

# New Issues



## FRANK GRATKOWSKI QUARTET LE VENT ET LA GORGE LEO 655

HARM-OH-NIE / LE VANT  
ET LA GORGE / LIED –  
SONG / GO! / THE FLYING  
DUTCHMAN. TOTAL TIME:  
74:34.

Frank Gratkowski – as, b  
clt, contrabass clt; Wolter  
Wierbos – tbn; Dieter  
Manderscheid – b; Gerry  
Hemingway  
– d. 10/07 and 2/11, Koln,  
Germany.

**L**e Vent Et La Gorge is the fourth album by saxophonist Frank Gratkowski's quartet since 2000. But the roots of this group go back to the saxophonist's mid 90s trio. From 1995-1999, the trio consisted of Manderscheid and Hemingway with Dutch trombonist Wolter Wierbos being added in 2000, making it a quartet. Wierbos was a member of Hemingway's famed 1990s quintet, one of the best groups of the decade. And Gratkowski and Wierbos also played in Hemingway's Double Blues Crossing quintet. So there's a lot of interconnections within this band which makes for four like-minded players delivering compositions and improvising group music of the highest order.

Gratkowski composed all of the material. It's clearly structured but it's loose enough to allow these musicians free rein. "Harm-on-ie" is an eight part suite that shows this off beautifully, alternating sections based around a staggered rhythm with those of drones and extended instrumental techniques.

"Part 6", an extended sequence with Wierbos playing multiphonics and Manderscheid coaxing spectral harmonics from his bass is especially effective. Elsewhere, the brief "Lied/Song" begins with a wonderfully expressive bass solo by Manderscheid before the others enter to essay a song that, if straightened out a bit, could sound like something from the more advanced cool school. The concluding "Flying Dutchman" features Wierbos wrenching the most astonishing sounds out of his instrument as Gratkowski roams underneath him with commentary on contrabass clarinet. The ten minute piece develops at a slow pace with discrete patter by Hemingway as the lower instruments play the scored material below while Wierbos continues an almost continual stream of consciousness. It's a magnificent performance.

This is the fourth album by this ensemble in 13 years. Each has something to recommend it but "Le Vent Et La Gorge" may be their finest yet.

Robert Iannapolo