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**AMERICAN OPERA PROJECTS  
RECEIVES FUNDING FOR TWO NEW OPERAS  
FROM NATIONAL ENDOWMENT FOR THE ARTS (NEA)**

**BROOKLYN WORKSHOP PRODUCTIONS OF HUANG RUO'S "THE WEEPING  
CAMEL" AND GREGORY SPEARS'S "PAUL'S CASE" FUNDED**

**BROOKLYN, NY** – American Opera Projects (AOP) announces that composer Huang Ruo's *The Weeping Camel* and composer Gregory Spears's *Paul's Case* are awarded \$10,000 each from the National Endowment of the Arts's [ART WORKS](#) initiative to support developmental workshop productions with AOP and partners. Both operas will be developed through AOP's First Chance series that presents concert readings of new operas in an intimate format that allows for direct conversation between audience and artist. Operas that receive fully-staged premieres after passing through First Chance include Tarik O'Regan's *Heart of Darkness* (London's Royal Opera House), Jorge Martín's *Before Night Falls* (Fort Worth Opera), and Stephen Schwartz's *Séance on a Wet Afternoon* (New York City Opera, Opera Santa Barbara), among many others.

Based on a true story that was the subject of an Academy Award-nominated documentary, *The Weeping Camel* follows a family of nomadic shepherds in Mongolia and their struggle to save a newborn camel calf through a native musical ritual. The opera for audiences of all ages will integrate both Western and Chinese opera traditions with contemporary musical language as well as use Chinese masks and puppetry to tell its uplifting story about the spiritual power of music. *The Weeping Camel* composer **Huang Ruo** and librettist **Candace Chong** most recently collaborated on the opera *Dr. Sun Yat-Sen*, which received the world premiere of its Chinese orchestra version at the Hong Kong Culture Centre Theatre with four performances in 2011 and at New York City's Le Poisson Rouge in January 2012. American Opera Projects will develop *The Weeping Camel* in collaboration with New York City's Symphony Space and the Guangzhou Opera House company in China.

*Paul's Case*, by composer **Gregory Spears** with a libretto by **Kathryn Walat** based on the story by Willa Cather, is a two act chamber opera that chronicles the dissolution of a high school dandy living in sooty turn-of-the-century Pittsburgh. Initially developed during American Opera Projects' [Composers & the Voice](#) residency program, has presented workshops of *Paul's Case* at the Manhattan School of Music, OPERA America's Opera Conference 2010 in Los Angeles, and at Center City Opera Theater in Philadelphia where it was noted for its "solid dramatic timing, compassionate characterizations, and huge potential" (*Philadelphia Inquirer* - David Patrick Stearns' Best in Classical Music for 2009). The opera has been developed in part with grants from the BMI Foundation and the Virgil Thomson Foundation. *Paul's Case* will complete development in Brooklyn during the 2012-13 season.

**ARTIST BIOS**

**Huang Ruo** has been cited by the New Yorker as "one of the most intriguing of the new crop of Asian-American composers." His vibrant and inventive musical voice draws equal inspiration from Chinese folk, Western avant-garde, rock, and jazz to create a seamless, organic integration using a compositional technique he calls

"dimensionalism." Huang Ruo's writing spans from orchestra, chamber music, opera, theater, and modern dance, to sound installation, multi-media, experimental improvisation, folk rock, and film. Ensembles who have premiered and performed his music include the New York Philharmonic, Philadelphia Orchestra, Hong Kong Philharmonic, Chamber Music Society of Lincoln Center, Asko Ensemble, Nieuw Ensemble, Quatuor Diotima, and Dutch Vocal Laboratory, and under conductors such as Wolfgang Sawallisch, James Conlon, Dennis Russell Davies, Ed Spanjaard, Xian Zhang, and Ilan Volkov. Complete bio at [www.huangruo.com](http://www.huangruo.com)

**Candace Mui-Ngam Chong** graduated from Royal Holloway, University of London with a Master's in Playwriting. She also holds a Bachelor's Degree in Psychology from the Chinese University of Hong Kong, an Advanced Diploma in playwriting from the Hong Kong Academy for Performing Arts. Candice had received three Best Script Awards in the Hong Kong Drama Awards for her plays; *Alive in the Mortuary* in 2003, *Shall We Go to Mars* in 2004 and *The French Kiss* in 2006. In 2003 she was also awarded Outstanding Young Playwright by Hong Kong Federation of Drama Societies. In 2011, Candice's latest work *Murder in San José* premiered at the 37<sup>th</sup> Hong Kong Arts Festival and toured Singapore's Esplanade Theatre, and her translation work *Chinglish*, written by David Henry Hwang, premiered at Chicago's Goodman Theatre.

**Gregory Spears** writes instrumental and vocal music that blends together stylistic aspects of romanticism, minimalism, and early music. His opera *Paul's Case*, developed by American Opera Projects' Composers and the Voice Program, was noted for its "solid dramatic timing, compassionate characterizations, and huge potential" (*Philadelphia Inquirer* - David Patrick Stearns' Best in Classical Music for 2009). He is also the composer of the "dance-opera cycle" *Wolf-in-Skins*, written, directed, and choreographed by Christopher Williams and currently in development at AOP. Other projects include a one-act chamber opera commissioned by Houston Grand Opera's HGOco with a libretto by Farnoosh Moshiri and an evening-length opera based on the novel *Fellow Travelers* being written in collaboration director Kevin Newbury and writer Greg Pierce. His music has been performed by the American Composers Orchestra, the New York Youth Symphony, the JACK Quartet, Center City Opera, the NOW Ensemble, Present Music Ensemble, So Percussion, and the Eighth Blackbird Ensemble. New Amsterdam Records released a recording of his *Requiem* in November 2011. [www.gregoryspears.com](http://www.gregoryspears.com)

**Kathryn Walat's** play *Victoria Martin: Math Team Queen* premiered Off-Broadway at the Women's Project, and was published in *New Playwrights: The Best Plays of 2007*, in *Dramatics* magazine, and by Samuel French. Her other plays include *Bleeding Kansas* (Hangar Theatre), awarded a 2010 Francesca Primus Citation; *Know Dog* (Salvage Vanguard Theater); and *Johnny Hong Kong* (Perishable Theatre). She has been commissioned by Yale Repertory Theatre, La Jolla Playhouse, and Actors Theatre of Louisville; and her work has been developed at The Public Theater, Playwrights Horizons, Manhattan Theatre Club, McCarter Theatre, Ars Nova, Electric Pear, Sundance Theatre Lab, Voice & Visions, and the Bay Area Playwrights Festival. Kate received her BA from Brown University, and MFA from the Yale School of Drama. In 2010 she was in residence at the Eugene O'Neill Theater Center with a workshop of her new play *Creation*, about music, obsession, and the creative process.

## ORGANIZATION BIOS

**American Opera Projects** mission is to champion innovative works of Music Theater, to expand the art form, and to identify, develop and present new works by emerging and established talent. Our goal is to create a lasting legacy of relevant music theater and to inspire new audiences with a fresh appreciation for new opera and theater.

**The National Endowment for the Arts** was established by Congress in 1965 as an independent agency of the federal government. To date, the NEA has awarded more than \$4 billion to support artistic excellence, creativity, and innovation for the benefit of individuals and communities. The NEA extends its work through partnerships with state arts agencies, local leaders, other federal agencies, and the philanthropic sector.

For complete project info, including audio and video samples, visit

**Paul's Case:** [www.operaprojects.org/paulscase](http://www.operaprojects.org/paulscase)

**The Weeping Camel:** [www.operaprojects.org/weepingcamel](http://www.operaprojects.org/weepingcamel)

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