



**INSTITUTE FOR MOLECULAR ENGINEERING'S ART & SCIENCE LAB
AT THE UNIVERSITY OF CHICAGO
LAUNCHES FELLOWSHIP**

**INAUGURAL FELLOWS COME TO UCHICAGO TO COLLABORATIVELY CREATE
NEW PLAYS INSPIRED BY SCIENCE AND TECHNOLOGY**

STAGE – Scientists, Technologists and Artists Generating Exploration – is a rare entity: embedded within a science and engineering institute at a major U.S. research university, it is a full-scale laboratory devoted entirely to meaningful collaborations among scientists and artists. Specifically, it is at the helm of one of the core research themes, that of “Arts, Sciences and Technology,” at the University of Chicago’s nascent Institute for Molecular Engineering (IME).

The *STAGE* lab’s distinct research focuses on creating and developing new theatre work inspired by science and technology. *STAGE* has additionally distinguished itself with the launch of a one-of-a-kind fellowship, catering to a new breed of scientists/artists. At the start of the new year, an inaugural group of fellows arrived at the University of Chicago to begin working on the lab’s unique theatre projects.

After an extensive search spanning hundreds of institutions and top engineering, research and theatre programs, three top candidates were chosen to fulfill the lab’s mission of bringing the scientific and technological age in which we live to the stage. By fostering new and imaginative voices and methods of storytelling, *STAGE* promotes the understanding of the sciences in the public arena. Rather than science lectures disguised as plays, these are emotionally engaging, entertaining stories aimed at capturing the public’s attention and stimulating interest in science and technology.

“*STAGE* adds a unique element to the Institute for Molecular Engineering, which strives to connect broadly with society about matters of applied science and engineering,” says Matthew Tirrell, Pritzker Director, Professor and Dean of the Faculty of the Institute.

During their long-term residency, the fellows will work under the mentorship of Nancy Kawalek, Professor and Distinguished Fellow in the Arts, Sciences and Technology, as well as with postdoctoral scholar Dr. Sunanda Prabhu-Gaunkar, other University of Chicago faculty, and an international array of distinguished artists and scientists. They will have access to a host of world-class scientists and scientific research facilities, a theatrical laboratory, and a plethora of multimedia equipment.

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“The University of Chicago and the Institute for Molecular Engineering champion an environment in which students and faculty collaborate across disciplines,” says Professor Kawalek. “In keeping with the IME’s multidisciplinary approach, we’ve selected three individuals from diverse backgrounds to pioneer new ways of thinking about science, technology, and theatre.”

The three fellows are Edison Hong, Collin Van Son and Ellen Wiese. Mr. Hong is a New York City composer who received a degree in chemistry before going on to receive his MFA from New York University Tisch School of the Arts’ Graduate Musical Theatre Writing Program, where he was a 2016 Richie Jackson Fellow. He has participated in residencies at SPACE at Ryder Farm and Goodspeed Opera House, and his compositions have been performed at venues such as Joe’s Pub, Sardi’s, the Laurie Beechman Theatre, and 54 Below. Mr. Van Son is a recent graduate of the Schreyer Honors College at Penn State University, where he earned a bachelor’s degree in physics with minors in English and mathematics. Both an actor and a writer, he is the recipient of Hofstra University’s Mill Prize and Penn State’s Edward J. Nichols Award. Ms. Wiese is a Chicago-based writer, theatre artist, aerialist, and taiko drummer with Bachelor’s and Master’s degrees from the University of Chicago. She has developed plays with Chicago’s Trap Door Theatre and Chimera Ensemble. As a literary apprentice at Steppenwolf Theatre Company, she worked as a dramaturg, script supervisor, and research associate with playwrights Tracy Letts, Matthew-Lee Erlbach, and Aziza Barnes.

In addition to using technology as a fundamental part of its theatrical storytelling, *STAGE* has adopted a collaborative and improvisational work process, based, in many ways, upon the exploratory nature of experimental science. “In the way we work and in the work itself,” Kawalek says, “the two cultures of science and art are wholly integrated. When people engage across disciplines, they begin to think and work in new ways. With the launch of the fellowship, we are cultivating the next generation of multidisciplinary leaders, and equipping them to meet the complexities and challenges of the future.”

To learn more about the fellowship and/or to apply, visit stage.ime.uchicago.edu/opportunities.

For more information:

Nancy Kawalek: kawalek@uchicago.edu, 773-702-5222

STAGE: stage.ime.uchicago.edu

Institute for Molecular Engineering: ime.uchicago.edu

About the Fellowship: stage.ime.uchicago.edu/opportunities

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