

DigiFest'21: Virtual Musical Development

As the pandemic ensues, some theatres limped along. Many theatres caved. The special relationships where the performers can feel the laughter, claps, and hums of the audience are put to a halt. Theatremakers must adapt. Personally, I added a new model that strives for other musical writers to adopt.

I love the theatre space and space in general. I, David Quang Pham, study the Universe as an astrophysicist and personify their verse as a musical dramatist. Science spins my creative process. I traverse science communication through the human condition. With these combinations, I was ready to traverse the virtual world.

I recently completed the yearlong New Play Development and Dramaturgy Apprenticeship under Working Title Playwrights, the best play incubator in Georgia, USA. No handshakes or long waits in an office occurred. All the happenings were through the internet. I participated in this entire program from Michigan, USA.

We created a new science musical about family and growing up. ELLIPSES follows the Galaxy family and their quest to undo the Big Bang, after a family member sets it off. When JD strikes down Singularity to run away from home with Gravity (the family dog), their younger siblings are left to fend for themselves in the vastness of the cosmos.

WTP developed new plays for decades, but generally they do not concentrate on musical development. Regardless, they never dictated the box that our work needed to fit in. Working Title Playwrights backed ELLIPSES. They took a risk with an emerging musical writer who barely made ends meet.

So, our Universe began and expanded through four Monday Night Development Workshops in October, December, February, and May. Each Zoom meeting, readers read fifteen-minute excerpts of our musical with fifteen minutes of feedback from the few dozen viewers. Five of the total fifteen readers went on to be a part of the official team. Our cosmic music is recorded by the acting ensemble members. Our fabric of spacetime is threaded by WTP's stage manager, dramaturg, and director. These professional collaborations were the first of my musical career. This was Jordan Alexandria Ealey's first time as the dramaturg for a new musical with existing music. This was filmmaker Aliyah Curry's first venture as the theatre director. And this all culminated into the virtual concert reading of ELLIPSES on July 15, 2021.

Our spacey animations were made through my longtime experience with Adobe and Corel software. The music is notated through Sibelius. We showcased on Zoom.

Our intent, for its demonstration at the 8th edition of DigiFest, is to present that new works for stage theatre can be virtually created and developed. Collaborations can be made from traditional theatre workers (choreographers, playwright, set designers, etc.) and unconventional theatremakers (animators, scientists, etc.) around the world. As I made my way through countless theatre gatherings, there is much to gain from the thoughts and reflections of creatives on every continent.

For more information, visit our website at: <https://www.ellipsesplay.com>