

# DOWNTOWN *Music* GALLERY

## FRANCOIS HOULE / KATE GENTILE / ALEXANDER HAWKINS - *Fatrasies*

(Les Disques Victo CD 137; Quebec, Canada)

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FRANÇOIS HOULE  
KATE GENTILE  
ALEXANDER HAWKINS

*Fatrasies*

Featuring Francois Houle on bass clarinet, clarinet & electronics, Alexander Hawkins on piano and Kate Gentile on drums & percussion. I often wonder how and why certain combinations of musicians come together to perform for the a festival like FIMAV, especially when that combination has never played together before. I see that Vancouver-based clarinetist Francois Houle and British pianist Alexander Hawkins did record together in a trio with NY-based percussionist Harris Eisentstadt for a disc on Songlines which was released in 2018. Having listened to quite a bit of Kate Gentile's recent recordings with Matt Mitchell as well as with her collaboration with the International Contemporary Ensemble, I can see why she would make a good choice here since she is a sympathetic collaborator as well as a thoughtful composer. I admire all three of these musicians immensely and have heard each one live as well as many different recordings.

The title of this disc, "Fatrasies", which means jumble, is a poem in which the meaning is often found in the way a particular poem sounds when we hear it rather than a literal translation of the chosen words. I just got back from the recent (40th-2024) FIMAV Fest in Quebec, having caught all 18 sets over four days. The sound and view at each concert was consistently well done. Hence the set on this disc from last year's fest is superb. Considering that this is indeed a live recording on a large stage (at the Le Carre 150 venue), the sound is especially well captured and intimate sounding. The opening piece is continuous and lush, unfolding meticulously and majestically. The repeating chords played by Mr. Hawkins is/are filled with drama and suspense. Mr Houle plays a powerful clarinet solo on top while Ms Gentile provides a cosmic, percussive cushion underneath. As the piece unfolds, the tension and simmering undertow continue to increase to near boiling point. There appears to be several cross-currents going on here, connecting different layers or streams. On "Revenons A Nos Moutons", things continue to escalate past the boiling point and into an intense, explosive section which slowly calms down although Hawkins' piano continues to erupt. Mr. Houle's clarinet is especially well and often closely recorded so we can hear every nuance just right. As I listen to the last piece, I find this disc to be most magical, focused, a marvelous, well-balanced, thoughtfully executed and instantly composed trio.