

# TOY PIANO



# COMPOSERS

1. **FISHER PRICE LAUGH & LEARN FUN WITH FRIENDS MUSICAL TABLE** (2014) - Elisha Denburg (4:46)
2. **clangor** (2013) - Monica Pearce (5:25)
3. **Walking** (2013) - Chris Thornborrow (7:41)
4. **Hermes' Lure** (2014) - Ruth Guechtal (4:21)
5. **Modus Operandi** (2010) - Nancy Tam (5:51)
6. **Sonata for Satan** (2012) - Daniel Brophy (10:17)
7. **Strange Gazes and Birdsong** (2013) - Fiona Ryan (5:17)

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## TOY PIANO COMPOSERS

Monica Pearce  
Chris Thornborrow  
Elisha Denburg  
Fiona Ryan  
Daniel Brophy  
Nancy Tam  
Ruth Guechtal  
Bekah Simms  
August Murphy-King

## ADMINISTRATION

Monica Pearce - *Founder, Artistic Director*  
Chris Thornborrow - *Co-Founder, Artistic Director*  
Elisha Denburg - *Co-Artistic Director*  
Tim Crouch - *Director of Marketing & Development*

[toypianocomposers.com](http://toypianocomposers.com)



## WELCOME!

**Toy Piano Composers (TPC)** is a Toronto-based collective of composers, founded by Monica Pearce and Chris Thornborrow, that presents imaginative new music to curious audiences in a playful concert environment. Since 2008, TPC has produced twenty-six concerts, and premiered over 120 new works of opera, chamber music, and orchestral music. This debut album highlights some of the most memorable chamber music that TPC has presented over the years, showcasing a generation of young composers from across Canada who are creating music over a vast range of styles. These seven pieces provide a musical snapshot of a vibrant community of composers and musicians that has grown out of Toronto in the last decade.



## FISHER PRICE LAUGH & LEARN FUN WITH FRIENDS MUSICAL TABLE - Elisha Denburg

*"FISHER PRICE LAUGH & LEARN FUN WITH FRIENDS MUSICAL TABLE* is the full name of the electronic children's toy featured in this piece. I stole it from my toddler and he doesn't seem to miss it at all."

- Elisha Denburg

## clangor - Monica Pearce

"The toy piano has been intertwined in many of my creative projects for the past several years, as I am continually inspired by its bright, percussive tone, its slightly fringe tuning, and its playful connotations as a concert instrument. For this project, I paired the toy piano with three pitched bicycle bells. What attracted me to the bicycle bells, in addition to the vibrant timbral possibilities, was the 'everyday' aspect: for many people, including myself as a biker, the sound of bicycle bells is part of their everyday sound world. The main motivator of the piece is the spinning-out of ornate, unpredictable lines, interpolated with tremolo bicycle bells. The piece hides up in the high frequency rafters, touching down briefly here and there to relieve some of the suspension. *clangor* was written for and dedicated to Margaret Leng Tan for the 2013 UnCaged Toy Piano Festival."

- Monica Pearce

## Walking - Chris Thornborrow

*"Walking* is inspired by the animated short of the same name by Ryan Larkin. He was a Canadian artist and animator who rose to fame when *Walking* (1968) was nominated for an Academy Award. He only created one other short film called *Street Music* (1972), before his career began to spin out of control. He spent the next four decades homeless, struggling with addiction.

The film *Walking* is a playful study of people in motion. In the short, we only get a quick glimpse of Larkin's characters as they shuffle, saunter, and dance across the screen. These brief encounters foreshadow Larkin's relationships and experiences with people as a homeless man. He would say years later in an interview for the film *Alter Egos*, 'I decided it was more interesting to live on the street. At least I get to meet a hundred people a day... it's kind of interesting...meeting all these people for just two seconds.'"

- Chris Thornborrow



## Hermes' Lure - Ruth Guechtal

"In *Hermes' Lure*, the harp acts as a 'doorway' between melodic- and noise-based material. All the material for this work can be found in the harp part, and the harp and other instruments trade between playing either type of material (melodic- or noise-based). Each section of the melody was assigned an extended technique where each technique can be played by one or more instruments; the result is an interesting game of timbres. Hermes, in Greek mythology, used various instruments including a seven-string lyre, the sounds of which were so beautiful they enraptured their audiences. In *Hermes' Lure* I have used the harp in an attempt to find an interesting combination between melody and noise, as well as 'luring' the listener in enjoying the noise-based material as much as the melodic content."

- Ruth Guechtal

## Modus Operandi - Nancy Tam

"*Modus Operandi* was created as a film score without pictures. In my mind, this piece is a murder mystery. It is Film Noir. The opening credits appear one page at a time in white letters on black background. Slowly the background crossfades from black to the opening looks of the first scene, while the credits continue to overlay on top. The camera pans slowly from right to left in a ransacked apartment, and the opening credits end. Lamps have fallen over, books strewn on the floor, drinks spilt. The camera leads us toward the broken window where the sheer curtains now waver carelessly in the wind. We are on the second floor in a library of an affluent estate. Standing by the window, we see a lone dog walking from left to right on the lawn outside. The camera leads us forward, then turns around. We see a tall raven-haired woman wearing a large dark pant suit. She tilts her head up, revealing her eyes for a moment before the smoke from her cigarette veils her face again. The camera follows the smoke upward into a transition to the next scene."

- Nancy Tam



## Sonata for Satan - Daniel Brophy

"I find the human search for purity in all of its forms interesting for several reasons: its unattainability, its use as a unit of measure, and its oppressiveness through expectation. The expectation is of homogeneity which then becomes the catalyst for complex violence, permeating everything with change.

Evil, and all of its reincarnations, is a symbol of change through death. Through the left hand path we explore the forbidden and reinterpret our perspective on purity, and the many wonderful ways to destroy it.

*Sonata for Satan* is based on similar principles, where a pure object is systematically degraded until its original form is no longer visible. The process is linear and degrading, driving further away from its original form as it moves along its trajectory. The initial section featuring the piano and homemade electronics serves as the original source of purity, which was recorded, fed through a spectrographic program and notated. Multiple compositional tools stemming from indeterminacy are applied to the resultant notation alongside intuitive motivic variation techniques to realize a degrading structure."

- Daniel Brophy

## Strange Gazes and Birdsong - Fiona Ryan

"*Strange Gazes and Birdsong* is inspired by a painting called "The Hideout" by artist Kate Domina. It was composed for the Toy Piano Composers concert *Artistic Differences*: a concert of music inspired by visual art. I wanted to musically recreate the dream-like atmosphere in the painting, which features a girl and a bird amid green leaves. The painting reminds me of times from my own childhood spent exploring the outdoors, and of trying to draw the plants and animals I saw and imitate the sounds I heard. *Strange Gazes and Birdsong* features toys, and unconventional instruments in addition to standard instruments, and is deliberately all set in a higher register. I chose this instrumentation to evoke something as playful, delicate, and ephemeral as a memory of a day of summer vacation from my childhood."

- Fiona Ryan

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