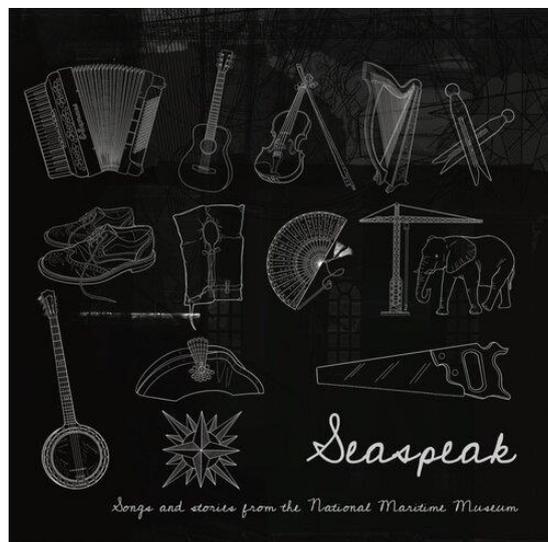


CD Review

'Seaspeak' by Joe Danks

Reviewed by Sandra Lawes



Are you missing the seaside? Longing to hear the sound of the waves and smell the salty air? Well, while we're waiting for normality to return, Joe Danks' new album '*Seaspeak*' could be just what you need.

Joe was born in Nottingham, about as far as possible from the seaside, and until recently he was a member of **Ranagri**. But he found his 'sealegs' when he took up a residency at the National Maritime Museum in Greenwich, as part of the English Folk Dance & Song Society's (EFDSS) 'Musicians in Museums' project. Here he wrote several new songs inspired by the museum's collection which he describes as '*the richest stimulus imaginable for a songwriter and arranger*'. The result is his impressive first album '*Seaspeak*', an evocative and beautifully crafted mix of new songs, revisited traditional songs, schottisches and hornpipes.

The ten-track album was recorded at The Queen's House, Greenwich. As well as demonstrating Joe's distinctive gentle vocals and his skill on guitar, bodhran and melodeon, the CD features the lively and uplifting contributions of the guest musicians. They are Danny Pedler (Pedler/Russell) on accordion and hurdy gurdy, Sarah Matthews (Sweet Visitor Band, Cupola, Intarsia) on fiddle, viola and vocals and harpist Jean Kelly (Society of Strange and Ancient Instruments). A particular highlight for me was the percussion contribution made by the quicksilver clogging and precision footwork of Simon Harmer's step dancing.

I found I had to listen very carefully to the gently performed lyrics to realise that some of the songs were about heavy themes such as music played on board Shackleton's expeditions to maintain the crew's mental health, the controversial deportation of an unfortunate circus elephant and the bloody battles of Jutland and Trafalgar – interspersed with more mellow subjects like the flowing of the River Thames and the track featuring John Masefield's famous poem about the lonely sea and the sky.

The album is released on 9 July 2021 – details of how to buy it are on the website www.ioedanks.co.uk

You can get a taster of Joe's work on his [Facebook page](#) including a video premiere of the album's opening track '*Sea Fever*' courtesy of Folk Radio and on his website www.ioedanks.co.uk

