



Chamber
Music Society
of Lincoln Center

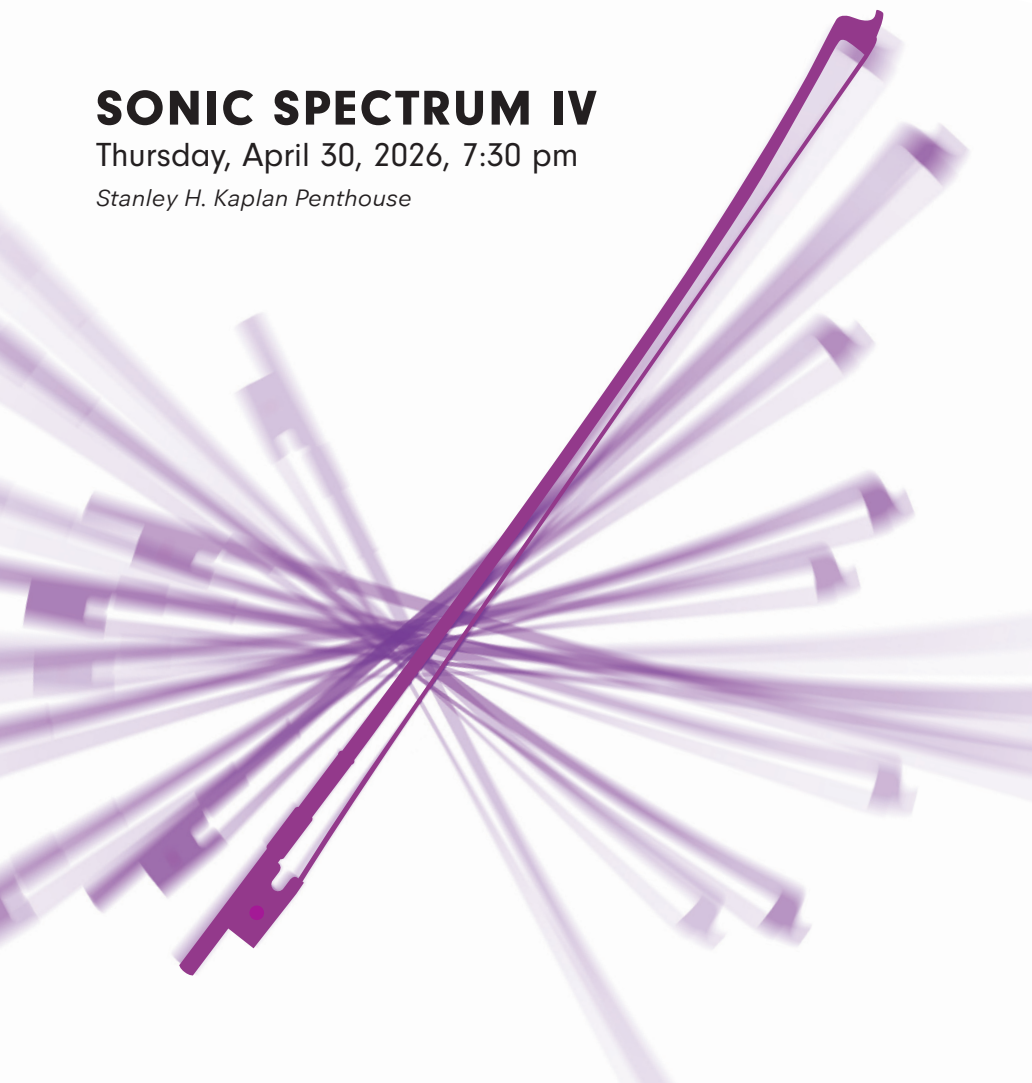
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ARTISTIC DIRECTORS

2025-2026 SEASON

SONIC SPECTRUM IV

Thursday, April 30, 2026, 7:30 pm

Stanley H. Kaplan Penthouse



The Chamber Music Society of Lincoln Center

70 Lincoln Center Plaza, 10th Floor

New York, NY 10023

212-875-5788

ChamberMusicSociety.org

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CMS Chamber Music Society of Lincoln Center

SONIC SPECTRUM IV

THURSDAY EVENING, APRIL 30, 2026, AT 7:30 ▶ 4,715TH CONCERT

Stanley H. Kaplan Penthouse

Kristin Lee, violin
Sandbox Percussion

Jonathan Allen
Victor Caccese
Ian Rosenbaum
Terry Sweeney

Gabriella Smith ***FIVE for Percussion Quartet*** (New York
(b. 1991) Premiere) (2024)
ALLEN, CACCESI, ROSENBAUM, SWEENEY

Vivian Fung ***Goddess/Insect for Violin and Percussion***
(b. 1975) **Quartet** (New York Premiere, CMS
Co-Commission) (2025–26)
▶ Arachnid Procession—Insect Scurrying
and Searching—Nature Rustling—Junkyard
Gamelan with Insect Intrusions—Goddess
Inner Circle—Cadenza—Rage with Fire Ants
LEE, ALLEN, CACCESI, ROSENBAUM, SWEENEY

—INTERMISSION—

Joan Tower ***To Sing or Dance for Violin and Percussion***
(b. 1938) **Quartet** (2024)
LEE, ALLEN, CACCESI, ROSENBAUM, SWEENEY

PLEASE TURN OFF CELL PHONES AND OTHER ELECTRONIC DEVICES.
Photographing, sound recording, or videotaping this performance is prohibited.

Essay on the Program

Beat It

BY PAUL GRIFFITHS

The word “percussion” is not new. Shakespeare knew it, though used it only once, when in *Coriolanus* the Roman general Titus Lartius recalls, among other aspects of the title character’s fearsomeness in battle, “the thunder-like percussion of thy sounds.” Since the word already meant the striking of one hard object on another, we are perhaps to imagine Coriolanus banging his sword against his armor, no doubt to the accompaniment of a hefty roar.

Percussion music, though, is still not a century old in the Western tradition. The earliest example seems to have been the scherzo, exclusively for unpitched instruments, of Alexander Tcherepnin’s First Symphony, first performed in Paris in October 1927. That could have been a prompt for Varèse’s whole piece for percussion ensemble, *Ionisation* (1929–31), and for the percussion interlude Shostakovich included in his opera *The Nose* (1927–28). *Rítmicas* Nos. 5 and 6 (1930), short percussion-only pieces by the Cuban composer Amadeo Roldán, came out of a different world, that of Afro-Cuban music, and thereby helped forge the links that new percussion music could have with musical elsewhere, especially African and Asian. From there, the story continues through Cage, Boulez, Xenakis, and Reich to the rich percussion culture of today.

It’s not hard to find reasons why percussion music has developed only—and increasingly—in relatively recent times. There’s been that growing global awareness among composers and the wish many have had—conversely but leading in the same direction—to contend with the sounds of the modern city. Also, harmony as music’s mainstay got intruded upon by rhythm and sonority, both of which percussion music can do very nicely.

Instruments struck, gently or with

more attack, can suggest the sounds and atmospheres of the natural outdoors as much as of the city, which brings us to the music of the first composer on this program, Gabriella Smith. As a teenager in Berkeley, California, where she was born, Smith went out regularly as a volunteer to work with ecologists in the large coastal reserve of Point Reyes, and saw herself as becoming an ecologist herself. However, she had been playing the violin since she was seven, and composing for almost as long, and was now attending the Young Composers Program set up by John Adams. The pull of music was too strong: she would do her ecology another way, studying natural soundscapes and creating compositions of disparate voices more or less united by the pulse of life—the pulse, too, of the human determination to maintain that life.

Many of her works evoke wild places: *Lost Coast*, *Desert Ecology*, and *Breathing Forests*, to name three orchestral scores of the last few years. The title of *FIVE* obviously suggests something more abstract (the number of drums or drumlike instruments each musician plays) but at the same time the music might seem to be mirroring natural processes. Consider, for example, how as the wavelets of a calm sea come to land on a beach, one with more power may overtake its predecessor. Smith divides her percussionists into two teams, both playing rapid sixteenth notes at first, on two drums in alternation. Gradually one team speeds up to quintuplets for a 5:4 cross-rhythm, then to sextuplets for a 3:2. The other team slows down to triplets, so that the speed ratio is now 2:1, from which point it goes back through 5:3 and 5:4 to the original even sixteenths in both parts.

The four players are now together again, as at the start, and so they stay through the next sequence. In this, each of them brings in another drum and then another, accenting

their attacks on these. Patterns with the new drums alternate with the old sort, and in both the meter keeps changing. Unsteadiness within regularity is thereby achieved in a different way from before. Meanwhile, attacks on the new drums, still always accented, become progressively more frequent until all attacks are of this kind.

Here the group splits in two again to replay the initial shifting-pulse process on these same drums, which are different from those in use before.

Then the shifting-meter process is replayed with two alterations: pairs of grace notes appear sporadically, followed by attacks not on the drums' heads but on their rims. (Players are free to choose which drums to use.) The resulting clicks become more numerous until they have taken over completely. The shifting-pulse process comes around for the third time, now with rim clicks.

The outcome, this time, is different. Pulsation goes on in sixteenth notes in $\frac{4}{4}$ time, but regularity is now jostled by pairs of grace notes, changing accents, and interventions from a kick drum (a small bass drum played by means of a pedal). Beats on drum heads also flood back until the situation is as it was at the beginning.

From here, the two processes of shifting-pulse and shifting-meter can unfold in turn one last time, with variation and increasing prominence for the kick drum. Repeating cycles have brought about overall change, which again relates to a phenomenon observable in nature: in evolution, for instance, or in the life of an individual organism, or in the development of a landscape.

Where Gabriella Smith looks to natural processes for which she finds analogues, Vivian Fung goes in for the detail, in the human mind and on the ground. Her title, she explains in a note to the score, alludes to the "God-Bug Syndrome" identified by the psychotherapist Eric Wäsel. This is where, to quote her directly, "a 'god complex' (inflated self-importance) acts as a defense against deep-seated feelings of worthlessness. I believe

our world right now is facing these conflicting emotions, and so this work ultimately reflects our turbulent and chaotic times."

Turning now to the music, she goes on to remark that "this piece explores many of the sounds that the term embodies—little critter sounds against soaring lines in the violin, an improv section that is more dance-like and free, chromatic lines and rustling textures to embody the scurrying creatures. I see *Goddess/Insect* as a violin concerto of sorts, but in a more adventurous vein, as a percussion orchestra forms the backdrop for this setting. There is an inherent theatricality in the sound world I am seeking to explore, and so, as part of the process of composition, I worked with the performers to maximize the use of spatial possibilities in the room, placement of instruments, and movement of performers."

Fung has no problem with writing characterful, evocative music (this is true also of the two violin concertos and earlier works for percussion ensemble in her generous output), and the named sections of her work will be easy to identify. Consistent throughout is the integration of violin and percussion, except, of course, where the violin is required to break out with lyricism. The use of space and movement will help create a feeling of ritual, building up to "Goddess Inner Circle."

Joan Tower's work comes, characteristically, not as metaphor but instead from a direct response to the instruments in play and how they appear to want to behave. She begins her note on the piece by recalling a conversation she had with Arvo Pärt, her near contemporary, about the origin of music. "He felt music came from the voice (or singing) and I had a different idea that it came from the drum (or dancing)." It is an argument, in other terms, between melody and rhythm. Tower's title places these as alternatives, but the music shows in many ways that they may balance one another and combine. When the invitation to write a piece for violin and percussion arrived, the compositional question became that of "how to have these two very different instruments in the same

space, living fairly comfortably together.”

“What I discovered,” Tower continues, “was that the pitched percussion (vibraphones, glockenspiels, and crotales) were an easier match to join the violin. So right at the beginning, when the percussion starts alone, there is a dialogue between non-pitched and pitched percussion, which eventually invites the violin to join the discussion. And, eventually, the violin starts picking up on some of the rhythms of the percussion as another interaction. Occasionally, I give solo space to both the violin and the percussion group to let them develop forward into their individual and special DNAs without having to adapt to the other one.”

Curiously, the piece starts out very much as Gabriella Smith’s does, with the four percussionists playing fast sixteenths in $\frac{4}{4}$ time, but on single lengths of piping. Pitched percussion intervene—glissandos on glockenspiels and efforts at melody, taken up by a vibraphone—while the pulsing switches to other sources. However, not until the melodic invitation has come from Tibetan bowls a second time, about three minutes into the piece, does the violin respond, at a slower tempo. Accompanied by a glockenspiel, it climbs a pentatonic line to a high A, a strategic note.

Pretty soon, though, the violin is learning

to dance, and even leading its new companions in dancing triplets at high speed. When it changes to a slower measure, in descending lines pizzicato, it becomes shadowed by vibraphone staccatos, but before long it leaves the floor for a while. The percussion develop the triplets and the slower music, the latter in glowing chords from vibraphones. Eventually these call the violin back into action, to play with two xylophones, then take off by itself. When it comes to dip down in tempo and volume level, it hands over to bowed vibraphones for a percussion-only sequence in the middle of the composition. Development of earlier ideas continues: the quick-fire sixteenths when the percussionists turn to unpitched instruments and the violin pizzicatos when that instrument re-enters.

Now that everyone is together again, the swirling dance continues, until the percussionists quietly reprise the work’s opening. The violin has to leave now and does not return until soft sticks trembling on cymbals provide encouragement. There is just time for a little more of the slower music before the percussionists make another soft restart. The violin is back much sooner this time, for a final union of the two instrumental types, of song and dance.

Program essay © Paul Griffiths

Learn More About Tonight’s Program

SCAN HERE



For an interview with composer Vivian Fung discussing her new concerto for violin and percussion, *Goddess/Insect*, which is on tonight’s program and written for violinist Kristin Lee and Sandbox Percussion, scan the QR code or visit ChamberMusicSociety.org/SonicSpectrum4.

About the Artists



Kristin Lee

A recipient of the Avery Fisher Career Grant as well as a top-prize winner of the International Naumburg Violin Competition and the Astral Artists' National Auditions, Kristin Lee is a violinist of remarkable versatility and impeccable technique who enjoys a vibrant career as a soloist, recitalist, and chamber musician. Lee has appeared as soloist with the Philadelphia Orchestra, St. Louis Symphony, Hawai'i Symphony, the Hong Kong Philharmonic, and many others. She is also the co-founder and Artistic Director of Emerald City Music in Seattle. Lee released her critically acclaimed debut solo album, *American Sketches*, on First Hand Records in November 2024. In 2026, she will collaborate with Grammy-nominated ensemble Sandbox Percussion, featuring a new commission by Vivian Fung. Lee's violin was crafted in Naples in 1759 by Gennaro Gagliano and is generously loaned to her by Paul and Linda Gridley. She is an alum of CMS's Bowers Program.



Sandbox Percussion

The “exhilarating” (*New York Times*) 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; in 2024, they recorded percussion for the feature film *The Wild Robot*. 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.

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. 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. A new recording by Sandbox Percussion, Erik Hall, and Metropolis Ensemble is scheduled for release in spring 2026 on the Western Vinyl label.

The group's latest album is *Don't Look Down* (Pentatone, 2025), featuring music by Christopher Cerrone. It won the 2026 Grammy Award for Best Engineered Album, Classical (engineers Mike Tierney and Alan Silverman). Other recent releases include *Bloom*, with music by Michael Torke (Ecstatic Records, 2024); and *Past Life / Lifeline*, with music by Ellis Ludwig-Leone (Better Company Records, 2024). 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.



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About the Composers



TITILANO AVANIGADE

Vivian Fung

JUNO Award-winning composer Vivian Fung has a unique talent for combining idiosyncratic textures and styles into large-scale works, reflecting her multicultural background. NPR calls her “one of today’s most eclectic composers,” and the *Philadelphia Inquirer* praises her “stunningly original compositional voice.” Recent premieres have included a new work for string quartet and poet, as part of Del Sol Quartet’s project *Facing the Moon: Songs of Diaspora*, featuring the poetry of Jenny Lim. A new work for Ensemble for These Times includes homemade percussion for Haruka Fujii. Continued partnerships include Fung’s first opera, *My Family//Cambodia, 1975* with librettist Royce Vavrek; *Girl from the 905*, a new song cycle with Vavrek and soprano Andrea Núñez; and a new work for violin and electronics to be premiered in early 2027 with violinist Nancy Zhou. Born in Edmonton, Canada, Fung began her composition studies with composer Violet Archer and received her doctorate from the Juilliard School.



ERIK PETERSEN

Gabriella Smith

Gabriella Smith is a composer whose work invites listeners to find joy in climate action. Her music comes from a love of play, exploring new instrumental sounds, and creating musical arcs that transport audiences into sonic landscapes inspired by the natural world. Her music “exudes inventiveness with a welcoming personality, rousing energy and torrents of joy” (*New York Times*). *Lost Coast*, a concerto for cello and orchestra, written for her longtime collaborator Gabriel Cabezas, received its world premiere in May 2023 with the Los Angeles Philharmonic conducted by Gustavo Dudamel. Other projects include a large-scale work for Kronos Quartet, commissioned in celebration of their 50th anniversary season, and an album-length work for yMusic featuring underwater field recordings. Smith grew up in the San Francisco Bay Area playing and writing music, hiking, backpacking, and volunteering on a songbird research project.



BERNARD MINDICH

Joan Tower

Joan Tower is widely regarded as one of the most important American composers living today. During a career spanning more than sixty years, she has made lasting contributions to musical life in the United States as composer, performer, conductor, and educator. Her works have been commissioned by major ensembles, soloists, and orchestras, including the Emerson, Tokyo, and Muir quartets; soloists Alisa Weilerstein, Evelyn Glennie, Carol Wincenc, David Shifrin, Paul Neubauer, and John Browning; and the orchestras of Chicago, New York, St. Louis, Pittsburgh, and others. In 2020, *Chamber Music America* honored her with its Richard J. Bogomolny National Service Award, and *Musical America* chose her to be its 2020 Composer of the Year. Tower was co-founder and pianist for the Naumburg Award-winning Da Capo Chamber Players from 1970 to 1985. She is Asher B. Edelman Professor in the Arts at Bard College, where she has taught since 1972.

About the Chamber Music Society

Founded in 1969, the **Chamber Music Society of Lincoln Center (CMS)** brings the transcendent experience of great chamber music to more people than any other organization of its kind worldwide. Under the artistic leadership of cellist David Finckel and pianist Wu Han, the multi-generational and international performing artist roster of 140 of the world's finest chamber musicians enable us to present chamber music of every instrumentation, style, and historical period.

Each season, we reach a global audience with more than 150 performances and education programs in our home at Lincoln Center's Alice Tully Hall and on tour with residencies worldwide.

We offer a wide range of learning formats and experiences to engage and inform listeners of all ages, backgrounds, and levels of musical knowledge through our education and community engagement programs. The Bowers Program, our competitive three-season residency, is dedicated to developing the chamber music leaders of the future and integrates this selection of exceptional early-career musicians into every facet of CMS activities.

Our incomparable digital presence, which regularly enables us to reach millions of viewers and listeners annually, includes our weekly national radio program, heard locally on WQXR 105.9 FM on Saturday and Monday evenings; radio programming in Taiwan and mainland China; and appearances on American Public Media's *Performance Today*, the monthly program *In Concert with CMS* on the PBS ALL ARTS broadcast channel, and SiriusXM's Symphony Hall channel, among others. The PBS documentary film *Chamber Music Society Returns* chronicles CMS's return to live concerts at Lincoln Center's Alice Tully Hall and on a six-city national tour. It is currently available to watch on PBS Passport. Our website also hosts an online archive of more than 1,700 video recordings of performance and education videos free to the public.

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