

## **Holbrook, Jamaica Plain Arts News (with permission) 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 bosendorffer 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.