

Project Information

* Project Discipline (Choose 1 discipline and up to 3 sub-disciplines)

Why We Ask This

Innovation often occurs through deep engagement with the field. This is an opportunity for you to explain not only what your work is about, but also how it fits into a broader discourse—be it within the field of art, or outside it. Be as specific and concrete as possible.

Performing Arts

Puppetry – Music Theatre – Multimedia Performance

* One Line Project Description (25 words or less)

A universal coming-of-age story starring the Galaxy family and their dog Gravity as they sing and dance their way through the Big Bang.

* Project Description (250 words or less)

- Why We Ask This

The project description should give evaluators a vivid sense of the project so they can imagine it and “see” it in their mind’s eye. Do not discuss the concepts behind your project without describing how the project will ultimately manifest. What will the work look like? What form will it take? How will the audience interact with the work? Be specific and concrete. We understand that these elements may change as the project develops, and/or that the project may have multiple manifestations.

ELLIPSES is a full-length coming-of-age musical that spans before the Big Bang to the very end of our Universe. It has eight principal characters (Singularity, their six Galaxy children, and their dog Gravity) and a flexible ensemble (tidal dogs and planetary friends). Singularity is the single parent who locked their kids in the house. JD is the rebellious teen who wants to leave home to go explore the Universe. And Milky Way is the baby sibling who’s going through galactic puberty. The Tidal (tidal forces personified as dogs) are aware of the audience and constantly interacts with them through their punk aesthetic and forceful presence.

ELLIPSES is an epic popera. The genres are pop, Chinese opera, punk, and a bit of psychedelia. The musicality gives the audience a mixed experience where the music speaks ancestrally and yet leads them into the future. It also broadens the choreographic possibilities. And it makes us gravitate to ELLIPSES’s core idea and messages.

In the story, ellipses are three stages representing childhood, teen-hood, and adulthood. Milky Way transitions from child to teen, JD transitions from teen to

adult, and Singularity transitions into the great beyond. Milky Way's arc plays around with puppetry, JD's arc works with choreography, and Singularity's arc draws from technology.

ELLIPSES works with the theatre stage to present the expansion and contraction of our Universe through an elliptical movable set. It makes use of the curtains (the fabric of spacetime) and the fourth wall (the edge of the Universe).

*** How does your project take an original and imaginative approach to content and form? Please be as specific as possible. (150 words or less)**

- Why We Ask This

Creative Capital has always been committed to supporting innovative, groundbreaking work. How is the project pushing boundaries, taking risks, and exploring an idea in a new or different way? Projects should challenge the status quo and spark conversations in new and innovative ways. Innovation can occur in a variety of areas, like form, function, content, or technicality.

Countless theatre artists have described this family drama as “unique.” They have not seen quintillions of years encapsulated within a two-hour narrative, personifying the origin of the Universe through a violent inciting incident. ELLIPSES's Big Bang happens when the oldest child kills their parent Singularity. The constantly shifting stage conveys the universal expansion and contraction, using field equations that resemble fields of flowers or Galaxies' varying levels of freedom to move about. Today's science lend itself to this original mythological cosmology, contrary to traditional mythology.

The story is also rather original due to musical theatre being its initial state. Stage musicals often rely on preexisting source materials and fandoms to produce. ELLIPSES is only an adaptation of my understanding of cosmological theories, as an astrophysicist-turned-dramatist.

And finally, as a Vietnamese American, my soul lives in the Galaxy family and pentatonic music. Xiqu is unheard in the American musical theatre canon.

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*** Please place your work in context so we may better evaluate it. What are the main influences upon your work as an artist? How does your past work inform your current project? Please use concrete examples, which may include other artists' work, art movements, cultural heritage, science, philosophy, research/work from outside the arts field, etc. (150 words or less)**

Why We Ask This

Innovation often occurs through deep engagement with the field. This is an opportunity for you to explain not only what your work is about, but also how it fits into a broader discourse—be it within the field of art, or outside it. Be as specific and concrete as possible.

My theatrical Big Bang happened when my family took me to Space Camp then TURANDOT. Science and the performing arts became inseparable. My teachers made them more visible and indivisible. One gifted me FLATLAND. I then wrote MATHLAND which had them saying: "You should be a musical writer." So, I went and got an astrophysics degree. In fact, I study science so that I can faithfully create ionic lyrics and break Earth with rocky choreography. I uncover truths by writing fables.

My first full-length musical, TOUR, is about subatomic particles going to college in an accelerator. Reg E Gaines (bookwriter-lyricist of BRING IN 'DA NOISE, BRING IN 'DA FUNK) read it and invited me to New York. He said: "The science spoke to the urban heart. We are all quarks colliding with one another in the accelerator called life." My purpose is to bring science to life through musical theatre.

*** What kind of impact—artistic, intellectual, communal, civic, social, political, environmental, etc.— do you hope your project will have? What strategies will you employ to achieve the desired impact? (100 words or less)**

- Why We Ask This

Art can contribute to and expand creative, intellectual, civic and/or social dialogue. This question is a chance to explain what you wish to accomplish with your work. The impact of your project could be specific, impacting a smaller audience with a specific set of concerns; or it could be more expansive, engaging a wide variety of people across the country

Science is more important than ever before; there are people who do not believe in science. It may be because scientific principles are not often represented in human qualities. The world needs stories about the importance of connections while embracing science. My personification in ELLIPSES looks to bridge humanity and Galaxies.

I seek funds for public readings to have performers portray ELLIPSES's characters which help bring out coming-of-age themes that audiences can intuitively sense. I hope teens and adults depart with an understanding that galaxy formations and clusters are truly human development and a growing family. We are all Galaxies.

*** Who are the specific audiences/communities that you hope to engage through this project? Please think beyond the broader art community where possible. How are you hoping to reach them? (100 words or less)**

- Why We Ask This

We encourage artists to begin thinking, at the earliest possible phase of their project, about whom they hope to reach. Think about audiences outside a community like “theater-lovers” or “readers”—who exactly is your work for? This question allows evaluators to see what kind of individuals, communities, or organizations would be most responsive to and appreciative of this project.

Science enthusiasts and family audiences are who I look to engage through ELLIPSES. Over generations, scientific passion is often passed down to my colleagues. I have spoken at Story Collider, a non-profit dedicated to personal stories about science. Most of their speakers are parents who fight for equity in STEM. And science communication students have interviewed me about my experience as a musical theater science communicator. The sciart communities have always been the most appreciative of my purpose. In readings and workshops of ELLIPSES, this familial story has especially tugged at the hearts of families.

*** How might your proposed project act as a catalyst for your artistic and professional growth? In what ways is it a pivotal moment in your practice? (100 words or less)**

- Why We Ask This

We want to know how artists envision their work changing in the next few years, and what part this proposed project will play in those goals. These responses provide us with a sense of your artistic ambition and your level of engagement with professional development.

In the 2020s, I became the Working Title Playwrights apprentice and Playwrights Foundation fellow with dozens of developmental events. My creative expansion occurred under these leading new play organizations in Atlanta and San Francisco. I am ready to engage in national initiatives. I look to someday present ELLIPSES at the World Science Festival. It is a current Eugene O'Neill semifinalist. Another national theatre organization noted the story as being “a cultural touchstone that would soar with studio recordings.” I look to be a leading science storyteller that more and more musical organization can entrust with their resources and network.