

FRANÇOIS HOULE • ALEXANDER HAWKINS • HARRIS EISENSTADT

• YOU HAVE OPTIONS •





**FRANÇOIS HOULE : CLARINET
ALEXANDER HAWKINS : PIANO
HARRIS EISENSTADT : DRUMS**

**1. CLUE 5:17 • 2. ART 7:14 • 3. RUN RIOT 3:16 • 4. THE PITTS 6:17 • 5. PRAYER
6:14 • 6. ADVICE 4:18 • 7. LARGO 5:34 • 8. YOU HAVE OPTIONS, I HAVE A
LAWYER 6:43 • 9. LE CONCOMBRE DE CHICOUTIMI 6:14 • 10. DUSK 7:19**

TOTAL TIME: 58:46 • RECORDED AND MIXED IN 24 BITS / 96 KHZ





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1, 6 COMPOSED BY ALEXANDER HAWKINS, BIG LIFE / IN ALL SERIOUSNESS MUSIC LTD (PRS) • 3, 5, 9 BY FRANÇOIS HOULE, TATTERDEMALION MUSIC (SOCAN)
• 4, 8 BY HARRIS EISENSTADT, HERESY MUSIC (SOCAN) • 2 BY STEVE LACY, ASSOCIATED MUSIC PUBLISHERS (BMI) • 7 BY CHARLES IVES, APRS (BMI) • 10 BY
ANDREW HILL, JAZZ FUND MUSIC (BMI) • RECORDED JULY 5, 2016 BY JOHN RAHAM AT AFTERLIFE STUDIOS, VANCOUVER, BC • MIXED & MASTERED BY FRANÇOIS
HOULE AT AFTERDAY AUDIO, VANCOUVER • PRODUCED BY FRANÇOIS HOULE • EXECUTIVE PRODUCER: TONY REIF • LAYOUT & DESIGN: LEE HUTZULAK •
COVER PHOTO: NICOLAS TEICHROB • SESSION PHOTOS: LAURENCE SVIRCHEV • THANKS TO KENTON LOEWEN FOR LENDING HARRIS HIS DRUMS
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You Have Options represents more than a culmination of thoughts and ideas, musically and logistically. The coming together with Alex and Harris, and the music we've managed to create despite the constraints of geography, time, and space, epitomize the vision of a very special person, without whom this project would have never come to life.

After moving to Vancouver in 1990 I forged a special relationship with Ken Pickering, the recently retired Artistic Director (Emeritus) and co-founder of the Vancouver International Jazz Festival. Throughout his 30-some years at the helm of Coastal Jazz & Blues Society, Ken encouraged collaborations of all sorts between local musicians and their peers from around the world. He would go out of his way to pair established artists with local musicians who grabbed his ears during his many outings to concerts. Thanks to his mentorship I've had the amazing opportunity to not only share the stage with many of my musical heroes, such as Steve Lacy, Evan Parker, George Lewis and Joëlle Léandre (to name a few), but also to forge life-long friendships with many of them. For example, I've been collaborating with legendary French bassist Joëlle Léandre and pianist Benoît Delbecq for almost 25 years.

Over the years Ken and I shared a little ritual together, which consisted in meeting on Monday mornings at Milano's Coffee on East 8th. During these meetings we'd discuss everything from the weather to current political affairs, but we'd also perform a kind of assessment of our individual activities, constantly dreaming up new ways of doing things. In 2010, thinking about the upcoming jazz festival program, I suggested putting together an international quintet, with the intention of mixing up old relationships with new ones in order to form an exciting lineup for a performance at The Ironworks, a favourite venue of touring and local musicians. This idea stemmed from Ken's philosophy of fostering international collaborations. Ken immediately jumped on the idea and suggested a few artists who were already expressing the desire to present their projects at the festival in 2011. We came up with a small combo with American Taylor Ho

Bynum on cornet, Swiss trombonist (Berlin resident) Samuel Blaser, Parisian pianist Benoît Delbecq, and two Canadians residing in Brooklyn, bassist Michael Bates and drummer Harris Eisenstadt. (It was my first time performing with Samuel, though I'd performed with Harris in his one-off Vancouver Quartet at the 2008 festival.) The group gelled wonderfully from the get-go, which led to a recording session at New Jersey's Water Music Studios and a Canada-US tour and release of Genera on the Songlines label in 2012.

Harris' playing throughout this project was so solid and inspiring that I knew I'd want to explore other avenues to perform and create music with him. In addition to being a fantastic drummer, Harris is a scholar of African and Cuban percussion traditions, and a really warm and easygoing person. If that wasn't enough, Harris has a really unique gift as a composer, with a penchant for infectious lyricism and unusual harmonic twists and turns. His Canada Day projects really grabbed my ears.

With Harris in mind I floated by Ken the idea of a trio with him and a pianist for the 2014 jazz festival. Ken immediately suggested Alexander Hawkins, a UK pianist I had not heard of before, as Alex had been collaborating with Harris since 2006 in the co-led Convergence Quartet (which also included Taylor). Ken spoke so highly of Alex that I accepted the suggestion without having heard his playing. Such was the extent to which I valued Ken's opinions.

Our first performances as a trio were a late-night gig at The Ironworks on June 29, 2014 and an afternoon show at Performance Works on July 1. We pulled together a few charts but mostly improvised a wild set of music to full houses. Alex: "...that gig on Canada Day itself...that was insane! Never having experienced the Jazzfest before, I was slightly unsure how it would work to play this music (what I love about the record is that it's often very spacious and poised, but live, things did get pretty wild at times) in front of that size of non-specialist audience, but it was almost a perfect musical experience: people just checking

out music, for free, without any prejudice as to what it was supposed to be like...kids, families, hard core listeners, casual listeners – everyone was super into it in a way that was really touching.”

In fact those gigs were such a success that we started plotting a course of action for repeat performances and maybe a recording. When Ken booked Alex’s trio (with Harris on drums) for the 2016 festival, we organized a one-day session at Afterlife Studio.

The session itself was unusual in that we didn’t really plan on a specific choice of repertoire. My initial thought was to do a full CD of improvisations, but, knowing Songlines’ Tony Reif’s preference for releasing mostly composed repertoire, we pulled a bunch of charts and started hammering away at a mixed bag of ideas. As we played and tried out a few tunes, it quickly became apparent that we really felt at ease playing each other’s original compositions, but also repertoire that was familiar to all of us. Alex and Harris suggested “Dusk” by Andrew Hill, and Alex suggested Steve Lacy’s strangely nostalgic tune, “Art”. The most unusual selection followed a conversation about off-the-beaten-path chamber music works. I mentioned my love of Charles Ives’ music, in particular a wonderful, not often performed Largo for clarinet, violin and piano. As I was scheduled to perform the work that summer, I pulled the score out and Alex had a go at the piano introduction, with me playing the violin part. It worked rather well, and we made a few takes without ever digging into the third section of the piece where the clarinet writing actually occurs. This rendition would definitely make the heads of classical music aficionados turn, as the level of freedom in interpreting the material somehow reflects the renegade attitude of the composer.

Harris: “What a pleasure to check back in on this music! I remember how very different the music we recorded felt compared to the initial performances... as though we had to pass through that first meeting in order to find the music we

hear now on this session. There’s a sense of poise, of tranquility, even during the densest moments. It feels as if this often delicate, sometimes fierce recording offers another possible response to the question we posed together during the performance on Granville Island – what does it mean to commit entirely to an impassioned hour of improvised music for an audience of hundreds of people unaware, at first, of what they’re about to hear?”

Alex: “Harris and I had just come back to town after a few days on Vancouver Island with my trio and I was in a really great space – being out in Canadian nature and playing music with friends must be the two of the best places to be! I recall that we didn’t necessarily play the same repertoire on the recording as we’d played on the gigs, and yet it all came very naturally. Clearly you and Harris have a long relationship, as do he and I, but given how little we’d played together at this point (you and I, and the trio), it was pretty uncanny how easy it all was, in the best possible way. I love the way Charles Ives, Andrew Hill, Lacy, and our own music sit totally unselfconsciously alongside each other...it’s that great thing of being stylistically eclectic yet totally coherent – but naturally eclectic (deliberate eclecticism is such a drag!).”

It’s this unselfish quality that defines long-term friendships, ones that move us to engage in new life experiences and to share ideas. If Ken Pickering’s mentorship has taught me one thing, it’s to trust the process. If one is surrounded by likeminded people, good things happen. It’s certainly true in music. This trio owes its existence to Ken. The music on this release is a tribute to his generosity of spirit and singular vision.

François Houle
Vancouver, BC
August 2018

Harris Eisenstadt
Brooklyn, NY

Alexander Hawkins
Oxford, England

In Memoriam Ken Pickering (1952-2018)