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Tap dancer and choreographer Leonardo Sandoval receives \$50,000 Vilcek Prize for Creative Promise

The Vilcek Foundation Prizes recognize and celebrate immigrants' contributions to culture and society

NEW YORK, March 15, 2022—[Leonardo Sandoval](#), a core dancer with Dorrance Dance and the founder of Music from the Sole, receives a [2022 Vilcek Prize for Creative Promise in Dance](#). A tap dancer and percussive dancer, Sandoval receives the prize for his dynamic choreography that expands the boundaries of tap as a genre.

The Vilcek Foundation Prizes are awarded annually in recognition and celebration of the contributions of immigrants in the arts and humanities and in biomedical science in the United States. The prizes serve the Vilcek Foundation's mission to acknowledge and honor the positive impact of immigration on arts, culture, and society. Recipients of the Vilcek Prizes for Creative Promise each receive a commemorative trophy and an unrestricted cash award of \$50,000.

Leonardo Sandoval was born in Piracicaba, São Paulo, Brazil. At the age of 6, Sandoval's parents enrolled him in ballet classes. His ballet teacher recognized Sandoval's natural affinity for rhythm and encouraged his parents to enroll him in a tap dance class. Through tap, Sandoval was able to connect his passion for rhythm and movement, using his body as an instrument to create his own music. Sandoval continued practicing tap, traveling to cities in Brazil to study with teachers from around the globe.

With just \$500 he had saved from busking in Rio de Janeiro, Sandoval immigrated to the United States in 2013, choosing New York as his new home for its history as the birthplace of tap dance. Soon after arriving in New York, Sandoval connected with Michelle Dorrance, with whom he had worked previously. Dorrance invited Sandoval to join her newly formed company, Dorrance Dance. As an early core member, Sandoval has helped to grow Dorrance Dance into one of the country's leading tap dance companies.

"Sandoval's work is powerfully grounded in experience and identity; he brings a consciousness of racism in his country of origin, Brazil, and in the United States to his artistic direction and performances," says Vilcek Foundation President [Rick Kinsel](#). "The perspective that Sandoval brings as an Afro Brazilian artist honors the history of vernacular dance in the Black diaspora. Through his work with Music from the Sole, Sandoval continues to build and develop the genre for future generations."

In 2015, Sandoval founded Music from the Sole, a tap dance and live music company that celebrates tap's roots in the African diaspora. With Music from the Sole, Sandoval seeks to open doors for artists whose voices are underrepresented in the dance community.

“Challenging long-standing power structures that affect the way dance is funded, created, [and] presented... helps me contribute to reclaiming the narrative surrounding tap dance's history and cultural significance.”

Read more about Sandoval at the Vilcek Foundation: [Leonardo Sandoval: Finding rhythm in the city's soundscape](#)

The Vilcek Foundation

[The Vilcek Foundation](#) raises awareness of immigrant contributions in the United States and fosters appreciation of the arts and sciences. The foundation was established in 2000 by Jan and Marica Vilcek, immigrants from the former Czechoslovakia. The mission of the foundation—to honor immigrant contributions to the United States, and to foster appreciation of the arts and sciences—was inspired by the couple's respective careers in biomedical science and art history. Since 2000, the foundation has awarded over \$6.4 million in prizes to foreign-born individuals and supported organizations with over \$5.6 million in grants.

The Vilcek Foundation is a private operating foundation, a federally tax-exempt nonprofit organization under IRS Section 501(c)(3).