My whole life has been a journey to answer one central question: How do we tell human stories about the importance of connections while embracing science?

When I was a kid, my parents told me traditional Vietnamese stories that personified nature. I am now an animated human being because my family and community raised me to see everything in nature as beings. They also took me to Space Camp and operas. That was when science and theatre became inseparable. I went on to obtain an astrophysics degree and a minor in theatre. While trying to fit in with my college peers by writing pop and punk rock, I grew to appreciate and compose in Quan họ style. These aspects grant me the ability to work well as both a musical and fable writer.

My playwriting discipline helps me demonstrate hope as not something you have, but as something you practice. It is intimately entangled with ancestry and legacy. It is messy, uneasy, and contradictory. My civic engagement is to teach that hope requires bearing witness to social and historical trauma to confront our toxic past and take a stance against social injustices. Once we do that, we can hold space for love and connection.

I define this moment creatively and scientifically as a practice in trust. It is my time to hope and for others around me to hope. It is my time to collaborate with artists of color who are hoping to heal and create.

The Van Lier Fellowship’s **personally** curated group would spark my ideas into drafts. Also, Rattlestick’s mentorship and staff would gear my characters and themes to be accessible to more collaborators. The last time these resources were granted to me was my 2020-2021 Working Title Playwrights (WTP) apprenticeship. This yearlong experience helped me develop *Ellipses* from an idea to drafts and a reading. While attending WTP’s readings, I curated eight performers who portrayed my characters from scratch to draft. Through a weekly series of interviews and exercises, I created a play filled with wonder, humor, puppets, and science. While the roles in this show have been written for and cast from WTP’s Acting Ensemble, it is made universal with a WTP dramaturg and director and bimonthly private readings alongside feedback sessions. The apprenticeship closed with a weeklong workshop and public reading. This process made *Ellipses* ready for festivals and industry readings.

Rattlestick Theater’s *Addressless* devised process was one of my inspirations to move into the New York City theatre community in 2022. However, this system forces many of us to live paycheck to paycheck. So, I balance my survival job in the food industry and passion in musical theatre development. The Van Lier Fellowship would provide me with the financial independence to dedicate more time to my work as a playwright.

And no matter what, I hope the community questions and relates their own journeys to my characters’. Perhaps, the audiences will grow grounded in their existing relationships or the ones they will have. I seek answers to my central question by personifying scientific entities and connecting science to the human condition.

My theatrical Big Bang happened at the age of seven. While visiting Space Camp, my family took us to TURANDOT. Science and theatre became inseparable. My teachers made them visible and indivisible. In high school, a class assigned a Calculus project. At that time, I played the clock Cogsworth in a production of BEAUTY AND THE BEAST. This inspired MATHLAND, a musical that personified time derivatives. My teacher wrote on my rubric: “You have a future as a musical writer.” So, I went and got an astrophysics degree (and a theatre minor).

I study science so that I can faithfully bake ionic lyrics and break Earth with rocky choreography. I uncover truths by writing fables. My next musical TOUR happened while working around the cyclotron at my alma mater. I felt that the quarks are also going to college trying to attain a higher degree. Lyricist Reg E. Gaines read this story and encouraged me to follow this musical writing path, saying: “The science spoke to the heart. We’re all quarks colliding with one another in the accelerator called life.”

It was also beyond the experience of playing "non-human" roles that inspired my work. My Vietnamese parents have had a role, telling bedtime stories that personified nature. My culture’s inherent devotion to this form of storytelling drives the vessel of my hearty personifications. I am now an animated human being because my family and community raised me to see inanimate objects as beings. These aspects grant me the spirit of a science fablist and musical writer.