

Little Red Boat

By

Mary Lydia Ryan

Written by

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I had been desperate of some much needed ambience this morning, the world and its news is a turbulent place these days, so a sanctuary in music was the ideal plan to make happen. I found that doorway to solitude and calm through the refrains of one of the most beautiful solo piano albums I have heard for some time, namely **Little Red Boat** by **Mary Lydia Ryan**.

From the moment we pushed away from the dock I found a most charming narrative indeed, the title track **Little Red Boat** manifested such a smooth and peaceful refrain it soothed my soul, the musical story told here is so very redolent of being on an actual boat, and one that has such a sweet melody to accompany you too.

As we drift slowly down the stream of this musical voyage we come across a delightful opus called **Woman In The Moon**. I have heard many charming piano based pieces in my time, but this now must be added to that "A" list, here we have a glistening track that has such a fluent performance within, the tones paint a picture of night, gazing up at a full moon and watching images change, perhaps even the face of a woman in the moon appears!

I have spent many an hour on boats on one description or another, and it must be said that I absolutely adore albums on the subject, here on **Floating On A Gentle Breeze** we have just that, the artist has such a wonderful way of painting with music, that it draws us into the narrative with ease and here we are, listening to **Mary Lydia Ryan** as we float gently upon that warming summer breeze, idyllic and perfect in every way.

The tempo picks up on this next piece called **The Joy of Ten Knots**. I used to live in an old English fishing village, and each Sunday the visitors during the summer would come down to the coast to sail their boats, I would watch them navigate the sand banks and drag themselves into the flow of a helpful breeze, this composition is a perfect soundtrack for that. It is rare to hear a pianist with such an excellent standard of musical description, but in **Mary Lydia Ryan** we have just that.

There was something truly to admire about this next offering entitled **In Wonder**. It had a timeless feel to its construction, one could truly imagine floating down a small river on our journey and coming across some of the most marvellous countryside ever and we would drift simply in wonder.

As we glide towards the half way marker of the album we come across a little cove, here we can hear the artist perform an almost cinematic offering called **Sailing This Sea Alone**. The sense of sailing on the ocean is incredibly peaceful and brings one back to the true realities of life, here the musician paints a graphic picture of a vista so blue, but also so vast, a slight ethic of wonder can be found here, and the feeling of a deep sense of solitude as well, a superb performance indeed.

How Did I End Up Here is a composition that is perhaps an open ended question. The journey could have taken us to a place we never expected to reach, or life's journey may have taken us on a path that we had not realised would happen. Regardless of which story you turn the page on, the artist really creates a colourful description that allows us the listener to make up our minds through both the major and minor refrains of this most clever composition.

There is nothing like a little **Gentle Sunshine**, we have that right now outside our studio window and we're grateful as it is deep midwinter, this melody and arrangement is a real light hearted moment of happiness and one that fits my mood perfectly as well.

Now it's time for a dedication, as this next piece is entitled **Waltz Under The Sun (Kevin's Song)**. This for me, has the energy of a celebration, one could feel a reality of pleasure and cheer within the construction of this offering; after all there is nothing quite like a good waltz is there?

Now here in Cyprus it is always exciting to watch the turtles swimming in the lapis seas, it's a real sign of high summer, so on **A Song About Sea Turtles** we have the description of that moment in music to a tee. Through Mary's performance and fluency we can actually watch their huge bodies rise and fall back into the depths of the ocean, in this most picturesque of offerings.

In the distance we can see our docking bay, but before we reach that point we have a gift from the artist, one more track, the penultimate one and called **Sparkle Of My Soul**. I found this easily the most uplifting piece on the release, this composition was brimming with enthusiasm and hope, and her performance it has to be said, sparkled with an abundance of clarity and happiness.

So let's moor our little red boat as we now arrive at the final chapter of the album, and the one we finish with is entitled **Ocean of My Soul**. This at well over six minutes, is the longest offering of the album and one that is also probably the deepest in arrangement, the moody swell here is attractive and very graphic and once more has that feeling that could be classed as possible film score music. The smoothness and pristine quality of performance on piano here was very classy indeed, and the perfect way to leave what has been a truly fantastic album to have sailed upon.

Little Red Boat by **Mary Lydia Ryan** would win with ease an award for charm, if there was one, this has to be one of the most delightfully descriptive and sun kissed albums I have heard in the solo piano genre this year. **Little Red Boat** is an album that will lift your mood and soothe your soul and performed by an artist who clearly is in-touch with her muse. If you're looking for an album packed with relaxing, but descriptive music, a warm and friendly narrative, performed with a skilful talent and produced with care and attention to details then this must be the album for you.