2021-9

Those who have graduated alongside me are now discovering new ions, fighting cancer with lasers, and stopping asteroids from hurtling towards our planet. They are pursuing higher education to become well-written scientists. My higher calling has been to be the science playwright. I can now make monologues for ions, create stage combat between lasers and cancer, and break Earth with a rocky game of dodgeball. I have also given a voice to my unheard colleagues.

The last I heard them was senior year in 2018, while studying in the cyclotron at Michigan State University (MSU). For a year, I had been immersed in my subatomic opera. I took a gap year after to send this play out. Then, the writer of *Bring in 'da Noise, Bring in 'da Funk* – Mr. reg e gaines – read it and invited me to New York. He said that the science spoke to the urban heart. We are quarks colliding with one another in the accelerator called life. And like any particle, I needed the feel of a higher degree.

At the beginning of a blazing 2020, a Dramatists Guild class led by alumni Laura Neill made me aware of Boston University (BU). I had visited the city twice for the Asian American Playwright Collective Playfest and a physics retreat at Boston College. The goal of both events was the betterment of the world. I knew that my scientific insights ought to be shared with writers of the future. Once I branded myself as the science theatremaker in any gathering, many reached out for help on their science plays. Soon, Working Title Playwrights asked me to be their apprentice. In 2021, Playwrights Foundation made me their literary fellow. My formal studies in playwriting and dramaturgy occurred under the leading new play organizations in Atlanta and the Bay Area. To be more like the pioneering playwrights that mentored me there, I strive to obtain a higher degree.

How do I plan to stand out amongst the other particles who are jumping at this opportunity? I will advance myself in New Noises. Particularly, this program will further my effectiveness in sharing how sparks fly when tackling specific daily prompts and amorphous weeklong assignments. 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. As the Vice President of MSU’s Society of Physics Students, I kept undergrads engaged by organizing artistic events where they saw compelling relationships in nature. I also mentored neurodivergent kids at 4th Wall Theatre Company (now Openspot). And in the past year, underserved communities have approached me to teach musical writing. To add, my experiences as a literary fellow has shaped my empathy with aspiring writers. I aspire to grow as an educator at the Boston Playwrights’ Theatre.

As a playwright, a pattern in my work is that the story traverses science communication through the human condition. TOUR, an opera about subatomic educators colliding in the academic Accelerator, was conceived as a physics undergrad. ELLIPSES, a musical about the isolated Galaxy family, was developed in our 2020 isolation. This musical found a yearlong home at Working Title Playwrights. My three-year-long hope is for Boston University to be the home of a notable musical as well.

Based on the work at Boston Theater Marathon Festival and alumni Steven Barkhimer’s musical profession, I know that BU is open to the form. As a librettist, I am going to be writing librettos, and seek mentorship from Barkhimer. My three-year graduate school project will be a musical that personifies science, perhaps telecommunication, having observed BU’s research in it. Also, I will make the most of writing unplanned dozens of shorts and several full-length plays a year. WTP made me disciplined and connected me with my first stage manager, dramaturg, and director. I also produced as an affiliate of CreateTheater and Playwrights Foundation and as a mentee under Jane Dubin and Jennifer Isaacson of Theater Resources Unlimited. Working with Boston’s artists may be sought if I am accepted, but I also look forward to connecting BU’s theatre with their first ecologist, astronomer, and geologist. Under my watch and in my time, this work we would do is a STEAM collaboration. Together, I would like to focus on humanizing the rich history of science in Boston.

My chronology in playwriting looks expansive lately. The best years of my life was as an apprentice, is as a fellow, and always as a champion of science plays. Much of the enlightenment happened in the dark years of 2020-2021. So, the time is now to get out of my Dark Age and onto an era of large-scale structure emergence. It is never too late to start grad school. However, the sooner I start, the earlier the galaxies, stars, planets, and ultimately cells can form; the more time there is for chaotic systems to settle with ecosystems; the smoother it is for intelligent life to set design my worlds and find their callings in art and science. Those who have graduated alongside me may be discovering new ions, fighting cancer with lasers, and stopping asteroids from hurtling towards our planet. However, I am a rare particle who can gravitate the masses towards what is present in the field of STEM and the natural field of science.

If I am accepted into Boston University’s Playwriting program’s orbit, I would acquire the tools that needed in order to not only build myself but the communities who have raised me with limited resources and yet has the passion for the performing arts. 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.

With a physics degree, my colleagues went out to discover new ions, fight cancer with lasers, and stop asteroids from hurtling into our planet. I’ve been instrumental, too. In terms of degree, I angle to fill their lives with vibrating particles. Whenever their laboratories open up to field trips, wave of kids to academic could dream: “Discoveries. Symmetry. The journeys. Quite loopy.” The lyrics of “Entanglement.” Or they could ponder: “In comes interaction. Oh the nucleation. A plasmic collision.” The lyrics of “Centration.” They will be singing TOUR, after the actual tour.

Let’s tour around this lab that is me. I drew the planets, and Pluto, on the corners of my alphabet homework. Beyond paper, theatre was the open way I could express my astronomical dreams. Like the fabric of spacetime, the audience was dark matter and we, as stellar objects, project into the void. In middle and high school, I delved into music theory and played the trombone. The nerdy persona remained, and the artistic talents dwelled into my college years. As I was finishing up my bachelor’s thesis, my sister informed me that my high school calculus teacher had been annually sharing my musical fable. During my junior year of high school, I wrote MATHLANDfor their winter project. Studying the magnetohydrodynamics modelling of the solar corona was not fluid, so I decided to return to musical writing on the side to be dynamic. Like a star, TOUR had its matters aligned in the span of billions of years.

One may come to believe that my parents love this journey. Of course, no. I respect particles like family, as they made us. In terms of science and humanity, which is not entirely exclusive to each other, new particles and immigrants entering our equations and lands propel us all. My pride in a Vietnamese upbringing grows and its inherent strangeness has shown worth. During this pandemic, I have newfound passion for particle physics. Beyond these small matters building us rather than tearing us down, its fundamental scientific research has practical medical applications that keep us built. The things that I realized within conceptualizing this unique story was that science was often essentially taken, not just from individuals but from community. It would be a community effort to bring back community awareness and community efforts of understanding how we can come together and own our science movements and culture. As an individual of a community, I coined TOUR, an operatic musical that experiments with tango, pop, choral, and four particles – Quark, Lepton, Boson, and Atom. These standard particles collide and compete with one another in the physics academic and professional field. By the end of act I, they all pass college and get jobs at the particle accelerator. In the end, they all rise as God Particles.

To end this tour, the takeaway is that this is the lab of an artistic scientist. What is the difference between that and the lab of a scientific artist, one may ask? Their theory is that science and art are two sides of the same coin. That is not conclusive. Science and art make the coin. I do not flip. I spin. That experimentation is my theatrical application. Specific and direct correlation as an artist.

~~Respectively, these radiations come from Working Title Playwrights, the International Dramaturgy Lab, and eventually Science Gallery and the Sloan Project commissions.~~ The mission’s outputs are musicals ~~TOUR, a physics fable~~ about particles in college, and ~~ELLIPSES, an astrophysics epic~~ about a family of galaxies. I gravitate Certainly being in the orbit of educated playwrights and the conservation of their angular momentum has kept me going.

I am a musical theater science communicator, formally educated in the astrophysics and playwriting field. My musicals are human, scientific, and relative. Their purpose is to introduce scientists to the performing arts and theatre artists to science.

As an artful scientist, I make connections by writing love letters to science. I traverse science communication through the human condition. Its personifications are amplified by my culture’s inherent devotion to humanizing nature.

As a Vietnamese American, I aspire to connect the Eastern and Western art forms. Having grown up in an Asian household, the only things my parents ever watched were Kunqu operas and Kabuki theatre. Naturally, I compose on a pentatonic scale. It is difficult to unravel this traditional fabric of spacetime, but it is a challenge I accept.

I am an early-career composer who has had the honors of virtual concerts. MATA is the opportunity to showcase my unique scientific songwriting approach on an in-person stage.