

Planning Grant – Presenting and Marketing Work

1. Describe your current work as an artist. Please elaborate on any significant artistic activities, awards or accomplishments, as well as any relevant community involvement.

Current work as an artist

I am a professional playwright whose plays have been produced throughout the U.S for the past 20 years. Most recently in June 2007, my play *CARRY THE TIGER TO THE MOUNTAIN*, about the murder of Vincent Chin in 1982, was remounted as a special Equity-approved presentation by Pan Asian Repertory in New York to commemorate the 25th anniversary of this seminal case in Asian American civil rights for the first National Asian American Theatre Festival. As a fourth generation Chinese American, my plays explore the Asian American experience and my body of work ranges from historical plays (*WONG BOW RIDES AGAIN*, *YIN CHIN BOW*, *THE BALLAD OF DOC HAY*) inspired by my family's history in California during the 1850s through the early 1900s, to contemporary dramas which reveal contrasts and parallels between Eastern and Western perceptions (*THE LEGACY CODES*), between past and present (*ANTIGONE FALUN GONG*), between tradition and science (*MIXED MESSAGES*).

In September 2005, I was diagnosed with stage 4 breast cancer with metastases to the spine and underwent surgery to remove a vertebra. Because of this diagnosis I feel compelled to find a way to publish a collection of my plays as a way to market my work to future generations. I am currently writing a memoir of my days as a child performer in Hollywood during the late 1950s and early 1960s, though I continue to teach playwriting to high school students in San Francisco through the Magic Theatre's Young California Writers Program. While I will resume writing plays, at this time, I am focused on marketing the plays that I've written in book form.

Significant artistic activities (in having my writing published)

In March 2007, I was an invited artist to the Montalvo Arts Center in Saratoga, CA for a month-long residency where I was able to take stock of my long and varied career in the performing arts. During my residency, I realized that for me, my significant artistic activities began in 1956, when I was 3 years old and cast to play a Korean orphan in the CBS TV series, "Playhouse 90" in the episode "Family Nobody Wanted." My transition from being a Hollywood child performer in into a "normal" teenager, formed the basis for my short memoir "Hollywood and the Pits," first published in *American Dragons* (HarperCollins, 1993) and which continues to be reprinted in textbooks and young adult anthologies throughout the U.S. Through my agent, Bruce Ostler of Bret Adams, Ltd. In NY, I have maintained contact with both large and small publishing houses that have already published my work.

In addition, two of my plays have been published in theatre anthologies, *ARTHUR AND LEILA*, in *Women Playwrights: Best Plays of 1993* (Smith and Kraus, 1994) and *CARRY THE TIGER TO THE MOUNTAIN*, in *New Dramatists 2000: Best Plays by the Graduating Class* (Smith and Kraus, 2001). Six of my plays (*ARTHUR AND LEILA*, *CARRY THE TIGER TO THE MOUNTAIN*, *KNOCK*

OFF BALANCE, THE LEGACY CODES, ANTIGONE FALUN GONG, and MIXED MESSAGES) are also available in CD-ROM format in the *Asian American Drama* collection, and the *Contemporary American Women Dramatists* collection distributed by Alexander Street Press, 2004 to present.

My method for teaching playwriting to high school students was so successful for TheatreWorks in Palo Alto, CA that I was asked to write a book on my methodology which became *Students Speak: The Playwrights Project Workbook* currently under consideration by Pearson Prentice Hall.

Awards or accomplishments

As my resume demonstrates, I have been the recipient of several grants, fellowships, commissions, awards and residencies for playwriting, including an Alfred P. Sloan Commission with the Magic Theatre in 2005-06, a 2003 James Irvine New Works Initiative with the Aurora Theatre and Z Space Studio, a 2001-03 NEA/TCG Playwright Residency with East West Players in Los Angeles, a 2001 Gerbode Playwriting Commission with the Magic Theatre in SF, a 2000 California Arts Council Individual Playwrights Grant, a Kennedy Center Fund for New American Plays grant in 1993, and two individual San Francisco Cultural Equity Grants one in literary arts in 1995, and one in performing arts in 2000. I received the East West Players' Made in America Award in 2003.

Relevant Community Involvement

While my plays explore the Chinese American experience, my work has been produced both by Asian American and non-Asian theatres (see resume). Most recently I've joined the cancer community, and while undergoing my medical treatment, I was also able to work with 4th year UCSF medical humanities students and bring excerpts of their creative writing projects to the stage with professional actors at the Magic Theatre on April 30, 2006. I have continued to teach playwriting to high school students, most recently for the Magic Theatre and continue participating in a weekly playwrights group, ThroughLine, which meets at Z Space Studio on Wednesday nights in San Francisco. Though I have taught all age groups, most of my teaching experience is with high school students in the Bay Area (see teaching experience in resume). I find teaching playwriting to this age group very satisfying because my students learn to see through another person's eyes, to recognize their own unique perspective, to collaborate with others, and to respect the power of their words in live performance at a time when trying to fit in is so important. Seeing their work performed affirms that they do, indeed, fit. In working with so many young people over the years, I am very aware of how much I want to pass on my plays to future generations, to demonstrate how my work fits into the American theatre cannon.

2. Describe how you currently present or market your work, and include a statement on how you hope to expand your audiences and/or distribution of your work.

I have a theatrical agent, Bruce Ostler, of Bret Adams, Ltd. in New York who has been my agent over the past 15 years. Bruce has not only negotiated my theatrical contracts, but also my literary contracts. While having an agent allows

one to send plays to theatres that would not otherwise take unsolicited manuscripts, from experience, I have found that personal contacts and developing relationships with theatres have helped me to get my plays produced. I was also a member of New Dramatists (a national playwrights' organization whose members are voted in for 7 years) from 1993-2000 which gives theatres who visit the New Dramatist library in NY access to all of a members' work. I have received commissions and productions from those who have had the chance to read one or more of my works. I still receive the New Dramatists newsletter that lists production opportunities for playwrights

Statement on how I hope to expand my audiences and/or distribution of my work.

In the past, I have developed relationships with theatres, often by approaching them with a specific project and finding a grant that would be mutually beneficial to both the theatre and myself. My health has slowed me down in continuing such specific, personal promotion, however I believe that seeing the breadth of my work in one place such as in a book will help to showcase my talent and depth as a playwright. If one of my plays doesn't work for a theatre, another one might suit its taste. I do think that having my plays collected in book form can be beneficial as I was commissioned to write CARRY THE TIGER TO THE MOUNTAIN, after the artistic director of the Contemporary American Theatre Festival in West Virginia had a chance to read several of my plays at New Dramatists. The commissioning process then becomes an investment in the playwright and less risky for the theatre when the writer's style, scope, and depth are known. Having my plays published in book form that can be purchased will also allow me to expand my audience by exposing my plays (particularly those plays inspired by true historical events) to patrons of institutions such as the Chinese Historical Society of America in San Francisco, The Southern California Chinese Historical Society in LA, the Chinatown Libraries in San Francisco, Los Angeles, and New York, as well as making my plays available to students and professors in Asian American Studies Departments and Theatre Departments at universities and colleges throughout the country. My published plays have been studied by theatre classes at UCLA and SUNY, Geneseo, and I have had requests to study my unpublished plays, MIXED MESSAGES (at UC Irvine), THE LEGACY CODES, (at Yale University), and gave a guest lecture to the UC Berkeley Classics Department on my play ANTIGONE FALUN GONG.

- 3. Describe the planning project for which you are seeking support, including specific information about the process you will use, and the consultants or collaborators which you wish to work with (if any) to support the planning effort.**

My planning project will be three-pronged. First with the help of my agent, Bruce Ostler and his assistants, and through my own online research and personal contacts, I will generate a list of publishers who publish single author volumes of plays and look at their published author list to see if my work would be of interest. I would like to look at large established theatrical publishers first, then go to smaller theatrical publishing houses, and if I find no interest in those

houses, I will query niche publishers of Asian American work such as Kearny Street Workshop, and the Asian American Curriculum Project. Some publishers may have specific interests in my historical plays while others may be interested in my more contemporary-themed work. Query letters tailored to the interests and mission of the publisher, along with short synopses of my collected plays with casting requirements, production history, and running times will be sent to the publishers. Query letters will be sent either through my agent or by me depending on the prospective publisher and initial contact. Follow up contacts will either be made by me or by my agent or his assistants.

Secondly, while I know that established publishing houses have their own editors and formatting, I believe that my plays would benefit from having an outside eye or proof reader for grammar, spelling, and consistency of format before sending a manuscript to a publisher. Although the publisher ultimately makes the decision on which plays to publish, I would like to prepare at least 14 of my full-length plays, and one 10-minute play for publication which would include transcribing two early plays into Microsoft Word (they were type-written before I owned a computer). If publishers require submissions online, I will need to purchase a PDF program to protect the integrity of my text.

Thirdly, I would like to have a website created to direct an online audience to my work. I would like to have brief synopses of my plays, cast requirements, running times, production history, and sample pages on the website (I will need to purchase a domain name, and will again need a PDF program so that downloaded sample pages cannot be altered,) with links to my agent, to any theatres or universities who are producing my work (with their permission) and a link to the publisher of my collected plays.

4. What is the timeline for this project. Please provide dates as possible.

Should I receive a planning grant, I believe that the first part of my plan, that of generating a list of possible publishers, writing an appropriate query letter accompanied by supporting information regarding my plays, could be accomplished within one month. The follow up with publishers will of course be ongoing until I receive a positive response.

The second part of my plan, to have my early plays transcribed and to proof read and consistently format the plays I'd like to include in a collection will take the longest amount of time. Having a proof reader read through the plays will take up to 30 hours without making corrections or asking or answering questions. I think that a reasonable timeline for the transcribing, proof reading, and formatting would be to have one play/week prepared for publication for a total of 15 weeks or between three and four months.

As for my third goal of creating a website for my work, I most likely will hire a web designer. I believe that a simple website that I can learn to maintain myself will be the most effective for me, and from my research I think such a website can be designed by a professional in about six hours.

I believe my planning goals to market my work could be accomplished within a five-month time frame from the start date of the grant. Barring no changes to my health or energy level, I believe the planning work to market my plays will be accomplished by March 1, 2008.