

Sticks Notes 1

Paddle to the Sea—Niagara

The four members of Third Coast Percussion all compose their own music, and in recent years, have worked on projects that involve composing music together as a team. As part of a multi-media performance project, the quartet composed music to perform live with the 1966 film *Paddle to the Sea*, based on a children's book of the same name written in 1941. The film tells the story of a small wooden figure in a canoe, lovingly carved by a Native Canadian boy and set on a long journey through the Great Lakes and St. Lawrence Seaway, out to the Atlantic Ocean and beyond. The people who find "Paddle" along the way must choose, rather than keeping him for themselves, to send him further along the waterways, perhaps with a fresh coat of paint or a new rudder. Paddle also encounters danger in his journey, as in this passage, when he goes over Niagara Falls.

Third Coast Percussion's album *Paddle to the Sea*, featuring this music, as well as water-themed works that inspired this composition, was released on Cedille Records in February 2018.

Paddle to the Sea was commissioned with lead support from the Maxine and Stuart Frankel Foundation. The work was co-commissioned by the Cleveland Museum of Art, the Meany Center for the Performing Arts at University of Washington, ArtsLIVE at University of Dayton, and the University of Notre Dame's DeBartolo Performing Arts Center.

(<https://shop.thirdcoastpercussion.com/product/niagara-from-paddle-to-the-sea-score-and-parts>)

Comedian's Galop

Dmitri Kabalevsky (1904-1987) was a Russian composer who managed a successful artistic career during Soviet times. His music won many awards in his homeland during his lifetime. He was also a force in music education: he set up a music education curriculum in 25 schools and even briefly taught a class of 7-year-olds. He wrote "Comedians' Galop" in 1938 as part of a broader suite of pieces, *The Comedians*, op. 26. Originally conceived as incidental music for a play, he later chose 10 numbers for the suite, which became his most famous work. (<http://windliterature.org/2012/03/18/comedians-galop-by-dmitri-kabalevsky/>)

SEESAW

SEESAW (2020) is scored for two percussionists who perform on one shared acoustic guitar. The piece was commissioned by the New Works Project, which organized a consortium of 31 musicians from around the globe to support the creation of this work.

The idea of multi-instrumentalism is often a foreign concept in the world of academic music. Classical musicians are often trained via a hyper-focused path on one singular instrument. Meanwhile in other genres, hopping from one instrument to the next is often a normal part of being a musician. Prince, Dave Grohl, and others have recorded entire albums on their own, playing every single instrument and singing every lyric and vocal line. I love this.

Having grown up a self-taught guitar player and sort of hiding that from my classical self, I decided to embrace it with *SEESAW*. I've taken what I know about guitar playing and percussion and have written something where both instruments meet. There are moments when the guitar is used as a percussion instrument, with the players striking the instrument in various areas with sticks to produce different sounds and colors. There are also moments that feature guitar techniques like harmonics, hammer-ons

Sticks Notes 2

and pull-offs. The piece is notated in tablature, which facilitates a non-traditional string tuning and is how I first learned to read guitar music. While the piece was written for percussionists to perform, I can also imagine guitar players performing it by exploring and learning about the various percussion techniques involved. (<https://ivandrums.com/duos/seesaw-duo-for-percussionists-played-on-guitar/>)

Ni Wa Seb

Ni Wa Seb is a traditional harvest song from the Dagara Culture of Northern Ghana, West Africa. This arrangement, by Bernard Woma was created as an introduction to the gyil (African xylophone). The piece is organized with a basic form for harmonic movement and presents a few basic rhythmic patterns and variations. (Notes by Neil Dunn)