, and artistic vision are extraordinary and revolutionary. I couldn't be happier that he has found a home at Seattle Opera, led by our frequent collaborator James Robinson. What a smart and wise investment in a groundbreaking composer, and in the future of opera!"

"Huang Ruo's voice has always been inventive and powerful, and I am delighted he will bring that to Seattle audiences," said **Washington National Opera's Artistic Director, Francesca Zambello**. "I first worked with him more than a decade ago when I commissioned him to write *An American Soldier*, a stirring account of racism in the military that has since gone on to have a life in multiple venues. I was so proud of Huang Ruo as I watched his career develop that we commissioned him to write a second piece, *The Rift*, about Maya Lin and her controversial design for the Vietnam Veterans Memorial."

Added **Marin Alsop, Artistic Director and Chief Conductor of the Polish National Radio Symphony**: "I am thrilled for Huang Ruo and Seattle! He is an outstanding composer with a unique voice."

The announcement comes on the heels of the success of Huang Ruo's newest opera *The Monkey King* at San Francisco Opera, which sold out its entire run of performances in November 2025 and helped cement Huang Ruo as one of the world's most original operatic voices. *The Monkey King* was recently announced as a finalist for the 2026 [International Opera Awards](#).

Born on Hainan Island, China, Huang Ruo studied composition at the Shanghai Conservatory before earning degrees from the Oberlin Conservatory and Juilliard. His compositional style blends Chinese and Western classical traditions into what he has dubbed a "third culture," integrating Chinese instruments and vocal techniques with Western musical forms. In addition to his ten operas, Huang Ruo's work spans genres from orchestral and chamber music to sound installations and experimental improvisation. Huang Ruo currently serves on the composition faculty at the Mannes School of Music in New York.

A fierce advocate for Asian and Asian American perspectives, Huang Ruo was honored by Asia Society Seattle at their annual benefit dinner on September 30, 2026.

About Huang Ruo

Composer Huang Ruo has been lauded 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 to create a seamless, organic integration using a compositional technique he calls "Dimensionalism." His music has been premiered and performed by the New York Philharmonic, Philadelphia Orchestra, and Boston Symphony Orchestra, among many others. He has written ten operas, including *An American Soldier*, which was named one of the best classical music events in 2018 by *The New York Times*. His newest

opera *The Monkey King* was premiered by the San Francisco Opera in 2025. He served as the first composer-in-residence for Het Concertgebouw Amsterdam. Huang Ruo was born in Hainan Island, China, in 1976. He earned a BM degree from Oberlin College, and MM and DMA degrees from the Juilliard School. Huang Ruo is on the composition faculty at the Mannes School of Music. Huang Ruo's music is administered exclusively by [European American Music Distributors Company](#). For more information about the composer and his music, please visit huangruoprojects.com.

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 several ways, offering artistic performances of the highest caliber 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. As one of the largest arts organizations in the Pacific Northwest, Seattle Opera employs more than 750 people annually and is an essential component of the region's economy. Follow Seattle Opera on Facebook, Twitter, SoundCloud, and on Classical KING.

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