**What is your relationship to music?**

Music is caring, annoying, and sort of messed up. Music has been there for my graduations (because they had to), for my tragedies (because they needed to), and often visits me at work (because they loved to). Music is my little sibling; I am shaping them up to be like me, their older sibling that he is today.

Chronologically, music came into my life when I started elementary school. I played the recorder which led to the performing arts shortly after. Then, I started playing the trombone in middle school. I became a songwriter midway into high school. While obtaining an astrophysics degree and a minor in theatre in college, I realized that musical theatre writing is what I wanted to do for the rest of my life.

My parents have had a role in supporting my relationship to music by taking me to operas, sending me to music camp to learn composition, and gifting me my trombone. They passed on Vietnamese bedtime 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. 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 science musicals have been performed and produced in Atlanta, Boulder, Kalamazoo, New York City, and Coimbra, Portugal. At Abington Art Center in Philadelphia, Theatre on the Verge will produce a concert reading of my musical *Turnover: A New Leaf* on March 17, 2024. I currently live in Washington Heights, where I play the trombone in the Queer Big Apple Corps Marching and Symphonic Band. I am also a member of ASCAP and Musicians United for Social Equity. In addition, I taught a musical writing class for Harlem Writers United and have been in community with other composers at Musical Theatre Factory for the past four years.

Thanks to the Kennedy Center’s BIPOC Critics Lab under Jose Solís, I have had the privilege of interviewing musicians about their own relativity to music. For TheatreMania, I interviewed songwriter Carrie Rodriguez, who shared with me her devotion and bouts with her musical theatre sibling as they composed *¡Americano!* for New World Stages. For The Public Theatre, I interviewed music director Jason Michael Webb, who spoke on his newfound relationship with his hip-hop/choral sibling as they staged *Hamlet* for Shakespeare in the Park. Recently, Alexis Hauk of American Theatre Magazine interviewed me about my relationship to music and theatre criticism. I told Hauk that music gives me hope and forces me to interrogate its complexities.

My practice in music helps me demonstrate hope not as 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.

Music is my hopeful sibling who is all (made) up in my head and (made it) down to my heart.

**What do you hope to get out of this writer's residency?**

If selected as a Music Writers Workshop writer, there are three things I hope to get out of this writer’s residency: a) several interview articles with the Asian Arts Initiative music artists, b) knowledge in unfamiliar Eastern instruments and music theories, and c) a deeper connection with the general music community in Philadelphia.

For my portfolio, I am continuously looking to interview musicians for magazine and online publications. The press frequently spotlights the Mellon Foundation and their civic engagement. This Mellon Foundation and Critical Minded-funded program would open doors for opportunities in publication after 2024. In addition, it would be astronomical to be in a space with (science) educators, like Joshua Minsoo Kim, who could coach me on ways to intersect science communication with musical networking.

Quan họ and pop are genres I have been adept in composing in, but I am starting to branch into electronic dance music. By immersing myself in the workshop process and learning different artist processes, these experiences expand my musical literacy. Also, the Asian Arts Initiative's Music Festival is a rare lengthy opportunity to immerse myself in music specific to the Asian diaspora. This would build my forte and relevance for my old songs I revisit or future songs I write.

The Philadelphia theatre community and I have had a three-year-long connection. Their artists mentored me on my musical writing and granted me my first literary management job. As my Abington Art Center show approaches, I would immediately connect with other residency writers. My recurrent collaborations with director Aliyah Curry and Philly-based dramaturg Heather Helinsky are due to simply being a part of a yearlong apprenticeship or fellowship. Like The Sống Collective for Vietnamese artists, I am always seeking other communities of Asian American artists. A nearly yearlong commitment to the Music Writers Workshop cohort would expand my network as a collaborative theatre artist who writes music from the Vietnamese diaspora. My sincere hope is that this would be a lifelong community in my life.