

Mp3 Laura Siersema - Love Flows Like The Blood Of A River



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"Her voice beckons mercilessly to the physical world like the bodiless spirit that haunts the mansion on a faraway hill. Wanderers beware...." Independent Song Writer's Magazine 14 MP3 Songs FOLK: like Joni, SPOKEN WORD: Poetry Details: SING OUT! Vol. 47 #3 LAURA SIERSEMA Love Flows Like the Blood of a River She sounds like a young Judy Collins but don't expect traditional fare from this young singer-songwriter. While she covers standards like "Shenandoah", her own material falls closer to the writing of Tori Amos. Simple arrangements with piano, acoustic guitar, light percussion and vocals cradle each song. Every original song seems like a collection of short stories, with vivid images strung together with Siersema's airy soprano as narrator. Her lyrics are refreshingly creative and free of cliches. Interspersed with the songs are short spoken word pieces that sometimes serve as an introduction to the upcoming song. Thankfully, they are short which makes for better repeated listening. The highlight of this CD is a hauntingly beautiful version of "Five Hundred Miles", sung over a rolling piano and cello. Eugene Friesen's cello is wonderful here, especially the stunning solo in the middle of the song. There's an intimacy to the productions of this release, as if she's sitting in the room with you. This is a fine second CD from this New England based singer-songwriter. __JA "Folk fans should take note, as well as those that like classical music, and Tori Amos." Suzie Siegel, Tampa Tribune "STUNNING!!!RECORDING!!!" David Weide, KUNV, Las Vegas "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 listener's skin goes on end." Josh Shear, Chicopee Herald "...they make movies out of music like this." Holbrook, Jamaica Plain Arts News "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 INDEPENDENT SONGWRITERS MAGAZINE "Love Flows Like the Blood of a River" ISWM INDIE PICK OF THE MONTH - (review)... THE CD: Her voice beckons mercilessly to the physical world like the bodiless spirit that haunts the mansion on a faraway hill. Wanderers beware....

WHY IT WAS SELECTED: Spookiness that sucked us into its ethereal perspective. SUMMARY: Not that Laura meant to create something with a sinister quality to it, but this CD gives the impression that we are being followed by spirits whose main goal is to somehow change us. The reason, unknown. We can sense that the changes may not be warranted or wanted...yet we are powerless to their advances.

THE GREENFIELD RECORDER July 24, 2003 By ADAM ORTH Recorder Staff GREENFIELD - The phrase came to her in a dream 20 years ago: "Love flows like the blood, of a river." These words have a significance - in part because of who said them - that Laura Siersema may never reveal. No matter. It's enough to know that, after years of searching, she has found both the voice and the courage to sing them. Indeed, they form the lyrical backbone for the title song of her second CD: "Love Flows Like the Blood of a River." Recently released at TurningStone Coffeehouse, an intimate performance space on Greenfield's Main Street, the CD arrives at a time when Siersema has all-but made her peace with the creative forces that drive her. A person committed to plumbing the depths of her unconscious, Siersema taps its creative energy with poetry, songwriting, and piano playing. Her crystal-clear voice and skill at the keyboard entice the listener into a journey both reflective and emotional. It wasn't always that way. Raised in Amherst County, Va., Siersema was one of four siblings born to parents who performed in a folk music group called the Hon-o-lees. Naturally, she was singing, playing ukulele, guitar and piano at an early age. She and a friend would be called out on stage during events headlined by her parents, such as Hootenanny Night at the Lion's Club. Then, at 11, her father's job was transferred to western Florida. The family followed and, somehow, Siersema lost the courage for music. She became a cheerleader, the good student. "I think, in ways I don't really know, leaving Virginia was very hard for me," she said. "It just went way inside." Unbroken was her interest in piano, a musical thread created with lessons from her mother. She took a year of classical piano lessons. But, other needs called. After graduating from high school she went to college to become a doctor. "It was doing was what was expected of me, because I did so well in school," said Siersema. "It was a desire, in many ways, to please my parents. To give them something of obvious worth." She was in her second year at the University of Florida, in a zoology class, when Siersema realized she could not make herself truly like being a doctor. She called her parents. "I

remember crying when I told them I couldn't do it," she said. "I knew I would never be what they imagined I could be." Siersema dropped her pre-med studies and instead became a nurse. She moved to New York City. The seeds of change had been sown, however. She'd written her first lyrics on a napkin in nursing class. In New York, she had a piano in her apartment. She started learning about different types of singing. She met the first of two therapists whose help would prove pivotal. She continued to capture her dreams in a journal. In all, she would spend seven years in nursing, either in hospice or in psychiatrics. Nursing did not trouble her - it just wasn't enough. "Just because you're good at something does not mean that is who your crucial self is," she said. "It was the best way I had, at the time, of surviving." One day, Siersema's lack of fulfillment built up enough for her to set her sights on the Berklee School of Music. It took a while, but one day she dumped her nursing books into her apartment's incinerator. They dropped seven floors. She left for Boston. Siersema continued to do nursing in the summers to pay the bills while in school. But the main thing was the music. It was at Berklee that she found her voice: as a songwriter, a poet and a singer. Her singing voice, says Siersema, was the most deeply buried of her creative energies. Professional singing lessons helped it emerge, yet offering it up publicly continues to tax her courage. "To discover the full range of my voice was an entirely phenomenal and necessary experience," she said. "It's the most vulnerable thing I can do, sing." It was at Berklee that Siersema made her first attempt to build a song from the phrase "Love flows like the blood, of a river." It didn't work. She felt forced by the deadline of completing school work. She wasn't yet adept at plumbing her unconscious. "I think true creativity comes from the unconscious. I don't think it's something you are deliberate about except in that discipline of waiting for things to appear," she said. "I could never think of the poems that I've written," she added. "Turn us into ashes and sycamore in bold stroke and mentor of your fire so that I can sing across days fitful and plain like you would my letters to the dead and ranting." - Poem that starts "Love Flows Like the Blood of a River." Free-association writing opened the door to Siersema's unconscious. She discovered its power at Berklee and got in the habit of picking a word or phrase - sometimes by pointing at a newspaper - and then seeing where it took her. "Our culture doesn't promote that way of doing things, or even that process, that slow, untimed process," she said. Siersema keeps these fragments, waiting for them to come together into a finished work. Her graduation from Berklee was about two years distant before she captured the phrase that would become the first lyric of her CD's title song. She remembers waking up in bed, reaching for the paper. It was dark, yet there was

enough light to see. She still has that original paper. The words on it are all-but identical to the lyrics in their final form. "It was really exciting, because I hadn't written like that for a long time," Siersema said. Here is that first verse: "He stretched the strings of his guitar drove his demons kicking against the walls of a closing March indifferent to his heart - love flows like the blood of a river." Siersema met her partner, George Touloumtzis, during her first year in Boston. She started playing coffeehouses. She was also building material for her first CD, "when I left loss." She performed with a vocal ensemble and began doing solo work in churches. She took on students and started teaching voice and piano. One of them, Emma, was clearly an artist. "I knew she would have a difficult time because of that," Siersema said. It was Emma who provided the second verse. "Emma you look angelic and you're watching me It's not so hard - when you're used to shells and poppy seeds picking them apart - love flows like the blood of the river." Siersema looks for beautiful sounds, both in her songwriting and in her music, and lets that guide her creativity. It was the second lyric that alerted Siersema to her emerging song. "When I realized I could say 'love flows like the blood of the river' with either, that's when I realized I could put it together," she said. "It's not something to be thought about until after the finish." Siersema listened to the song, and let it direct her where to go next. "It seemed what I had was a man speaking and a story about a woman," she said. "I had two expressions that I was making into one. Both from a musical point of view and maybe from a male/female point of view." Here is her third verse: "His hand reached out and touched her hip as the traffic died in the distance the heater hissed and the blanket worn from footsteps overhead we slam the doors and we curse the other, we try too hard - love flows like the blood of a river." Siersema, who released her first CD in 1999, started recording for her second CD, "Love Flows Like the Blood of a River," in 2000. It wasn't released until early 2003. She co-produced it with Doug Hammer of Dreamworld Studios in Lynn. Steve Wilkes plays percussion and Eugene Friesen plays cello. There are several original songs and poems on this CD, including one written by Siersema's mother. There are also several remakes of traditional songs, like "Green Sleeves," "O Sinner Man," and "Shenandoah." It's this reworking of traditional songs that interests Siersema these days. She hopes to put together a third CD by taking such songs, which resonate deeply with her, and altering them. "That has been the coolest experience," she said. "I never would have guessed I would be so driven." But, meanwhile, she must sell her second CD. Siersema, who moved to Greenfield in September, ordered 1,000 of them. "It came to my home in late February," she said. "It arrived in 10 boxes, in the snow." Her CD party at the TurningStone

Coffeehouse was attended by a small group of enthusiastic family and friends. She's sent about 200 CDs to different venues in hopes of getting it reviewed or aired. WUMB in Boston, which she calls "The Boston station," is playing her songs and so is at least one station in Worcester. A review of her CD, in "Sing Out!" magazine, is set to hit newsstands Aug. 8. The CD is on sale at TurningStone, at Boswell's Books in Shelburne Falls, at Amazon.com, and on her Web site - laurasiersema.com. Her Web site also has music files of her songs, including "Love Flows Like the Blood of a River." She's also looking for local venues to perform. She played Cafe Koko and is among the performers in the July and August lineup for The Station, at the Greenfield Energy Park. "What I do is solitary, but the message is meant for everyone or anyone and the only way I can have people hear it is to sing it myself," she said. "I guess that's one of my main questions now. Where do I go to be heard?" Here is the fifth, and final, verse of the title song:

"Whatever you might have been looking for's in the shadow of the Tobin Bridge. love flows like the blood of a river." You can reach Adam Orth at: aorth@recorder.com or (413) 772-0261 Ext. 265

THE SUNDAY REPUBLICAN "Inventing Music Hits Right Note" by David A. Vallette July 11, 2004 GREENFIELD--Laura L.Siersema is happy inventing music and delivering her inventions from the stage. The "Hon-O-Lees" had a lot to do with that. The brand name of her parents, Ed and Dinny Siersema, the Hon-O-Lees were part of the folk music scene. Little Laura latched on, taught by her parents first to play the ukulele, then piano and guitar. Despite a degree in nursing, and subsequent nursing jobs, she has ever since been on a musical life quest. She writes poems and sets them to music. Her genre is uncategorized. "There are oceans above us now, but I'm not touching bottom," is an excerpt from "Vault of the Valley," a song in "Love Flows Like the Blood of a River," one of her two albums. It was dedicated to her parents. Siersema has a hard time categorizing herself, and others haven't found it any easier to detail who she is as a performer. She has been described by various reviewers as experimental, avant garde, Celtic, serene, surreal and mellow. Her best self description, which also falls sort of pinning things down, is "basically folk with elements of jazz and classical." Siersema is a transplant to Western Massachusetts, having moved to Greenfield in 2002. She grew up in Amherst, Va., with three siblings and went to the University of Florida, securing a bachelor's degree in nursing. From there it was on to New York City to pursue both nursing and music. "It struck me one day I should do that," she said of making the Big Apple the place to get going. Living in Manhattan, she worked at St. Vincent's Hospital in the psychiatry department, and also for Hospice, while doing a few gigs as a performer, usually at open-mic nights. She also gave piano

lessons. That sufficed for a while, until she got the yen to go back to school, this time for music. She left for Boston and Berklee College of Music for songwriting, emerging from Berklee in 1990. Siersema wrote and sometimes got published poems, which became the base part of writing songs. She also worked on her voice, becoming a church soloist at Eliot Church in Newton. Shortly after arriving in Boston, Siersema met her life partner, George A. Touloumtzis, a Massachusetts native. He was a counselor at a private psychiatric facility in Brookline where she periodically worked. One of their in common pursuits was bicycling, and they both wished for more rural terrain for it. That is what led them to Greenfield. "We wanted the lifestyle," she said of what this community offered. They were taken by "the beautiful valley and countryside" and bought the third house they viewed, which is on Abbott Street. Geography was not an obstacle for either's work, as opportunities have joined them. "My work is most everywhere," she said. She works coffeehouse and festivals as entertainer and contemplates her third album. She can be caught July 22 at Energy Park on Miles Street, one of three performers doing a show, 6-8pm and July 25 Siersema will perform in the Sunday afternoon concert series in Old Deerfield. Asked her aspirations, Siersema said her third album, which will be produced in a new recording studio, just might enable her to reach a new plateau. "It would mean moving to the next level for me," she said. THE BERKSHIRE EAGLE "Diversity of sounds to resonate in region" Seth Rogovoy/ The Beat April 16, 2004 On her new CD, "Love Flows Like the Blood of a River", Pioneer Valley singer-songwriter Laura Siersema alternates original compositions, traditional folk and gospel songs, and spoken-word poems, all tied together by her high soprano voice and a rare sense of quietude. Siersema's songs are meditative, Laura Nyro-like, soul-piano ballads with subtle percussion and occasional cello. A one-time nurse and alumna of Berklee College of Music in Boston, Siersema sings in a soft, soaring coloratura soprano that lends her compositions an art-song feel--imagine Dawn Upshaw does Tori Amos. The Virginia native grew up in a musical family--her parents had their own folk music group, the Hon-O-Lees--and she learned to play piano, ukulele and guitar. Siersema performs at the Dream Away Lodge in Becket tomorrow at 9.

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