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## More Than \$82 Million Awarded for Arts Projects Nationwide Includes \$20,000 awarded to Festival Opera

Walnut Creek, California —National Endowment for the Arts Chairman Jane Chu has approved more than \$82 million to fund local arts projects and partnerships in the NEA's second major funding announcement for fiscal year 2016. Included in this announcement is an Art Works award of \$20,000 to Festival Opera to support the development of a new chamber opera, *Rated R for Rat*, by composer Wang Jie.

The Art Works category supports the creation of work and presentation of both new and existing work, lifelong learning in the arts, and public engagement with the arts through 13 arts disciplines or fields. "The arts are all around us, enhancing our lives in ways both subtle and obvious, expected and unexpected," said NEA Chairman Jane Chu. "Supporting projects like the one from Festival Opera offers more opportunities to engage in the arts every day." Festival Opera General Director Sara Nealy said, "We are honored to be recognized by the NEA for the work we are embarking on to create cultural bridges with new works that engage diverse members of our Bay Area communities, and we are excited to work with our partners, American Opera Projects, to bring this imaginative new work to the stage."

The grant will support the development of a new chamber opera, *Rated R for Rat* by composer Wang Jie and librettist Anne Babson, with related outreach activities. The opera will portray strong artists contending with an oppressive bureaucracy, with the latter represented as characters of the Chinese Zodiac. Development activities will include a workshop with the creative team, including conductor Michael Morgan, stage director Mou Zhou, and composer Wang Jie. Additional activities will include lectures, readings, live streaming workshop performances, and "virtual workshops" using social media to elicit feedback and interactive discussions.

To join the Twitter conversation about this announcement, please use **#NEASpring16**. For more information on projects included in the NEA grant announcement, go to [arts.gov](http://arts.gov)

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In October 2016, Festival Opera will present a workshop of excerpts and discussion of a new chamber opera in development with composer in residence **Wang Jie**. Her opera *Rated R for Rat* will make its world debut at Festival Opera in 2017, in collaboration with the respected new works incubator, American Opera Projects.

Festival Opera's production of *Abduction From the Seraglio* will be presented Friday, Saturday and Monday, August 5, 6 and 8 at 8:00 p.m., and on Tuesday, August 9 at 2:00 p.m. in the Regents' Theater at the Valley Center for the Performing Arts on the campus of Holy Names University in Oakland, CA. For more information, visit [www.FestivalOpera.org](http://www.FestivalOpera.org). All artists and programs subject to change.

### About Festival Opera

Festival Opera has emerged as one of the most respected opera companies in the San Francisco Bay Area and one of the top professional performing arts companies based in Walnut Creek. Founded in 1991, the non-profit organization provides opportunities for emerging artists, including San Francisco Opera Adler Fellows and Merola Program artists. Festival Opera strives to make opera accessible to a diverse audience.