

presents...

# ***PIVOT FESTIVAL***

**GABRIEL KAHANE  
CARLA KIHLESTEDT  
SARAH CAHILL  
DEL SOL QUARTET  
THE WESTERLIES  
HALEY HEYNDERICKX  
SANDBOX PERCUSSION**

**Wednesday, January 29, 2025 | 7:30pm**

**Thursday, January 30, 2025 | 7:30pm**

**Friday, January 31, 2025 | 7:30pm**

**Herbst Theatre**

Launched in 2016, PIVOT is a San Francisco Performances series created for adventurous audiences interested in truly unique arts experiences, driven by a philosophy of innovation, creativity and artistic excellence that pushes the boundaries of the traditional concert experience.

For the tenth year of PIVOT, guest curator composer/singer-songwriter Gabriel Kahane introduces you to artists you'll want to lean in and listen to. He will perform opening night and host all three evenings of deliciously ingenious music brimming with thought, humor—both dark and light—and substance.

PIVOT: New Adventures in the Performing Arts was developed under a grant from:



The PIVOT Festival is sponsored by:



presents...

# ***PIVOT FESTIVAL***

## **SANDBOX PERCUSSION**

Ian Rosenbaum

Jonny Allen

Terry Sweeney

Victor Caccese

**GABRIEL KAHANE** | Host/Curator

Friday, January 31, 2025 | 7:30pm

Herbst Theatre

**AKIHO**

**Seven Pillars**

*Stage Direction and Lighting Design by Michael Joseph McQuilken*

**This program is made possible in part by the generous support of Jeanne Newman.**

**Sandbox Percussion** is represented by Blu Ocean Arts    [bluoceanarts.com](http://bluoceanarts.com)

**Gabriel Kahane** is represented by MKI Artists  
70 S. Winooski Ave., #318, Burlington, VT 05401    [mkiartists.com](http://mkiartists.com)

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## ARTIST PROFILE

*Sandbox Percussion* make their *SF Performances* debut with tonight's concert. *Gabriel Kahane* appears for the eleventh time. He made his first appearance in January 2019 and has been curator of both the 2024 and 2025 *PIVOT* series.

Described as “exhilarating” by *The New York Times* and “utterly mesmerizing” by *The Guardian*, the Grammy®-nominated ensemble *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 love of chamber music and the simple joy of playing together; they have since captivated audiences with performances that are both visually and aurally stunning. In 2024, *Sandbox Percussion* became the first percussion ensemble to be awarded the prestigious *Avery Fisher Career Grant*.

This season's highlights include a performance of their 2021, Grammy®-nominated album *Seven Pillars*, featuring *Andy Akiho*'s title piece at the Beijing Music Festival; a collaboration with the London-based *Gandini Juggling* at Boston's Institute of Contemporary Art and a special *Max Roach* tribute with the *Tyshawn Sorey Trio* with performances that include the 92nd Street Y and the Library of Congress. Together, the two groups explore the extraordinary legacy of jazz pioneer *Max Roach*, who was born 100 years ago.

*Sandbox Percussion* recently recorded percussion music for its first feature film: *The Wild Robot* (DreamWorks, 2024), an animated science fiction survival film with music by *Kris Bowers*. In August, *Sandbox Percussion* released their latest album via *Ecstatic Records* with composer *Michael*

*Torke*, who created the hourlong piece *BLOOM* for the group. The first recording of *Lifeline*, a vibrant percussion quartet composed by *Ellis Ludwig-Leone* for *Sandbox Percussion*, will be released on the album *Past Life/Lifeline* in December, on *Better Company Records*. A new album celebrating the group's long-standing collaboration with *Christopher Cerrone* will be released in February on *Pentatone Records*, including the piece *Ode To Joy*, co-commissioned by the group in 2023.

*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.

Starting in 2024–25, *Sandbox Percussion* will also be on faculty at the Peabody Institute of the Johns Hopkins University.

*Sandbox Percussion* endorses *Pearl/Adams* musical instruments, *Zildjian* cymbals, *Vic Firth* sticks and mallets, *Remo* drumheads, and *Black Swamp* accessories.



Called “trailblazing” by the *Los Angeles Times*, **Andy Akiho** is a Pulitzer Prize finalist and five-time Grammy®-nominated composer whose bold works unravel intricate and unexpected patterns while challenging the boundaries of classical music.

“Increasingly in-demand” (*The New York Times*), *Akiho* has earned international acclaim for his large-scale compositions that highlight the theatricality of live performance. He is the only composer to receive Grammy® nominations for Best Contemporary Classical Composition in 2022, 2023, and 2024.

Recent highlights include the world premieres of several major works, most notably *Nisei*—a sweeping new concerto for cellist *Jeffrey Zeigler*—which headlined this year's *Sun Valley Music Festival*. Another standout: *Sculptures*, a groundbreaking, triple Grammy®-nominated work for *Omaha Symphony* honoring renowned visual artist *Jun Kaneko*. Finally, *BeLonging*, a powerful new collaboration with *Imani Winds* with strong political undertones, also made highly acclaimed live and recorded debuts.

*Akiho*'s works have been commissioned by leading orchestras and ensembles around the world, including the *New York Philharmonic*, *National Symphony Orchestra*, and *Shanghai Symphony*. Equally at home writing chamber music and symphonies, he is the *Oregon Symphony*'s 2023–24 composer-in-residence.

Also a virtuosic steel pannist, *Akiho* has a deeply physical relationship with playing, which undoubtedly informs his compositions. His style is also shaped by his unique path as a composer: having spent most of his 20s playing steel pan by ear in *Trinidad* and *New York City*, *Akiho* only began writing music at age 28.

Born in 1979 in *Columbia, SC*, *Akiho* is based in *Portland, OR*, and *New York City*.



**Michael Joseph McQuilken** originally hails from *Portland, Oregon*, where he was raised in a working-class home by a health worker mother who was terrified that his artistic tendencies would leave him perpetually broke. These fears were not allayed when 20-something *Michael* became a pro-

fessional street performer for three years, making music with garbage. Fortunately, he finagled a scholarship-fueled higher education, and now he is a (working) director, writer, filmmaker, and composer in New York. He holds degrees in directing and sound engineering, and has an amazing wife, Adina, and a beautiful three-year-old daughter, Zelda, who both tolerate his restless creative tendencies that have taken over the majority of the space in their home. Recent collaborators include Drake, Migos, Cardi B, Nelly, The Flaming Lips, Du Yun, Daniil Trifonov, Lupita Nyong'o, and many others. Michael also serves as the current Artistic Director for Titus Kaphar's film production company, Revolution Ready.

For **Gabriel Kahane** see p. 17.

## PROGRAM NOTES

*Seven Pillars* by Andy Akiho explores the free spaces created within an organized structure. This evening-length work, comprising seven quartets and four solos, began with its central movement, *Pillar IV*. Originally commissioned as a stand-alone work, this piece contained a rigorous struc-

ture and motivic content that Akiho felt compelled to expand beyond its 10-minute capsule. *Pillar IV* became the nucleus for *Seven Pillars*, containing the DNA from which the other six quartets are built.

The macro-structure of *Seven Pillars* is made up of two simultaneous processes. The first is an additive process where each movement introduces a new instrument that is then incorporated into the subsequent pillars. To balance this expansion, there is a symmetrical structure on either side of the central movement, *Pillar IV*.

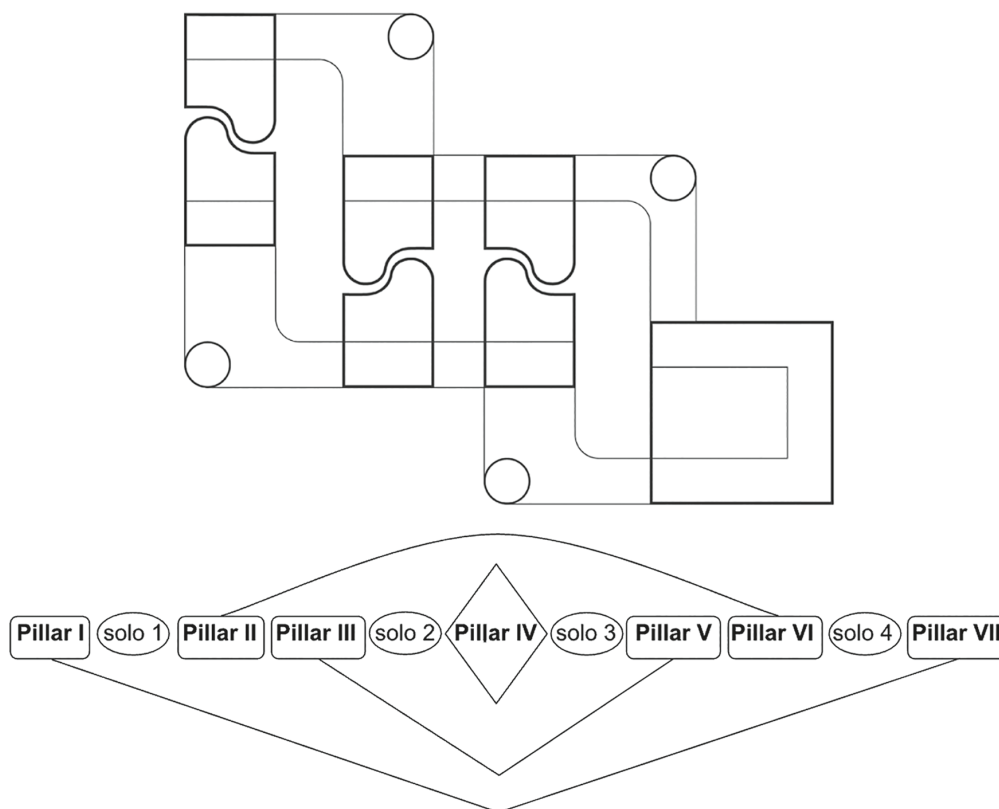
The reflecting movements—*Pillars I & VII*, *Pillars II & VI*, *Pillars III & V*—share formal elements, motives, pitch sets, and other musical elements, but Akiho is the first to say that this is not the point of *Seven Pillars*. Rather, this structure creates space that can be populated with emotion and imagination. Even the reflecting movements are occupied by wildly different aesthetics despite sharing an underlying logic. While still observing the macro-structure, these free spaces are first seen in the solo movements. The solos have a more improvisatory form, elaborating on the pillars, going off on tangents, or transporting us to somewhere else entirely. They are the

skin to the pillars' bones, but, as we zoom in further, this soft tissue permeates every moment of this meticulously crafted work.

*Pillar I* unapologetically throws us into the world of *Seven Pillars*. The building blocks of the piece are flying around like shrapnel, colliding and combining with each other to eventually congeal into a cohesive whole. This extraverted overture is followed by the first solo, *Amethyst*. Scored for vibraphone, it transports us away from the cacophony of *Pillar I* into the colorful, dreamlike world of pitch and brightness.

*Pillar II* is an otherworldly experience generated from Akiho's reimagining of what the vibraphone and crotales can be. It begins with glowing, amorphous sounds. The resolution on these sounds is made finer and finer as the piece progresses, until they become sharply defined. This sets the stage for *Pillar III* which brings us back to earth with its firm rhythmic underpinning. Interlocking figures dance around each other and then snap into unison. We are treated to Akiho's version of a backbeat—in 13 beats rather than in four. Layers of variations culminate into a fire-alarm of sound that collapses into a sedated coda. The second solo, *Spiel*, snaps us out of this

### SEVEN PILLARS





trance and introduces the glockenspiel. Kicking down the door with dazzling speed and agility, eventually it disappears into thin air as if nothing had happened.

The stage is now set for the nucleus of the whole piece, *Pillar IV*. Every theme presented thus far is here, tightly woven into an impenetrable lattice structure. Even in its moments of ambiguity, *Pillar IV* has a straight-faced determination that is unflappable. After this onslaught, the air is cleared with the third solo of *Seven Pillars*, *mARImBA*, which introduces the marimba to our palette. Its warm, dark tones are a welcome sound, exploring a more introspective realm than we've yet heard.

*Pillar V* is a sadistic game. We hear the same hexatonic scale that we heard in *Pillar III*, but now it is used as the foundation for a bass line ostinato. With each repetition, this piece swells like a festering

wound. A singular build which lasts the latter two-thirds of the movement presses forward relentlessly, ending with a manic, obsessive, accelerating repetition of its six pitches. The following movement, *Pillar VI*, is like a delirious fever-dream. A motif like the twitchy ticking of a clock in the high marimba is battled by unsettled unison gestures. The coda of *Pillar VI* is profound in its simplicity. Unison repeated pulses anchor a high yearning marimba descant. These pulses fade away and so too does the desperate melody. This stillness is jolted forward by the fourth and final solo, *carTogRAPH*. Scored for a multi-percussion setup (a 'trap' set), this solo is a virtuosic display of rhythmic complexity and agility. Titled accordingly, *carTogRAPH* requires the performer to navigate a highly detailed map of musical twists and turns in this exhilarating demonstration of dexterity.

The final movement, *Pillar VII*, is structurally a near carbon copy of *Pillar I*, but rather than stark unpitched sounds, *Pillar VII* is populated with all the vivid colors that have been discovered throughout the piece. By now, we've come to expect the gradual build that has propelled so many of the previous movements, but rather than breaking itself under the duress and intensity, *Pillar VII* transcends itself. Notes that were dizzyingly fast now seem comforting, and with each successive layer we gain confidence, not concern. This movement, and the entire *Seven Pillars*, finishes with the performers executing over five thousand notes in the final three minutes alone. It's like taking off in a rocket, and we all are passengers.

—Program Note by Jonny Allen



## DREAMERS' CIRCUS

Nikolaj Busk | Piano  
Rune Tornsgaard Sørensen | Fiddle  
Ale Carr | Guitar

**FEB 27 | 7:30pm** | Presidio Theatre

Program to be announced from the stage



**AMJAD ALI KHAN** | Violin

**SHARON ISBIN** | Guitar

**AMAAN & AYAAN**

**ALI BANGASH** | Sarod

**AMIT KAVTHEKAR** | Tabla

**FEB 22 | 7:30pm** | Herbst Theatre

*Strings for Peace*

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