



Developing the Musical that Connects the Humanities to Galaxies
David Quang Pham, Working Title Playwrights, Michigan State University

Project: ELLIPSES

ELLIPSES is the epic science mythology about family, child development, and adulthood. It stars Singularity and their teenage Galaxies and follows their quest to undo the Big Bang, after Gravity (the family dog) sets it off. When the oldest child strikes down Singularity to run away from home with Gravity, their younger siblings are left to fend for themselves in the vastness of the cosmos. The supermassive heart of this coming-of-age story is finding oneself in the nothingness... <https://www.ellipsesplay.com>

Obstacles and Objectives

13.8 billion years ago after the Big Bang, the materials from supernovae formed the “golden age” of musical theatre. We are now in the “uranium age” where musical theatre must tell stories that are heavy yet natural. Often that is the problem with plays that explore scientific themes. Their text sound heavy, but they do not feel natural. Developmental opportunities are slim, with these plays set aside as “experimental.” However, the science community has been at the forefront in making space for everything out-of-the-world.

Channeling my astrophysics and theatre background, I am developing a musical that personifies the entire history and hypothetical future of our Universe: ELLIPSES. The Galaxy family will have the audience laughing and relating to the struggles of puberty and growing up.

INHABIT will enhance the musical’s appeal in its celestial depiction of the human condition by a) providing scientific legitimacy from relationships that will form from the institute’s Scientific Services, and b) enhancing musical authenticity from Research Group Histories of Music, Mind, and Body.

Project Timeline

* Working plans as of August 2021

September:

- Get acquainted with the Max Planck Institute for Empirical Aesthetics
 - ❖ Science Department
 - Scientific Services
 - ❖ Department of Music
 - Music and Language
 - ❖ Research Group Histories of Music, Mind, and Body
- Reach out to the Max Planck Institute for Astronomy
- Reach out to Max Planck Institute for Physics



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Project Timeline (cont.)

October:

- Write a new draft of ELLIPSES from scratch

November:

- Record demos of new and reworked songs with the Department of Music

December:

- Produce a hybrid physical and virtual concert reading

Additional Resources

- [Stefanie Schmitt](#) - dramaturg, editor and lecturer. She teaches at the University of Vienna (Theatre, Film and Media Studies) and works as stage manager at the Burgtheater. Her research includes dramaturgies of the digital, immersive storytelling and the interconnections of acting theory and neuroscience. With Sebastian Brauneis and Poesie Media she recently developed the virtual theatre experience “Inside Lieutenant Gustl”.
- [Bianca Waechter](#) - an Austrian Actor living in Berlin. She did her Acting training in New York at NYU Tisch School of the Arts, Stella Adler Studio of Acting.