

TURNOVER: A NEW LEAF

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A Floral-Herbal Musical

By David Quang Pham

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[Queer Theatre Kalamazoo](#) 2022-2024

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## DAVID QUANG PHAM (he★him)

David Quang Pham is a musical theater science communicator. He writes science musicals and consults on stories that explore STEM. His notable musicals personifying astrophysics, quantum physics, chemistry, and botany are respectively: [ELLIPSES](#), [TOUR](#), [•OH: BENZENE AND VINYL LIVE IN OHIO](#), and [TURNOVER: A NEW LEAF](#). [Queer Theatre Kalamazoo](#) is producing [TURNOVER](#) to close out their tenth season from May 9-19, 2024.

After completing an astrophysics and theatre education at Michigan State University, he studied playwriting as the 2020-2021 New Play and Dramaturgy Apprentice of [Working Title Playwrights](#), Atlanta. He was the 2021-2022 Literary Fellow of [Playwrights Foundation](#), San Francisco. Composer [Janelle Lawrence](#) mentors him, helping to forge his broad range of musical styles including pop, punk, tango, and quan họ. [Harriet Tubman Effect Institute](#) commissioned his music. His interviews with composers for The Kennedy Center and Public Theater's [BIPOC Critics Lab](#) are published in The Public and [TheaterMania](#). He also consults on stories that explore STEM. His recent dramaturgical credits are [Millennials are Killing Musicals](#) by [Nico Juber](#) (2022 29-hour reading, [Open Jar Studios](#)) and [Allies](#) by Michael McGoldrick (2022 [PPADC](#) Hamilton Arts Festival). His recent stage management credits are [BĀS](#) by [Janelle Lawrence](#) and [Sugar Vendil](#) (2023 [JACK](#)). He is a moderator at [LMDA](#); founding member of [CreateTheater](#) and the International Dramaturgy Lab; member of [ΣΠΣ](#), [ASCAP](#), and the [Dramatists Guild](#). He plays trombone in the [Queer Big Apple Corps](#) Marching Band. His moonbase is in Washington Heights. His earth is in Wyoming, Michigan. Be up to lightspeed at [davidquang.com](#) [@sciencetheatre](#)

## PLOT SUMMARY

TURNOVER: A NEW LEAF is a floral-herbal musical about how two business-owning families, who are rooted in prejudice, overturn their views when their queer kids start rooting for each other.

In Dirty City, a Cilantro arrives. Rau Răm is an Asian immigrant and expectant mother hoping to start a salon business. When no one can spare a plot of land, Malus Crabapple welcomes her with a neighboring open plot. Rau is a bit hesitant due to Malus's gay nightclub, FigLeaf. But FigLeaf patrons have a liking for Rau's body oil that spices up their skins. Rau happily takes their money yet cannot support their "lifestyles." But the major turnover would be Rau's son: Parsley ("[Move the Plot Forward](#)").

This teen operates Salontro's day-to-day business and spends the nights with his mom ("[A Natural](#)"). As summer starts, Malus introduces Parsley to their teenage nibbling Pyrus ("[Amount to Anything](#)"). Parsley helps Pyrus with issues they have with the other flowers ("[Grow a Pair](#)"). Pyrus invites him to hang out and pays him with a beverage called Miracle ("[Test the Water](#)").

Parsley asks Rau to go with Pyrus to the movies. She reluctantly lets him go. At Cantaloupe Outlets, Parsley and Pyrus pose in a photo booth ("[Photosynthesis](#)"). Pyrus then takes him clothes shopping. He discovers a liking for different floral styles, especially crop tops ("[Crop Top](#)"). Nearby, Rau picks a fight with Malus over finances. They soon bump into Parsley and Pyrus. Rau's world turns upside down when she sees Parsley's crop top. Malus explains Rau's prejudice to Pyrus ("[Soiled](#)").

Parsley is grounded ("[Fertile](#)"). Soon, Pyrus helps Parsley sneak out. With their guest DJ Cauliflower, they have the time of their lives ("[Dirt on You](#)"). However, herbs are not accustomed to the nightlife and this one is especially underaged. Parsley blackouts and ends up in the hospital, getting his stoma pumped.

Malus revisits FigLeaf's founding. FigLeaf closes down due to underage drinking laws violations ("[Fig Leaf](#)"). Rau and Malus introspects. Rau feels that Malus's "lifestyle" is as natural as the greens around, whereas Malus sees Rau less as invasive and more invested in the community as Rau agrees to help Pyrus ("[Green Card](#)"). Pyrus visits Parsley to part ways before they return to school. Rau offers Pyrus a job if they are ever around again. After all, it is a family business ("[Turnover](#)").

TURNOVER plants coming-of-age themes of family dynamics, immigrant assimilation, performative activism, body image, and the duality between nature versus nurture.

## CAST OF CHARACTERS

**PARSLEY** RĂM, preteen, Rau's son

**RAU** RĂM, adult, Parsley's mother and the owner of Salontro

**PYRUS** CRABAPPLE, older teen, Malus's nibling

**MALUS** CRABAPPLE, adult, Pyrus's uncle and the owner of FigLeaf

## Orchestra

**DJ CAULIFLOWER**, the alias for the production's music director, who briefly interacts with the performers

✿ Androgyny Botany: Each character resembles the androgynous nature, with open-ended vocal requirements

✿ People of the Global Majority most represent the experiences of these flowers and herbs; cast accordingly

## MUSICAL NUMBERS

1. "Move the Plot Forward" Malus, Rau
2. "A Natural" Rau
3. "Amount to Anything" Pyrus
4. "Grow a Pair" Pyrus, Parsley
5. "Test the Water" Parsley
6. "Photosynthesis" Parsley, Pyrus
7. "Crop Top" Pyrus, Parsley
8. "Soiled (The Family Name)" Rau, Malus, Parsley
9. "Fertile" Parsley, Pyrus
10. "Dirt on You" DJ Cauliflower, Pyrus, Parsley
11. "Fig Leaf" Malus
12. "Green Card" Rau, Malus
13. "Turnover (A New Leaf)" Parsley, Rau, Pyrus, Malus

SCENE 4

LOCATION: SALONTRO, CILANTRO FAMILY-OWNED SALON IN DIRTY CITY

MALUS, fully clothed, steps into the sunrise.

PARSLEY turns the salon's "Closed" sign to "Open."

MALUS

Cow, Parsley.

PARSLEY

Chào. You Crabapples are always sweet, but you can never sweeten your pronunciations?

PYRUS (OFFSTAGE)

No malice.

MALUS

Yes, Pyrus!

PARSLEY

Pyrus?

MALUS

My nibbling.

PARSLEY

Another Crabapple?

MALUS

Another pear in town.

PYRUS (OFFSTAGE)

And I wanna get outta this Dirty City.

PARSLEY

Doing our city dirty? You'll fit in real well.

MALUS

Tanning beds come in all shapes and sizes. And there will be one that matches your body.

PYRUS (OFFSTAGE)

I don't want nobody to see me around ya. Let's go back to FigLeaf!

PARSLEY

I always wanna visit FigLeaf.

MALUS

Now, ya may have the spirit of a Fig. But only adult plants are allowed at nightclubs. And, ya *mother would lose her freakin' aldehyde.*

PYRUS (OFFSTAGE)

Ya said ya'd take me to Cantaloupe Outlets, not make this salon my outlet...

MALUS

Ya will never find me among those hipsters. How about a trip to Celery Mall?

PYRUS (OFFSTAGE)

But ya said we could go where I wanted! You're more of an Apple Blossom than a Crabapple. Celery Mall only sells to old houseplants.

MALUS

Take that back!

PYRUS (OFFSTAGE)

Per FigLeaf's policy: No returns. No, Malus.

MALUS

You're digging a deeper hole for ya-self.

PYRUS (OFFSTAGE)

Ain't that what we're supposed to do as plants?!

MALUS

Even plants can get overheated.

PARSLEY

You're all making a mountain out of a molehill.

PYRUS (OFFSTAGE)

*Shadeeee.* Ya all add to my sunburns.

### 3. "AMOUNT TO ANYTHING"

PYRUS walks in, with sunburns.  
Their entrance intersects a rocker  
and an acned teenager's presence.

PYRUS

MOUNTAINS OUTTA MOLE HILLS.  
NO REST. DISTRESS. A MESS. CARELESS.

I DELIVERED BRUISES AND I GOT INTO TROUBLE AT SCHOOL.  
SO, I'LL SPEND THIS SEASON WITH MY ONE WEIRD UNCLE.  
I WON'T KNOW MALUS...

ALL BECAUSE REALLY  
I WILL NEVER AMOUNT TO ANYTHING.  
I WILL NEVER AMOUNT TO ANYTHING.  
I WILL NEVER AMOUNT TO ANYTHING.

ANYTHING!

SUNBURNS. PIMPLES. ACNE. BIG DEAL.

PYRUS (CONT'D)

I AIN'T ALWAYS THIN-SKINNED, BUT MY THICK SKIN HAS NOT LOOKED REAL COOL.

SO, I'LL WASTE MY SUMMER NEXT TO A CILANTRO.

I CAN'T GIVE A MORSAL...

ALL BECAUSE IN LIFE,

I CARE NOT TO AMOUNT TO ANYTHING.

I CARE NOT TO AMOUNT TO ANYTHING.

I CARE NOT TO AMOUNT TO ANYTHING.

I DON'T CARE!

ANYTHING!

End of "AMOUNT TO ANYTHING"

PYRUS (CONT'D)

I just wanted a good tan...

MALUS

And ya can get it here.

PYRUS

But I wanted it naturally.

MALUS

We're not the only families susceptible to sunburns. The Cherrys and Maples are, too.

PARSLEY

Our tanning beds can be set at any level that is comfortable with you.

MALUS

See, Parsley. Always level-headed.

PYRUS

I'm gonna level with ya Cilantros: ya can spice up my skin, but it ain't ever spice up my life.

(to MALUS)

*Don't look at me.* I'll meet ya back at FigLeaf.

MALUS

Ya seedlings enjoy yourselves!

MALUS exits.

PYRUS

I ain't no seedling anymore, Malus! Do your thing, little herb.

PARSLEY leads PYRUS around the tanning beds in Salontro.

PARSLEY

High pressure tanning beds?

PYRUS

I ain't letting no middle schooler pressure me.

PARSLEY

No pressure at all, it is then. Where do you go to school?

PYRUS

Tetra High Center of Learning.

PARSLEY

THC, in the U P? The school's rich enough to not have a resource officer.

PYRUS

Eat poop, *inferior lower peninsula*... Yeah, it ain't stop other flowers from being fashion polices.

PARSLEY

And I'm here to just police your membrane. And weed out the troubles in your brain.

PYRUS

They police me. They get under my membrane.

PARSLEY

What did they do?

PYRUS

They reacted.

PARSLEY

To...?

PYRUS

Me shutting down the school's power grid... So they ain't look at me no more.

PARSLEY

My classmates would think you're loads of fun!

PYRUS

What do middle schoolers even do for fun?

PARSLEY

Mudwrestling and singing in the rain!

PYRUS

I'm not sure what to make of it. Fun or not, in the end, I'm the one who shuts the party down.

PARSLEY

A rose and thorn for you.



PYRUS

Don't get me started on the roses. They are mean and the brighter fashion police.

PARSLEY

How?

PYRUS

They go beyond outer body shaming. Their thorns reach my core. My nucleus.

PARSLEY

Your nucleus needs to toughen up.

PYRUS

My nucleus needs to grow thorns, like them.

PARSLEY

You pears need to stop comparing yourself to others.

PYRUS

Easy for you to say. You haven't gone through puberty yet, little herb.

PARSLEY

You'll grow out of anything.

PYRUS

Wow, rich coming from a middle school poop head.

4. "GROW A PAIR"

PYRUS

*YOU NEED TO GROW UP.*

PARSLEY

*TWO CAN PLAY AT THAT GAME!*

PYRUS

*YOU AIN'T SHIT.*

PARSLEY

*I AM THE SHIT.*

PYRUS

*YOU ARE*

PARSLEY & PYRUS

*A NUMBER TWO.*

PYRUS

*GROW UP, HERB.*

PARSLEY

*GROW UP, PEAR!*

PYRUS  
I NEED TO GROW ONE?

PARSLEY  
YOU GOT SKIN IN THEIR GAMES.

PYRUS  
I AIN'T THICK.

PARSLEY  
HIGH SCHOOL AIN'T SHIT.

PYRUS  
I NEED

PARSLEY & PYRUS  
TO FACE THE HEAT.

PYRUS  
STOP COMPARING...

PARSLEY  
GROW A PAIR.

PYRUS chooses a tanning bed, gets  
in it, and closes it. After it  
does its magic, they get out.

PYRUS  
HERB... THIS AIN'T NATURAL.

PARSLEY  
DUDE... I FEEL POWERFUL.  
YOU PEARS.

PYRUS  
I AM STILL GROWING.

PARSLEY  
WE BOTH NEED TO GROW UP.

PYRUS  
CILANTROS.

PARSLEY  
AND CRABAPPLES.

PARSLEY & PYRUS  
WE DO MAKE A GREAT

PARSLEY TEAM. PYRUS SMOOTHIE.

PYRUS (CONT'D)  
NOT SO SMOOTH...

PARSLEY  
LET'S GET SOME FOOD!

PARSLEY shares fertilizer  
popsicles with PYRUS.

PARSLEY (CONT'D)  
HERE'S TO GROWING UP!

PYRUS  
FERTILIZER NEVER...?

PARSLEY  
GETS TOO OLD!

PYRUS  
DEFINITELY!

PARSLEY  
YOU KNOW WHAT IS COOL IS THAT

PARSLEY & PYRUS  
WE'D MAKE A GREAT PAIR.

End of "GROW A PAIR"

PYRUS pulls out a glass bottle.

PYRUS  
Let's test our water.  
(Scaring PARSLEY)  
It's only fifteen percent...

PARSLEY  
I can't drink that.

PYRUS  
Why not?

PARSLEY  
I'm not old enough.

PYRUS  
I ain't either. But I'm fine. *I feel old enough.* And I'm like only a few years older than you. Besides, this is worth 72 bullshits. You're old enough to count that high?

PARSLEY  
You don't need to spew much. Look, it's on me. If you feel bad about it, I'll take a few bull.

PYRUS  
Nah, I need to save every bullshit I can, so I can finally cut off my carbon-dated parents.

(MORE)

PYRUS (CONT'D)

You heard my life with the flowers at school.  
Now imagine that but 72 times that at home.

Just a sip. You'll feel right at home.

PYRUS opens the bottle.

PARSLEY takes a sip. He spits some  
of it out.

PARSLEY

It's a miracle I got any taste of osmosis.

PYRUS

That's the name of the liqueur: Miracle! Well,  
I'll let ya and one of ya new friends be.

PARSLEY

Friends?

PYRUS

Miracle and I, silly herb! And now that we're  
friends, friends go shoppin' together!

PARSLEY

Can Miracle come along?

PYRUS

*Miracle needs to stay a no-show or we'll be  
shown the door by the po-po. Don't start poop!*

PARSLEY

Wash your mouth out with soap!

PYRUS

Wash yours with Miracle! I'm rooting for ya,  
Parsley.

PYRUS takes the bottle. They exit.

## 5. "TEST THE WATER"

PARSLEY enters a newfound state  
that is akin to being introduced  
to alcohol for the first time. The  
lake forms. The tides rise.  
PARSLEY wobbles. They stay put and  
yet also journey to far-off lands.  
They break in their sea legs. They  
slowly pass out.

PARSLEY

(Repeatedly)

Glucose is clear...

End of "TEST THE WATER"