Personal Statement – David Quang Pham

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

My peers pursued higher education to become well-written scientists. They are now discovering new ions, fighting cancer with lasers, and stopping asteroids from hurtling towards our planet. My higher calling is to become the science playwright. I can make up monologues for ions, create stage combat between lasers and cancer, and break Earth with rocky choreography. I have also given a voice to my unheard colleagues by writing these science plays. My first play TOUR was indeed about particles going to college in a nuclear reactor. I wrote this play at Michigan State University (MSU) while completing my undergraduate degree.

After graduation, I took a gap year to send TOUR out. Then, the writer of *Bring in 'da Noise, Bring in 'da Funk*, reg e gaines, read it and invited me to New York. He said that 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 2018 and 2019, I visited Boston for the Asian American Playwright Collective Playfest and a physics retreat at Boston College. At the start of 2020, a Dramatists Guild class led by Laura Neill made me aware of Boston University (BU). In all events, people believed my scientific insights benefited writers. Once I branded myself as the science theatre artist, other playwrights reached out for help on their science plays. Soon, Working Title Playwrights (WTP) asked me to be their apprentice. In 2021, Playwrights Foundation approached me to be their literary fellow, where I often noted the poetic forms of BU playwrights when reading their work for our Bay Area Playwrights Festival. My formal studies in playwriting happened under the leading new play organizations in Atlanta and the Bay Area. I look to grad school to be closer to the experience of my mentors as we push our theatrical skills to the highest degree.

I approach Boston University for the community and resources. An MFA helps us climb the industrial slopes in our high hopes of being world-changing writers and educators. I have taught classes and mentored for much of my life. Still, a challenge that I face is the expectation that visiting writers will have academic experiences in teaching. I look to meet this standard through my aspiration to grow as a playwriting educator at the Boston Playwrights' Theatre. I will advance myself in New Noises. This program would further my effectiveness in teaching my unconventional creative process. Young playwrights with fresh ideas may get a lot out of positive mentorship from me as someone who has original thoughts and runs with it.

When I was the Vice President of MSU's Society of Physics Students, I kept pupils engaged by organizing artistic events where they saw compelling relationships in nature. They made connections between the chemical elements and human personalities (personification). And on Physics and Astronomy Day, we annually visited a local science museum to combine science demonstrations and theatre for school-aged children.

I also mentored neurodivergent kids at Openspot Theatre. In those four years of volunteering, they developed an interest in science storytelling. One student created a water molecule character while another wrote its scene for a showcase. It was rewarding and encouraging to see the next generation embrace my love for science.

In the same way, I strive to connect Boston Playwrights' Theatre with my education as a science communicator and unite artists and scientists. Boston is turning out playwrights and dramaturgs who specialize in science, such as Sloan grantee Kira Rockwell and Des Bennett respectively. Together with the community, I would like to focus on humanizing the rich history of science in Boston. My three-year plan is for BU to be the home and inspiration of my next science musical. This play would be my thesis.

My 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 in all that are presented to me, including dozens of shorts and a full-length play per year; stories about scientists discovering new ions, fighting cancer with lasers, and stopping asteroids from hurtling towards our planet. BU is where we can break walls, new grounds, and dimensions.

If I am accepted into Boston University's MFA Playwriting program, I would acquire the tools to build the communities who have raised me with limited resources. I believe your open and diverse background and reliable mission would accelerate me to be the pioneer in science playwriting that I know I could be. Thank you for your consideration and spacetime.