

Laura Sullivan

Pieces of Forever



I remember reviewing most of Laura Sullivan's earlier works. At the time they were solo New Age piano tunes with a good grip on passion and theme. It was like watching clear, sharp black and white television. Skip ahead almost fifteen years, and a new Grammy Award (*Love's River*) and behold. Sullivan's music is now in rich, vivid colors with profound tonal contrast and an obvious sharpness that shifts the attention of the listener's heart and soul to a deeper level. **Pieces of Forever** is an album of fond memories of Laura Sullivan's childhood. A life of hard work and times of great discovery. Of family and walnut trees and flowering gardens. It is all here embodied in eleven original tracks of post classical music with pop tinges around the edges. The storylines are drawn with a broad stroke. The passion is focused and stronger than ever.

There must have been great challenges in the beginning. Sullivan opens the album with a tune called **A Darker Season**. Cool, murky, and mysterious, it is like standing at the doorway to the unknown. Perhaps it is a metaphor for our current times where the future is so gloomy, it leaves a bad taste in your mouth and a burden on your psyche. Musically, the melody is hauntingly beautiful with an obscurity created out of complex, evocative notes, each one a question mark.

Your life is melting before you like candle wax. Your pain is never ending. Laura's music is here to comfort, to shelter, to give hope. **Rest Your Sorrow** is a suite in three movements. The three pieces are mixed in among the other tracks and offer respite throughout the listening experience. The songs are somewhat reminiscent of Ludovico Einaudi's works with a stylish blend of piano and violin that seemed to engage a sense of bone-weary sadness. The music recommends you take a breath. Maybe sit on the bench and warm yourself in the sun. I particularly enjoyed the third movement. Laura's piano melody seems to mesh with a pedal steel guitar backed by cello and harmonica and yet the tune maintains a dreamlike quality.

The eerie sound of a musical saw permeates the tune **The Long Goodbye**. It is an instrument that you don't hear much, but its silky texture and peculiar resonance adds an otherworldly flavor to the theme. The music was as if the character was walking from light into the dark and everything was shadowed in reverse colors. Black became white. Red became blue. There was a lot of blue.

In **Pieces of Forever Prelude**, Liz Hanks' cello and pedal steel guitar by Bryan Daste combine to create a theme that suggests a new day of life on the farm. Dusty crop rows, chicken chasin', and watering the flowers in a typical day just before the sun peaks half way over the mountain. The piece is short, but produces quite an aural scenario.

One of Laura's outstanding numbers on *Pieces of Forever* is a tune called **Damaged Poetry**. It quickly became a favorite of mine. Featuring a harmonica by Adam Burney and banjo by Charles Butler, it is a waltz of Americana daydreams driven by Laura's folksy piano theme. The

title is a poem written by Laura's that proposes that even though not everything is perfect, it is still wonderful in many ways.

"It was poorly written/and highly damaged/it was still beautiful/in its own way."

Blue Tent Creek is an homage to Laura's mom, The Blue Tent Creek Angel. The music flows like a gentle stream as it carries gentle waters that will eventually enter the sea. A mother's love, her presence, her teachings are like the creek. Touching, holding, pushing you along, and nourishing everything she/it touches.

The last cut is called **Pieces of Forever Postlude**. Delicate piano and mournful cello dance slowly about as that ubiquitous pedal steel guitar sways in the background. The sun is going down, the day's work complete, and it is time to celebrate the blessings. As the music conveys, we are truly comforted in the knowledge that all will happen again on the morrow.

Sullivan's music goes through a varied gamut of feelings, from happy to sad to elation on these emotionally driven tunes. One can almost witness the circle of life in the music, with the ring having a bit of gap for what is to come. I enjoyed every track on Pieces of Forever and I give it my highest recommendation. Personally, I don't know how Sullivan can top this wondrous work, but I know she will. - R J Lannan, Artisan Music Reviews