

## Mp3 Laura Siersema - When I Left Loss



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Her quiet and reflective style a lilting lullaby...her unusual, textured piano a relaxed landscape of sound...her words powerful. (Mish Mash) 20 MP3 Songs FOLK: like Joni, SPOKEN WORD: Poetry Details: Folk fans should take note, as well as those that like classical music, and Tori Amos. Suzie Siegel, The Tampa Tribune STUNNING!!! RECORDING!!! David Weide, KUNV, Las Vegas Laura has a "unique...very pure voice." Bob Ludwig, Gateway Mastering Studios they make movies out of music like this. Holbrook, Jamaica Plain Arts News Laura is an acoustic craftsman, a wordsmith with the soul and lyrics of a true poet Indie-Music Reviews spoken word pieces lend a riveting, personal touch and at times cut so deep the hair on the listeners skin goes on end. Josh Shear, Chicopee Herald This is an album to be actively listened to, paid attention to an excellent choice for people who like acoustic singer-songwriters. Rebecca Swain, Folk Tales Siersema has power in her words her piano and voice mix together beautifully. Mish Mash Indie Music Reviews She sings like an angel Gary Lee, Mt. Wachusett Folk Cafe THE TAMPA TRIBUNE Suzie Siegel Friday, November 5, 1999 tampatrib.com "Laura Siersema sings and plays piano with strength and precision on "when I left loss". Her delicate phrasing details struggles, opportunities lost, loneliness. Her voice is wistful and ethereal, sad and soothing. "In this old house lies tucked away / all the memories long forgotten now / all the blues and greens and laughter / all the dreams that I ran after / and must have missed" she sings in "This Old House". Prose poems break up the tracks. Most songs are original, but her version of "Where Have All the Flowers Gone" will stay in your mind like pressed petals. Siersema, a graduate of Berklee College of Music, works as a classical vocalist and accompanist. She sings with such control on songs such as "All the Pretty Little Horses". Folk fans should take note, as well as those who like classical music--and Tori Amos." MISH MASH INDIE MUSIC REVIEWS "The quiet and reflective style of Laura Siersema is like a lilting lullaby. Her

piano and voice mix together beautifully, creating a calm and relaxed landscape of sound. Some of the songs begin with her reading poetry, and let me tell you, I could sit enraptured listening to a full album of her simply doing this. Her interpretation is thoughtful and precise, and it sets up the tunes in a fashion that I've never quite experienced before. As a songwriter and poet, her words remain the center of focus throughout. The most inspiring moments come in short phrases: "She broke a toast to the wayfarer and edged a way to the door..." (Abigail Child) and "Sara called St. Louis her home and her divide / studied architecture for plans of some exactness..." (My Mother's Keeper). Even her treatment of traditional folk tunes like Pete Seeger's "Where Have All the Flowers Gone" sound fresh and alive. Siersema has power in her words, and they shine clearly with only the hushed phrases of the piano in the background. It's a simple approach that has an unexpected depth." THE FREE LANCE-STAR Thursday, February 22, 2001

Michael Zitz Siersema warms to spotlight When folk artist Laura Siersema was a kid growing up in Amherst, Va., near Lynchburg, she took piano lessons from a Mrs. Tinsley. One day she noodled out a simple ditty of her own. Writing a song for the first time even a childishly simple one was a life-changing experience. I thought I was doing this incredible thing, Siersema remembered this week in a telephone interview. I loved it. I remember being very surprised that I could do that. As a small child, she played piano, ukulele and guitar. And she wrote poetry. Writing was her real love. At first performing her music live was something of a necessary evil a thing that simply had to be done to have her songwriting reach audiences. I've become more and more comfortable doing it, she said. All the while she's been growing consciously as a person as a woman, she said. I realized what I'm doing is not performing so much as being myself in the spotlight. Siersema said she had to learn to be comfortable on stage in order to pass on what it is that I've discovered about the interior world, the roots for everyone's life. Her brand of folk music is inflected with both jazz and classical flavoring, but is focused on lyrics. In spite of that focus, her music has more of a visceral effect than one of evoking images. Maybe it's the feeling that comes across more readily than any clear picture, Siersema said. I'm growing more and more in the sense that I want to write what pours out rather than chop at it, she said. Siersema now lives in Boston, after graduating from the Berklee College of Music in that city. Her first album, when I left loss is getting airplay on college and public radio. REMINDER PUBLICATIONS, INC. Josh Shear October 24-30, 2001 Pianists help listeners get back to basics on their new CD releases Much of the music that seeps into our lives has elements we take for granted: multiple guitar tracks overlayed on each other, big production sound and feel, and

synthesized drum beats. Meanwhile, some artists are keeping it simple. Laura Siersemas 1999 album *When I Left Loss* is an example<sup>19</sup> tracks that include Siersemas voice, many of them; the piano, and one more that has the piano and some strings. The strings were played by Doug Hammer, who also produced the record. In other words, Siersema put together a record that required total of two people. In fact, it took as many people to take the photos for the insert as it did to record and mix the record. Siersemas sweet, dark voice mixes easily with her piano parts, especially on songs like the title track and *My Mothers Keeper*. She also tackles classics like *Where Have All the Flowers Gone?* and *The Water is Wide*. What really gives the album a special touch, however, are the spoken word pieces. Read almost in a whisper, the short prose and poetry selections written by Siersema lend a riveting, personal touch to the record, and at times cut so deep the hair on the listeners skin goes on end. Heck, try it for your self. Read, slowly and softly, the selection (sanctuary): Under ground bark, colored fish and many suns I peer through construct eyes into a sanctuary of miniatures already cupped and beautiful, hurled by my relief into the beating heart of sure footing and mingled accents wild. Siersemas words carry that same breath and breadth throughout the album. As a beautiful closing touch, Siersema does an a cappella version of the lullaby "All the Pretty Little Horses".

THE TIMES HERALD-RECORD Friday, April 20, 2001

Sandy Tomcho Laura Siersemas loss is our gain Almost 20 years in the making, singer/songwriter Laura Siersemas life work is now available on the CD *When I Left Loss*. My soul needed to do it. Ive had to be protective of my voice because I never got nurtured for it and I was never really ready, said Siersema, who performs in concert Sunday at Bodles in Chester. It was my time to bring it to the world; I hope people can be still for a moment and realize that silence is not weird it is where you find the richness of meaning in life. This CD is an example of what happens when you go inside and listen to your interior voice. Born in Farmville and raised in Amherst County, Va., Siersema grew up listening to her parents perform in their own folk-music group, the Hon-o-lees. Her father played upright bass and the saxophone and her mom played the piano. Thats where I learned, Siersema said. I was singing and playing the piano, ukulele and guitar when I was small. I played the guitar with a girlfriend of mine we were sort of a duet. Before Siersema began junior high, her parents decide to move to Florida. Siersema wouldnt sing again until college. There were probably a lot of reasons why I didnt sing, but I think it was more because I was self-conscious, because I didnt know anybody, Siersema said. For me, it was unknown territory, and I was petrified. She attended the University of Florida with the intentions of becoming a nurse.

However, her priorities eventually shifted. I wrote my first lyrics on a napkin during a class at UF and began writing phrases in my journal and decided to go back to school to study classical voice, Siersema said. I needed to work through what scared me. While attending the Berklee College of Music in Boston, where she eventually settled, Siersema discovered that she also could write poetry. Some of her poems have been published, while others are used as transitions on the CD. The album was written over years of time; some of the poetry on the CD is from 91 and 92, Siersema said. I use them as introductions to songs because there are a lot of emotional threads in both the music and the poetry that link the two together. Its another way of looking into the interior. And shes been looking into the interior for quite some time. Siersema wrote January 17th, her first song, in 1984. Other songs from the CD were simply phrases from the past, compiled ideas at the moment batched together. Whatever is in my body, I remember. Sometimes a phrase will just crop up, but mostly I hear ideas at my keyboard or when Im on the bus Ill write things down in my pad, Siersema said. Writing is much less self-conscious for me. I can tell when things are meant to be lyrics and when theyre not. Her voice sounds angelic, and a majority of the 20 songs are accompanied by only a piano. Songs focus on love, loss and life, and the CD is more an intimate conversation with listeners than a performance. When I perform, its a flowing experience rather than a foot-stomping one. Its very contemplative.

AMHERST NEW ERA-PROGRESS Thursday, July 29, 1999

Jim Cox New England songwriters roots are grounded in Amherst County past Folk artist Laura Siersema may have become a fixture on the Boston area coffeehouse scene, but she traces her musical roots to her Amherst County childhood, where her parents played in a local group called the Hon-O-Lees back in the 1960s My dad played the upright bass. There were two women in the middle who wore the same dress one of them was my mom, recalled Siersema, who recently released her first CD, when I left home. She describes her music, which includes songs inspired by her childhood, such as Old Rustburg Road, as original folk. I grew up playing the ukulele and guitar. Mom taught me piano when I was little, she recalled. Siersemas parents moved to Amherst when she was a year old. She has fond memories of performing in talent shows in the old Amherst Elementary School, on the site of what is now the Amherst County Administration Building, in a duo called the Lora Lees Her father worked for American Cyanamid before being transferred to Florida in 1968. She attended high school and college in Florida before moving to Boston in 1987 to attend the Berklee College of Music, which she said has the only contemporary songwriting degree program in the world. I made a switch in my life. I was initially writing

poetry, so it took me a while to get into that songwriting mode. I was studying classical voice and I started to work in churches and do some recording for the last two years I've been back on the circuit as a singer/songwriter. The coffeehouse scene is really strong in New England. Siersema performs as a solo artist, just me and my keyboard. After writing the lyrics for another artist's song, she tried her hand at recording her own work. I started recording for this project in January of '98. Siersema recorded the album in Somerville, Mass. With a fellow Berklee grad. She is entirely a one-woman show, even doing her own publicity. Fans can listen to an entire song from the album by going to [laurasiersema.com](http://laurasiersema.com). She has been told she has a voice like Judy Collins, very mellow or laid back, in her words. A lot goes into the lyrics; lyrics can be awfully specific about a scene, like my grandmother's house on Old Rustburg Road. I went down that road when I was home and it's all grown over now. She hadn't lived there in a long time. The house is still there, but can't even see it, she said. The project hasn't made money for her yet, but she says her goal is always an artistic one. I try to make all my decisions based on a real internal process; I don't care anything about videos or commercial success. What drives me is to take care of my voice, be writing the best way that I can, she explained.

JAMAICA PLAIN ARTS NEWS (with permission) Holbrook Review:

"When I left Loss" During this spring's Jamaica Plain Open Studios, I had the pleasure of having Laura perform live at my recording studio. It's always interesting to discover what someone you heard live sounds like on an album (and vice versa). Throughout "when I left loss," Laura Siersema sets the stage for an intimate conversation with her listener. Her beautiful, smooth alto, pleasant vibrato, and rolling, romantic piano playing underscore the carefully considered stories she sings to her audience. Most of the 20 selections on "when I left loss" are accompanied only by piano; however, this album feels not at all underproduced. The whole disc creates a lovely mood of contemplation. The uncluttered arrangements leave the listener plenty of room to appreciate Siersema's considerable skills as a wordsmith and lyricist, as well as a pianist and arranger. Short, spoken poems introduce many of the selections. Her voice is sincere and warm. She's not performing; she's talking to a friend. "when I left loss" was produced by Doug Hammer and Ms. Siersema. Doug recorded and mixed all the tracks at Dreamworld Studios in Somerville, MA, and did well to keep the mixes open and let Laura's softly commanding voice enrapture us from center stage. My only recording/production nit-pick is that the piano tones are often dwarfed by the richness of Laura's voice. Perhaps one of our generous readers has a nine-foot bosendorfer languishing in their drawing room that they would like to donate to Laura's next recording? There is a

song here for anyone who has felt the moment of clarity after a good cry. If you are so unfortunate as to have never experienced any of life's pain, you may find it difficult to appreciate the curative power of "Dr. Laura's" melody prescription. That's OK, go out, get jilted, dumped, sick, whatever--Laura will wait. She's like the lovely, talented aunt you never had, who wheeled her piano into your hospital room to sing for you when you had a broken arm, and ended up curing the entire ward. They make movies about music like this. But there's no need to wait until disaster strikes to fire up "when I left loss." I imagine a cross-country driving trip would serve as a delightful backdrop for listening to these songs. Her subject matter is drawn from that rich mine of life, love and loss, although, as the album title suggests, the overall mood is one of the spirit's triumph over the void of loss and darkness. She seamlessly blends traditional songs and arrangements with her original compositions; her style is sometimes more jazz, sometimes more traditional, and sometimes a bit theatrical, but always lulling, graceful and sincere. During this season of holiday craziness, give yourself a present and pick up a copy of "when I left loss". It just may cure your holiday blues.

BIO: I was born in Farmville and raised in Amherst County, Virginia and grew up listening to my parents perform in their own folk music group, the Hon-o-lees. They had me singing and playing ukelele, guitar and piano from the time I was small. Though I went away to college to become a nurse, I never stopped playing piano--in fact it was during a class at UF that I wrote my first lyrics on a napkin and then made songs of them. Finding my own voice has been my passion all along, though it has taken distance and digging and time and much experimenting to hear that voice and become comfortable performing. What expressions began on the piano or as phrases in my journal became a need to go back to school to immerse myself in music, to study classical voice for the first time, to work through what petrified me, to discover that I was a poet, too. I graduated from Berklee College of Music, I have been a soloist in churches, I have studied voice with the internationally known soprano Phyllis Curtin, I have been the music director and accompanist for musical theatre productions and school choruses and played with a small orchestra, my poetry has been published nationally. As a singer/songwriter I have had the wonderful opportunities of opening for John Gorka, Connie Kaldor, Dana Cooper, David Roth, Bernice Lewis, Lori McKenna and Cheryl Wheeler. when I left loss, my first album, was in the making all my life. Love Flows Like the Blood of a River is a continuation of my journey as a creative artist, of the ability to hear and see what bridges us to the invisible, what connects and ever so slightly distances us all. It is the patience to wait for what appears. To have had the collaboration of such great musicians as Eugene

Friesen, Steve Wilkes and Doug Hammer, responding in their own ways to my songs, immeasurably broadened this musical experience for me and for the album. I am very proud to present it to you.-Laura Siersema Cover design copyright 1999 Helene Zuckerbrod. All rights reserved.

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