

Sandbox Percussion: 2025-26 Season Bio

Short Bio: Sandbox Percussion

The “exhilarating” (*The New York Times*) and “utterly mesmerizing” (*The Guardian*) GRAMMY®-nominated Sandbox Percussion champions living composers through its unwavering dedication to contemporary chamber music. In 2011, Jonathan Allen, Victor Caccese, Ian Rosenbaum, and Terry Sweeney were brought together by their interest in expanding the percussion repertoire. Today, they are established leaders in contemporary music for percussion, engaging a wider audience for classical music through collaborations with leading composers and artists.

In 2025, Sandbox Percussion made its debut on NPR’s *Tiny Desk* with a genre-defying program of pieces by Andy Akiho and Viet Cuong; and, in 2024, they recorded percussion for the feature film *The Wild Robot* (DreamWorks). Sandbox Percussion is the first percussion ensemble to receive the prestigious Avery Fisher Career Grant; at the 2024 ceremony, they performed “Pillar V,” from *Seven Pillars*, Akiho’s 2021 suite for percussion quartet, which *The New York Times* called “as pure as music gets.” It was nominated for two GRAMMY® awards and was a Pulitzer Prize finalist.

Building on that success, Sandbox Percussion and Akiho embark on a project in 2025-26 to create a new work with Akiho joining on steelpan; “Pentalateral I,” the first completed movement, is available now as a single. Throughout the season, the quintet continues to create and record the rest of the piece, giving premieres of individual movements in select venues.

Sandbox Percussion also continues to champion *Re(new)al*, Cuong’s green energy and environment-themed 2017 concerto for percussion quartet. They reunite for the world premiere of a new work by Cuong to be performed with the Albany Symphony, which commissioned and premiered *Re(new)al*.

Another season highlight is the collaboration with violinist Kristin Lee, the founder and artistic director of Seattle’s Emerald City Music, where Sandbox Percussion is ensemble-in-residence this season. Together, they present a Vivian Fung world premiere, and the Pacific Northwest premiere of recent works by Joan Tower and Gabriella Smith. Lee joins Sandbox Percussion again at the Chamber Music Society of Lincoln Center for *Sonic Spectrum IV*, a program that includes Lou Harrison’s Concerto for Violin with Percussion Orchestra.

Over the season, Sandbox Percussion performs Simeon ten Holt’s minimalist work *Canto Ostinato*. The group’s arrangement for percussion quartet and two pianos was performed at Lincoln Center *Summer for the City*. A new recording by Sandbox Percussion, Erik Hall, and Metropolis Ensemble is scheduled for release in spring 2026 on the Western Vinyl label. At Duke University, Sandbox Percussion and the Tyshawn Sorey Trio present *Max Roach at 100*, a tribute to the influential jazz drummer. At Stanford Live, Sandbox Percussion joins the choir The Crossing for *You Are Who I Love*, the last work by the late Harold Meltzer, set to Aracelis Girmay’s poem about the undocumented immigrant experience in the U.S.

The group’s latest release is *Don’t Look Down* (PENTATONE, 2025), an album that “stretches and challenges the listeners’ ears” (*BBC Music Magazine*), featuring music by longtime

collaborator Christopher Cerrone, with Hanick on piano and mezzo-soprano Elspeth Davis. The album received three GRAMMY® Award nominations, for Best Classical Compendium, Best Contemporary Classical Composition (the title piece), and Best Engineered Album, Classical.

Sandbox Percussion also recorded percussion music for its first feature film, *The Wild Robot* (DreamWorks, 2024), an animated science fiction film directed by Chris Sanders, with music by Kris Bowers. It received three Academy Award nominations, and a GRAMMY® Award nomination for the score.

Sandbox Percussion holds the positions of ensemble-in-residence and percussion faculty at the University of Missouri-Kansas City and The New School's College of Performing Arts, where they have created a curriculum with entrepreneurship and chamber music at its core. The 2025-26 season is the group's second year on faculty at the Peabody Institute of Johns Hopkins University. Sandbox Percussion endorses Pearl/Adams musical instruments, Zildjian cymbals, Vic Firth sticks and mallets, Remo drumheads, and Black Swamp accessories.

sandboxpercussion.com

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