

# Program

**JOHN LENNON (1940-1980) & PAUL MCCARTNEY (b. 1942)** -  
arr. for toy piano by Toby Twining  
*Eleanor Rigby* (1966)

**PHYLLIS CHEN (b. 1978)** - video by Rob Dietz  
*Carousel* (2010)  
*Cobwebbed Carousel\** (2010)  
toy piano/music box

**JAMES JOSLIN (b. 1987)**  
*Für Enola* (2011)  
toy piano/jack-in-the-box/spinning top

**ERIK GRISWOLD (b. 1969)** - image of chickens with toy piano mountain  
by Phyllis Chen  
*Old MacDonald's Yellow Submarine\** (2004)  
IV Chooks!  
V Bicycle Lee Hooker  
toy piano/woodblocks/bicycle bell/bicycle horn/train whistle

**RAPHAEL MOSTEL (b. 1948)**  
*Star-Spangled Etude No.3, 'Furling Banner'* (1996) - Australian premiere  
toy piano/toy siren/police whistle/toy gun

**PHILIP GLASS (b. 1937)**  
*How Now* (c.1968) - Australian premiere  
piano

**INTERVAL** - 20-minutes

**JED DISTLER (b. 1956)**  
*Minute Ring* (2006) (with apologies to R. Wagner)  
toy piano

**ERIK SATIE (1866-1925)**  
*Gymnopédie No.3* (1888)  
piano

**TOBY TWINING (b. 1958)**  
*An American in Buenos Aires\** (A blues tango) (2001) - Australian premiere  
toy piano/piano

**HENRY COWELL (1897-1965)**  
*Tides of Manaunaun* (1917)  
*Advertisement* (1914/1959)  
piano

**SOMEI SATOH (b. 1947)**  
*Cosmic Womb* (1975)  
piano/pre-recorded piano

\*written for Margaret Leng Tan

Ms. Tan plays the Steinway piano and the Schoenhut toy piano

*Melbourne Recital Centre proudly stands on the  
land of the Kulin Nation and we pay our respects  
to Melbourne's First People, to their Elders past  
and present, and to our shared future.*



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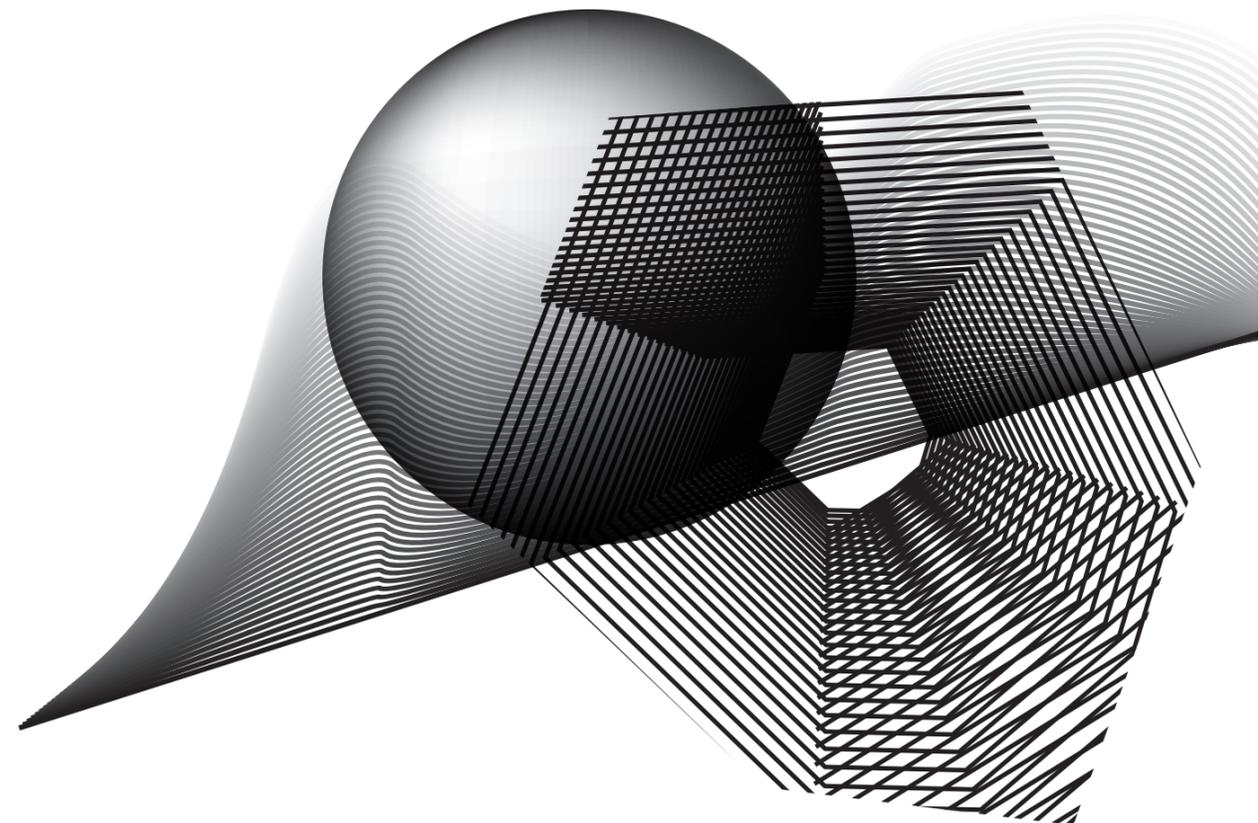
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Presents

# MINIATURE meets MONUMENTAL

Friday 23 August 2019, 7.30pm

Elisabeth Murdoch Hall, Melbourne Recital Centre



**Margaret Leng Tan**

piano/toy piano/toys/sound objects

## About the Music

*MINIATURE meets MONUMENTAL* is an exercise in maximal contrasts: tiny vs. gargantuan, fun vs. serious, vernacular vs. ivory tower. Yet, through it all, the toy piano manages to hold its own against its behemoth counterpart. And on occasion, miniature can even be monumental!

Toby Twining created his toy version of *Eleanor Rigby* for my 1997 *Art of the Toy Piano* album because I thought this popular Beatles song would be a potent evocation of '60s nostalgia when heard emanating from a toy piano.

Phyllis Chen is a pianist, toy pianist and composer who created the annual UnCaged Toy Piano Competition in 2007 and since 2011 has hosted the bi-annual UnCaged Toy Piano Festival in New York. Rob Dietz, a video and sound artist, collaborates frequently with Phyllis Chen.

Phyllis Chen writes: 'Both *Carousel* and *Cobwebbed Carousel* are composed on the same punch tape strip but for *Cobwebbed Carousel*, the reverse surface of the punch tape passes through the music box mechanism. In this 'counter-piece', Margaret suggested that I attempt to capture the mysterious, darker aspect of childhood. *Cobwebbed Carousel* is dedicated to and written for Margaret Leng Tan with great admiration.'

[phyllischen.net](http://phyllischen.net) | [cerumenspoon.com](http://cerumenspoon.com)

James Joslin is an English composer whose oeuvre includes toy piano pieces, instrumental works with electronics and sound installations. His *Für Enola* (for toy piano and jack-in-the-box), won the 2011 UnCaged Toy Piano Competition's 'Most Ingenious Combo' award.

He writes: '*Für Enola* attempts to bridge the gap between the inherent childlike nature of the toy piano and its more recent status as a 'serious' instrument. Chance operations were used to construct the piece in a manner mimicking that of a child playing the toy piano - seemingly random strikes just happening spontaneously. *Für Enola* is also visual theatre, intended as a nod to the man who first saw the potential of the toy piano as a concert instrument: John Cage.'

[jamesjoslin.weebly.com](http://jamesjoslin.weebly.com)

'*Chooks*' is a sonic depiction of chickens. '*Bicycle Lee Hooker*' is a mini-tribute to the great blues musician, John Lee Hooker.

Erik Griswold explains: 'Knowing the skill and dedication of Margaret Leng Tan, I pushed the limits of toy instrument virtuosity by asking her to coordinate bicycle bells, train whistles and toy piano in '*Bicycle Lee Hooker*', a right brain/left brain extravaganza.'

'*Chooks!*' and '*Bicycle Lee Hooker*' are part of *Old MacDonald's Yellow Submarine* created with funding from the Australia Council for the Arts. *Old Mac* was the ABC's official entry at the 2010 International Rostrum of Composers.

Composer-pianist, Erik Griswold performs in Clocked Out Duo with percussionist Vanessa Tomlinson. He is the composer for Margaret Leng Tan's portrait-piece, *Dragon Ladies Don't Weep*.

[erikgriswold.org](http://erikgriswold.org)

Raphael Mostel is renowned for his Tibetan Singing Bowl Ensemble and his chamber narrative, *The Travels of Babar*.

The toy piano inspired Raphael Mostel's flag-waver of a piece, *Star Spangled Etude #3 (Furling Banner)*. The work celebrates the great American tradition of freedom, a freedom that has become increasingly under threat since the ascent of the Trump presidency.

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

*How Now* bears all the hallmarks of the early classic Minimalist period in Philip Glass's career. Philip re-discovered *How Now* in a drawer almost a quarter century after it was written and gave it to me to perform in the early nineties.

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

Jed Distler is the Artistic Director of Composers Collaborative. On 21 June, 2013, his *Broken Record*, for 175 battery-powered keyboards and grand piano, set a new Guinness Book record for the world's largest keyboard ensemble.

I have chosen Jed Distler's monumental miniature *Minute Ring* because it fits nicely with my sit-down comic aspirations. I dedicate my performance to Anna Russell (1911-2006), the singer and comedienne famous for her Wagnerian opera parodies.

[composerscollab.org](http://composerscollab.org)

Erik Satie's *Gymnopédies* have been transcribed for every conceivable instrumental combination beginning with Debussy's orchestration of the first and third *Gymnopédie*. I have added my version of *Gymnopédie No.3* for toy piano and piano to the mix.

Toby Twining has expanded the musical palette with a new choral sound, micro-consonant harmony, and innovative instrumental techniques. Twining was awarded a Guggenheim Fellowship in 2011.

Toby Twining's *An American in Buenos Aires* manages to weave seamlessly together three diverse genres - tango, blues and the symphony. In 1995 Twining wrote *Satie Blues and Nightmare Rag* for me. These were the first compositions to tap the potential of the toy piano and piano played together. This blues tango continues to explore the novel combination. The resplendent 'symphonic finale' elicits echoes of *Gershwin's Rhapsody in Blue*.

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

Henry Cowell, like John Cage, was the quintessential American original. He caused an international furor with his remarkable string piano and tone cluster techniques. Among his many students were George Gershwin and Lou Harrison, who described Cowell as 'the mentor of mentors.'

*The Tides of Manaunaun* and *Advertisement* by Henry Cowell are now historic avant-garde. Cowell was the first composer to explore the expanded possibilities of the piano whether through an unconventional approach to the keyboard as in the arm and palm tone clusters of *The Tides of Manaunaun*, or through direct contact with the strings themselves as in his *Aeolian Harp* and *The Banshee*. The brash and witty *Advertisement* is a virtuoso study in clusters for fingers, fists and palms inspired by the equally virtuosic neon lights of New York's Times Square.

[henrycowell.org](http://henrycowell.org)

One of Japan's most distinctive composers, Somei Satoh's minimal and mystical musical style has prompted critics to hail him as Japan's Arvo Pärt.

*Cosmic Womb* belongs to a 1970s series of Satoh piano compositions exploring the instrument's reverberative potential through tremolo technique. The voluminous massed sonorities of *Cosmic Womb* support a kaleidoscope of moods: the brooding mystical opening, the luminous radiance of the climax into the suspended iridescence of the coda.

Margaret Leng Tan © 2019

## About the Artist

Singaporean pianist *Margaret Leng Tan* is one of the most highly regarded performers in American experimental music. Tan, whose work embraces theatre, choreography and performance, has been hailed as the 'diva of avant-garde pianism' by *The New Yorker*. She is renowned as a pre-eminent John Cage interpreter (her mentor of 11 years) and for her performances of American and Asian music that transcend the piano's conventional boundaries. She is also one of George Crumb's favorite performers for whom he composed *Metamorphoses (Book I)*, a major piano cycle which Ms. Tan has performed to critical acclaim throughout Europe and the U.S.A. since 2017. It will receive its Australian premiere at the Extended Play Festival presented by Sydney's City Recital Hall on 31 August.

The first woman to earn a doctorate from Juilliard, Margaret Leng Tan is recognised as the world's first toy piano virtuoso. Her groundbreaking 1997 recording, *The Art of the Toy Piano* (Point/Universal), transformed a humble toy into a real instrument. She has been called 'the queen of the toy piano' (*The New York Times*) and 'the toy piano's Rubenstein' (*The Independent*, U.K.). The BBC, CNN and National Public Radio (U.S.A.) have all profiled her career as a concert toy pianist. Her curiosity has extended to other toy instruments as well, substantiating her credo: 'Poor tools require better skills' (Marcel Duchamp).

In 2015 Ms. Tan was awarded the Cultural Medallion, Singapore's highest artistic accolade. Recent major works written for her include *Curios* by Phyllis Chen, a solo music-theatre piece for toy instruments. *Dragon Ladies Don't Weep*, a theatrical sonic portrait of Margaret Leng Tan, is currently in development with the Australian music theatre company, Chamber Made. *Dragon Ladies* will premiere in February 2020 at AsiaTOPA in Melbourne.

