**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 stage musical that spans from the beginning to the theoretical end of our Universe. The staging demonstrates universal expansion and contraction through an elliptical movable set and spacey projections. It also utilizes theatre curtains (the fabric of spacetime) and the fourth wall (the edge of the Universe).

The story 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 Tidals (tidal forces personified as dogs) constantly interact with the audience through their punk rock aesthetic and forceful presence.

ELLIPSES is an epic popera. The genres are pop, Chinese opera, punk, and psychedelia. The musicality gives the audience a mixed experience where the traditional string instruments present an ancient tone, and the Wurli electric piano resembles the future. It also broadens the choreographic possibilities to explain astrophysical concepts. These make us gravitate to the elliptical 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 with puppetry, JD’s arc works with choreography, and Singularity’s arc draws from technology.

**\* 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 described this musical 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, with seasonal changes to field equations that resemble fields of flowers or Galaxies’ varying levels of freedom to dance about. Today’s science lend itself to my original mythological cosmology, contrary to religious cosmology.

The story is also notable for musical theatre being its originated state. Stage musicals often rely on preexisting source materials and fanbase to produce. ELLIPSES is an adaptation of my understanding of cosmological theories, as an astrophysicist-turned-dramatist.

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

**Project Information (Page 2)**

**\* 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 you 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**

ELLIPSES looks to make an intellectual and familial impact.

Science is more important than ever. So many people 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.

I seek funds for public workshops 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. Scientific passion is often passed down to my colleagues through family. I spoke at Story Collider, a non-profit dedicated to telling personal stories about science. Their speakers often are parents seeking equity in STEM. And science college students interviewed me about my experience as a musical theater science communicator. The sciart communities support my purpose. In our workshop talkbacks, this familial story has especially tugged at the hearts of those who outgrew their parents. ELLIPSES’s scientific and familial ideals look to reach more of these communities.

**\* 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. OPERA America’s grant committee noted the story as “a cultural touchstone that would soar with studio recordings.” I look to be a leading science storyteller that more musical organizations can entrust with their resources to sculpt these universal touchstones.

\* In addition to funding, Creative Capital also provides scaffolding and support services for awardees (such as expert consultations, gatherings/retreat, alumni network, workshops). How would our non-monetary services help you to realize your goals for this project and/or your long- term artistic and professional growth? (100 words or less)

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Why We Ask This

The Creative Capital Award provides Awardees with services that include strategic planning, legal and financial counsel, community-building, networking, and communications support. Let us know if any of these services would be helpful to you and how.

As an up-and-coming artist and literary associate, I respectively thrive on mentorship and extensive research. What particularly gravitates me to Creative Capital is the alumni network. ELLIPSES would seek communicative input from science-esque artists, such as recent awardee Etienne Charles. Even two decades ago, Creative Capital supported the multimedia project: The Origin of the Sun and the Moon. Though I hoped to have known James Luna, I would treasure their memories by studying Creative Capital’s archives to recognize Luna’s artistic processes. Creative Capital’s community-building and communications support are what I would utilize for my continued growth as a science artist.