

The “Sea Series” Solos

♪ for Wind and Percussion Instruments ♪

A performance of the entire “Sea Series” of instrumental or vocal solos with piano accompaniment is a story through sounds that may involve/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, all residents of Bristol, are raising a pint of ale, laughing and singing out loud 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! He hears Moore moan in agony. Suddenly, a wooden door is pulled open and blinding light outlines the silhouette of a rather portly man. **“Arghh! What have we here? Crewman, get the captain! Looks t’me ‘s’if we’ve some stowaways!”**

Hawkins also wakes from the commotion, complaining of a heavy head. The three men stare at each other. How have they come to be on this sailing ship? The last recollection is sensing sudden movement and hearing quick footsteps close behind them in the dark alley just beyond Rudd’s Tavern...

The friends are shocked to learn they’re victims of a “press gang” instructed by Captain Hyde to round up more men from the vicinity of Rudd’s, the favourite haunt of sailors and dock workers alike. Captain Hyde demands to know how they have managed to board the ship unbeknownst to anyone. There is no reply. The three stowaways are taunted to swim the 5 nautical miles to the mainland, or to spend the entire voyage in the damp, musty darkness of the brig. **“There is, of course, another option,”** proposes the captain. **“I might consider the possibility of signing you on as crew if you wish. You’ll be paid a meager wage and fed in exchange for hard work for the duration of our journey.”** Hawkins asks how long. **“Twelve to sixteen months - p’r’aps more,”** replies Captain Hyde. Reality sets in. Fate has determined their course. No one knows the fate of Ferguson, Moore and Hawkins back in Bristol. With no desirable options, they follow others to the galley yearning for supper. Later, stomachs satisfied but heads still aching, the friends test their sea legs on the main deck. Will they ever return home? From the stern of the ship they can barely see a faint outline of the mainland. It is absolutely certain they are now **“Out To Sea, Far, Far From Home”**.

Working 16-hour days, by first month’s end Ferguson, Moore and Hawkins make the best of their situation. Occasionally, they actually enjoy this new experience on the sea while blessed with good weather, fair winds and reasonable treatment from upper command. Presently, the ship’s course is toward the Sargasso Sea where the air is often still and exceedingly hot for weeks on end. 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 encounter **“Six Weeks of Sargasso”**.

Day 41 in Sargasso... a sudden light movement of air brings instant response. Both men and sails come to life, quickly reacting to this promising breeze. The wind strengthens, fills the sails already hoisted to the full. Sailor’s delight! Determined to escape the Sargasso Captain Hyde shouts, **“Westward, mates!”** With renewed eagerness, the crew responds to the improved weather, and the ship once again heads westward, **“With Wind In Our Sails!”**

Two months pass. With favourable winds and reasonable temperatures, good health has returned to most of the crew and none too soon, for great strength and determination will be vital now, as suddenly, without warning, all hands desperately struggle for their lives against a **“Sudden Squall at Sea”**.

Ferguson, Moore and Hawkins have many stories to tell upon returning to Bristol. One fine day, just above the horizon, a Spanish galleon is sighted, headed southeast. Sailors begin to imagine beautiful Spanish ladies dancing to a quick energetic tune, **“Perpetuo Espagnol”**.

Encompassed by salt water, fair winds and good weather, vast blue skies filled with large billowing clouds, three more months pass. There are enduring days of hard work and misery. Each day becomes much like the monotonous previous one. Incredible sunsets become commonplace and sink below the horizon unnoticed. Spirits have fallen to the lowest... when suddenly, from up high, an excited lookout enthusiastically shouts, **“Land to Starboard!”**

Fresh water, fruit, berries, strange but delicious vegetables! A pool at the base of a magnificent waterfall for bathing! The men discover a new species of tree that grows remarkably straight and proves stronger than present wood 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 **“Sailors’ Dance”**.

Having accomplished the purpose of this voyage, Captain Hyde announces time to sail homeward, words exciting to all! With new provisions aboard, two long trunks of the new tree fastened to the deck for examination in Bristol, thoughts of home encourage the crew to work in earnest to complete the latter half of this journey. Ferguson, Hawkins, and Moore long to see their loved ones and the mainland soon. Eager to plant their feet on English soil, they begin the **“Homeward Voyage”**.