

The “Sea Series” Solos

♪ for Voice & Wind/Percussion Instruments ♪

A performance of the entire “Sea Series” of instrumental or vocal solos with piano accompaniment is a story through sounds which may include narration of the story outline below.

The story begins when sailing ships ruled the high seas. After a day’s work in the harbour, John Ferguson, Robert Moore, and John Hawkins who live and work in Bristol are raising a pint of ale, laughing and singing loudly with their friends at *“Rudd’s Tavern By The Wharf”*.

When the tavern closes, Hawkins, Ferguson and Moore bid each other a good night and head homeward. Late the next afternoon, Ferguson senses something amiss. Still dark, everything’s moving from one side to the other. Oh, how his head hurts! Moore complains loudly. Suddenly a wooden door is pulled open and blinding light outlines the silhouette of a man. *“Arghh! What have we here? Crewman, get the captain! Looks t’me as if we’ve found us some stowaways!”*

Hawkins also wakes from the commotion complaining of a heavy head. The three men stare at each other. How did they land on a sailing ship? The last thing they remember is walking homeward and hearing something close behind them in the dark alley...

The friends are shocked to learn they are victims of a “press gang” instructed by Captain Hyde to round up more men from Rudd’s Tavern, the favourite haunt of most sailors and labourers. Captain Hyde demands to know how they got on board the ship. There is no reply. They are invited to return to the mainland, if they feel capable of swimming 14 nautical miles, or to spend the entire voyage in the darkness of the brig. *“There is... another option,”* replies the captain. *“Of course, you might consider signing on as members of the crew. You’ll be trained, paid a wage and fed for the duration of our journey.”* Hawkins asks how long. *“Twelve to sixteen months - p’rhaps more,”* replies Captain Hyde. Back home in Bristol no one knows where Ferguson, Moore and Hawkins are, whether they’re alive or dead. Reality sets in. Fate has determined their course. With no other options, three new crew members follow others to the galley for supper. Then, stomachs somewhat satisfied but heads still hurting, the men test their sea legs for the first time, moving to the aft. Will they ever return? From the stern of the ship they can barely see a faint outline of the mainland. They are now *“Out To Sea, Far, Far From Home”*.

By the end of the first month, for 16 hours a day, Ferguson, Moore and Hawkins try to make the best of their situation. On some days they actually enjoy this new experience on the sea, blessed with good weather, fair winds and reasonable treatment from the upper command. Presently, the ship’s course points toward the Sargasso Sea where the air is often still and exceedingly hot for weeks. Even with a fairly strong breeze, a ship moves very slowly through a dense expanse of seaweed known as ‘sargasso’ — breeding ground of the American eel. Fresh water, food supplies and general health of the crew decline rapidly. Faces, lips, exposed skin dries and cracks, stings and festers. The ship’s crew is about to endure *“Six Weeks of Sargasso”*.

Both men and sails rejoice the return of a welcome breeze. Day 43 in Sargasso... a promising breeze brings instant response. Men and sails rejoice, come to life once again. The wind strengthens and fills the sails already hoisted to the full. Sailor’s delight! Determined to escape the Sargasso Captain Hyde shouts, *“Westward!”*. With renewed eagerness we begin to move *“With Wind In Our Sails!”*

A month passes. With favourable winds and reasonable temperatures, good health has returned to most who survived the Sargasso and none too soon, for great strength and determination will be vital as suddenly, every able-bodied crew member desperately struggles for life against a *“Sudden Squall at Sea”*.

Ferguson, Moore and Hawkins have stories to tell should they ever return to Bristol. One fine day, just above the horizon, a Spanish galleon is sighted, heading in the opposite direction. Sailors imagine ladies of Spain dancing to an energetic incessant tune called *“Perpetuo Espagnol”*.

Encompassed by salt water, fair winds and good weather, vast blue skies filled with large billowing clouds, two more months pass by. There are enduring days of hard work and misery. Each day is like the last. Incredible sunsets become commonplace and sink below the horizon unnoticed. Spirits have fallen to the lowest... when suddenly, an excited lookout shouts with astounding enthusiasm, *“Land to Starboard!”*

Fresh water, fruit, berries, strange, new but delicious vegetables! A magnificent waterfall with a pool for bathing! Sailors discover a new tree that grows straight and seems stronger than the wood presently used for masts. Morale improves. Spirits are rising! It’s time to celebrate this good fortune ...on the beach... with food, drink, merriment ... and a joyful *“Sailor’s Dance”*.

Having accomplished the purpose of the voyage, Captain Hyde announces it’s time to sail homeward. This announcement is exciting to all! With new provisions aboard and three long trunks of the new tree fastened to the deck for inspection in Bristol, thoughts of home encourage the crew to work hard to complete the better half of the journey. Ferguson, Hawkins, and Moore long to see their loved ones and the mainland once more. Eager to plant their feet on English soil, they’ll soon embark on *“The Homeward Voyage”*.