

Title of the artwork / collection: ELLIPSES: The Cosmology Mythology Musical

Description of the artwork: ELLIPSES stars Singularity and their teenage Galaxies and follows their quest to undo the Big Bang, after their dog Gravity sets it off. The supermassive heart of this coming-of-age story is self-discovery in isolation.

In astrophysics, David Quang Pham seeks connections between the humanities and the galaxies. He noticed that galaxies were aimless while viewing them at the Michigan State University Observatory. During the pandemic, he virtually made connections with theatres around the world. When Atlanta's Working Title Playwrights made him their second apprentice, he was granted a nurturing space with professional resources for the first time in a decade-long career as a musical writer. In WTP's first class instructed by Addae Moon, he decided to craft a new musical after having worked on an opera for many years. He looked through an isolated lens but with family. Ever since, he strives to develop this original mythology about the origin of our Universe, devised through the musical theatre medium, that connects family to relativity and temporality to eternity.

This musical is developed in yearlong workshops at WTP between 15 professionals in Atlanta, Georgia and the author in Wyoming, Michigan. Together, they recorded 9 demos. Stage manager Alexis 'Lexi' McKay maintained order. Dramaturg [Jordan Alexandria Ealey](#) consulted on the story. Director [Aliyah Curry](#) used her cinematography expertise to render this stage musical virtual. The concert reading visualizes production numbers through animation and impressionistic digital paintings. The visuals were made through the Adobe and Corel software. For an inside look at the creative process, visit: <https://www.ellipsesplay.com>

Author(s) name(s): David Quang Pham

Country: United States of America

Affiliation: Working Title Playwrights

Bio: David Quang Pham is the musical theatre science communicator. Due to youthful trips to operas and space camp, he now writes love letters to science and devises stories from its branches. After completing an astrophysics and theatre education at Michigan State, he studied under the Working Title Playwrights Apprenticeship in Atlanta and is most recently named the Literary Fellow for Playwrights Foundation in San Francisco. Composer Janelle Lawrence mentors him, helping his music span a broad range of musical styles including gospel, pop, tango, and Xiqu. His subatomic opera, TOUR, is a 2020 Downtown Urban Arts Festival finalist. He is cowriting PARALLEL UNIVERSITY for the NYPL Performing Arts Library program. He is also a proficient trombonist. Pham is a dramaturg and moderator at LMDA; a founding member of CreateTheater; a member of ΣΠΣ, ASCAP, the Dramatists Guild, and OPERA America.

DigiFest'21: Virtual Musical Development

Artist(s) name(s): Daniela Cobb

Country: United States of America

Affiliation: National Broadway Tour of The Lion King, Working Title Playwrights

Bio: Daniela Cobb has performed in the Atlanta Theatre district with many companies: True Colors, The Alliance, Horizon Theatre, and more. She is now a traveling performer with the National Broadway Tour of The Lion King. "Always grateful for an opportunity to create and heal through the arts."

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.

DigiFest'21: Virtual Musical Development

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