

## **Application for the Steve Weiss Memorial Grant - Sonolith32**

Dear Selection Committee,

We, Daan Wilms and Maximilian Schwarz, would like to apply for the Steve Weiss Memorial Grant with our new instrument the "Sonolith32", at PASIC 2026.

The Sonolith 32 is a 2.5-octave lithophone (stone marimba). The name combines the words *sonare* (Latin: "to sound") and *lithos* (Ancient Greek: "stone"), along with the number of sounding bars that make up the instrument. As contemporary percussion performance increasingly emphasizes the exploration of new timbral possibilities, we see significant potential in expanding the family of idiophones and keyboard percussion instruments. Participation in PASIC 2026 would provide an unparalleled opportunity to introduce the Sonolith to the international percussion community, demonstrate its unique sound world, and establish valuable connections with performers, educators, and distributors.

Our project originated from a long-standing friendship and musical collaboration. As both freelance musicians and composers, we decided to present our work together and develop new artistic projects jointly. The creation of a shared instrument became the natural culmination of this partnership.

While searching for new sound sources, Daan Wilms discovered the remarkable tonal qualities of stone tiles. Over the course of many months, he developed specialized techniques and concepts for tuning them with precision. When Maximilian Schwarz heard the first sound samples, he immediately recognized the instrument's potential and began designing a suitable resonating body and suspension system. After refining three prototypes, we have since developed our first production model, the "Sonolith32". The dimensions of the bars have been standardized, the final body design has been completed and the suspension system has been optimised in order to maximize resonance and sustain.

Alongside the finalization of the instrument, we have been actively developing a repertoire for it. Daan Wilms has already recorded an entire album of music for lithophone and has arranged works from the early music repertoire—including compositions by Bach, Biber, and others—for the Sonolith. Due to its comparable range, much of the existing marimba, vibraphone, and xylophone repertoire can also be adapted for the instrument. Meanwhile, Maximilian Schwarz is currently composing two works that features the Sonolith both in percussion ensemble setting, as well as a solistic stand-alone instrument.

Our efforts have already generated international interest. Following a single Instagram post showcasing the instrument, we received inquiries from percussionists and institutions in the United States, Germany, Spain and China. This response demonstrates the strong potential of social media and video-based promotion. The Sonolith is not only acoustically distinctive but also highly compelling visually, making it especially well-suited for exhibition environments and digital marketing.

PASIC 2026 represents the ideal platform to present the Sonolith to a global audience. The event attracts leading percussion performers, educators, students, retailers, and manufacturers from around the world. With the support of the Steve Weiss Memorial Grant, we would be able to showcase the instrument firsthand through demonstrations, performances, and direct interaction.

Our primary target audience includes professional percussionists, conservatories, universities, and music schools. In addition, we are developing a smaller pentatonic version, the "Sonolith7", designed specifically for music therapy and educational applications. We believe that both versions have strong commercial and artistic potential, serving distinct yet complementary markets.

The opportunity to exhibit at PASIC would significantly accelerate the growth of our project, allowing us to present an innovative new instrument, gather valuable feedback from industry professionals, and establish relationships that will support future distribution and development.

Thank you for considering our application. We are very excited about the possibility of presenting the Sonolith32 at PASIC 2026!

Sincerely,  
Daan Wilms and Maximilian Schwarz

While our website and social media profiles are currently under construction to prepare the launch of our company later this summer, please find more information about us on the following page as well as in the separate product presentation (PDF). In the online application form, we have listed two different cost estimates, depending on whether both of us or just one person would be invited.

A video of the Sonolith (prototype II) version can be found at this [link](#).  
New video content featuring the actual production model is in the making.  
You can find an entire album by Daan Wilms featuring the Sonolith at this [link](#).

Daan Wilms (\*1994 in Mol, Belgium) is an innovative percussionist and a distinctive voice in contemporary music. After completing his bachelor's degree at the Royal Conservatoire of Antwerp, he pursued master's studies in classical and contemporary percussion at the University of Music and Performing Arts Munich under Prof. Raymond Curfs. In 2023, he became the first student in Germany to graduate from the newly established postgraduate program *Excellence in Performance*.

His artistic work has received numerous awards, including First Prize at the Nuremberg Percussion Competition 2022, the Belfius Music Competition, and the Kulturkreis Competition at Gasteig in 2023. In 2024, his concert engagements took him to renowned festivals such as the Venice Biennale and the Salzburg Festival.

Daan regularly performs with leading orchestras including the Bavarian Radio Symphony Orchestra, the Munich Philharmonic, the Munich Chamber Orchestra, the Bavarian State Opera, and the Munich Radio Orchestra. Close collaborations with distinguished composers such as Steve Reich, Helmut Lachenmann, and Jörg Widmann have also shaped his own projects at the intersection of music, theatre, and visual arts.

[www.wilmsdaan.com](http://www.wilmsdaan.com)

Maximilian Wolfgang Schwarz (\*1997 in Vienna, Austria) is one of the most versatile percussionists of his generation. The multi-award-winning multi-percussionist and drummer has been performing on major international stages for many years, either as a soloist or as a guest with renowned ensembles such as Elbtoneal Percussion (as a fix member since 2026) or the CBPercussion Group at spectacular festivals and projects. In addition to selected works of contemporary classical music, his constantly growing solo repertoire primarily includes his own compositions. Max Schwarz cultivates a hybrid compositional style consisting of classical compositional approaches from different eras and cultures, his own serial concepts and electronic production. His avant-garde pieces are published by Edition Svitzer (Copenhagen); he also regularly produces for television, film and theatre.

As a drummer, he fuses driving grooves, elements from world music and complex polyrhythms with live electronics. With this characteristic style, he is part of the world music/electronica trio maTrigal. After completing two bachelor's degrees in pop/world music (drums) and classical music (percussion) at the Hochschule für Musik und Theater Rostock, he went on to complete a master's degree in classical music at the Hochschule für Musik und Theater München. Max Schwarz is currently continuing his studies in the postgraduate programme "Excellence in Performance" with Prof. Alexej Gerassimez. Since 2025, he has also been teaching himself, giving a rhythm workshop at the Seefeld Music Festival Summer Academy and a master class at the Central Conservatory of Music in Beijing, where he worked with local students on his own compositions and presented them in a joint final concert. In recent years, he has toured Germany, Austria, Italy, France, Spain, and China.

[www.maxschwarz.eu](http://www.maxschwarz.eu)