



Credits: 2022 Recording

Produced and mixed by Daniel Ledwell

Mastered by Archive Mastering

Vocals/ Acoustic Guitar- Tara MacLean

Guitars/Bass/Synth/Piano- Daniel Ledwell

Lumitone- Leith Fleming-Smith

Drums- Michael Belyea

Violin/Viola- Kinley Dowling

Cello- Natalie Williams-Calhoun

Saxophone- Ian Sherwood

BG Vox- Jenn Grant, Kinley Dowling, Catherine MacLellan, Tara MacLean, Harmony Wagner, Alicia Toner, Sheldon Elter, Kristi Hansen

Tara MacLean returns to the world stage with the heartbreaking and inspiring story of her life, and the soundtrack ‘Sparrow’ to accompany the book.

Song of The Sparrow is the story of how music saved my life over and over again. It was my liferaft in an often stormy sea. It was the perfect combination to write a book, and then record an album of the songs that were most significant to the story. Some songs were hits that changed the trajectory of my career, some were songs that marked huge life events, and some were songs that changed me as a writer. Seven of the songs on the album are re-imagined versions of my favourites. Three songs are new, and are in the theme of the thesis of the book, which is that we all have what we need inside of us to rise, no matter the circumstances. The album is indeed the soundtrack to the book, which then gives the story a new dimension of experience for the reader.

SPARROW - TRACK BY TRACK

SPARROW

Written by Tara MacLean

This song is the title track for the book "Song of the Sparrow". Written on my new Martin Guitar right after a break up, I felt free and alive deep in my heart when I wrote this.

Produced with movement and lush sounds, it has a more Americana feel than I've had before. True to my Celtic and country roots, you can hear the influence of Emmylou. It's a song that lifts, moves and feels like medicine. The production takes it to the next level, where the music meets the words like water meets waves. Guitar centric, it feels east coast, but it will also resonate from Nashville to Norway.

I was inspired to write this song as I was writing the book, knowing that it would be important to have a song that really spoke for the message of the story, which is about rising above circumstance, about triumph, about courage and forgiveness. I am hoping listeners will be lifted by the song, and inspired to let go of the things that hold them down. This song has roots and wings.

I knew I wanted singer/songwriter Catherine MacLellan to direct the video. She knows me so well, as our families have deep roots together. Our fathers toured as a duo for twenty years. I wanted the video to be natural and real. I was thrilled with some of the studio footage my Friend Melanie Stone got in the studio while we were recording, so Catherine spliced that into her footage of me in my natural habitat: PEI, by the fire and by the water. There's a nod to one of my earlier music videos at the end, which if people know about it, will get it.

My favourite lyric is the chorus because it feels like a painting. I love bow and arrow imagery. Sometimes life is pulling back on the arrow, it's tense, you shake, you aim. And there is release. Putting this song and the book into the world is me releasing the arrow from the bow.

"It's the arrow in the bow
The sparrow and the song
The marrow in the bone
Nothing's unforgivable
When you let go.
Sparrow."

When I was little, I sang before I spoke. My mother told me I was a bird. I would walk around the forest and imitate the bird calls. This song is about who I am fundamentally as I go through epic transformations in life, learning to fly higher, extending my wingspan, and seeing the world and life with a new perspective. Open sky.

LAY HERE IN THE DARK

Written by Tara MacLean

Written alone one night during a moment of terrifying sadness during the pandemic. I had just recently

broken up with my husband of 16 years and hit a very dark and lonely patch. I reached for my guitar, and I brought in everything I knew about survival and wrote this song. It didn't just feel like my loneliness, it belonged to the whole world and it was heavy. This song was my life raft that night. It is a prayer, and the only thing I knew to reach for was love. There is a reservoir available to all of us anytime, all we have to do is ask.

*"Love, this is gonna sting
I can feel the wounds are opening
Oh love, you are everything
Teach me how to bow when I am breaking."*

This is not only my favourite song on the album, it's my favourite song I've written. One line in particular made me realise I am at a new level in my life. "Teach me how to bow when I am breaking." How, in the middle of the greatest challenge, can we find gratitude for being alive? Even when we feel we can hardly breathe, even when the darkness is pulling us under, can we become the witness and see that it's part of the essential training of strength and courage? Can we thank the darkness? Can we forgo the self pity and recognize the treasure in the pain? And in the song, I am speaking to Love. Love as an all encompassing force that is a limitless reservoir that we have access to when we need it.

Making the video was amazing. Daniel Lanois, who is my favourite all time musician and songwriter, had listened to the song and gave me the idea to do the video in the dark, on a bed with a flashlight. I spoke to director Nathan Sizemore from Confound Films, who I was a huge fan of and had worked with before. He was totally into the concept and he nailed it. I got a room at the Broadview Hotel in Toronto and we filmed it in 4 hours. I love how intimate it feels.

IF I FALL

Written by Tara MacLean

This song was my lead single from my Passenger album, released on Capitol/Nettwerk Records. I originally wrote this song for a TV show called Felicity, as an audition for its theme song. I was getting a lot of songs in WB shows and I was hoping this would land. It ended up in a Katie Holmes movie called Teaching Mrs. Tingle during a love scene! After desperately pleading with my manager to not let this be my lead single, they convinced me it was not bubble gum, and was catchy enough to get on the radio. They were right. It was the number one most added at AAA Radio the week it was released. The video was a huge production that ended up so far from what I'd imagined. Last minute someone put a giant teddy bear in the car, and I was far too busy getting dressed to even question that. I was hoping to be taken seriously as an artist for my first globally released single. One very well known interviewer from Japan asked me why my video didn't represent me or my album at all. All I could say was that somehow my vision had been wrestled from me and so I went from an idea about transformation and now we have a car chase, me throwing a TV in heels and a yellow bear. Maybe that's what happens when too many people are making decisions and I was trying to make everyone happy. The song did very well for me in opening doors to the rest of the record that was less hit oriented. People have shared that it was the theme song to their youth, driving with their windows

down, feeling free and ready to take on the world. That vision is more in my mind than that music video. Since I had such a hard time imagining rerecording this, I needed to remember why I wrote it in the first place, for a character who was in the process of profound transformation. And so changed the whole vibe in this reimagining of the song, getting to the heart of it.

“You can hear screaming and never stopped
To listen to your one and only prayer
A place for you somewhere.”

THAT’S ME

Written by Tara MacLean

This is one of my favourite songs. I wrote it in 1994 about a moment when I really wanted to check out of this heartbreak hotel. I had been through a brutal breakup and I fell apart and hit bottom. This song is my self portrait. I was self destructive, self sabotaging and I was wrestling with all my demons. That was before I learned to make friends with them. It was the first song I got into a movie called Kissed, and then I sang it in the Jerry Bruckheimer film Coyote Ugly where I had a cameo. No matter how many years have gone by, I have kept this song in my set, to remind myself how far I’ve come.

*“Caught on the floor now
This bottle in my hand
In the confusion
It seemed the safest place to land”*

LET HER FEEL THE RAIN

Written by Tara MacLean

This is one of the first songs I wrote, laying in the backyard on the grass, rain pouring down. I felt so numb from heartbreak and I just let myself become rain. I went inside and wrote the words down that had come to me and this song was born. This was the song I was playing on the ferry when I was discovered by Nettwerk and Sony Publishing. I recorded it as a one off for a compilation album called “Lit From Within” to benefit Rape Crisis Centres. I was told they began using the song to help in their therapy sessions, to unblock pain and release it. Knowing that a song I wrote had that kind of medicinal quality certainly changed the trajectory of my writing in that I learned that what healed me, could heal others. This song opened doors for me that I didn’t even know were there.

*“And you will kneel before her
at her altar in the trees
Because they say no matter who you are
She’ll bring you to your knees”*

This is a fun song to release with the book, because it is one of the first songs I wrote when I learned that I could heal myself with music. In some ways, the songwriting is still immature and simple, but there is an innocence to it. The song was the one I was singing when I was discovered by record executives on a ferry boat in BC. It has opened many doors for me.

The video was directed by the brilliant filmmaker and photographer Sydney Woodward with art design by Patricia Parkinson. I love how it's set in the lush rainforest, and also in the iconic nest that we used for the book cover. Also, my daughter Flora did my hair and my daughter Stella did my makeup!

Fun story about that nest. It was created by the famous Japanese singer UA, who has a farm on Salt Spring Island in BC. When I was looking for a nest, I put out a call to our community on facebook and of course, on that island, there was a human sized nest. There was also a giant egg that someone offered, but that seemed a little much! The symbolism is obvious, about a safe place to launch from, starting again, rebirth. The artisanship that UA shows in the creation of this nest is extraordinary and I am so grateful to be able to use it for the album and the book.

THINGS OUTSTANDING

Written by Tara MacLean

I couldn't leave out a song about becoming a mother. This was the hardest time in my life. I was dropped from Capitol records during the pregnancy and was told to "just go be a mother". Having had an experience of severe postpartum depression, motherhood wasn't what I was expecting. The depression happened as a result of a difficult birth, nursing issues and then she never slept. Shortly after the birth, my beloved sister died. My husband was devastated, and to make matters worse, he didn't realize it until a few months in, but he had been affected by the birth, and no longer felt attraction to me. He left. All that to say I felt very alone in the world. One minute I was married, my sister was my closest friend, I had a record deal and a baby on the way. The next minute I was grief stricken and by myself taking care of a baby who didn't sleep. I didn't know if I was going to make it. This song encapsulates the desolation and loneliness that so many mothers feel after a baby comes, when they have no idea what happened to their lives. Fortunately, my baby girl is what pulled me through. Taking care of her every day gave me purpose and saved my life. I wrote this song with Ron Lopata and Simon Wilcox, two of my favourite people and songwriters who gave deep love and support to me during that time. This song was released on a very obscure album called "Wake" that really had no life because I was on my third baby when it came out, and that affected momentum for the label. It took a few years, but I got on my feet, thanks to a band I had joined with two friends, Kim Stockwood and Damhnait Doyle. We named the band SHAYE, after my sister. Piece by piece, song by song, I put myself back together.

*"The table's set, the beds are made
Seems I let them slowly fade
Here I am at winter's birth
Called to from beneath the earth
These frozen songs beneath the street
Biting shoes trip at my feet
Once my face scrapes at the dirt
No one asks if I am hurt."*

LAST KISS

Written by Tara MacLean

I wrote this song a few days after my sister died in a car crash. She died because she pulled the car over to the side of the highway to kiss the man she loved. A distracted driver didn't see them and crashed into the car. I tucked away this song and forgot about it. I wanted to record something about Shaye, since her death changed me forever. It began my relationship with death, which is always shocking the first time. As I was driving to Nova Scotia to record the album this song came into my mind very clearly after 19 years, as if Shaye wanted me to remember it. Here it is, a song from my most grieving heart.

*"So fast, so fast, before we grasp
The pages tear
So fast, so fast we disappear
Into the air"*

EVIDENCE

Written by Greg Reely, Stephen Nikleva and Tara MacLean

Released in 1996 as my lead single from Silence, my Nettwerk debut. Produced by Norm Kerner at Brilliant Studios in San Francisco, Evidence is a song about child sexual abuse, and was written for my sister Shaye, who like me, was a survivor. This was the first song I heard of mine on the radio on Z95 FM in Vancouver. Driving down the street, I rolled down the windows and cranked the stereo, looking into the other cars to see if anyone else was listening? It was a moment I will never forget. I had a lot of input into this video, and I am very happy with the concept, a spooky elevator that brings people into their subconscious in order to root out the trauma. It was added to Much Music in rotation and as a result of this song I won Best New Solo Artists at the Canadian Radio Music Awards in 1997. The feedback personally on this song was powerful, especially by other survivors of abuse. This had to be redone for the album because it was an early statement as a writer, learning to be brave to approach the darkest things, with music shining the light on it. This song was in **Fame LA**, sung by two characters in the show, and also on the soundtrack for **Charmed**.

*"Terrified my tongue would now betray
All the lies that I'd been taught to say.
Search your eyes for evidence of love
Can you hear me, can you hear me now?"*

DIVIDED

Written by Bill Bell and Tara MacLean

Released in 1999 on EMI Capitol/ Nettwerk, Divided was my second single from my Passenger album. Originally produced by Malcolm Burn in New Orleans, it is a song about the way humanity continues to divide itself with belief systems and disagreements, it is a song about unity, about setting weapons down and finding an ever evolving state of wonder and love for each other. This was the song I

performed on Conan O'Brien in 2000 in New York City, one of the highest profile performances I've ever done. There was also a cool video to go with it. I didn't love my very 90s style makeup in my close-ups but the rest of it was great! This song went to the top of the charts in Taiwan, Korea and Thailand, and that began an amazing adventure of touring Asia in the fall of 2000. This was one of my rare groovy songs that allowed for some dancing on stage!

Re-recording this song was important because it not only holds such a significant place in my heart as a lyric, but I wanted to see how Dan would interpret it for this millenia. The words seem even more poignant today.

*"Check your weapons at the door
You don't live here anymore.
But a heart cannot repent
When it doesn't know it's spent
It's lifetime beating itself to death."*

SILENCE

Written by Tara MacLean and Stephen Nikleva

This song was written in 1995 during a demo session with Greg Reely in Vancouver that Sony Publishing paid for in a preliminary demo deal. My friend died of suicide and I took the day off in the studio. I wrote the words and the next day I came in and asked them to just put the mic in front of me to see what happened. It was written in as much time as it took to sing it. The version on Silence is that demo. I sang it a cappella most of my career, preferring to sing it at the end of shows because I had to descend to really reach the depths of this song and that took me time, and took getting to know an audience, preparing them and preparing myself for where the song would take me. Later on I would sing it for the first time to my record label president at Capitol, Roy Lott. He said, "I knew you were really good, but until now I didn't realize how brilliant you were." That meant a lot to me, because this song is vulnerable and raw, and isn't easy to sing because I have to rip myself open every time.

*"I'm long past feeling
And I'm too far gone
Staring at my ceiling
I know silence better than anyone."*