



DENISE DONATELLI

Whistling in the Dark – The Music of Burt Bacharach **Savant Records/Release Date August 27, 2021**

Just as the indelible vibe of the legendary Burt Bacharach was beginning to take hold of our culture and become the soundtrack of everyone's lives, three-time GRAMMY® nominated vocalist Denise Donatelli, then a young girl growing up in Allentown, PA, found a deep connection to Dionne Warwick's original version of "Walk on By." And now, with her new album ***Whistling in the Dark – The Music of Burt Bacharach***, she continues her lifelong love affair with his songs, marking her first concept album devoted to a single composer and her debut recording with legendary producer Larry Klein.

Recorded live under strict COVID-19 protocol in October 2020 at The Village Studios in Los Angeles, the sessions feature Denise bringing her warm vocal elegance with Klein's hand selected all-star jazz/pop quartet of himself on bass, Larry Goldings on piano and organ, Anthony Wilson on guitar and Vinnie Colaiuta on drums.

The intimately arranged collection finds her and the four time GRAMMY® winning producer (Joni Mitchell, Melody Gardot, Madeleine Peyroux) discovering a fresh soulfulness in some of Bacharach's iconic hits including "The Look of Love" and several originally associated with Warwick that Denise first heard growing up listening to the soul stations in nearby Philly: "Walk On By," "In Between the Heartaches," "Anyone Who Had a Heart" and "A House is Not a Home." Two poignant lesser known songs, "Toledo" and "In the Darkest Place," were collaborations with Elvis Costello from their 1998 album, *Painted From Memory* and the opening title track is an artful, atmospheric re-imagining of a track from *Blue Umbrella*, an EP by Bacharach and Daniel Tashian that earned a 2020 GRAMMY nomination for Best Traditional Pop Vocal Album. One of the craftier choices is "Mexican Divorce," originally a 1961 Lieber & Stoller-produced hit for The Drifters, which featured backing vocals by Warwick and Whitney Houston's mother Cissy Houston.

Like many grand collaborations taking root in Los Angeles, the genesis of ***Whistling in the Dark*** traces back to a GRAMMY get-together that Denise and Klein attended. She was a longtime friend of his wife, singer Luciana Souza and a big fan of his work. Having enjoyed her previous recordings, Klein expressed interest in producing a project with her – but with a whole new pared down approach. They met numerous times to discuss possible material and last April, just after the start of the pandemic lockdown, Klein was on a call with a friend who had received a call from Bacharach. The proverbial light bulb went off and Klein telephoned Denise with the idea to do an album of all Burt Bacharach music. She was on board immediately and overcoming her initial concerns about finding unique ways to tackle this project, the two created a powerful playlist balancing recognizable classics and more obscure songs from the immense catalog.

Larry's approach to the recording was drastically different from what Denise had been used to with her earlier projects. Instead of having her familiarize herself with the arrangements beforehand, he invited her into dynamic, highly spontaneous sessions – nearly mirroring the effect of an impromptu live performance. To quote Denise from

her liner notes: “Larry’s idea was to re-imagine Bacharach’s music in such a minimalistic way that examines the very essence of the songs. He knew what he was striving for, but left room in the process for what became a great collaboration among the musicians.”

Born and raised in the countryside of Allentown, PA, Denise, trained on classical piano from age four through her high school years and began her love of jazz at an early age. She grew up listening to all genres of music but fell in love with jazz and vocalist’s recordings of Nancy Wilson, Sarah Vaughn, Carmen McRae, and Ella Fitzgerald.

Living in Atlanta in the early 90’s, she began working at Turner Broadcasting and launched her singing career at the Ritz Carlton Hotel where she appeared regularly with a jazz trio for over five years.

Denise moved to Los Angeles in 2000 and immediately found her place in the tight knit community of well-respected musicians. In 2005, she released her debut recording *In the Company of Friends*, produced by pianist Tom Garvin on the Jazzed Media label. She then teamed with producer/pianist Geoffrey Keezer and their highly successful Savant Records collaborations earned four GRAMMY nominations: three for Best Jazz Vocal Album for *When Lights Are Low (2010)*, *Soul Shadows (2012)* and *Find a Heart (2015)*, and one for *Best Arrangement* for the track “Don’t Explain.” In 2012, Denise was chosen Jazz Vocalist of the Year by The Los Angeles Jazz Society, whose advisors at the time included Herbie Hancock, Quincy Jones and Johnny Mandel. She has also placed in Downbeat Magazine’s Critics Poll in the categories of Best Female Jazz Vocalist and Rising Star for five consecutive years. Once described as a “musician’s singer” by the late saxophonist Phil Woods, her innate musicianship and pure tone have also earned her spots singing for episodes of “The Simpsons” and TV promos for *Frazier*, CBS/Paramount and Turner Classic Movies. Denise’s on-camera work includes national and international commercials for such brands as CNN, Hyundai, Lexus, and Mercedes-Benz.

Denise is associated with the American Heart Association in memory of her son.

“As a recording artist, everything has been an extension of my formative years studying music, piano performances, listening to and singing along with great artists’ recordings. All of these endeavors have inspired this incredible journey. And what a great next stop on the journey this is – collaborating with Larry Klein paying tribute to one of the greatest songwriters of our time!” ***Whistling In the Dark—The Music of Burt Bacharach!***

Track Listing

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|----|---------------------------|-----------------------------------|
| 1. | Whistling in the Dark | (Burt Bacharach & Daniel Tashian) |
| 2. | The Look of Love | (Burt Bacharach & Hal David) |
| 3. | In Between the Heartaches | (Burt Bacharach & Hal David) |
| 4. | Toledo | (Burt Bacharach & Elvis Costello) |
| 5. | Anyone Who Had A Heart | (Burt Bacharach & Hal David) |
| 6. | Walk On By | (Burt Bacharach & Hal David) |
| 7. | In The Darkest Place | (Burt Bacharach & Elvis Costello) |
| 8. | Mexican Divorce | (Burt Bacharach & Bob Hilliard) |
| 9. | A House is Not a Home | (Burt Bacharach & Hal David) |

PRODUCED BY LARRY KLEIN

Denise Donatelli, Vocals
Larry Goldings, Keyboards
Thomas Dybdahl, Prepared Piano & Synth (track 1)
Anthony Wilson, Guitar
Larry Klein, Bass, Additional Keyboards
Vinnie Colaiuta, Drums

