

PERFORMANCE

GRAMMY®-NOMINATED

**SANDBOX PERCUSSION
SEVEN PILLARS**

Sept. 8 at 7:30 p.m.

FREEDMAN THEATRE

MUSIC BY
ANDY AKIHO

PERFORMED BY
SANDBOX PERCUSSION
IAN ROSENBAUM
JONNY ALLEN
TERRY SWEENEY
VICTOR CACCCESE

STAGE DIRECTION & LIGHTING DESIGN BY
MICHAEL JOSEPH McQUILKEN

PRESENTED BY
UNCSA

Brian Cole
CHANCELLOR

Saxton Rose
SCHOOL OF MUSIC, DEAN

WARNING: This performance features strobe lights,
and could potentially trigger seizures for people with
photosensitive epilepsy.

SEVEN PILLARS

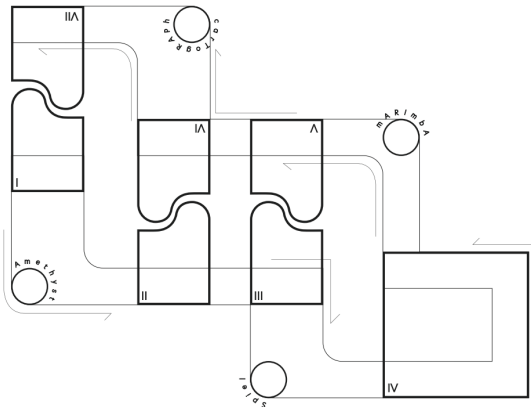
MUSIC BY ANDY AKIHO

PERFORMED BY SANDBOX PERCUSSION

STAGE DIRECTION & LIGHTING DESIGN

BY MICHAEL JOSEPH McQUILKEN

- 1 PILLAR
- 2 AMETHYST
- 3 PILLAR II
- 4 PILLAR III
- 5 SPIEL
- 6 PILLAR IV
- 7 mARImbA
- 8 PILLAR V
- 9 PILLAR VI
- 10 carTogRAPH
- 11 PILLAR VII



The commission of Seven Pillars has been made possible by the Chamber Music America Classical Commissioning Program, with generous funding provided by The Andrew W. Mellon Foundation and the Chamber Music America Endowment Fund, and also by the Barlow Endowment for Music Composition at Brigham Young University.

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 structure 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. The timbral color of this movement is equally elemental, offering the starkest palate of unpitched, articulate and raw sounds.

The first solo, **Amethyst**, is scored for vibraphone, and it transports us away from the cacophony of Pillar I into the colorful, dreamlike world of pitch and brightness. Beginning with lyricism and subtlety, Amethyst eventually works itself into a frenzy. In the aftermath of this turmoil, the movement floats away into the cosmos of Pillar II.

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. The glowing waves of light at the start of the piece become sparkling photons of light at the finish.

Pillar III 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 4—which is layered with complex variations that culminate into a fire-alarm of sound. As with Amethyst, this irreconcilable tumult collapses into a sedated coda, recuperating from the previous blows.

The second solo, **Spiel**, introduces the glockenspiel, but not as it’s ever been heard before. This glockenspiel kicks down the door and delivers a relentless message, dazzling with its speed and agility. Eventually it disappears into thin air as if nothing had happened.

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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. No event is out of place, this movement is the gears of the clock. Even in its moments of ambiguity, Pillar IV has a straight-faced determination that is unflappable.

maRImba, the third solo of “Seven Pillars,” introduces the marimba to our sound palette. It begins starkly, with a single bowed pitch that looks back to the sounds that began Pillar II. This gives way to a distant chorale - soft, deep, rolled marimba chords interrupted by a distant vibraphone melody. The piece ends with an aria. This improvisatory and melodic section jumps back and forth from the very bottom to the very top of the marimba, pushing and pulling as it fades away into a distant memory.

Pillar V is a sadistic game. The marimba is now an integral part of the sound world with its rich depth, and the piece has also begun retracing its steps by reflecting the forms of previous movements. In Pillar V 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, and where Amethyst and Pillar III left off in their self-devouring crescendos, Pillar V continues. A singular build which lasts the latter two-thirds of the movement presses forward relentlessly. Pillar V ends with a manic, obsessive, accelerating repetition of its six pitches.

Pillar VI is the delirious fever-dream following Pillar V. A motif like the twitchy ticking of a clock in the high marimba is battled by unsettled unison gestures. These finally give way to a weightless feeling in the middle of the movement. The final section of Pillar VI is profound in its unique simplicity within the context of Seven Pillars. Unison repeated pulses anchor a high marimba descant that reaches and grasps for unattainable heights. These pulses fade away and so too does the desperate melody.

The fourth and final solo, **carTogRAPH**, is also the penultimate movement in Seven Pillars. Scored for a multi-percussion setup (a ‘trap’ set) consisting of a variety of pitched and unpitched sounds, carTogRAPH is a virtuosic display of rhythmic complexity and agility. The work is extroverted and exuberant, oftentimes sounding as if it could take the place of the drum solo in a rock concert. At the moment the listener feels like they could tap their foot or predict what comes next, the music shifts beneath their feet. Titled accordingly, carTogRAPH requires the performer to navigate a highly detailed map of musical twists and turns in this exhilarating demonstration of dexterity.

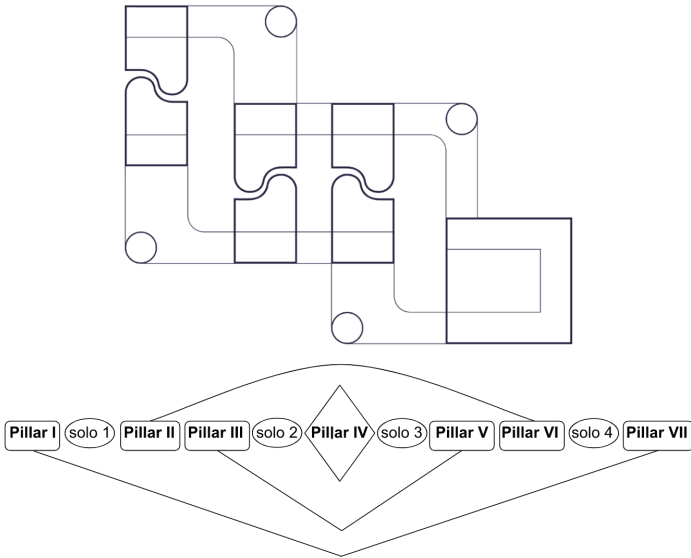
Pillar VII is full of nostalgia. This is thanks in part to the simple three-note melody that permeates the whole movement, as well as the familiar themes that are recapitulated within this movement. Formally, Pillar VII is nearly a carbon copy of Pillar I, but rather than stark unpitched sounds, Pillar 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 forward, but Pillar VII finds its own way to deliver on this front. 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

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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.

Written by Jonny Allen

SEVEN PILLARS



BIOGRAPHIES

ANDY AKIHO

Described as “trailblazing” (LA Times) and “an imaginative composer” (NY Times), Andy Akiho is a GRAMMY® nominated composer and performer of new music.

Recent engagements include commissioned premieres by the New York Philharmonic, National Symphony Orchestra, Shanghai Symphony, China Philharmonic, Guangzhou Symphony, Oregon Symphony with soloist Colin Currie, American Composers Orchestra, Music@Menlo, Sandbox Percussion, Chamber Music Northwest, Carnegie Hall’s Ensemble Connect, LA Dance Project and experimental opera company The Industry.

Akiho has been recognized with many prestigious awards and organizations including the Rome Prize, Lili Boulanger Memorial Prize, Harvard University Fromm Commission, Barlow Endowment, New Music USA and Chamber Music America. Additionally, his compositions have been featured on PBS’s “News Hour with Jim Lehrer” and by organizations such as Bang on a Can, American Composers Forum, The Intimacy of Creativity in Hong Kong and the Heidelberg Festival. His latest composition, “Seven Pillars,” performed by Sandbox Percussion, was nominated for two GRAMMY® Awards.

Akiho is also an active steel pannist and performs his compositions with various ensembles worldwide. He has performed his works with the Charlotte Symphony, South Carolina Philharmonic, Nu Decco Ensemble, LA Philharmonic’s Green Umbrella Series, the Berlin Philharmonic’s Scharoun Ensemble, the International Drum Festival in Taiwan, and he has had four concerts featuring his compositions at the Kennedy Center in Washington, DC. Akiho’s recordings “No One To Know One” (Innova Recordings) and “The War Below” (National Sawdust Tracks) features brilliantly crafted compositions that pose intricate rhythms and exotic timbres inspired by his primary instrument, the steel pan.

Akiho was born in 1979 in Columbia, South Carolina, and is currently based in Portland, Oregon.

SANDBOX PERCUSSION

Described as “exhilarating” by The New York Times, and “utterly mesmerizing” by The Guardian, GRAMMY®-nominated ensemble Sandbox Percussion has established themselves as a leading proponent of this generation of contemporary percussion chamber music. Brought together by their love of chamber music and the simple joy of playing together, Sandbox Percussion captivates audiences with performances that are both visually and aurally stunning. Through compelling collaborations with composers and performers, Jonathan Allen, Victor Caccese, Ian Rosenbaum and Terry Sweeney seek to engage a wider audience for classical music.

Sandbox Percussion’s 2021 album “Seven Pillars” was nominated for two GRAMMY® awards - Best Chamber Music/Small Ensemble Performance and Best Contemporary Classical Composition. This evening-length work by Andy

BIOGRAPHIES

Akiho with stage direction and lighting design by Michael Joseph McQuilken is Sandbox's largest commission to date. In addition to the album, Sandbox commissioned 11 films that accompany each movement of the work.

In addition to the world premiere of *Seven Pillars* at Emerald City Music in Seattle, the 2021/2022 season included many highlights - Sandbox Percussion performed concertos with the Albany Symphony and UMKC Conservatory Orchestra, traveled to Northern Ireland, Lithuania and many cities across the United States, performed at the Percussive Arts Society International Convention, and premiered new works by David Crowell, Molly Joyce, Loren Loiacono, Jessica Meyer, Tawnie Olson and Tyshawn Sorey.

Sandbox Percussion has performed throughout the United States and made their United Kingdom debut in 2019 at the Vale of Glamorgan Festival in Cardiff where they premiered a work by Benjamin Wallace for percussion quartet and fairground organ. In the 2019/20 season, Sandbox Percussion premiered "Don't Look Down," a work by Christopher Cerrone with pianist Conor Hanick, at the Caramoor Center for Music and the Arts. They also presented the first-ever percussion quartet performance at Dumbarton Oaks, on a program that included world premieres by Andy Akiho and Viet Cuong. Sandbox Percussion has collaborated closely with composer John Luther Adams, presenting programs of his music at venues such as Storm King Art Center, Tippet Rise Art Center, Trinity Church Wall Street, Caramoor and String Theory at the Hunter in Chattanooga. Sandbox has performed Viet Cuong's concerto "Re(new)al" with the Albany Symphony and the Curtis Symphony Orchestra, as well as premiered a wind ensemble version of the work with the Brooklyn Wind Symphony. Sandbox has collaborated with actor and writer Paul Lazar on a portrait concert of music by John Cage at the Institute for Advanced Study at Princeton University, and gave three sold-out performances of Steve Reich's *Music for Eighteen Musicians* with Emerald City Music in Seattle.

In addition to maintaining a busy concert schedule, Sandbox was appointed ensemble-in-residence and percussion faculty at the University of Missouri-Kansas City in 2021, where they have created a curriculum with entrepreneurship and chamber music at its core. Sandbox has led masterclasses and coachings all around the United States, at institutions such as the Peabody Conservatory, Curtis Institute, The Juilliard School, the University of Southern California and Cornell University. In 2016, Sandbox Percussion founded the annual NYU Sandbox Percussion Seminar - a week-long seminar that invites percussion students from across the globe to rehearse and perform some of today's leading percussion chamber music repertoire at the iconic Brooklyn venue National Sawdust.

In 2020, Sandbox Percussion released their debut album "And That One Too" on Coviello Classics. The album features works by longtime collaborators Andy Akiho, David Crowell, Amy Beth Kirsten and Thomas Kotcheff.

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

BIOGRAPHIES

MICHAEL JOSEPH McQUILKEN

Michael Joseph McQuilken originally hails from Portland, Oregon, where he was raised in a working-class home by social worker parents who were terrified that his artistic tendencies would leave him perpetually broke. These fears were not allayed when 20-something McQuilken became a professional street performer for three years, making music with garbage. Fortunately, he finagled a scholarship-fueled higher education, and now he is a not-quite-broke director, writer, filmmaker and composer in Jersey City. He holds degrees in directing and sound engineering and has an amazing wife, Adina, who tolerates his restless creative tendencies that have taken over the majority of the space in their home.

UNCSA MANIFESTO

We Believe

ARTISTS enrich our culture, enlighten our society, lift our spirits, and feed our souls.

Integrative **ART EDUCATION** from an early age sparks a lifetime of creative thinking, powerful self-expression, and innovative problem solving.

Rigorous **ARTISTIC TRAINING** empowers our students and graduates to engage our communities, advance local and global creative industries, and inspire the world.

ART ORGANIZATIONS improve the quality of life and place in big cities and small communities, transforming them from merely livable to truly lovable.

UNC SCHOOL OF THE ARTS nurtures the talent, hones the craft, and develops the unique voices of emerging artists. We realize the full potential of exceptionally creative and passionate students to do their best work and become their best selves.



THE SCHOOL OF MUSIC

The School of Music gives talented young artists the opportunity to perfect their musical talent and prepare for life as professional musicians. Our training includes both private instruction and public performance experience, including more than 150 recitals and concerts presented each year. This performance experience, combined with career development opportunities and studies in music theory, literature and style, provides the ultimate training to help young musicians grow as both artists and professionals.

DEAN'S CIRCLES

The Dean's Circles support each of the five arts schools at UNCSA — Dance, Design & Production, Drama, Filmmaking and Music. Dean's Circle members support the school of their choosing with an annual gift of \$5,000 or more in support of discretionary funds, scholarships, or other fundraising priorities. Members enjoy special events and opportunities to interact with the school's dean, faculty and students. If you are interested in joining one or more UNCSA Dean's Circles, please contact Shannon Wright, Director of Development for Leadership Annual & Family Giving, at wrights@uncsa.edu or **336-770-1427**.

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REYNOLDA QUARTET CONCERT

Guest Artist Latonia Moore, Soprano, in Recital with Allison Gagnon, Piano

Sept. 10 at 7:30 p.m.

WATSON HALL

Internationally acclaimed soprano Latonia Moore, recently seen as Billie in “Fire Shut Up in My Bones” and as Serena in “Porgy & Bess” at the Metropolitan Opera, will present a recital featuring the music of Verdi, Rachmaninoff, Katherine Davis, Roger Quilter and Strauss with faculty artist Allison Gagnon at the piano. The recital is part of Moore’s residency with the A.J. Fletcher Opera Institute during the 2022-23 season, also including public and private master classes.

Reynolda Quartet

Sept. 13 at 7:30 p.m.

WATSON HALL

In 1876, Antonín Dvořák entered his now famous G major bass quintet in a competition for which Johannes Brahms was a judge. This winning entry garnered lasting respect for Dvořák’s Czech-inspired music in German music circles, and began a lasting connection of friendship and mentorship between the two composers. The Reynolda Quartet is joined by violist Scott Rawls, professor of viola and chamber music at the University of North Carolina at Greensboro, and UNCSCA bassist Paul Sharpe for a lively performance of this delightful work.

UNCSCA