

**INTRODUCING LETIZIA GAMBI**



I N T R O D U C I N G L E T I Z I A G A M B I



Some music seems easiest to define by describing what it's not. Especially when it's music that marks such a strong, confident arrival of new ideas – or a revival of older ones – or some compelling, intelligent mix of what's new and what's new again.

*Introducing Letizia Gambi* is one of those dramatic arrivals that challenges categories and assumptions. Yes, the number of jazz-world heavyweights on this disc is nothing short of staggering, yet it's clearly not a jazz album. Lovers of the **Great Neapolitan** Songbook will find a number of familiar friends here – reconfigured in surprising ways – but it's not a simple revisiting of those classic melodies. And though a few of these tracks reveal a refined, Euro-chill kind of feel, they do not constitute an artful pastiche of laid-back styles that has lately grown to a common fad.

*Introducing Letizia Gambi* is a focused and a warmly absorbing debut by a young woman who, with the support of a visionary producer and seasoned musicians, has woven a rich variety of musical sources into a sound that defies stylistic distinctions and geographic distances. It's a longer way of saying simply that this album is indeed a rare thing – one that deserves to be heard and considered according to its own merits.

There's a lot here to hear and to consider, including Gambi's own story. **She's a Neapolitan** by birth and musical identity. Displaced to **Como** in the north of Italy as a youngster, she grew up compelled to a path of artistic expression. She danced, sang, performed, painted, and returned to **Naples** when she could. While still in her teens, traveled to **London** to study musical theater, graduated art school as a designer, and then began attending acting school in **Milan**.



In the end, music held the upper hand. Gambi auditioned for Milan's **International Jazz Academy**, and was one of only seven accepted. She graduated with a masters degree, and a burning desire to find a way to sing in a manner that drew upon the various vocal approaches she had come to love – **from canzone Napoletana to operatic romanze**, Tin Pan Alley ballads to present-day R&B. Was there a way to interweave these traditions and not sound too in the tradition? Could they blend—**breathe**—together, in an organic, contemporary way?

This was the dream that Gambi shared with **Lenny White** one evening in late 2009. The budding singer met the accomplished drummer and producer—best known for his accomplishments in the world of Fusion-era jazz—after a gig in Milan. White was intrigued: "Send me something. If I like it, I'll work with you."

Gambi sent something: an English version of the old Neapolitan canto "Carmela" and White was hooked. What began as a creative challenge quickly became a full album project requiring Gambi's presence in **New York City**, and eventually included an impressive circle of musicianship: keyboardists **Chick Corea**, **Patrice Rushen**, and **Gil Goldstein**. Bassists **Ron Carter**, **John Benitez**, and **Dave Finch**. Trumpeter **Wallace Roney** and saxophonist **Gato**

**Barbieri**. Guitarist **Nick Moroch** and *bandoneonero* **Hector Del Curto**. First-call percussionists, string players and orchestrators, with **White** himself on drums throughout.

*Introducing Letizia Gambi* is the result of a year and a half of inspired songwriting and studio work. Its stylistic and linguistic mix – **English, Italian, Neapolitan and Spanish** – shows off the album's borderless ambitions. There's a satisfying balance of themes that deal with romance and ruefulness from a variety of genres, including more traditional – **like Duke Ellington and older cantautore of Naples** – to such recent song crafters as **Bjork** and fellow Neapolitan **Pino Daniele** (whose longtime favorite "Appocundria" – with its whisp of a melody – receives a grand, sweeping treatment on this collection).

Gambi's voice is front and center, comfortably convincing across a range of rhythms and moods. She ably handles a song's sense of drama, without tipping to an extreme: "Secret Tears", the album's kickoff tune taken from a **Donizetti opera**, is a stellar example. She can plumb the emotional depth of a lyric, telling its story from beginning to end. She can be facile and loose, or bite into and convincingly sell a hook – as she does so well on her own composition "**A Time**", co-written with White.

Speaking of originals: most were composed with White's structural guidance, and Gambi's songwriting ability merits its own applause. On tunes like "The Love Of Your Life" and "My Town", she proves herself bilingually adept, marrying message and melody, bringing an Italian lyricism and confidence to her English pronun-

ciation. **"Yo Soy El Sur"**, is especially significant: a powerful statement of Southern pride that literally sings down the various travails and unexpected troubles she faced in recording this album.

True to Gambi's initial vision, the album's primary roots remain the music of her youth, and the vocal jazz she later embraced. It's a musical kinship that makes sense: in both, equal attention is afforded melody as well as embellishment, with highest value placed on a singer's personal stamp. In both, there's an abiding reverence for what came before—songs are kept around for a long time. These shared priorities come through in Gambi's medley of the nostalgic ode to Naples **"Munasterio 'e Santa-chiara"** and **Ellington's "In A Sentimental Mood"**. They are there in the playful revival of Bruno Canfora "Soli" (originally a hit for Italian songbird **Mina** in 1965) as well as Gambi's updating of older classics **"Tu Si 'Na Cosa Grande"**, and that capo of Neapolitan melodies, "O Sole Mio". (Dig Gambi's impromptu flow on the closing moments of the last.)

There are details that pull upwards on the corners of the mouth, like **Barbieri's solo on the tango-ized take of Prince's "The Question of U"** (that briefly quotes his own **"Theme from Last Tango in Paris"**) and the eerie vocal echo of a line from **Madama Butterfly** in **"Bachelorette"**. There are elements woven throughout—Del Curto's wispy *bandoneon* lines and White's nuanced rhythms—that provide the album a satisfyingly consistent feel and remind the ear of the group effort behind these tracks.

**Introducing Letizia Gambi** lives up to its title. On it, intermittently, Gambi speaks directly of herself and the deep musical roots she



inherited, revealing her natural speaking voice with its colorful accent. It's a novel idea that works well, as does the brief excerpt of a home recording of her uncle singing "Passione"—another song from Naples' rich legacy—that precedes her own rendition, refitted with an electric guitar solo. It speaks to the triumph of the marriage of eras and styles that defines this album and promises much more to come. **Brava!** **Ashley Kahn**

Ashley Kahn is author of *Kind of Blue: The Making of the Miles Davis Masterpiece*, *A Love Supreme: the Story of John Coltrane's Signature Album*, *The house that Trane Built: the story of Impulse Records* and other titles on music and culture. Teaches music history and journalism at New York University.



Patrice Rushen    Letizia Gambi    Lenny White    Ron Carter

# 01

**Letizia Gambi**  
**Max Ionata**  
**Antonio Farao'**  
**Dario Rosciglione**  
**Lenny White**

**SECRET TEARS (UNA FURTIVA LAGRIMA)**  
(G. Donizetti/Letizia Gambi/Lenny White-Chinese Music BMI)  
Arranged by **Lenny White**

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vocals & back vocals  
sax  
piano  
bass  
drums

# 02

**Letizia Gambi**  
**Chick Corea**  
**John Benitez**  
**Lenny White**  
**Pedro Alvarez**  
**Jair Sala**  
**Hector Del Curto**  
**Nick Moroch**  
**Jisoo Ok**  
**Nick Danielson**  
**Leonardo Suauz**  
**Paz Shmuel Katz**  
**Ron Lawrence**  
**Daniel Miller**

**APPOCUNDRIA**  
(P. Daniele - EMI)  
Arranged by **Lenny White**, Orchestration by **Carlos Franzetti**

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vocals  
piano  
bass  
drums  
percussions  
percussions  
bandoneon  
guitar  
cello  
strings  
strings  
strings  
strings

03

**AND I THINK OF YOU (E PENSO A TE)**

(L.Battisti/Mogol-Acqua Azzurra)

Arranged by **Nicki Richards & Lenny White**

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**Letizia Gambi**  
**Patrice Rushen**  
**Dave Finch**  
**Lenny White**  
**Hector Del Curto**  
**Jisoo Ok**  
**Nicki Richards**  
**Gregory Russel Clark**

vocals  
piano  
bass  
drums  
bandoneon  
cello  
back vocals  
back vocals

04

**SOLI**

(B.Canfora/F.Castellano-Pipolo-Curci)

Arranged by **Gil Goldstein**

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**Letizia Gambi**  
**Gil Goldstein**  
**John Benitez**  
**Lenny White**  
**Nick Danielson**  
**Leonardo Suauz**  
**Paz Shmuel Katz**  
**Ron Lawrence**  
**Daniel Miller**

vocals & back vocals  
piano & accordion  
bass  
drums  
strings  
strings  
strings  
strings  
strings

05

**YOU ARE SO SPECIAL (TU SI' 'NA COSA GRANDE)**

(D.Modugno/R.Gigli-Curci/Megao')

Arranged by **Lenny White**, Strings Arranged by **Gil Goldstein**

English lyrics by **Letizia Gambi & Lenny White**

(by courtesy of 'Curci /Megao' Publishing)

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**Letizia Gambi**  
**Wallace Roney**  
**Gil Goldstein**  
**John Benitez**  
**Lenny White**  
**Nick Danielson**  
**Leonardo Suauz**  
**Paz Shmuel Katz**  
**Ron Lawrence**  
**Daniel Miller**

vocals  
trumpet  
piano & accordion  
bass  
drums  
strings  
strings  
strings  
strings  
strings

06

**A TIME**

(LennyWhite/Letizia Gambi -Chinese Music BMI )

Arranged by **Lenny White**, Strings Arranged by **Carlos Franzetti**

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**Letizia Gambi**  
**Vince Evans**  
**Dave Finch**  
**Lenny White**  
**Hector Del Curto**  
**Nick Danielson**  
**Leonardo Suauz**  
**Paz Shmuel Katz**  
**Ron Lawrence**  
**Daniel Miller**

vocals & back vocals  
piano  
bass  
drums  
bandoneon  
strings  
strings  
strings  
strings  
strings

07

**'O SOLE MIO**

(E.Di Capua/A.Mazzucchi/G.Capurro-Bideri c.e.v.e./  
Gennarelli Bideri) Arranged by **Lenny White**  
Strings arranged by **Lenny White & Carlos Franzetti**

**Letizia Gambi**  
**Patrice Rushen**  
**Ron Carter**  
**Lenny White**  
**Nick Moroch**  
**Hector Del Curto**  
**Jisoo Ok**  
**Nicki Richards**  
**Gregory Russel Clark**  
**Nick Danielson**  
**Leonardo Suauz**  
**Paz Shmuel Katz**  
**Ron Lawrence**  
**Daniel Miller**

vocals  
piano  
bass  
drums  
guitar  
bandoneon  
cello  
back vocals  
back vocals  
strings  
strings  
strings  
strings

08

**THE QUESTION OF U**

(Prince/Nelson Prince Rogers)  
Arranged by **Lenny White**

**Letizia Gambi**  
**Axel Tosca**  
**John Benitez**  
**Lenny White**  
**Gato Barbieri**  
**Nick Moroch**  
**Hector Del Curto**  
**Nichi Richards**  
**Gregory Russel Clark**

vocals  
piano  
bass  
drums  
sax  
guitar  
bandoneon  
back vocals  
back vocals





09

**Letizia Gambi**  
**Gennaro Sica**  
**Nick Moroch**  
**Pete Levin**  
**John Benitez**  
**Lenny White**  
**Hector Del Curto**  
**Jisoo Ok**

### **PASSIONE**

(L.Bovio/E.Tagliaferri/N.Valente-Bottega dei Quattro)  
Arranged by **Lenny White & Pete Levin**

vocals  
tenor vocals  
electric & acoustic guitar  
piano  
bass  
drums  
bandoneon  
cello

10

**Letizia Gambi**  
**Patrice Rushen**  
**Ron Carter**  
**Lenny White**  
**Hector Del Curto**  
**Nick Moroch**  
**Jisoo Ok**  
**Nicki Richards**

### **BACHELORETTE**

(Bjork Gudmundsdottir/Sigurjon B.Sigurdsson)  
Arranged by **Nicki Richards**

vocals & back vocals  
piano  
bass  
drums  
bandoneon  
guitar  
cello  
back vocals



# 11

## THE LOVE OF YOUR LIFE

(LennyWhite/Letizia Gambi -Chinese Music BMI )

Arranged by **Lenny White** Orchestration by **Gil Goldstein**

**Letizia Gambi**  
**Gil Goldstein**  
**Dave Finch**  
**Nick Moroch**  
**Hector Del Curto**  
**Nick Danielson**  
**Leonardo Suauz**  
**Paz Shmuel Katz**  
**Ron Lawrence**  
**Daniel Miller**

vocals/talking voice  
piano  
bass  
guitar  
bandoneon  
strings  
strings  
strings  
strings  
strings

# 12

## MY TOWN (CARMELA)

(S.Bruni/S.Palomba/L.Gambi-CAM)

Arranged by **Lenny White** Orchestration by **Carlos Franzetti**

English lyrics by **Letizia Gambi** special thanks to  
**Bruni/Palomba's** heirs for sharing with Letizia the new recording

**Letizia Gambi**  
**Dave Finch**  
**Lenny White**  
**Carlos Franzetti**  
**Nick Moroch**  
**Hector Del Curto**  
**Nick Danielson**  
**Leonardo Suauz**  
**Paz Shmuel Katz**  
**Ron Lawrence**  
**Daniel Miller**

vocals & back vocals  
bass  
drums  
piano  
guitar  
bandoneon  
strings  
strings  
strings  
strings  
strings

Drums recorded at **Dot's Way**, West Hills, **California** Special Thanks to Vince Wilburn



# 13

## **MUNASTERIO 'E SANTACHIARA / IN A SENTIMENTAL MOOD**

(A.Barberis/M.Galdieri-La Canzonetta)/  
(Duke Ellington/Mills)

Arranged by **Patrice Rushen**

English lyrics by **Letizia Gambi & Lenny White**  
(courtesy of La Canzonetta Publishing)

**Letizia Gambi**  
**Patrice Rushen**  
**Ron Carter**  
**Lenny White**  
**Nick Moroch**  
**Jisoo Ok**  
**Hector Del Curto**

vocals  
piano  
bass  
drums  
guitar  
cello  
bandoneon

# 14

## **YO SOY EL SUR**

(LennyWhite/Letizia Gambi - Chinese Music BMI)

Arranged by **Lenny White**

**Letizia Gambi**  
**Axel Tosca**  
**John Benitez**  
**Lenny White**  
**Hector Del Curto**  
**Nick Danielson**

vocals & back vocals  
piano  
bass  
drums  
bandoneon  
violin solo

Recorded at Knoop Studios, New Jersey / Recording Engineer: Manfred Knoop, Chris Suit  
(except track 1) / Mixed by Manfred Knoop at Knoop Studios (tracks 1, 5, 7, 10, 11, 12, 13 and  
14) drums of track 11 recorded at Dot's Way (California) / Mixed by Pablo Arraya at Audio  
Piranha Studio, New York (tracks 2, 3, 4, 6, 8, 9) / Track 1 Recorded at Casa del Jazz (Rome),  
Recording Engineer: Ascanio Cusella / Mastered by Greg Calbi at Sterling Sound, New York.

## **T H A N K S**

To my family, thanks for being my strenghts, my reason, for supporting me with so deep love.

To my Mother because she's the reason of my singing, my Dad who taught me the bravery of being honest and the power of an open mind, Gianpaolo my brother always by my side holding my hand and Vale my second sister.

To Bob who acted as an angel, to Valentina who saw my dreams through my heart and believed in me.

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To you is dedicated this record and whatever I'll do in the future. Your teaching will stay forever with me: I'll thank you for the rest of my life.

