

Rick Sparks

Speak Peace



Be prepared for some transporting music when you hear **Speak Peace**, the latest album from composer **Rick Sparks**. Using soothing melodies and promising themes, Mr. Sparks' music will take you away from the noise, the stress, and the turmoil of everyday life as long as you play the record. Maybe even beyond. **Speak Peace** is eleven contemporary/New Age instrumentals with an ability to soothe the psyche, a sort of musical fairy dust for the imagination. Sparks uses it liberally throughout the album to calm and comfort the listener.

Rick Sparks started playing piano at age seven and he equates the healing power of music from his days playing in a church. Hearing calming instrumental music was all the motivation he needed for pursuing his career in a genre that would specifically touch hearts and heal souls. He has eight other albums to his credit, and one of my favorites is *Christmas Night*. As Sparks himself suggests, he is the purveyor of "quiet music".

With an inorganic chorus that floats in the background, the opening tune **Speak Peace** sets the tone for the album. The music fairly shimmers as waves of sound wash your cares away. The music swells using the power of electronic strings and chorus. They blend together to make an uplifting anthem suggesting that heaven is not that far off.

I can see them in my backyard on a daily basis. Slender black bodies. Lacy, transparent wings that look as if they were designed by Tiffany, and a boundless energy powered by sunlight. I can hear them flitter about in Rick's piano tune **Dragonfly Dance**. What makes them alight for a nanosecond and then move on? Perhaps it is just the love of dance. This is an enchanting tune.

A flourish of flute introduces the next tune, **Lass of Inverness**. Rick has us up in the highlands scouring the land for a beauty that may exist only in our imaginings. Angelic chorus and scintillating piano allow us to walk the heaths and heathers in search of a dream. We will never give up.

**1912 Waltz** is measured and melancholic. The music conjures up a vision of an old white farm house at the end of the lane. A big parlor with a Victrola on the sideboard plays as they dance about the room, neither aware of their lack of movement. Just holding on for dear love.

One of the more poignant tunes on **Speak Peace** is called **Prayer for Ukraine**. Rick's reverent and chilling canticle puts the tragedy of a senseless war up on center stage and the music becomes a hymn of hope and peace. It is a prayer of healing for the destruction of a peaceful land and a quiet requiem for all the souls lost, past, present, and sadly, the future.

Taken from Isaiah 40:31, **We Wait Upon the King** is a prayer that gives strength to the spirit. Rick's liturgical line is an entreaty that says faith shall win any war. This tune has a pipe organ impression as if presented in a towering sacred space or just a cathedral of the spirit.

**Auld Lang Syne** is not your granddad's version. Spark's fare thee well is from a modern day heart, but with the familiar sadness that a goodbye does make. The recognizable refrain only occurs in the middle and is bridged on either side by beautiful strains of piano and ethereal chorus that sounds more like a prayer than a parting. Beautiful rendition and a favorite.

Additional tracks are **Harvest Moon, Little Princess, A Love That Lasts, and End of Day.**

Speak Peace is a daydreamer's delight. The tunes are bright with a lot of airy themes, but there are also tunes that are engaging and thoughtful. Sparks compositions present a good balance of fantasy and weightiness so that the listener is engaged at every sensory level, even the ones in their heart and mind. Highly listenable. - R J Lannan, Artisan Music Reviews