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Laura Siersema's "loss" is our gain

Almost 20 years in the making, singer/songwriter Laura Siersema's life work is now available on the CD "when I left loss".

"My soul needed to do it. I've 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.

"That's 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 wouldn't sing again until college.

"There were probably a lot of reasons why I didn't sing, but I think it was more because I was self-conscious, because I didn't 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. It's another way of looking into the interior.

And she's 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 I’m on the bus—I’ll 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 they’re 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.