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**Gaia Wilmer Large Ensemble**  
***Folia: The Music of Egberto Gismonti***

The magical music of Brazilian composer/guitarist/pianist **Egberto Gismonti** has enchanted generations of listeners. His celebrated blend of folkloric, jazz, and popular music has stationed Gismonti in the pantheon of Brazilian music. Composer/arranger **Gaia Wilmer** fell under Gismonti's spell as a youngster and now honors him with her new large ensemble recording, ***Folia***.

Originally from the south Brazilian city of Florianópolis, Wilmer began her study of music late in life. It wasn't until after graduating with a degree in international relations that Wilmer began to pursue her love of music by moving to Rio de Janeiro to study and perform. After four years, she then decided to move to Boston, where she studied at the Berklee College of Music and the New England Conservatory. While studying, Wilmer presented music with her octet in Boston and New York City.

During her time in Rio, Wilmer was asked to sub for the alto saxophonist in Corações Futuristas, a large woodwind ensemble. The group had a history with Gismonti, collaborating and performing regularly with the legend. Having grown up listening to Gismonti's music, Wilmer was excited at the prospect of performing alongside him on this concert. Intense practice earned Wilmer Gismonti's notice, which soon developed into a friendship (he would later write a recommendation letter for her application to Berklee).

Wilmer began arranging Gismonti's music for large ensembles while finishing her master's degree at NEC, as a rehearsal big band was made available to composers each semester. With a number of arrangements in hand, Wilmer received a grant from the Centro Cultural Banco do Brasil which would provide opportunities to perform her music in the Institute's four concert venues. She anticipated four concerts but was approved for sixteen.

The grant allowed Wilmer to present music of Gismonti at a series of concerts in honor of his 70th birthday in 2018, in which he was part of the program. Gismonti accepted the invitation to play one concert in each of the four cities together with six other special guests, thus allowing Wilmer to enlist harmonica magician **Gabriel Grossi** and the former Gismonti collaborator, cellist/arranger **Jaques Morelenbaum**, for what would eventually be twelve performances in four different Brazilian cities and the recording of *Folia*, which was recorded soon thereafter in São Paulo.

Many musicians have performed the music of Egberto Gismonti. With that in mind, Wilmer wanted to find a way to present his music in a unique way and really make the compositions her own. Wilmer began by selecting pieces that she truly loved, both well-known and more obscure. A handful of the pieces were selected from her favorite Gismonti recording, *Em Família* (1981). She approached each piece individually, trying to find intriguing ways to translate them appropriately for nineteen instruments. Even Gismonti pointed out that with her changes and reharmonizations the music had truly become her own re-compositions.



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The recording begins with the effervescent “Folia,” a tricky piece that, in her mind, had everything necessary for an expansive big band revisal. On “Em Familia,” Wilmer utilizes rarely performed elements from a version of the song’s introduction and slower 4/4 section around which to build a dynamic suite. The dancing “7 Anéis” was the first arrangement Wilmer wrote while at NEC. The piece expands with playful rhythmic experiments and a subtle reharmonization, providing a fantastic structure for a Gismonti piano feature. Gismonti named the minimalist piece “Bianca” for his then infant daughter. Wilmer asks the trumpets and trombones to mirror the sounds of a playground to honor the tribute. The ensemble keeps the piece floating with ambiguous harmonies and quiet subtlety. Wilmer gives depth to “Infância” by incorporating a segment of a Gismonti played interlude into the intro before the piece takes off into tempo led by a wonderful feature segment from Morelenbaum’s cello.

Wilmer completely reimagined the beloved “Lôro” by utilizing tiny pieces of melody to create a chant-like chorale used in the intro, middle, and ending of the piece. The theme emerges slowly and Grossi’s dynamic harmonica playing is a true highlight. One of the last pieces Wilmer arranged, “Karatê,” utilizes an interpretation of the frevo rhythm from northeastern Brazil, a gorgeous Gismonti piano intro, and typical sounds of Brazilian big bands to become a sweeping standout. “Maracatu” takes its name from another northeastern rhythm, which was stretched by Gismonti and further stretched by Wilmer. The piece was arranged for a solo feature for Gustavo D’Amico’s soprano saxophone.

Gismonti wrote “Cego Aderaldo” for a blind man in northeastern Brazil. Composer Luiz Gonzaga also wrote a piece with the same name for the same man. Wilmer decided to find a way to combine the two, the middle eastern elements of Gismonti’s tune countered by the baião rhythms of their master Gonzaga. The recording concludes with Gismonti’s typical encore, “Baião Malandro,” a fast, difficult tune that includes some incredible arranging, including a full band sweep that would usually cascade from Gismonti’s piano.

**Gaia Wilmer’s** large ensemble tribute to her hero **Egberto Gismonti** finds a perfect way to honor the legend’s work and expand upon it. **Folia** balances the love and appreciation for the existing works while re-composing them into exciting and fun pieces for a large ensemble.

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