

A homage to Frank Zappa



48 fugues for Frank

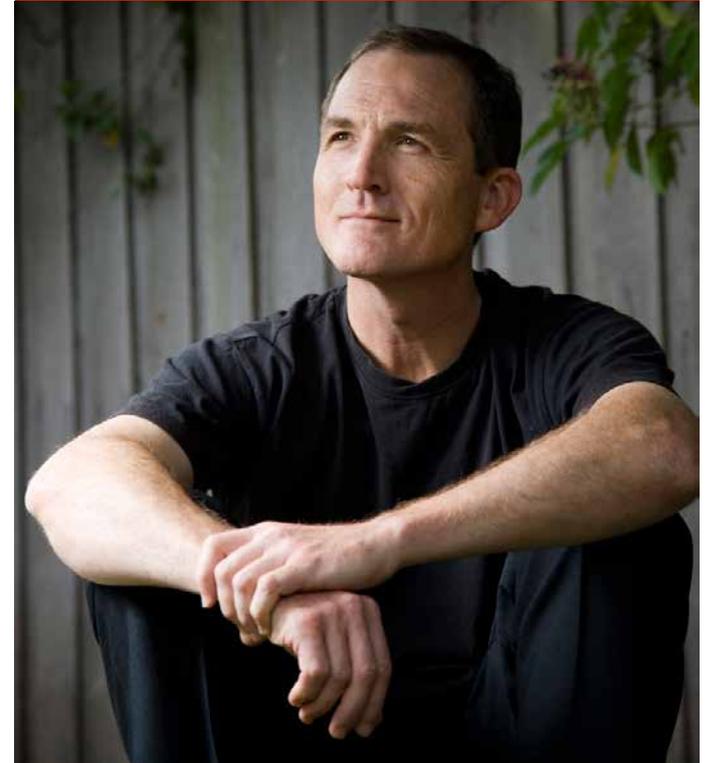
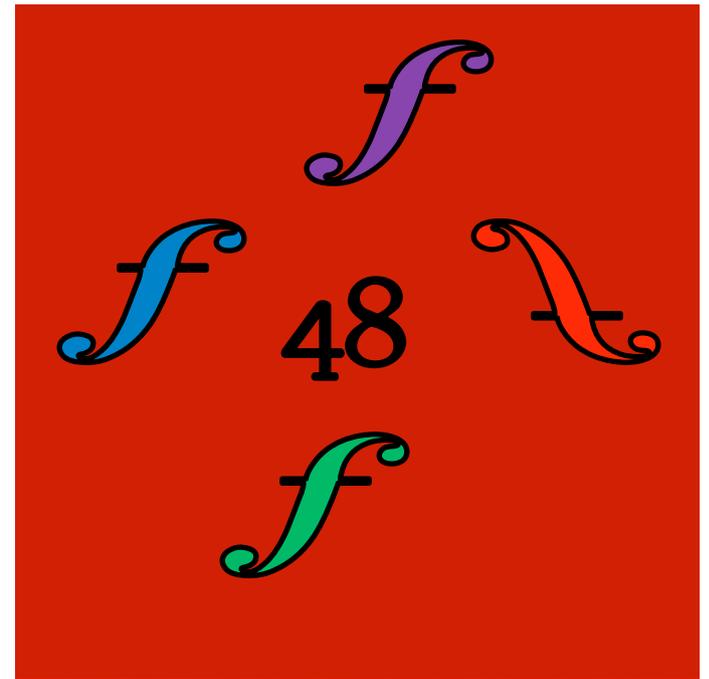
A musical homage to the life and work of Frank Zappa, composed and performed by Michael Kieran Harvey, and complemented by **Lingua Franka** – concrete poetry by Arjun von Caemmerer, **48 Fugues for Frank** premiered in 2010. A labor of love for Zappaphiles and anyone else with an interest in advanced music, innovative poetry and artistic vision. Each of the ten pieces uses four or five ideas inspired by, reacting to, or developing some of Zappa's signature techniques.

Track listing (with obscure Zappa influences):

1. 48 Fugues For Frank #1 — (Greggery Peccary, Pentagon Afternoon) 7'50"
2. 48 Fugues For Frank #2 — (The Girl in The Magnesium Dress) 7'07"
3. 48 Fugues For Frank #3 — (Jazz From Hell) 7'18"
4. 48 Fugues For Frank #4 — (Tink Runs Amok) 6'20"
5. 48 Fugues For Frank #5 — (Civilization Phaze III) 4'36"
6. 48 Fugues For Frank #6 — (G-Spot Tornado) 3'46"
7. 48 Fugues For Frank #7 — (St Etienne: guitar solo) 6'16"
8. 48 Fugues For Frank #8 — (Ruth is Sleeping) 4'58"
9. 48 Fugues For Frank #9 — (The Black Page) 5'13"
10. 48 Fugues For Frank #10 — (Baby Snakes) 6'02"

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I remain indebted forever to Ernest Rust who opened my mind to the music and doors of Frank Zappa. Through headphones he encouraged me to subject my much younger and more ignorant self to *You Are What You Is* (apparently one of the albums Zappa was happiest with, and the first to be entirely pooted forth from *The Utility Muffin Research Kitchen*, his own recording studio).

Having been brought up on the more controlled austerities of JS Bach and Ravi Shankar, I could not believe my ears, as I was simultaneously and vastly astounded, bewildered, shocked, amused, entertained.

Then I stumbled across the *Francesco Zappa* album, Zappa's synclavier opus of his namesake (who had *flourished* some 200 years previously) and whose Baroque compositions he had inimitably rendered with his *Barking Pumpkin Digital Gratification Consort*. Frank Zappa reeked humour, affection, subversion – and questions: why the division of music into serious and non?; what is an 'authentic' instrument?; dare 'rock' musicians inhabit other Domaines?; can 'new' music be old, and 'old' music, new?

Thus it was both shocking and exciting to discover that an Australian and 'classical' musician had actually released a version of Zappa's *Ruth Is Sleeping*, and what was even more freaky, was alive and living not in leather but in Hobart, and more oddly yet, was working in parallel on a Zappa homage of his own.

Arjun von Caemmerer

Jugalbandi 2: "Thirteen"

for L. Shankar

J
A
Z Z
PP
A

Frank Zappa was a great man. Through his lyrics he skewered hypocrisy whether religious, social, artistic or corporate. During the '80s he took on the American religious right and the government of Ronnie Ray-gun, testified to the US congress including Tipper and Al Gore on the issue of rock censorship and blasted the hypocrisy of Baptist preachers such as Swaggart, at the same time winning Grammy awards for albums with titles such as *Jazz From Hell*. He was a personal friend of democracy heroes like Vaclav Havel (who also had the courage to confront the other major censoring religion of Communism). At the time of his death in 1993 Zappa was working on an ambitious project called *Civilization Phaze III* which used Dada and concrete poetry techniques to evoke a world not so much post-apocalyptic as post-human toilet.

A perennial thorn in the side of the establishment, he stood up for humanism



and rationalism, and his music reflects both extreme rigour and freedom. No teenager would ever consider self-harm after listening to Zappa's *Suicide Chump* just as any remotely religious-leaning thinking person would hang their head in shame after listening to his rap, the first on vinyl, *Dumb all Over*.

Fugue: to flee
to chase

dissociative state

cryptographic hash function

FZ re cigarettes:

"These aren't drugs ... these are food"

FZ re God:

"In the book it says he made us all to be just like him... so if we're dumb, then God is dumb, and maybe even a little ugly on the side."

Michael Kieran Harvey

for Nicholas Slonimsky

Just A Minitude

From
Tromping Banality
Is
Struck
The
Grand
Wazoo'd Mother'd
Chords
Of
Invention

These pieces pay homage to Zappa's fascination with purely instrumental music. The use of vocals restricted his idiomatic complex style to an accompanying role, largely so that the text could be understood.

A supreme autodidact, Zappa was at his best improvising. With Australian rock infected with vomit-inducing spectacles such as trivia quiz shows and contests, and totally emasculated through the influence of everyone from Scientologists, Hill Song-style evangelical Churches, Christian bikies to old rockers' radio stations, it's important to remember the educative contribution of Zappa.

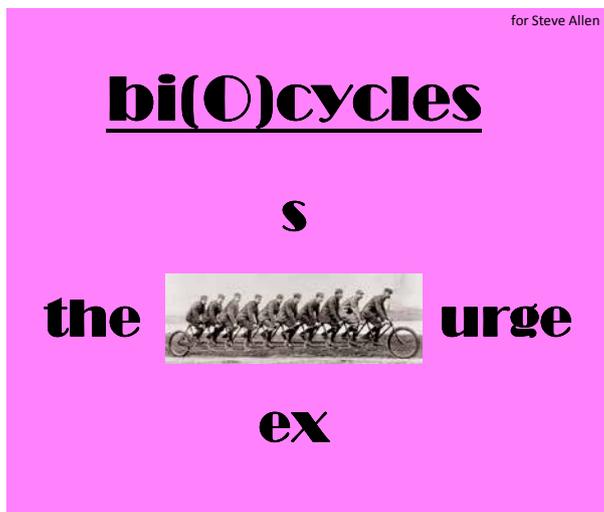
This he achieved not only by way of his satirical lyrics, but in the sheer complexity and intelligence of his music, which somehow bypassed the stupidity of the American top 40 cartel and listening public, spreading to connoisseurs in Europe, Australia and elsewhere.

His deep respect for classical masters such as Stravinsky, Nancarrow, Slonimsky, Bartok, Ravel, Debussy, Varese and Boulez resulted in sympathetic arrangements of their music for his virtuoso ensemble, interspersed with humorous digs at commercial genres like doo-wop, disco, blues, gospel, country 'n' western, cult-backed pop/rock stars, reggae, pretentious jazz and stadium rock to name only a few.

I hope our little homage might inspire listeners to dip into Zappa's oeuvre for themselves, or the Zappa connoisseur to wryly consider what might have been had he not died so young.

Michael Kieran Harvey

Each of these ten pieces uses four or five ideas inspired by, reacting to, or developing some of Zappa's signature techniques. The conceit of using the number 48 in the title, which refers of course to the great contrapuntal cycle of JS Bach, is a playful dig at Zappa's professed antipathy to counterpoint, though the use here of strict fugue form is completely arbitrary.



1. 48 Fugues For Frank #1

Zappa influences:

Greggery Peccary (Studio Tan), Pentagon Afternoon (The Yellow Shark)

Number one started out as an exploration of Zappa's favourite chord, the added 2nd. It quickly morphed into pompous

counterpoint, with a slow coda just before the return of the opening chords and gratuitous arpeggios. (The slow coda becomes the "lyrical" subject of the cycle).

2. 48 Fugues For Frank #2

Zappa influence:

The Girl in The Magnesium Dress (The Perfect Stranger)

Number two explores the mechanical beauty of some of Zappa's synclavier writing, but with a more humane elasticity of tempo. The pitches and scales are transformed from the first piece. Contrapuntal textures are angrily dispersed by an aggressive percussion cadenza, the whole piece fading to white over a ground bass.

3. 48 Fugues For Frank #3

Zappa influence:

Jazz From Hell (Jazz From Hell)

Number three evokes some of his guitar lines and favourite improvising chord changes, and is in the form of a palindrome. The opening harmonies are excited into "added resonances". Debussy's shimmering texture is evident throughout, while Bartok's Bulgarian rhythms vie for equal exposure.

for bb:pp

A PenChant for Double Entendre

*Butt Hi
Sex
Act*

*In
GRime
End Sits*

*CatHoliCC
Our
Seatt*

*He
End
(Full Stop)*

*Oft His
TuRgid
P
Rose.*

"But this exacting rime ends its Catholic course at the end (full stop) of this turgid prose."

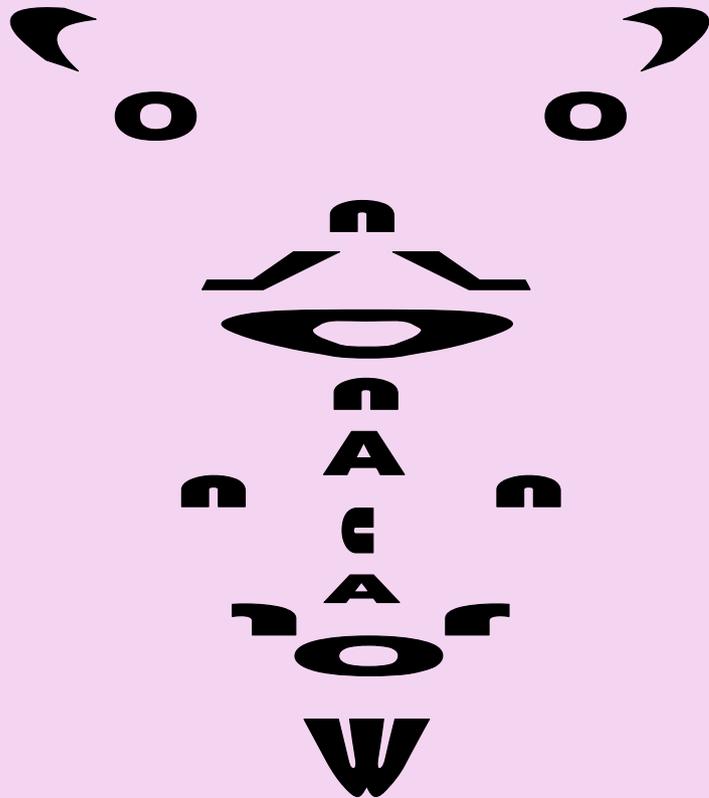
4. 48 Fugues For Frank #4

Zappa influence:

Tink Runs Amok (The Man From Utopia)

Number four begins as a rhythmic looping exploration of five beats alternating with seven in a general over-arching 12/8 time.

Piano Player Study No.52



9. 48 Fugues For Frank #9

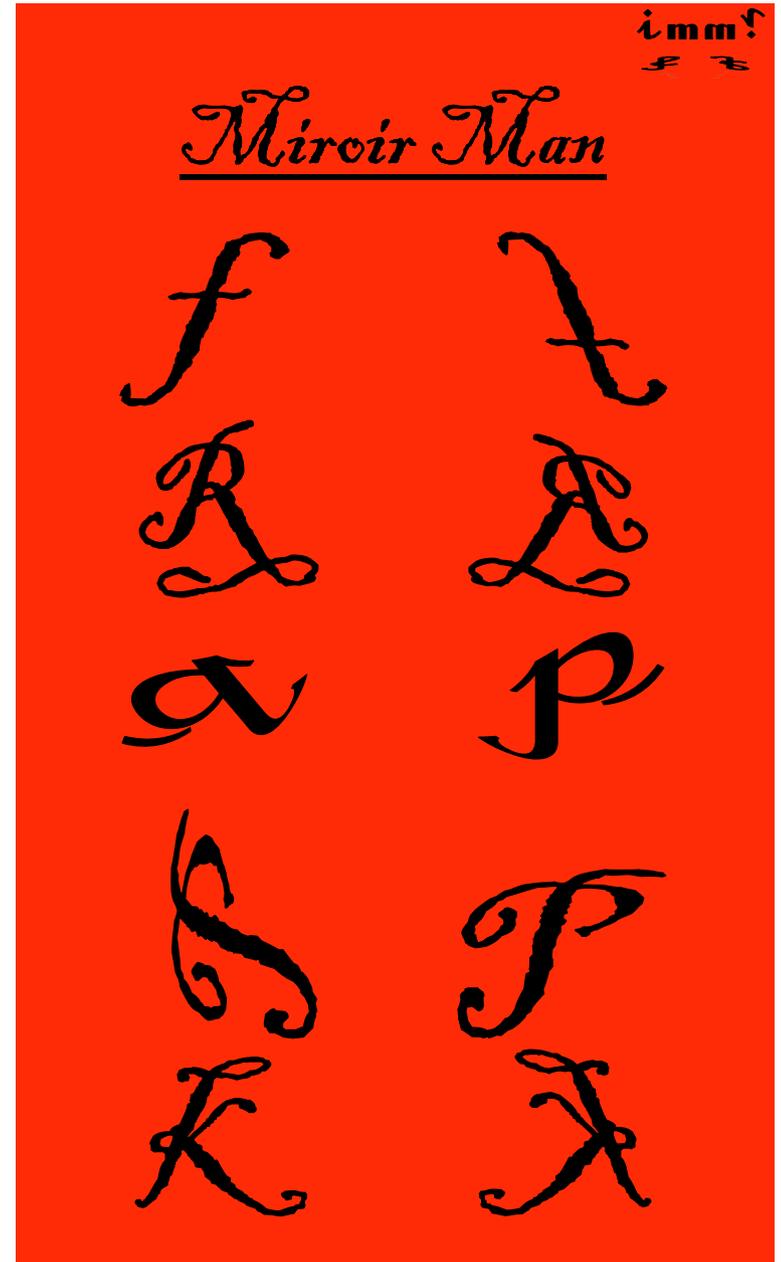
Zappa influence:
The Black Page (Zappa in New York)

Number nine explores the interplay of 21 beat cycles and their prime subdivisions, with extended modal harmony based on the same divisions realized as pitches. At the two-thirds mark there is a colossal climax where the harmonic movement slows down, splintering off into an asymmetrical octave cadenza. The epilogue is soft and a retrograde of the exposition.

10. 48 Fugues For Frank #10

Zappa influence:
Baby Snakes (Sheik Yerbouti)

Number ten begins as an exhausted meditation on the lyrical theme, almost dangerously succumbing to the lure of the easily Ambient, before a final outburst of a montage of themes from the cycle in true operatic Zappa style.





This recording took place in March 2010 at Move Records studio

Piano: EX Shigeru Kawai concert grand (a big thank you to John Blanch of Kawai Australia)

Piano: Michael Kieran Harvey

Composer: Michael Kieran Harvey

Concrete poetry: Arjun von Caemmerer

Recording engineers: Martin Wright and Vaughan McAlley

Editing: Vaughan McAlley

Mastering: Martin Wright

Front cover photo: Graeme Lee

Photo (this page) of Arjun von Caemmerer and Michael Kieran Harvey: Peter Mathew

Notes: Michael Kieran Harvey

48 FUGUES FOR FRANK was premiered during the Mona Foma Festival of Music and Art 2010 (curated by Brian Ritchie) at the Tasmanian Museum and Art Gallery, The Bond Store, in Hobart on 13, 14, 15, 16, and 17 January 2010.

I am deeply grateful to Brian Ritchie for believing in this humble project and bringing it to fruition and a concrete date, and to Arjun, for encouraging me and bringing to the project all his esoteric Zappology, Yogic wisdom and witty concrete poetry. MKH

