Personal Statement – David Quang Pham

Theatre is where we can break walls, new grounds, and dimensions. My higher calling is to be the science playwright. My theatrical Big Bang happened when my family went to see *Turandot* after visiting Space Camp. It was then that I cannot separate the performing arts and science. My drama and math teachers only made them more visible and indivisible. In high school, I wrote *Mathland*, a musical about people integrated in a two-dimensional world, unable to go upstage or downstage. My teacher said: "You should be a scriptwriter." So, I went on and got an astrophysics degree.

In fact, I majored in science at Michigan State University (MSU) so that I can faithfully bake ionic lyrics, stage combat between lasers and cancer, and break Earth with rocky choreography. My peers studied science to craft ions, fight cancer with lasers, and stop comets from impacting Earth. I give a voice to my colleagues by writing their stories. Our undergraduate program made us value authenticity, creativity, and equity which lend themselves to playwriting. Indeed, my first formal play, TOUR, was about particles going to college in an accelerator. After graduation, I took a gap year to send TOUR out. Reg E Gaines (the playwright 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." And like any particle, I needed to reach the excited state of a higher degree.

In 2020, a Dramatists Guild class led by Laura Neill introduced me to Boston University (BU). Guild members believed my scientific insights benefited writers. Once I branded myself as the science theatre artist, other science writers requested my help. Working Title Playwrights (WTP) soon made me their apprentice. In 2021, I became the Literary Fellow of Playwrights Foundation. It is an honor to read plays from our festival applicants who are BU students and alumni. I have learnt so much from assessing their work. It is also a great honor to assess reports from National Committee Reader, Caity-Shea Violette. So, my formal studies in playwriting occurred under the leading new play organizations in Atlanta and San Francisco. I am aiming for graduate school to be more like my mentors who have pushed their theatrical forms to the highest degree.

I approach Boston University for the community, resources, and especially the science. BU is turning out playwrights who specialize in science, such as Sloan grantee Kira Rockwell, and educators who write about the science community, like Melinda Lopez. I seek environments

inhabited by those who practice science communication through playwriting. In that spirit, I look to unite artists and scientists to humanize the rich history of science at BU. My three-year plan is for BU to be the home and inspiration of my next science musical. This play would be my thesis.

To break more dimensions, I look to also teach playwriting through science. I have taught classes and mentored for much of my life. MFAs ultimately give us the tools to climb educational slopes. At the Boston Playwrights' Theatre, I look to meet academic standards through my aspiration to grow as an educator. I would advance myself in New Noises, a program that can put me lightyears ahead when it comes to teaching my scientific creative process. Due to my distinct academic background, I have countless original thoughts and run with them. My mentorship in a teaching fellowship can help young playwrights with fresh ideas foster more of their own unique voices.

As the Vice President of MSU's Society of Physics Students between 2016 and 2018, I kept pupils engaged by organizing artistic events where they saw compelling relationships in nature. I lend my methods of personification so that they can make connections between the chemical elements and human personalities. And on Physics and Astronomy Day, we annually visited a local science museum to combine science demonstrations and theatre for school-aged children. During that time, I also mentored neurodivergent kids at Openspot Theatre where some students developed an interest in science storytelling. A student created a water molecule character while another student wrote its scene for a showcase. It was rewarding and encouraging to see the next generation embrace my love for science.

My own chronology in playwriting is expansive. Much of the creative expansion occurred as a fellow and an apprentice. Coming out of the dark ages, I am ready to engage in large-scale structure emergence as a graduate student. I look to uncover advantages in challenges when writing new materials, including dozens of shorts and a full-length play per year. Plays about scientists who are crafting ions, fighting cancer with lasers, and stopping comets from impacting Earth. Boston University is where we break walls, new grounds, and dimensions.

Following grad school, I look to spearhead as an educator and practitioner of science storytelling. The diverse setting and scientific accomplishments of Boston University's Playwriting Program would help me be a pioneer in science playwriting that I know I could be.

Thank you for your consideration and spacetime.