



DUT PRESENTATION AT 8AM

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Jodie du Plessis:

Tuesday, 19 October at 14:00 (South African time) to finish at 14:15/14:20, and followed by a Q+A session until 14:30 latest.

“20-minute presentation on your work. We'd love to hear about your experiences as an artist during the initial lockdown and how it helped you to unleash your creativity and inspired to you do the work that will be exhibited.”

Google: <https://docs.google.com/document/d/1Ry1Rn8Y9SbTMnnBZoQO1x8F56f6DeYy5/edit>

8AM: Introductions

Daniela Cobb:

I'm Dani (she/her). I am based in Georgia in the United States.

I sing as and portray SPT0615-JD, the hero of ELLIPSES.

David Quang Pham:

I'm David (he/him), composer and writer of ELLIPSES. I am based in Michigan in the United States. I am the musical theater science communicator. My purpose is to introduce scientists to the performing arts and theatre artists to science. I have a Bachelor of Science in Astrophysics at Michigan State University and studied playwriting under the New Play and Dramaturgy Apprenticeship at Working Title Playwrights in Atlanta. I am currently the Literary Fellow of Playwrights Foundation, a national theatre located in San Francisco. My job is to read scripts, organize volunteers, and decide what plays should be produced. It is so nice to advance the performing arts with people everywhere and anywhere. Thank you to Jodie, the DigiFest team, and Durban University of Technology for the warm welcome and invitation. Here and there, we are going to discuss how our musical, ELLIPSES, was produced.



8:05AM: How did the lockdown unleash our creativity and inspire ELLIPSES?

David Quang Pham:

1) As a musical writer, I know that I am giving years of my life away to this process. Musicals that you see staged on Broadway, like *The Lion King*, there were many steps before getting there. After the first draft, the script must be read by other professionals. Then, they are read by actors sitting in chairs and reading or singing from the script at a rented venue. Then, they're workshopped, where only parts of the show are put on in front of the audience. Then audiences give feedback. And do these on repeat until the work is clean enough to get a full production. Before 2020, musicals and plays went through this process.

2) As for ELLIPSES, the musical development has been generally virtual. It saves us from having to consider 1) expenses like venues because Zoom is available and 2) getting an audience. I made connections everywhere during the lockdown, so we had audiences from San Francisco, New York City, not just Atlanta. The lockdown helped me as an artist who did not have much following. There were over fifty people who came to our virtual show back in July.

3) So, how did I connect to Georgia from Michigan? In 2019, one of my musicals became a finalist for a major New York theatre festival. I decided to get out of my bubble in Michigan and look at other cities. When I went to college at Michigan State University, many of my friends were in Atlanta. And they let me know this organization called Working Title Playwrights. I signed up for their newsletter, and I sort of thought that I might never meet them. Everything that they do, from their classes to their workshops, are physically in Atlanta.

8:07AM

Then, 2020... Everything became virtual. Working Title Playwrights grew nationally. The artistic director, Amber Bradshaw, reached out to me to join in on their Monday Night readings on Zoom. I went to their town hall. In August 2020, they asked me to be their second apprentice. And that changed my life. It was my first professional title for a theatre company. This was my one chance to prove myself as a playwright. My tuition was covered by them. Like many artists, I am not well off.

4) But I am rich in creativity. Our first class is "Generating Story Ideas," which was about how to come up with new things and not have writer's block. I formally met our director there, Aliyah Curry, who is also a student in the class. An award-winning filmmaker and poet. Our instructor's name is Addae Moon. So, I thought about writing a story centered on astrophysics, which was again, my background. Then I thought about the isolation that we are in, and the Moon is not just enough. I thought of the whole Universe. I thought of singleness. I've met single parents



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throughout this lockdown and how it is for them. On August 16, 2020, a story about Singularity and their Galaxy children was conceived. We shared the first page of it to the dozen writers in the class, and everyone loved it. It is a new family musical.

Later in October, we had our first reading of the first 11 pages. Five performers read in front of thirty professionals. The responses were positive, and they wanted to know more.

In December, we had our second reading of the first 11 pages of the second act. And one of the five readers this time was Dani!

8:09AM

Daniela Cobb:

David Quang Pham:

8:15AM: