

A Historical Overview, Analysis, and Wind Transcription of
Frank Zappa's "Sad Jane"

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Abstract

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This dissertation explores a selection of orchestral works by American composer Frank Zappa (1940-1993), focusing on those recorded by Kent Nagano (b. 1951) and the London Symphony Orchestra (LSO) in 1983. Chapter 1 offers a biographical snapshot of Zappa, including events and factors, such as his autodidactic musical education, that contributed to his musical development and eclectic musical tastes that straddle the worlds of pop and art music. Chapter 2 explores the relationship between Zappa and the various performers he worked with on productions of his large orchestral pieces. This includes his professional relationship with Nagano, his interactions with the musicians of the LSO and Berkeley Symphony Orchestra, as well as the dancers and choreographers involved with *A Zappa Affair*. Chapter 3 provides an analysis of "Sad Jane" and a discussion about the author's transcription of it for wind ensemble.

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INTRODUCTION

While beginning my graduate studies at the University of Oregon, I became interested in the music of composer and guitarist Frank Zappa (1940-1993) through what many of the Zappa fanbase might consider a back door. I had a strong interest in the music of Edgard Varèse (1883-1965), and I was particularly familiar with his works for winds and percussion—*Octandre*, *Hyperprism*, *Intégrales*, and *Ionisation*. While exploring Varèse’s music, I came across some writing that seemed to connect him loosely to Zappa,¹ which I found to be rather peculiar at the time. My interest was piqued, and it began a passion that continues to this day. What could these two musicians from seemingly different musical worlds have to do with one another?

Here are a few points to illustrate my naïveté at that time toward Zappa and his music. I knew that he was a rock guitarist that led a group called The Mothers of Invention, and that many of his songs were satirical in nature with some rather intriguing titles. The first Zappa album I owned was *Sheik Yerbouti* (1979), his first release after parting ways with Warner Brothers Records, and it contained tracks with titles such as “I Have Been In You,” “Bobby Brown (Goes Down),” and “Broken Hearts Are For Assholes.” A friend of mine introduced it to me when I was an undergraduate student. I thought it was entertaining to listen to for the humorous lyrics, but Zappa’s music, as I knew it from that album, did not seem like anything more than something good for a chuckle. Most of my other friends were not interested in his music either, so it sat there in my music collection for a number of years.

I had heard a piece of Zappa’s for wind ensemble titled *The Dog Breath Variations*, which I did not know any background information about—such as the important fact that it existed as “The Dog Breath Variations” and “Uncle Meat (Main Theme)” performed as a medley

¹ Frank Zappa, “Edgard Varèse: The Idol of My Youth,” *Stereo Review*, June 1971.

with his touring rock band before it existed in versions for wind ensemble.² I do recall thinking how interesting it was that Zappa would write a piece for wind ensemble. How does a rock guitar player go about writing a piece for wind ensemble? It was not until I discovered that Varèse and Igor Stravinsky (1882-1971) were musical influences of Zappa's that I finally got curious about Zappa's life and his music. I am certainly glad that connection was made as it opened up the world of Frank Zappa to me. My interest stemmed from his desires to blur the boundaries between pop and art music as well as educate and share his experience of music with his audiences. He is the ultimate musical omnivore, fluent in a number of musical idioms from rock to jazz to classical, and someone who regarded all these forms of music on equal footing.

There are numerous resources available to the individual that is interested in learning about Frank Zappa. Most of the current output on Zappa focuses on biographical and historical aspects.³ There are also the myriads of interviews Zappa gave to different sources that cover not only biographical events, but also include some theoretical insight into his music. Scholarly articles have been written by Jonathan Bernard on the life of Zappa's "crossover" pieces,⁴ listening strategies for Zappa's pieces for acoustic concert ensembles and the role of parody and satire in his music,⁵ and Zappa's avant-garde aesthetic.⁶ William Morris Price and Brett Clement have contributed dissertations that examine the evolution of Zappa's "Bebop Tango"⁷ as well as

² Before that, these existed as separate compositions on *Uncle Meat* (1969)

³ Kevin Courrier, *Dangerous Kitchen: The Subversive World of Zappa* (Toronto: ECW Press, 2002); Barry Miles, *Zappa: A Biography* (New York: Grove Press, 2004); Neil Slaven, *Electric Don Quixote: The Story of Frank Zappa* (London: Omnibus, 1997); Frank Zappa and Peter Occhiogrosso, *The Real Frank Zappa Book* (New York: Poseidon Press, 1989). These are only a few of the available texts on Zappa's life.

⁴ Jonathan W. Bernard, "The Musical World(s?) of Frank Zappa: Some Observations of His 'Crossover' Pieces," in *Expression in Pop-Rock Music*, ed. Walter Everett, 2nd ed. (New York: Routledge, 2008), 157–209.

⁵ Jonathan W. Bernard, "Listening to Zappa," *Contemporary Music Review* 18, no. 4: American Rock and the Classical Music Tradition (2000): 63–103.

⁶ Jonathan W. Bernard, "From *Lumpy Gravy* to *Civilization Phaze III*: The Story of Frank Zappa's Disenchantment," *Journal of the Society for American Music* 5, no. 1 (2011): 1–31.

⁷ William Morris Price, "An Original Composition, Symphony No. 1, Pollock and An Analysis of the Evolution of Frank Zappa's *Be-Bop Tango*" (DMA diss., Louisiana State University, 2004).

a large-scale analytical study of Zappa's instrumental music that explores style and form, rhythm and meter, and pitch organization.⁸ Andre Mount's dissertation took a different look at Zappa's music and his ability to blur the boundaries between art and pop music,⁹ while Michael Yonchak discussed style and interpretation in Zappa's music, focusing on three pieces for wind ensemble.¹⁰

This document combines historical and theoretical aspects, focusing on: (1) Zappa's first attempt at recording his orchestral music with an established professional orchestra—the London Symphony Orchestra (LSO), (2) his professional relationship with Kent Nagano (b. 1951), who conducted the LSO on that recording, (3) *A Zappa Affair*, which was a collaboration of dance, puppetry, and music with Zappa, Nagano, the San Francisco Miniature Theater, and a number of dancers and choreographers, and (4) an analysis of “Sad Jane,” the second half of a ballet suite composed Zappa, and (5) a transcription of “Sad Jane” for wind ensemble.

⁸ Brett Clement, “A Study of the Instrumental Music of Frank Zappa” (PhD diss., University of Cincinnati, 2009).

⁹ Andre Mount, “‘Bridging the Gap’: Frank Zappa and the Confluence of Art and Pop” (PhD diss., University of California Santa Barbara, 2010).

¹⁰ Michael Yonchak, “Rehearsal Strategies and Stylistic Interpretations to Three Works for Wind Ensemble by Frank Zappa” (DMA diss., University of Kentucky, 2009).

CHAPTER 1

ZAPPA BIOGRAPHY

It is hard to imagine that if Frank Zappa was still alive today that he would only be about 70 years old. In a career that spanned roughly 30 years, he accomplished so much and was well known in different arenas both inside and outside of music. He was a rock bandleader who toured and released over 60 albums. His early musical education and development are remarkable given that he was mostly self-taught, with little guidance from peers, his parents, or any real mentorship. The purpose of this chapter is not to provide an all-encompassing account of Zappa's life—far from it, as there are numerous sources available to the reader who wants to explore Zappa's life in more depth and detail. What is covered here is simply a chronology of Zappa's life highlighted by events and factors that contributed to his musical development and his eclectic musical tastes that straddle the worlds of pop and art music.

Frank Zappa was born in Baltimore, Maryland on December 21, 1940, the eldest of four children in the Zappa household. His parents, both first generation immigrants, were of Sicilian, Greek, Arab, and French ancestry. The family lived in an Army housing facility in Edgewood, Maryland where his father worked as a meteorologist at the Edgewood Arsenal. Zappa was often sick as a child, with ailments like frequent earaches, asthma, and sinus problems. He also recalled that the family did not have much money, which meant that his father would sometimes volunteer for human testing of warfare agents by the Army to help pay the family's bills. The family moved to Florida for a short time, where Zappa's health improved, but as his mother grew homesick they returned to Baltimore. They eventually moved westward and relocated to

California when Zappa was about “ten or twelve.”¹¹ His father took a job teaching metallurgy at the Naval Postgraduate School in Monterey, a town on the coast of California. The family relocated a few more times, including to El Cajon, just outside of San Diego, before finally settling in the high desert north of Los Angeles in Lancaster, California by 1956.

When Zappa was around twelve years old, he became interested in the drums, and as he remembers, he was “just interested in the sounds of things a person could beat on.”¹² This initial interest in “sounds of things” led to a chance encounter with Varèse’s music when he was a young teenager. The story Zappa tells in a number of places¹³ is that he had read an article in *Look* magazine touting a New York record store owned by Samuel “Goody” Gutowitz (1904-1991). The article touted the ability of Goody’s salesmen to sell anything, even a Varèse recording with a bunch of “drums banging,” as an example of their salesmanship. Zappa decided that he needed to find this album, and he happened upon the album at a record store in nearby La Mesa, California. Interestingly enough, no article matching all the details of his description ever ran in *Look* magazine, but his recollections most likely are a combination of several articles.¹⁴

Regardless of how Zappa eventually came to own the *Complete Works of Edgard Varèse, Volume I*, it had an enormous impact on his musical development. His mother only allowed him to listen to the record in his room, which he readily did multiple times each night while poring over the album’s liner notes. He even subjected his friends to the ordeal of listening to Varèse, going so far as to make chalk marks on the record to facilitate finding the “hot items so my

¹¹ Zappa and Occhiogrosso, *The Real Frank Zappa Book*, 22.

¹² *Ibid.*, 29.

¹³ *Ibid.*, 31–32; John Diliberto and Kimberly Haas, “Frank Zappa on Edgar Varèse,” *Down Beat*, November 1981, 22; David Reitman, “I Dreamed I Interviewed Frank Zappa in My Maidenform Bra,” *Rock Magazine*, January 25, 1971, 31; Zappa, “Edgard Varèse: The Idol of My Youth,” 62; “Frank Zappa: American Composer” Radio, *The Music Makers* (Public Radio International, 1996), (34:26). These are a selected number of instances where Zappa references the story of his initial discovery of Varèse.

¹⁴ Mount, “‘Bridging the Gap’: Frank Zappa and the Confluence of Art and Pop,” 105–106.

friends wouldn't get bored in the quiet parts."¹⁵ Zappa's passion for Varèse's music quickly led him to discover Stravinsky's *Le Sacre du Printemps* and the music of Anton Webern (1883-1945). During his high school years, Zappa sought out any information he could find about Varèse's life and music, coming away empty-handed more often than not. Zappa's education was only able to happen in this environment because of his persistence to be a composer.

Jonathan W. Bernard remarks that Zappa had "no encouragement from his family, no peers who shared his outlook, no modern-music ensembles giving concerts nearby—no cultural support system, in short, to reinforce his feeling that what he wanted for himself was important and worth having. He had to supply all this himself..."¹⁶ He also notes that Zappa's development as an autodidact was rather unusual owing to the fact that it took place in this "virtual vacuum."¹⁷

On a trip to visit his aunt in Baltimore in 1957, he sent Varèse a letter in hopes of scheduling a visit with him in New York while he was on the East Coast. The elder composer replied, and was regretful that he was not available to meet due to an upcoming trip to Europe.

One can get a sense of Zappa's ambition in his letter to Varèse:

I began to go to the library and take out books on modern composers and modern music, to learn all I could about Edgard Varèse. It got to be my best subject (your life) and I began writing my reports and term papers on you at school. At one time when my history teacher asked us to write on an American that has really done something for the U.S.A. I wrote on you and the Pan American Composers League and the New Symphony. I failed. The teacher had never heard of you and said I made the whole thing up. Silly but true. That was in my Sophomore year in high school.

Throughout my life all the talents and abilities that God has left me with have been self developed, and when the time came for Frank to learn how to read and write music, Frank taught himself that too. I picked it all up from the library.

I have been composing for two years now, utilizing a strict twelve-tone technique, producing effects that are reminiscent of Anton Webern.

¹⁵ Zappa, "Edgard Varèse: The Idol of My Youth," 63.

¹⁶ Bernard, "Listening to Zappa," 68.

¹⁷ Bernard, "The Musical World(s?) of Frank Zappa: Some Observations of His 'Crossover' Pieces," 2.

During those two years I have written two short woodwind quartets and a short symphony for winds, brass and percussion.

He goes on to describe his future plans, including being so bold as to offer an idea to Varèse:

I went to the Jaycee and studied harmony and music appreciation and history for one semester and came out of it with A's and B's.

I plan to go on and be a composer after college and I could really use the counsel of a veteran such as you. If you would allow me to visit with you for even a few hours it would be greatly appreciated.

It may sound strange, but I think I have something to offer you in the way of new ideas. One is an elaboration on the principle of Ruth Seeger's contrapuntal dynamics and the other is an extension of the twelve-tone technique, which I call the inversion square. It enables one to compose harmonically constructed pantonal music in logical patterns and progressions while still abandoning tonality.¹⁸

Not bad for a high school student who taught himself how to read and write music!

Zappa does mention that two of his high school music teachers, Robert Kavelman and William Ballard, were helpful in his early musical education.¹⁹ Kavelman was the first person to tell Zappa about dodecaphonic music, and Ballard allowed Zappa to conduct the school orchestra at Antelope Valley High and had them read through some of his music.²⁰ These first experiences of hearing his music performed jolted him into realizing the necessity of learning more about how “the system really worked,” particularly since his initial foray into composing was influenced by the visual representation of the music:

I started writing music because I liked the way it looked and I had art talent when I was a kid, so I used to draw music. I figured that's what everybody else did, you know, just draw it till you liked the way it looked and then handed it to a musician. Theoretically a person who could read dots on paper and then translate your engraving into some kind of audio masterpiece. And I did, since I didn't know any musicians, labor under this

¹⁸ Felix Meyer and Heidi Zimmermann, eds., *Edgard Varèse: Composer, Sound Sculptor, Visionary* (Woodbridge, Suffolk: Boydell Press, 2006), 403–404.

¹⁹ Zappa and Occhiogrosso, *The Real Frank Zappa Book*, 35.

²⁰ Zappa was also grateful to Ballard for kicking him out of the marching band.

delusion for quite some time and just draw music. [...] I couldn't read it. I could write it. I could make it look terrific.²¹

His interest in the visual aspect of the musical score continued on later into his career, even influencing the way that he composed²² and titles of his pieces, like "The Black Page."

For part of his senior year of high school, Zappa had the opportunity to take a harmony course at the adjoining junior college in Lancaster. He recalled using Walter Piston's harmony book for that course and how bored he was with Piston's text and the examples and exercises used in class: "There wasn't anything there that I thought was useful for what I wanted to do. I didn't like the sound of the musical examples... Still, I guess it was better than putting up with the stupid classes they had at the high school."²³ Learning music in this formal setting was far from ideal for Zappa since it represented a degree of predictability and a lack of originality and creativity to him. So instead of relying on formal classes at school, he took it upon himself to find the information he desired at the library:

You have to go out looking for it; it's like investigative reporting. Go to the library. I borrowed records from people and got things at school. I figured that if music was gonna be my life, I should get the finest education I could afford. So I went to the library.²⁴

After finishing high school and a brief stint in junior college where he met his first wife, Kay Sherman, Zappa began working at Pal Recording Studio in Cucamonga, California²⁵ with Paul Buff. Buff was an ex-Marine who started the studio in the late 1950s, and he eventually went on to work for Art Laboe at Original Sound, a Hollywood record label, in 1963. By then Zappa was finishing work on his first film scoring project, *Run Home Slow*, a "really cheap

²¹ Paul Zollo, "Frank Zappa: The SongTalk Interview," *SongTalk*, 1987, 36.

²² Bernard, "Listening to Zappa," 77.

²³ David Mead, "Unholy Mother," *Guitarist*, June 1993, <http://talkingguitars.blogspot.com/2010/12/frank-zappa-interview-march-1993.html>.

²⁴ Michael Davis, "Record Review Interview: Frank Zappa," *Record Review*, April 1979, 13.

²⁵ Cucamonga, Alta Loma, and Etiwanda were later incorporated in 1977 into Rancho Cucamonga.

cowboy movie”²⁶ written by his former high school English teacher. Coincidentally the soundtrack recording was engineered by Buff at Original Sound. Zappa used this money and bought Pal Recording Studio from Buff for \$1,000 in 1964, renaming it Studio Z. In the meantime, Zappa had filed for divorce from Sherman and had moved out of his house into the recording studio, where he lived for a short time until the city condemned the studio in order to widen the street on which it was located. Zappa moved from Studio Z to an apartment in the Echo Park neighborhood of Los Angeles in 1965.

It was during the time Zappa was working with Paul Buff that he met Ray Collins, a singer with the Soul Giants, a local R&B band. Through his affiliation with Collins, Zappa was later asked to play guitar with the Soul Giants in 1964, and he accepted.²⁷ The group primarily played covers of popular songs, and Zappa considered the group a “pretty decent bar band.”²⁸ After a short time with the band, Zappa suggested that they start playing some original music in hopes of getting a recording contract. Although the bandleader, Davy Coronado, did not share Zappa’s desire to play original music and left the band, the other members, Jimmy Carl Black, Roy Estrada, and Collins, decided to give the idea a chance. Zappa took over as leader, and “he told us if we’d stick with him and play his music he’d make us all rich and famous,” Black recalls.²⁹ This became the original lineup for the band whose name was soon changed to “The Mothers.” The Mothers’ lineup changed and fluctuated a few times, but when the band landed its first recording contract with MGM Records, the band consisted of the original quartet of Zappa, Black, Estrada, and Collins plus the addition of guitarist Elliot Ingber.

²⁶ Zappa and Occhiogrosso, *The Real Frank Zappa Book*, 43.

²⁷ Jerry Hopkins, “Frank Zappa,” *Rolling Stone*, July 1968, 11. Zappa describes teaching himself how to play guitar on an instrument he bought for \$1.50 with string action that was so high off the fretboard that he could not play chords on it.

²⁸ Zappa and Occhiogrosso, *The Real Frank Zappa Book*, 65.

²⁹ Ron Young, “Jimmy Carl Black: One of Mother’s Finest,” *Boogie Magazine*, October 1987, 7.

The Mothers' first album was *Freak Out!* (1966), a double-LP that, in the end, easily cost four times what the average rock and roll album cost to produce at the time, largely because in addition to the five-piece Mothers, Zappa's arrangements included an additional seventeen players. Before MGM executives allowed the album to be released, the band was made to change their name to "The Mothers of Invention" (MOI) for fear that airplay would be limited if they were known simply as "The Mothers."

Commercial success of the album was tepid when it was first released (the album only made it to #130 on the Billboard chart), but it showed early signs of what the future of Zappa's music could and would be: an amalgamation of different styles that contained combinations of various styles of pop music, musical arrangements that were more sophisticated than those of any other rock bands at the time (particularly striking, since no one in the band except Zappa could read music), and elements of *musique concrète*. It was a convergence of his musical influences, and Zappa was able to demonstrate his skill as a bandleader and front man for the group. In the debut album's liner notes, he lists many of these influences under a heading that read, "These People Have Contributed Materially in Many Ways to Make Our Music What it is. Please Do Not Hold it Against them." The extensive list included people as diverse as Pierre Boulez, Charles Ives, Eric Dolphy, Bob Dylan, Salvador Dali, and Bram Stoker. On the MOI sophomore album, *Absolutely Free* (1967), Zappa used a slightly expanded instrumentation and carried these musical ideas even further.

Zappa and the MOI went on a three city promotional tour shortly after the release of *Freak Out!*. At the conclusion of this tour, back in Los Angeles, Zappa was introduced to Adelaide Gail Sloatman (b. 1945), who would later become his wife. In 1967 the band left California for New York City where they had been offered a contract to perform six shows a

week, with two shows per night, at the Garrick Theater. The size of the audiences at the Garrick varied dramatically, anywhere from three people to capacity crowds.³⁰ Zappa's time at the Garrick was important in the development of his live performances. The band would play their shows in the evening and rehearse during the afternoons. The shows of course consisted of performances of the music, but they also included the use of improvisation coupled with plenty of audience participation. Zappa directed all of this, and these characteristics would become a hallmark of his bands' live performances. Zappa and Sloatman married in September 1967 while living in New York City, shortly before the band left for their first European tour.

Just prior to the MOI run at the Garrick, Zappa began recording sessions in Los Angeles for a different type of album that would eventually be released as *Lumpy Gravy* (1968). This album did not contain any singing and each side of the LP played continuously without pause. Bernard groups the music into five different categories: (1) instrumental passages that were in the style of Varèse, Stravinsky, and Webern; (2) instrumental passages that were in a style closer to pop; (3) *musique concrète* that was sometimes mixed with percussion; (4) spoken material that consisted of monologues; and (5) snippets of music taken from other unidentified sources.³¹ This album, as one can imagine, did not have much commercial success in 1968, but it provides a glimpse of how Zappa is able to merge his various musical influences into one final product that does not quite resemble pop music nor art music. Zappa and his family as well as the MOI, which now officially included Jim "Motorhead" Sherwood (saxophone) and Ian Underwood (keyboards and woodwinds), moved back to California in 1968. In 1969, Zappa, prompted by a scene he witnessed that involved Duke Ellington begging for a ten-dollar advance backstage at a performance that year, disbanded the MOI due to his own financial difficulties:

³⁰ Zappa and Occhiogrosso, *The Real Frank Zappa Book*, 97–98.

³¹ Bernard, "From Lumpy Gravy to Civilization Phaze III: The Story of Frank Zappa's Disenchantment," 4.

We'd been together in one configuration or another for about five years at that point, and suddenly EVERYTHING looked utterly hopeless to me...I was paying everybody in the band a weekly salary of two hundred dollars—all year round, whether we were working or not, along with all hotel and travel expenses when we did get work. The guys in band were pissed off—as if their welfare had been canceled—but at that point I was ten thousand dollars in the red.³²

Zappa got his first taste working with a professional orchestra in 1970 when the Los Angeles Philharmonic, conducted by Zubin Mehta, offered him a performance of his orchestral music. By Zappa's account the orchestra did not really want to play his music, but instead only wanted a combined performance with Zappa and the MOI.³³ The problems with that request ranged from the MOI being disbanded to the fact that the Musicians Union would not allow Zappa to tape the performance, even when he assured them it was exclusively for his use as the composer. However, Zappa went ahead with it and put together a temporary MOI group to play the show with the Philharmonic, which included music that would later be on the soundtrack of his film *200 Motels* (1971). He never did receive a tape of the concert. The concert took place on May 15, 1970 at Pauley Pavilion on the campus of the University of California, Los Angeles (UCLA). A review in *Rolling Stone* magazine read:

It took Zappa—who, if anything, is perhaps a bit too much of the people, of the people “on a glandular level”—to break fresh wind among those suffocating old toads [the orchestra]. At UCLA's Pauley Pavilion, before 12,000 attentive fans, he did it marvelously. It was his show from the start. Mehta and the Philharmonic were simply new lab toys for his mad genius, and they became better people for it.³⁴

There were some more attempts—mostly as a result of requests made to Zappa— at getting his orchestral music performed in Europe and the United States with orchestras such as the Royal Philharmonic Orchestra, the Vienna Symphony, the Oslo Philharmonic, the Residentie Orkest at The Hague, and the Syracuse Symphony. None of these attempts proved successful, and Zappa's

³² Zappa and Occhiogrosso, *The Real Frank Zappa Book*, 107.

³³ *Ibid.*, 110.

³⁴ David Felton, “What Zappa Did to Zubin Mehta,” *Rolling Stone*, July 9, 1970.

frustration at and disdain for working with orchestras grew during these encounters throughout the 1970s.

However, right in the middle of these failed attempts with larger orchestras to get his music performed, Zappa was able to organize a performance of his orchestral music in 1975 at Royce Hall, once again on the UCLA campus. This time, Zappa put the orchestra together himself, and collectively they were called the Abnuceals Emuukha Electric Symphony Orchestra, conducted by Michael Zearott.³⁵ The group gave two performances on September 17 and 18, 1975, which included versions of “Pedro’s Dowry,” “Strictly Genteel,” and “Bogus Pomp.”³⁶ In addition to these two concerts, the orchestra also spent September 19 recording in Royce Hall. The tracks from these dates were not released until *Orchestral Favorites* (1979). Zappa would not be involved again in an orchestral performance until 1983 when he hired the London Symphony Orchestra, under the direction of conductor Kent Nagano (b. 1951), to record a number of his works for large orchestra. That session would result in a public performance in London and the albums *Vol. I* (1983) and *Vol. II* (1987). It also brought about a second performance of three of the pieces, “Bob in Dacron/Sad Jane,” “Pedro’s Dowry,” and “Mo ‘n Herb’s Vacation,” in the United States on June 15-16, 1984 by the Berkeley Symphony Orchestra, under the direction of Nagano.

Earlier in 1984, Pierre Boulez (b. 1925) performed and recorded three of Zappa’s pieces with his group, the Ensemble Intercontemporain. *The Perfect Stranger* (1984) featured three pieces for a reduced orchestral instrumentation. The title track was commissioned by Boulez and also included versions of “Dupree’s Paradise” and “Naval Aviation in Art?.” The remaining

³⁵ Zappa recorded the 1967 *Lumpy Gravy* sessions with an orchestra of Los Angeles studio musicians that he also dubbed with the same name. The 1975 version of the orchestra, made up of roughly 36 musicians, included some of the same personnel from the 1967 sessions.

³⁶ These are pieces that would later get rearranged for the 1983 London Symphony Orchestra recording.

tracks were composed on the Synclavier, a digital synthesizer that Zappa was beginning to use more frequently to compose and realize his compositions.

From 1985 until 1990, Zappa continued to compose on the Synclavier, and some of these Synclavier pieces made up the majority of *Jazz From Hell* (1986), which won him a Grammy Award in 1987. Outside of composing and performing, Zappa, along with musicians John Denver and Dee Snider, was involved in a Congressional hearing in 1985 to speak against the Parents' Music Resource Center and their proposal to place advisory warnings on albums that were considered offensive and unsuitable for minors. Zappa also went on one last tour with his rock band in 1988 that folded less than midway through. In 1990, Zappa was diagnosed with terminal prostate cancer, nearly a decade after it had first developed, and the end of his life was quickly approaching. In these final years of his life, he turned his attention back to composing and doing what he enjoyed most, "putting little black dots on music paper."³⁷

He was approached by the Ensemble Modern, a group based in Frankfurt, Germany, in 1991 to write a piece for them that would be premiered at the Frankfurt Festival alongside the music of John Cage, Karlheinz Stockhausen, and Alexander Knaifel. Zappa invited the ensemble to his home in Los Angeles for two weeks of rehearsals. At the time, Andreas Mölich-Zebhauser was the general manager of the Deutsche Ensemble Academy, the umbrella organization of the Ensemble Modern:

From the very beginning, we came together showing each other our capabilities. We played Frank some of the Ensemble's recordings. Frank let us hear some of his recent Synclavier music. In person, we showed Frank what level of difficulties in music we could realize, and on the other hand we saw what Frank was able to do. At the end of this working period we knew a lot about Frank Zappa, and he had very precise information about what he could do with and for the Ensemble. That was the basis of his compositions for this event.³⁸

³⁷ Zappa and Occhiogrosso, *The Real Frank Zappa Book*, 142.

³⁸ Andreas Mölich-Zebhauser, "Preparing the Ensemble Modern for the Frankfurt Festival," *Guitar Player Presents*, 1992, 13.

The pieces from these sessions included pieces that represented different parts of his career. “Dog Breath Variations/Uncle Meat,” “Be-Bop Tango,” and “Pound for a Brown” were pieces that existed in different versions with his rock bands as well as in versions for acoustic ensembles. “Outrage at Valdez” was composed for a 1990 documentary about the Exxon Valdez spill in Alaska. “The Girl in the Magnesium Dress,” “G-Spot Tornado,” and “Ruth is Sleeping” were originally composed for the Synclavier. These and others ultimately culminated in a series of performances in September 1992 in Germany and Austria. Zappa made the trip to Frankfurt to rehearse with the Ensemble prior to their performances there. He also hosted the concerts and shared conducting responsibilities with Peter Rundel, the Ensemble’s music director, at the three performances in Frankfurt. The Ensemble went on to perform in Berlin and Vienna, but without the composer, who was too ill to tour. These performances became the tracks for *The Yellow Shark* (1993), which Zappa described as the best representation of his orchestral works. *The Yellow Shark* was released one month before Zappa’s death on December 4, 1993.

CHAPTER 2

HISTORICAL BACKGROUND OF ZAPPA'S WORKS FOR LARGE ORCHESTRA

Introduction

Frank Zappa's relationship with conductor Kent Nagano began near the end of 1981, when the 30-year old Nagano met Zappa backstage during the intermission of one of his rock concerts to look at some of the composer's orchestral scores. That relationship is central to the discussion regarding Zappa's works for large orchestra during the early 1980s. Zappa gave Nagano his first big opportunity to work with a major orchestra, and Nagano became a champion of the composer and his works for orchestra. In this chapter we examine the relationship of these two musicians and the two projects they worked on together: the London Symphony Orchestra (LSO) recording of 1983 that resulted in *London Symphony Orchestra, Vol. I* (1983) and *Vol. II* (1987), and *A Zappa Affair (AZA)* in 1984. The rhythmic complexity, orchestrational density, and technical demands required to perform and understand Zappa's music proved a challenge for everyone involved: Nagano, the performing musicians, and the choreographers and dancers involved with AZA.

Zappa and Nagano

Kent Nagano, currently the Music Director for both the Bayerische Staatsoper Munich and Orchestre Symphonique de Montréal, was born in Berkeley, California on November 22, 1951. He grew in up in Morro Bay, a small town located on California's Central Coast, midway between San Francisco and Los Angeles. With a current population of just over 10,000 people, Morro Bay was an even sleepier town in the 1950s and 1960s during Nagano's youth. His

parents had graduate degrees from the University of California, Berkeley—his father in architectural engineering and mathematics and his mother in microbiology—and they played cello and piano. Entertainment in the Nagano household consisted of playing music and reciting literature.¹

Although he would complain about living in such a small town when he was younger and “wanted to go to a city that had a traffic light with three lights on it,”² he later realized the value of growing up around neighbors who were Swiss, French, Spanish, Mexican, German, and Portuguese. Living in a fairly remote location also allowed him regular interaction with nature, and he felt that this connected him to the tradition of composers, poets, and painters, artists drawn to express their relationship with nature. Moving to Europe to study later in life was an easy transition for him, and he attributes part of that to his connection to nature and growing up surrounded by European immigrant neighbors.

Nagano eventually got his wish to move to a larger town when he began studies at Oxford University. He later returned to California to complete his degree in sociology and music at UC Santa Cruz, earning his undergraduate degree in 1974. He went on to study law at San Francisco State University, but eventually decided to turn his attention completely to music, Nagano studied composition with Roger Nixon and Grosvenor Cooper, conducting with Laszlo Varga, and worked with the San Francisco Opera. He earned a master’s degree from San Francisco State University in 1976.

He went on to serve as assistant conductor and eventually associate conductor to Sarah Caldwell with the Opera Company of Boston, concurrently pursuing further studies of the music of Olivier Messiaen and Leoš Janáček at the University of Toronto. He was offered the music

¹ Ken Bullock, “Kent Nagano: Hopelessly Californian,” May 17, 2010, <http://www.sfcv.org/events-calendar/artist-spotlight/kent-nagano-hopelessly-californian>.

² Ibid.

directorship of the Berkeley Symphony Orchestra (BSO) in 1978, a position he held for thirty seasons. Nagano's relationship with Zappa began early in the conductor's tenure with the BSO, and although the story of how they met in 1981 and eventually came to work with one another is well documented,³ it is beneficial to provide a brief synopsis of the events in this document.

On a visit to the Institut de Recherche et Coordination Acoustique/Musique (IRCAM) in Paris, Nagano noticed that Zappa's name was included on a list of future commissions by IRCAM and its director, Pierre Boulez. He was quite intrigued and surprised by the fact that Boulez would be interested in Zappa's music, and he asked a friend of his who worked at the IRCAM about the Zappa commission. Nagano's contact informed him that Zappa had written a number of compositions that Boulez agreed to conduct on an upcoming concert. These pieces, "The Perfect Stranger," "Dupree's Paradise," and "Naval Aviation in Art?" would ultimately end up on *The Perfect Stranger* (1984) recording by Boulez and the Ensemble Intercontemporain. Once he returned to California, Nagano got in touch with Zappa's manager, Bennett Glotzer, to request some of the composer's scores. He was told that scores would be sent, and that Zappa would be on tour with his band in the San Francisco Bay Area shortly. The scores never arrived in the mail, but Zappa called him with an invitation to come to a concert on December 10, 1981 at the Berkeley Community Theater to obtain the scores. This was Nagano's first rock concert experience, and his account of it during this interview is particularly interesting:

So I had never in my life been to a rock concert before (laugh), having lived a very sheltered life as a classical musician. I went out and bought some earplugs and went to this rock concert, and it was everything that I had feared. It was smoky and sort of light shows all over the place, crowded with thousands of people, dressed in very unusual clothing (laugh). During the intermission, this enormous bodyguard found me where I was because I was sitting in the seats. He was so big. He looked like a sumo wrestler, and said, "Follow me," and of course I didn't argue.

³ Ibid.; Dan Forte, "Nagano on Conducting Zappa," *Mix*, June 1983; Kent Nagano, "Premiering Zappa with the London Symphony Orchestra," *Guitar Player Presents*, 1992; Martin Hansson, "Titties & Beer" Radio (Swedish Radio P2, January 23, 1994), <http://www.kentnagano.com/videos/all>.

I followed him and he took me downstairs to the dressing room. And there I met Frank Zappa. He was taking his intermission break, and he showed me the scores that he had brought with him. He said, “Take a look at that. What do you think?” And I opened up the scores. They were really, as I said, so complicated that I was a bit taken aback, and I didn’t know what to make of them. I explained to him that I really didn’t know what to make out of the scores. I had to take them home and study them a little bit before I could answer him. He said, “Okay. Take the scores, go home and let me know what you think.”⁴

After studying the scores for several weeks, Nagano decided that he wanted to program some of these pieces with the BSO, and he asked Zappa for permission to perform them. He did not hear anything from Zappa for a length of time,⁵ until Zappa phoned, asking if he would be interested in conducting a concert and recording session with the LSO. Nagano learned an important lesson during this conversation, and again, this is best described in Nagano’s own words:

A few weeks went by and I got a telephone call from Frank Zappa, again unannounced out of the blue, saying, “Well, what do you think? Would you be interested in the scores?” And I said, “Well yes, I’m really interested in a couple of scores, and I would like to perform them.” He said, “How would you like to come with me. I’ve hired the London Symphony Orchestra. How would you like to come with me to London and record these pieces—do a public concert in London and record them?”

And at this point I was really unknown. I was just basically out of school, and I was working with this orchestra that’s having a tough time. This is one of the very few times in my life when I tried to be coy (laugh), because I wanted to be cool. So, of course I wanted to go, and I liked the music a lot, but I said, “Well gee, I don’t know. I have to think about it,” and of course that was being dishonest. But I said it anyway, and Frank said, “Hmm...well I tell you what. I’ll give you fifteen seconds to think about it, and after fifteen seconds you either say ‘yes’ or ‘no’ and if you don’t say anything at all, I’ll just go to another conductor.” So I said, “Well actually, Mr. Zappa, I am. I am interested,” (laugh) and that was the last time that I actually ever tried to be coy.⁶

The partnership between Zappa and Nagano was a good match for a couple of reasons.

The two men had a great mutual respect for each other and for what the other brought musically

⁴ Hansson, “Titties & Beer.”

⁵ Depending on the interview, Nagano cites the amount of time anywhere from several weeks to several months.

⁶ Hansson, “Titties & Beer.”

to the table. Nagano spoke on many occasions of Zappa's multiple talents as a knowledgeable and inspired composer, virtuosic guitarist, and talented sound engineer. Nagano felt that his genuine appreciation of Zappa's music was an important factor in getting to know Zappa as a person.⁷ Zappa returned the sentiments, and he also spoke highly of Nagano and his skills as a conductor. It wasn't until 1990 that Nagano learned that Zappa, prior to offering the LSO job to Nagano, had contacted a number of Nagano's colleagues to do some research about the conductor's skills and reputation.⁸

Nagano's detailed style of rehearsal and the high level of importance he placed on accuracy only amplified Zappa's legendary pursuit of perfection in the performances of his music, whether it was with his rock band or with an orchestra. Zappa was right next to Nagano during the LSO rehearsals and recording sessions, and his astute ears and thorough knowledge of his own music proved immensely helpful to the LSO's preparations; because of that, he quickly garnered the respect of the LSO musicians. He and Nagano were a terrific team for the project. The conductor later recalled how wonderful it was to work with someone who was also open to ideas and questions from other musicians during rehearsal.⁹

At first glance the casual observer might not think the two men had much in common, particularly when taking into account the musical worlds they were most well known for occupying at the time. However, growing up in the remote locales of Lancaster and Morro Bay played a part in their early development as musicians. Bernard credits Zappa's lack of aesthetic preconceptions, which would later become an asset in his ability to move so comfortably and knowledgeably between music genres, to his autodidactic music education fueled by his curiosity

⁷ Nagano, "Premiering Zappa with the London Symphony Orchestra," 9.

⁸ Ibid.

⁹ Ibid.

and ambition to write music.¹⁰ A stroke of luck in discovering recordings of Varèse and Stravinsky during his teenage years was crucial in furthering his desire to write modern music. He was persistent in his impulse to compose, and continued to explore that while playing in and writing music for R&B and rock bands.

While Nagano's experience growing up in a rural area was different from Zappa's, the result was similar in that it played a part in developing a strong and diverse connection to different types of music. Nagano's remote locale, which encouraged playing music with his family at home, combined with the good fortune of living in an area surrounded by European immigrants and being connected to nature played a strong role in fostering Nagano's early musical development. The conductor has always been grateful to Frank Zappa for providing his first break with a major orchestra. Reflective of Zappa's musical diversity, there is something fitting about someone with such a strong connection to the world of popular music being the springboard in launching the career of a world-class opera and orchestra conductor.

The London Symphony Orchestra, Volumes I & II

As a composer, I rank him right up there with the other great masters of the century. It was one of the most exciting projects I've ever worked on.

Kent Nagano¹¹

After an early attempt in 1970 to have his orchestral music performed by Zubin Mehta and the Los Angeles Philharmonic, Zappa was approached a number of times between 1976 and 1982 to have his orchestral music performed in Austria, Holland, Poland, and the United States. However, each episode ended up costing Zappa enormous amounts of his own money to pay

¹⁰ Jonathan W. Bernard, "The Musical World(s?) of Frank Zappa: Some Observations of His 'Crossover' Pieces," in *Expression in Pop-Rock Music*, ed. Walter Everett (New York: Garland, 2000), 2.

¹¹ Forte, "Nagano on Conducting Zappa," 11.

copyists for creating parts; his manager's expenses to negotiate on his behalf; musicians and crew for the shows. No rehearsals or performances ever materialized to show for his efforts from those encounters—just a growing distaste for symphony orchestras and musicians' unions.¹² Zappa decided to contact a British orchestra to record his music, but the BBC Orchestra was booked for another five years. Fortunately, he contacted the LSO, and they were able to fit his project in between two other recording projects.

In early January 1983, Zappa traveled to England for the recording session with the LSO. The LSO, under the direction Kent Nagano, rehearsed for four and a half days beginning on January 7. These initial rehearsals took place at the Hammersmith Odeon, a venue in which Zappa's band had performed several times. However, to satisfy union rehearsal requirements—and much to Zappa's annoyance—a live performance had to be given before recording could commence. A concert was given at the Barbican Centre on January 11 by the LSO, which Zappa called a disaster.¹³ Zappa hated everything about the hall, from its design and acoustics to the fact that it had a stand-up bar backstage for use by the performers. The stage in the Barbican was too small to adequately fit the 107-piece orchestra, and this resulted in two violas being left out of the orchestra for the performance.¹⁴ The world premieres of the large orchestra versions of "Envelopes," "Pedro's Dowry," and "Bogus Pomp," were given that evening along with the world premieres of "Mo 'n Herb's Vacation" and the ballet suite "Bob in Dacron/Sad Jane."

Recording occupied the next three days. Zappa recalled that the actual floor plan of the initial recording venue was smaller than the one sent to him, so he had to find an alternate location.¹⁵ After numerous failed attempts to book another hall, they wound up at Twickenham

¹² Bill Milkowski, "Orchestral Maneuvers," *Modern Recording & Music*, August 1984, 30.

¹³ Frank Zappa and Peter Occhiogrosso, *The Real Frank Zappa Book* (New York: Poseidon Press, 1989), 152.

¹⁴ Dan Forte, "An Interview With Frank Zappa," *Mix*, June 1983, 90.

¹⁵ Zappa and Occhiogrosso, *The Real Frank Zappa Book*, 152.

Studios, a film studio that occupied an old soundstage with less than ideal acoustics. They recorded: “Bob in Dacron,” “Sad Jane,” “Mo ‘n Herb’s Vacation,” “Envelopes,” “Pedro’s Dowry,” “Bogus Pomp,” and “Strictly Genteel.” “Pedro’s Dowry” was already released on *Orchestral Favorites* (1979), but it was a different version for a smaller 40-piece orchestra. “Bogus Pomp” was also released on the *Orchestral Favorites* album in a shorter 40-piece version, and it, along with “Strictly Genteel” was used in Zappa’s film *200 Motels* (1971). “Envelopes” was released on *Ship Arriving Too Late to Save a Drowning Witch* (1982), but that, too, was a different version for a small rock band.

Zappa experienced numerous frustrations during the recording, including what he described as a strange attitude on the part of the orchestra. This was one of the first digital multitrack recordings ever done of an orchestra. The adjustments he had to make with the types of microphones used and their placement within the orchestra in addition to having to record in a substandard environment was different from how the musicians were accustomed to working, thus contributing to the attitude he sensed from the ensemble.¹⁶ He also describes an incident with the trumpet section that is now somewhat famous. On the break before the last session of the last day, the entire trumpet section left the studio and went to a pub across the street. They returned fifteen minutes late, resulting in an inadequate number of takes before he had to release the orchestra:

They made so many mistakes, and played so badly on that piece [*Strictly Genteel*], that it required forty edits (within seven minutes of music) to try to cover them. We used every mixing trick in the book to hide the out-of-tune notes.¹⁷

Although recording took place over the span of three consecutive days, the pieces were not all originally released on the same album. *London Symphony Orchestra, Volume I* was

¹⁶ Ibid., 154.

¹⁷ Ibid., 156.

originally released on vinyl in June 1983, and it included “Jane,” “Pedro’s,” “Envelopes,” and the three-movement “Mo ‘n Herb’s.” Before *Volume II* was issued on vinyl, a compact disc was released, only in the United States, in September 1986. This CD was simply titled *The London Symphony Orchestra*. It contained some of the tracks from *Vol. I*—“Jane” and “Mo ‘Herb’s”—with the addition of “Bogus Pomp.” It was not until June 1987 that Zappa decided to release all but one of the remaining tracks from the recording on *London Symphony Orchestra, Volume II*. *Vol. II* contained “Bob,” “Strictly Genteel,” and “Bogus Pomp.” Zappa describes why he waited four years to release *Vol. II* in his liner notes to that album:

Rock journalists (especially the British ones) who have complained about the “coldness,” the “attempts at perfection,” and “missing human elements” in *Jazz from Hell* [an instrumental album mostly realized on the Synclavier] should find the *L.S.O. Volume II* a real treat. It is infested with wrong notes and out-of-tune passages. I postponed its release for several years, hoping that a digital technologist somewhere might develop a piece of machinery powerful enough to conceal the evils lurking on the master tapes. Since 1983 there have been a few advances, but nothing sophisticated enough to remove “human elements” like the out-of-tune trumpets in “Strictly Genteel,” or the lack of rhythmic coordination elsewhere.¹⁸

His biting remarks here are in contrast to his comments in the liner notes of *Vol. I*, where Zappa thanks the LSO for their “valiant” efforts, as well as in a 1983 interview with Dan Forte:

I don't want to be critical of the LSO, because they really gave it their all and struggled valiantly with the problems at hand. They weren't fuckin' off; they were really putting out the energy. But there was a certain unevenness from one section to another, in terms of the quality and style of the players in the section. The strings were generally quite good, especially ensemble-wise. Good concertmaster. The winds, great—except the first flute had immense problems with *Mo 'n' Herb's Vacation*. But other than that, wonderful. In the brass, the trumpets—a little bit of a problem [laughs]. If what I had written had sounded just a *liiittle* bit more like *Star Wars*, they would have been okay. Trombones and French horns, good. Percussion, good, except for one guy. Piano, great. Harp, great.¹⁹

In doing the mixing for *Vol. I* and *Vol. II*, Zappa decided that each section in the music could have its own personalized acoustical space. Artificially built acoustic spaces were applied

¹⁸ *The London Symphony Orchestra Volumes I & II*, Rykodisc RCD 10540/41, 1983/1995. The quotation is from the liner notes to *Vol II* (1987), which were included in this 1995 release.

¹⁹ Forte, “An Interview With Frank Zappa,” 104.

to each section of the music according to its musical character. Zappa compared this to stage lighting for a visual environment.²⁰ There was also a large amount of reverberation applied to the overall mix in an attempt to cover up as many of the mistakes as possible. It was not until April 1995 that the entirety of the LSO tracks were posthumously released by Rykodisc on the double CD album *London Symphony Orchestra, Volumes I & II* (1995). The official Rykodisc statement read, “Completely remixed and remastered. The complete LSO sessions, including all pieces found on the original vinyl master, with four never before available on CD. Restored artwork, all original liner notes.”²¹

Much of the reverberation that was added to the original albums was reduced in the 1995 release. This allowed for more of the “human elements” to come through, but it also allowed for a more realistic representation of the music. It is important to note that the tracks on disc one and disc two of the 1995 album do not correspond to the tracks on the original releases of *Volume I* and *Volume II*. For example, “Bob” and “Jane” initially appeared on different volumes, but on the 1995 release they occur as they normally would under normal performance conditions, coupled together in the intended form of a ballet suite.

The reasons for the multiple releases of the same album stem from Zappa’s well-documented discontent for the way the concert and recording sessions turned out, even calling them “high-class ‘demos’ of what actually resides in the scores.”²² Although Zappa’s view on the project is the most widely known, there are others that participated in the project who have provided alternate points of view. Nagano recalls:

The evening of the performance, I had butterflies in my stomach, but it was more a combination of anxiety and enthusiasm than actual fear. There was definitely a feeling that something enormous was about to happen. The reception was pretty predictably

²⁰ Zappa and Occhiogrosso, *The Real Frank Zappa Book*, 155.

²¹ *The London Symphony Orchestra Volumes I & II*.

²² Zappa and Occhiogrosso, *The Real Frank Zappa Book*, 146.

unpredictable in that the hall was half-filled with normal LSO concert goers and half-filled with Frank Zappa enthusiasts, some of whom had never seen a symphony orchestra before. Because of the mix of listeners, there was an electric tension in the air since people had no idea what to expect. But the London Symphony Orchestra was 100% behind the concert and behind Frank, and they played extremely well. By the end of the evening there was curtain call after curtain call, including an ovation by the orchestra for Frank.

Afterwards, we went into a studio. Frank was right there next to me. He demonstrated he had impeccable ears and absolute command of the scores. That was one of the reasons why the London Symphony respected him so much.²³

David Ocker, who had been Zappa's music copyist and orchestrator since the late 1970's, played solo clarinet on "Mo 'n Herb's." Ocker was present at most of the recordings and rehearsals. His account speaks highly of Zappa as a composer and his sense of musical judgment, but it did question Zappa's understanding of classical musicians' attitudes:

In my opinion, Frank was a genius of a composer, an exceptional arranger and a very good orchestrator. There's an intentional descending scale in that sentence. Of course he hired people (like me) to catch the little mistakes and keep all the details straight—he didn't make big mistakes. He knew what he wanted and he knew when something was being played correctly or when it wasn't. *However*, Frank Zappa did not understand classical musicians' attitudes.

Frank hadn't the foggiest notion of what it was like to show up at a session, take out your instrument, have someone slam a sheet of music in front of you and be expected to cut it, then be told to do it differently by some composer or conductor or other and still not develop a bad attitude.

At best the orchestra was kind of a big rock band to him. At worst it was like a big synthesizer. Tweak a knob and presto, the sound changes. But the knob doesn't complain if it's made to work too hard or develop a 'tude when the composer complains about its performance. Live performers do—especially when they got the same pay for playing footballs and background swill the week before. Had Frank not wasted everyone's time by trying to come up with a new seating scheme for the Barbican concert, the performances would likely have improved a lot more than had everyone stayed stone sober for 2 weeks.

Frank Zappa mercilessly ridiculed the players of the LSO both in private and public. I don't think they deserved that sort of treatment. But when he did it, he had his facts right. He just interpreted the facts to support his notion of what was going on. Yes, he was constantly having bad experiences with classical musicians all through his career, and I'm

²³ Nagano, "Premiering Zappa with the London Symphony Orchestra," 9.

sure there's always two diametrically opposed ways of looking at what actually happened: Frank's and the orchestra's. I'm here to say that the truth was probably somewhere between the two.²⁴

A ZAPPA AFFAIR

The last performances of these pieces that Zappa was directly involved with took place during an event in June 1984 called *A Zappa Affair* (AZA). The initial idea for the event came in 1982 when Nagano, after spending some time with Zappa's scores, brought his pieces for large orchestra to the attention of Stephanie Zimmerman, company manager of the Oakland Ballet Company. His hope was to collaborate on a joint production with the ballet and the Berkeley Symphony Orchestra (BSO). Initial planning meetings took place, but due to financial constraints, the Oakland Ballet Company had to withdraw from the project. The idea was placed on hold until 1984.

During her time with the ballet company, Zimmerman had befriended Bay Area designer, performer, and puppeteer, John C. Gilkerson. During a discussion in early January 1984 about the expansion of Gilkerson's company, the San Francisco Miniature Theatre (SFMT), the pair conceived the idea of using his puppets for the Zappa event. Nagano was initially opposed to their idea, but he was eventually persuaded to pitch it to Zappa over the phone. According to Zimmerman, Zappa loved the idea and the event was back underway.²⁵ AZA was now to be a collaborative effort with Zappa and his music, Nagano and the BSO, Gilkerson and the SFMT, and a team of twelve dancers led by choreographers Tandy Beal and Joan Lazarus.

By the time of AZA the BSO had been under Nagano's direction for about five years. Under his leadership, the orchestra transformed itself from a pops orchestra called the

²⁴ David Ocker, "The True Story of the LSO," November 20, 1994, <http://homepage.ntlworld.com/andymurkin/Resources/MusicRes/ZapRes/LSO.html>.

²⁵ Stephanie Zimmerman, "Puppets, Symphony, Zappa: How It All Happened," *In Performance*, June 1984.

“Promenade Orchestra” into a legitimate symphony orchestra. They distinguished themselves through Nagano’s adventurous programming, particularly a series of performances that included works by Messiaen. The cycle of Messiaen performances culminated with the West coast premiere of *Des Canyons aux Étoiles*, which Messiaen attended in 1984.

The AZA program featured the U.S. premieres of “Bob/ Jane,” “Mo ‘n Herb’s,” and “Pedro’s,” as well as the world premiere of “Sinister Footwear.” Each of these pieces were to be staged as ballets, choreographed by Beal and Lazarus, and involved the dancers either as puppeteers for Gilkerson’s puppets or as live dancers, in the case of Paul Zmolek and Robert Walker. The 111-person orchestra put together for AZA was slightly larger than the orchestra on the LSO recording, and musicians for the ensemble consisted of the regular BSO roster with additional freelance musicians from the San Francisco Bay Area and from the Oakland Symphony and Oakland Ballet Orchestra. Nagano and the orchestra had six weeks of rehearsals scheduled at the demand of Zappa in order to prepare for the performances.

The concerts took place on the evenings of Friday, June 15 and Saturday, June 16, 1984 to capacity audiences at Zellerbach Auditorium, located on the campus of the University of California, Berkeley. Zappa’s wife, Gail, as well as their children Ahmet, Moon Unit, and Dweezil, were in attendance at the opening performance.²⁶ The second evening’s performance was broadcast on public radio in a joint effort by KQED-FM (San Francisco) and KPFA (Berkeley), and it was also the fifth and final performance of the 1983-84 BSO season. Charles Amirkhanian, music director of KPFA, and Katherine Loomis, executive producer of KQED-FM, hosted the broadcast, which also included interviews with Zappa, Nagano, and Ocker.²⁷

²⁶ Len Callo, “A Zappa Affair,” *Mother People*, 1984.

²⁷ Although the June 16 broadcast is the only official audio recording from AZA, an audience recording from Friday, June 15 exists, and it is historically significant because it contains the true U.S. and world premieres of these pieces.

Since a video recording of AZA is not available, these audio recordings provide critical insight to the atmosphere inside of Zellerbach for this important event in Zappa's orchestral output.

Adding to the electricity of a capacity audience, the orchestra pit was also tightly packed, with the oversized ensemble occupying parts of the stage. Amirkhanian describes the scene in the pit and onstage in the opening of the radio broadcast:

The orchestra completely takes up the entire pit, but then rolls up onto the stage on the left side with string basses, harp, ondes martenot, and piano, among other electrified instruments. And on the right hand side, eight percussionists, about four of them actually, are on the stage with the timpanist alone having six timpani.²⁸

AZA was to be a fundraiser for the BSO, and Zappa functioned as the emcee for both evenings. He was extremely complimentary of the BSO's work in his opening remarks, and he prompted people to donate to the organization and to the arts in general. Zappa was encouraged that the event even came together at all, offered this in his opening remarks on June 15:

This event is a little miracle because things of this size and shape don't usually occur in what they call the "arts in America," and it's only by some sort of good fortune that it happened in Berkeley. But in the process of putting on this large and complicated show, the arts managed to employ 200 people in the area...It pays to put money into the arts because it does impact your community. You get entertainment, and also people get to work. Making matters worse, they are doing a very good job at what they're doing. This is an exceptional job, and you should be proud to have them in Berkeley.²⁹

Zappa also used the opportunity as emcee to speak to the audience about the storyline for each piece.

By all accounts and reviews the concerts were a tremendous success. The audience was engaged not only with Zappa's music, but also with the choreography of Beal and Lazarus coupled with Gilkerson's puppets. One can certainly hear audience laughter and enjoyment when listening to the audio recordings of both evenings. One reviewer wrote:

²⁸ Charles Amirkhanian, "A Zappa Affair" Radio, *Berkeley Symphony: 1983-84 Season* (Berkeley, CA: KPFA/KQED, June 16, 1984).

²⁹ Zappa, opening remarks to A Zappa Affair. June 15, 1984.

In reality, it wasn't Zappa's music but the spectacularly successful overall production that made Friday's world premiere at UC Berkeley's Zellerbach Auditorium a true event.

It was one of those rare times when a wild new concept was fully realized. Usually such cross-cultural projects look great on paper, but don't translate to the stage.

Zappa's concept, the orchestra, dancers and a dazzling array of sets and props, all coalesced into a huge, two-hour production that was funny, entertaining, mixed the various art forms masterfully, and took a bold step into the future.³⁰

One of the interesting differences to notice between the first and second evenings involves a transition that was supposed to have happened between the second and third movement of "Sinister Footwear." There was a lengthy costume change between the two movements, and Zappa, the consummate entertainer, wanted to come up with a way to fill the dead space. He suggested that Robert Walker, who played Jake in "Sinister Footwear," bring out one of the "ugly shoes" and present it to different members of the orchestra to obsess over while members of the orchestra improvised. Beal thought the idea was unprofessional, and she did not want one of her dancers doing such a thing. In the end Zappa decided that Walker would bring the shoe out to Carol Coe, the orchestra's harpist, who was supposed to act entranced by the shoe. She was the person that then brought it around to different members of the orchestra, and finally to the timpanist, Pete Thielen, who acted transfixed by it.

During the June 15 performance of "Sinister," there was miscommunication backstage, and no activity occurred between the movements as planned. The audience waited for a little while after the music stopped, and they thought the piece was over and commenced with timid applause, followed by another lengthy silence. After the piece was complete, Zappa came out to explain what happened, and he had Walker, Coe, Thielen, and the rest of the orchestra perform what was supposed to take place between the movements. He seemed quite amused about all of this as he explained to the audience:

³⁰ Larry Kelp, "Zappa Pokes Into the Fine Arts," *The Oakland Tribune*, June 18, 1984.

Whenever things get played for the first time, mistakes will occur. Little problems will crop up, and this was no exception. We had worked out something really terrific to fill up the black hole between the second and third movement. We had a communication problem backstage, and since we have four minutes to kill while we get ready for 'Pedro,' we're going to make sure that you didn't miss anything. We're going to reenact [it].

The orchestra improvised music to the scene onstage while Zappa explained what was happening, much to the wild entertainment and laughter of the audience. Before moving onto the next piece "Pedro," Zappa remarked, "Now, that's a good rehearsal for tomorrow night. Do it just like that tomorrow night, and Jake will be sure to give her the shoe."

Zappa did not take any chances with it for the June 16 performance, and he announced what was to happen prior to the start of "Sinister." He even makes a quick jab at Beal's reluctance at the idea:

Last night a trendsetting event occurred here on this stage. This show, even though underfunded, is very complicated. In this piece you will see various delays between the movements because we've got to move stuff around back there. Between the first and the second movement, there's kind of a boring little slot where we have to sit there wondering if something's going to happen. Don't worry something will happen in a minute. Between the second and third movement, there's this big hole. Last night I figured out this great way to fill up that hole because I believe in entertainment. You bought a ticket. You don't want to sit there without anything going on around you. So I made some suggestions to the dancers, 'You know, just do a little of this, do a little of that, and be entertaining.' It didn't work. Well, it's not because it wasn't a good idea. It was another reason...so...[audience laughter]

I don't want to get into that now because there are critical professional reputations at stake here, and I'm not talking about mine [audience laughter]...What we'll have to do is that between the second and third movement, I'm going to have to come out here to entertain you for a minute while we move stuff around [applause]. For those of you who were here last night, I have to make it perfectly clear this time that the action that takes place on this side of the curtain is my fault, and anything that takes place on that side of the curtain is 'art.'³¹

At this point it's interesting to note that public opinion of the event was drastically different from that of many that were involved with or participated in the event. Although the

³¹ Amirkhanian, "A Zappa Affair."

piece written by Stephanie Zimmerman in the program booklet was overwhelmingly positive and optimistic, some of the dancers and choreographers I interviewed for this document recalled what a nightmare it was to work with Zappa, particularly regarding how difficult he was to communicate with and what an abrasive attitude he had toward the people he was supposed to be working with. Even three years after the event, the manager of the BSO, Kelly Johnson, referred to the event as the “nightmare of 1984,” and he did not want to be reminded of it.³²

From the perspective of the BSO, AZA was a financial disaster. Instead of being a fundraising opportunity for the BSO, it ended up putting the BSO hundreds of thousands of dollars in the red due to production costs that kept escalating. The L. J. and Mary C. Skaggs Foundation, a California philanthropic organization, provided \$20,000 to help finance AZA, but that was not nearly enough to keep pace with the demands of the budget. Johnson, who had just taken over as the orchestra manager, said, “I saw the budget go from \$50,000 to \$100,000 to \$150,000...I would come to work, get beaten up, and go home; come to work, get beaten up, and go home.”³³ The front of the program booklet and all of the advertisements for AZA even listed a third performance that was to take place at the San Jose Center for the Performing Arts on Wednesday, June 20. The performance was cancelled due to low ticket sales, much to the disappointment of this reviewer for the Zappa fanzine *Mother People*: “Can you believe a city with over 600,000 people and not even a thousand with brains enough to buy a ticket to a milestone event like this one (that’s 1 out of 600). As you could have guessed, if you didn’t know already, the Zappa Affair in San Jose was cancelled due to a lack of ticket sales. How could a thing like that happen?”³⁴

³² Sarah Cahill, “The Zappa Affair: Kent Nagano, The Berkeley Symphony and ‘Sinister Footwear’,” *Option*, 1987, 66.

³³ Ibid.

³⁴ Callo, “A Zappa Affair.”

The financial troubles trickled down from there as it affected the organization's ability to pay their bills after the event was over. The dancers remembered AZA with some bitterness because they were either compensated far below what they were originally promised, or they did not remember being compensated at all. Beal thought everyone got paid, although in small chunks over the course of two years, which is why she thinks many don't remember it now.³⁵ Judging from their recollections about whether or not they got paid for their work on AZA, it seems there was a level of administrative and organizational confusion. Beal also said that it was the "last time I ever did a gig without a down payment and full payment the night of the show. At least I learned a good lesson."³⁶

Marilyn (Henkus) McLaughlin, a dancer who worked the Dolly Parton puppet in "Bob/Jane" and was one of four operators inside of the Decamorph puppet in "Mo 'n Herb's," recalls, "It was a horrible fiasco and a very traumatic experience as my first professional job after graduating. It was a really sour experience, and the most pungent taste in my mouth was not getting paid. I remember my body hurt so badly. It was a grueling and exhausting experience, and we never got paid."³⁷ Ellen Sevy operated the Olivia puppet in "Bob/Jane," and she was also one of the dancers inside of Decamorph. Sevy was living in the Santa Cruz area at the time, and she remembered driving 75 miles each way to participate in rehearsals that took place at the Victoria Theater, located in the Mission district of San Francisco. "I don't know what happened. What I think was supposed to happen was that the orchestra was supposed to pay the San Francisco Miniature Theatre, and *they* were supposed to pay the dancers. But we never got paid. That's a big memory of mine, which would put a damper on my fondness for the project."³⁸

³⁵ Tandy Beal, e-mail message to author, April 24, 2012.

³⁶ Ibid.

³⁷ Marilyn McLaughlin, interview by author, telephone interview, March 9, 2012.

³⁸ Ellen Sevy, interview by author, telephone interview, March 9, 2012.

Paul Zmolek, currently on the dance faculty at Idaho State University, along with Robert Walker, was one of the two live dancers who did not function primarily as puppeteers. Zmolek played Bob in “Bob/Jane” and Herb in “Mo ‘n Herb’s.” Additionally, he had a puppeteer role operating M. Jackson in “Sinister.” Zmolek confirms Sevy’s hunch about how the puppeteers/dancers were supposed to be paid:

Financially, it was a disaster. We were promised gigs in San Jose and a possible tour that failed to materialize. None of the performers were paid in full. The two live performers got paid a higher percentage of what had been contracted because we were employees of Tandy Beal, but the puppeteers got very little because they were hired by the San Francisco Miniature Theatre, which I heard went bankrupt after the show.³⁹

I spoke to my ex-wife [Aida Pisciotta] afterwards, and she said she received a partial payment. I also ran into another puppeteer from the show from Tandy’s company who had taken a short-term loan out on the strength of the expected pay stated in the contract so he could pay rent and expenses. The very partial pay he received had really put him in a bind. All of the puppeteers were on contract with the SFMT.⁴⁰

Even as one of the choreographers, Joan Lazarus got paid far less than what was promised to her. For all of her work, she remembers getting paid approximately \$400.

Choreographers Tandy Beal and Joan Lazarus had the formidable task of creating choreography to Zappa’s four symphonic works that were to be performed on AZA. The first challenge was that the Zappa’s music was unfamiliar to them, and this included what was to be the world premiere of “Sinister.” Secondly, they had to utilize a combination of different elements on the stage that included live dancers, sixty different puppets that ranged in size (up to fourteen feet tall) and style (some were operated by wooden rods, others were strapped to dancer’s bodies, and a couple were simultaneously operated by four or five dancers). The third and most challenging aspect for the choreographers was working with Zappa.

As Zappa’s music was extremely demanding for the musicians, one can imagine that it

³⁹ Paul Zmolek, e-mail message to author, March 9, 2012.

⁴⁰ Paul Zmolek, e-mail message to author, March 12, 2012.

was also tough for the choreographers to grasp. Beal and Lazarus split the choreography assignments. Beal was responsible for “Bob/Jane” and “Sinister,” and Lazarus took choreography duties for “Mo ‘n Herb’s” and “Pedro.” Aside from some instances where Zappa wanted to include some characters from one piece as a preview for a following piece, Beal and Lazarus worked independently of each other, and they each took a different approach to the music.

Lazarus, who was an assistant professor at Mills College in Oakland at the time, very much wanted to understand Zappa’s music. She had wonderful opportunities at Mills to work with notable composers Terry Riley and Lou Harrison. However, Zappa’s unwillingness to share information about his music, which again was incredibly dense and challenging to follow, was extremely frustrating for Lazarus. She was thankful for Nagano’s assistance in creating recordings for her to work from:

My experience with [Zappa] as the composer, whose music I needed to understand, was that he was very insulting. He would, on one hand, criticize our inability to understand his art, but on the other hand, he did everything in his power to make sure we didn’t have any information at all. And thank god for Kent Nagano! I had been a musician when I was younger...I knew how to read a score, and I wanted to understand his music. It’s incredibly dense, but it’s stunningly beautiful music when it’s not so layered.

What Kent did for me was make a recording of rehearsals on a cassette recorder—this was 30 years ago, and you couldn’t walk in and record something on your phone—and then overlay verbal indications of where we were in the music so that I could listen and read the score. It was an important thing that he did for me because there was no way I could follow the score. It was sometimes like an opaque wall of sound coming through the air. It was very hard as a choreographer. We’re used to being handed a recording, and there wasn’t one.

Once Kent understood that I was actually willing to see how well I could understand what he was doing, I was able to come to any of the [orchestra] rehearsals. I needed to hear what he was saying to the musicians about the music.⁴¹

⁴¹ Joan Lazarus, interview by author, telephone interview, March 13 2012.

Zappa scripted the entire libretto for each ballet,⁴² in a sense locking the choreographers into specific movements that he felt needed to happen at defined moments on the stage. Although she feels differently about it now, at the time Lazarus felt like it was her job to know the storyline and the music in order to fulfill his vision. She came to dance rehearsals with a “score” of musical events, and the choreography was completely mapped out early in the process with movement events that coincided with the musical events.⁴³ It was infuriating to her that Zappa did not show up to any of the dance rehearsals, but he told her very candidly after the dress rehearsal that the choreography was uninteresting and not nearly entertaining enough. Emergency rehearsals were called to change what they could with the short amount of time remaining.

Beal’s approach was slightly different than that of Lazarus, and Beal was someone that Lazarus looked up to and considered a superior to her in the arts world. At that point Beal was already quite well known and respected in the dance community for her work, having already completed tours with her dance company throughout the United States and Europe. She was also recognized with grants from organizations such as the National Endowment for the Arts and the California Arts Council, in addition to being selected by the American Council on the Arts as the most outstanding emerging dance artist of the year in 1983. Where Lazarus felt like she needed to closely follow Zappa’s libretto, Beal decided that his libretto was not going to work choreographically, and therefore went in the direction of a more general storyline for her two pieces.⁴⁴

⁴² The libretto for each of the ballets was included in the printed program from the January 11, 1983 LSO performance at the Barbican. Portions of that program can be viewed here: http://www.afka.net/Scrapbook/LSO_1983-01-11.htm

⁴³ Paul Zmolek, e-mail to author, March 14, 2012.

⁴⁴ Lazarus, interview.

Zmolek thought that Beal's sense of visual play, wonderment, and movement punning was a good match for working with Gilkerson's visually stunning puppets.⁴⁵ He recalled a scene in "Bob/Jane" where the original libretto called for Bob, played by Zmolek, to detach Jane's breasts, fondle them while ignoring her, and then sling them over his shoulder and exit. Beal felt this was too harsh, and instead "seeing the wonder within simplicity and adding to FZ's rather cynical humor,"⁴⁶ created a movement where Bob turned the breasts into a giant butterfly and then returned them back to Jane. Beal's recollection of working with Zappa is slightly different than Lazarus', and here she notes the difference in Zappa's demeanor in a singular setting versus a group setting:

Zappa treated people weirdly. Although one on one he was great and super-intelligent, in rehearsal he forgot that everyone was trying their best to make his work manifest well. He kept making stupid jokes in bad taste, and often at people's expense—not cool.⁴⁷

Some of the dancers recalled the rehearsal atmosphere as odd, likely due to the friction caused by trying to choreograph to music that one would not necessarily point to as being "choreographic music" Add to this, working with a composer that both at once gave instructions that were too specific without providing adequate feedback during the process. Zmolek, who was and still is an ardent fan of Zappa's music, noted some of the inherent problems with the libretto:

Zappa's libretto seemed more conceptual than a feasible document for creating a workable *mise en scène* on stage. He included very specific references that were funny on the page, but largely untranslatable to the stage. Dance, like music, is very good at portraying emotional states, but when it comes to very specific details, theatre is better. Zappa really didn't understand dance, and what its strengths and limitations are. I read a few years later about premieres of ballets of his in Europe that were deemed as successes. It seems that the choreographers ignored his libretti and just created movement to the music, which was a better choice if the choreographers didn't fully get behind Zappa's witty satire.⁴⁸

⁴⁵ Zmolek, e-mail, March 12.

⁴⁶ Ibid.

⁴⁷ Beal, e-mail.

⁴⁸ Zmolek, e-mail, March 12, 2012.

Although Lazarus worked from tape recordings of the orchestra rehearsals, Beal primarily used piano reductions of the scores during dance rehearsals, and she choreographed from those. This was especially problematic in one section of “Sinister Footwear” when Beal choreographed a tango that was meant by Zappa to be a waltz!⁴⁹ Zappa’s frustration with Beal and the choreography was fully revealed when she was not present at the rehearsals in Zellerbach Auditorium. The opening of the production kept getting postponed, which eventually conflicted with another opening she had in Paris, so Beal was not present for the Zellerbach rehearsals or performances.

Her dancers did not get a full sense of the music until they began technical rehearsals in Zellerbach, resulting in a sense of chaos. The dancers were trying to go through Beal’s choreography without having heard the music. They were contending with operating the entire cast of puppets for the first time—Gilkerson was simultaneously building the puppets during the rehearsal process—and some of the choreography had to be restaged because sections of the orchestra were now on the stage. The choreography was not humorous or entertaining enough for Zappa, and he made that known.

Lazarus recalls how unhappy Zappa was with Beal’s choreography, and how he addressed it during an opening night television interview:

We moved into the theater. Frank saw Tandy’s choreography, which, admittedly, didn’t have much to do with the music. She hadn’t listened to it. He said, ‘I refuse to have her name on anything. I hate it.’ She wasn’t there, but he hadn’t had the grace to go see what we were up to.

We had one television interview sitting in the theater on opening night. I’m sitting next to him, and the interviewer asked, ‘How is it having your ballet finally choreographed, and seeing them this way?’ I’m sitting next to the man, and he said, ‘The choreography is boring as fuck, but I guess I just have to live with it.’⁵⁰

⁴⁹ Ibid.

⁵⁰ Lazarus, interview.

Lazarus admits that the only reason she saw the project through to completion was the fact that John Gilkerson was a very good friend of hers.

Gilkerson's work on the puppets was beautiful and stunning by all accounts, from the dancers that maneuvered them, to the newspaper critics that reviewed the shows, to the radio hosts that covered the event, and even Frank Zappa himself. The San Francisco Miniature Theater was, essentially, Gilkerson. Gilkerson, a classmate and good friend of actor Tom Hanks from Skyline High School in Oakland, was well known for his work around the San Francisco Bay Area. He created costumes for the San Francisco Opera and Ballet, the Oakland Ballet, and the Dance Theater of Harlem, and also designed store windows for department stores. He was also involved with the NBC Emmy Award-winning children's show *Buster and Me*, for which he created puppets and was a main character.

In addition to the sixty puppets that Gilkerson created for AZA, he and his company were responsible for the production design and performance staging for the concerts. Gilkerson and his production manager, Frank Morales, made several trips to visit Zappa on an ongoing basis in order to discuss the direction of the puppets and how they fit into the overall production. When asked about Zappa's experience regarding AZA, his widow Gail specifically mentioned Gilkerson in a kind light saying, "I can tell you that working with the puppets was a profound and deeply moving experience for FZ because of the character and personal integrity of John Gilkerson."⁵¹ Gilkerson passed away from AIDS-related complications in 1989, not too long after AZA.

⁵¹ Gail Zappa, e-mail to author, March 15, 2012.

Conclusion

In this chapter the relationship between Frank Zappa and the various performers he worked with on productions of his large orchestral pieces was explored. This includes his unique relationship with conductor Kent Nagano, his interactions with the musicians of the London Symphony and Berkeley Symphony Orchestras, as well as his incongruous relationships with choreographers Joan Lazarus and Tandy Beal. By this time, the composer had already begun composing on the Synclavier, an early digital synthesizer and music workstation manufactured by New England Digital Corporation. For the remainder of his compositional career, nearly until his death, the Synclavier was his preferred method of composing since it was able to realize the most complex music he could dream up. Synclavier compositions were included alongside recordings by the Ensemble Intercontemporain on *The Perfect Stranger* (1984), and they comprised nearly the entirety of his Grammy Award-winning album *Jazz From Hell* (1986). It was not until Zappa began rehearsals with the Ensemble Modern in 1991, in what would ultimately result in seven concerts given in Europe in 1992 and *The Yellow Shark* (1993) album, that Zappa would once again perform with orchestral musicians.

CHAPTER 3

SAD JANE—AN ANALYSIS AND TRANSCRIPTION FOR WIND ENSEMBLE

Introduction

“Bob in Dacron/Sad Jane” is a two-part ballet suite composed by Frank Zappa in 1979. The London Symphony Orchestra (LSO) premiered this ballet, along with five of his other works for large orchestra, on January 11, 1983 at the Barbican Centre in London, followed by three consecutive days of recording. After the recording session by the LSO, the Berkeley Symphony Orchestra gave the United States premiere of three of these pieces during A Zappa Affair on June 15 and 16, 1984 in Berkeley, California. All of these projects took place under Zappa’s supervision, and were conducted by Kent Nagano. The instrumentation for “Bob/Jane” is for an expanded orchestra consisting of: piccolo, 4 flutes, 4 Oboes (4 doubles English horn), 4 B-flat clarinets (3 doubles E-flat; 4 doubles bass clarinet), 4 bassoons (4 doubles contrabassoon), 8 horns, 4 B-flat trumpets (4 doubles flugelhorn), 4 tenor trombones, bass trombone, tuba, piano, harp, timpani, 6 Percussion, and strings (expanded sections with 4 violin parts, 8 viola parts, 3 cello parts, and 2 bass parts).

“Bob in Dacron” is in four movements: I. Bob’s Clothes (mm. 1-124); II. What Bob’s Body Really Looks Like (mm. 125-169); III. Bob Gets Drunk (mm. 170-246); IV. Bob Meets Jane (mm. 247-296). “Sad Jane” is also divided into multiple movements: I. Jane’s Clothes (mm. 1-46); II. What Jane’s Body Really Looks Like (mm. 47-89); III. Alla Marcia (mm. 90-167). It is interesting to note that the tracks on the released albums were never divided according to the movements delineated by Zappa in the score. On *Vol. I* (1983) and *The London Symphony Orchestra* (1987), “Jane” is listed as one track without any indication that there are different

movements. “Bob,” which was not released until *Vol. II*, received similar treatment. This is in contrast to “Mo ‘N Herb’s Vacation,” which appeared as three discrete tracks on every release on which it was included. When the entirety of the LSO session was released on one album in 1995, “Bob” and “Jane” were each divided into two movements, simply listed as “Bob in Dacron, First Movement,” “Bob in Dacron, Second Movement,” “Sad Jane, First Movement,” and “Sad Jane, Second Movement.”

Of the two parts of the ballet, “Bob” can be the more challenging to listen to for a couple of reasons. The first reason is due to its through-composed form. Bernard divides Zappa’s output for acoustic concert ensembles into two categories as they relate to form: (1) forms relying upon repetition of some kind, or (2) episodic forms that consist of motivic, thematic, or other elements that are essentially non-repeating.¹ “Bob” clearly falls into the latter category. Bernard describes this as the more challenging musical form to listen to because, as opposed to works that may contain a textual or visual reference to a narrative, there is little for the listener to hold onto during the listening process. The second challenge to listening to “Bob” is that while non-repeating, there is a textural similarity throughout much of the piece that can make the task of discerning one part from another difficult. In describing another of Zappa’s pieces, “Dupree’s Paradise,” Bernard remarks that the challenge of listening to a piece of music that is so similar throughout is that “the piece ends up so monochromatic, in terms of texture, dynamics, tempo, and overall pacing, that paradoxically it is very difficult to follow except from moment to moment...the effect is curiously stifling.”²

¹ Jonathan W. Bernard, “Listening to Zappa,” *Contemporary Music Review* 18, no. 4: American Rock and the Classical Music Tradition (2000): 86.

² *Ibid.*, 87.

For those two reasons it was important for Zappa to describe the narrative of “Bob/Jane” to the AZA audience in 1984.³ In addition to what the audience saw on stage, it provided them with a storyline that could be associated with the music. Much to the audience’s enjoyment, Zappa colorfully described the work as a “piece of entertainment” that centers on a middle-aged man who unwittingly dresses in extremely ugly clothing before going out to find female companionship for the evening. While he is deciding on his attire, three imaginary girls appear and provide affirmation of his choices. Bob goes out to a bar, makes a fool of himself, and winds up getting kicked out of the establishment. He does, however, find a girl, Jane, who happens to be a faceless bag lady. Zappa closes his remarks with, “[Bob] uses his imagination. Suddenly Jane is naked, and she ain’t too bad even though she doesn’t have a face. Then we have the big surprise ending.”⁴ Since any recordings of AZA that exist are audio recordings, it is not possible to conclude what happens in the surprise ending to which Zappa refers.

Although “Jane” is inevitably linked with “Bob” and shares some of the same aural challenges, there are differences that set it apart, and for that reason along with my decision to create an arrangement of “Jane” for wind ensemble, “Jane” will be the focus of the remainder of the discussion regarding the characteristics that help to both define the overall formal structure and unify to the piece. These characteristics include: (1) the construction and transformation of the melody, specifically through motivic repetition, pitch contour, and rhythm; and (2) the use of recurring harmonic structures, including both dense 7-note chords from Zappa’s “Chord Bible” and sparse triadic chords that are more akin to his rock music. Form is more easily distinguished in “Jane” as Zappa incorporates a brief introduction (which reappears at the end of the piece as a

³ This is different from the 1983 LSO performance where there was a printed program that included the libretto for the ballets. There was no such reference material for the AZA audience. There was an AZA program, but it did not include any reference to the plot of the ballets.

⁴ Charles Amirhanian, “A Zappa Affair” audio, *Berkeley Symphony: 1983-84 Season* (Berkeley, CA: KPFA/KQED, June 16, 1984).

coda), repetition of melody, and recurring harmonic structures. Although released posthumously, perhaps this is the reason why “Jane’s Clothes” and “What Jane’s Body Really Looks Like” are combined into a single track simply titled “First Movement,” while “Alla Marcia” was left to be the “Second Movement” on the 1995 LSO release.

Melodic Construction and Transformation

As mentioned in Chapter 1, due to the way Zappa learned to play the guitar, Zappa had a predilection for playing single-line melodies. This in turn had an effect on his compositions, specifically regarding the importance of melody in his works. Brett Clement notes that Zappa’s guitar playing provided an additional method for his compositions although there are few examples of his works for acoustic concert ensembles that are idiomatic to the guitar. However, he goes on to describe the significance of Zappa’s attempt to integrate his guitar playing with his pre-composed melodies; and “Jane” is a quintessential example of this approach.⁵ The first two sections of “Jane” share common pre-composed melodic and motivic material, while most of the entirety of the melodic material in the third part is based on an improvised guitar solo from a 1968 concert performance.⁶

What one can tell by listening to the first half of “Jane,” and through visual confirmation with the written score, is that the melody in this section is indeed pre-composed, as opposed to improvised. There is clearly a level of melodic/motivic development that probably would not

⁵ Brett Clement, “A Study of the Instrumental Music of Frank Zappa” (University of Cincinnati, 2009), 16.

⁶ Frank Zappa, “Non-Foods: Not the Moody Blues,” *Guitar Player*, November 1983, 117.

have been possible if the melody had been improvised, a fact revealed by closer examination of the melodic material, specifically manipulated via contour retention and isomelism.⁷

Robert D. Morris describes contour as “one of the most general aspects of pitch perception...grounded only in a listener’s ability to hear pitches as relatively higher, equal, or lower, without discerning the exact differences between and among them,”⁸ and he notes that the analysis of contour can aid in the understanding of continuity and coherence in a composition. I will describe melodic contour using both contour intervals (INT) and contour segment (CSEG).⁹ With INT, each interval between two pitches is labeled with a “+” for an ascending motion and “-” for a descending motion to form a contour interval. CSEG takes the INT method one step further by assigning a number to each pitch within a contour, with 0 being the lowest pitch in the segment. I will use the term isomelism in the same manner that Clement does, the “technique in which a melody’s succession of pitch classes (and often just pitches) is preserved (or transposed) while its rhythms are altered.”¹⁰ Zappa’s use of both melodic contour retention and isomelism facilitates delineation of form in the first half of “Jane.”

The introduction of “Jane” is quite short—only four measures in length—before the melody is introduced. It begins hauntingly with softly sustained harmonic clusters scored in the flutes, bass clarinet, and bassoons. A steady eighth-note pulse in the harp accompanies the harmonic clusters, and the combination of the two components establishes a tonal center on A Dorian with a somewhat ambiguous leading tone (Fig. 3.1). After the short introduction, the

⁷ Clement, “A Study of the Instrumental Music of Frank Zappa,” 29. Clement’s use of the term isomelism refers to a technique in which a melody’s succession of pitch classes (and often just pitches) is preserved (or transposed) while its rhythms are altered

⁸ Robert D. Morris, “New Directions in the Theory and Analysis of Musical Contour,” *Music Theory Spectrum* 15, no. 2 (Autumn 1993): 205.

⁹ *Ibid.*, 206.

¹⁰ Clement, “A Study of the Instrumental Music of Frank Zappa,” 29.

melody is stated in full, repeated at m. 18, and then again at m. 66. The final movement of “Jane” closes with a coda that very closely resembles the opening four measures of the piece.



Figure 3.1: “Sad Jane” mm. 1-4

The melody, which can be divided into two parts, is introduced in m. 5 by the piccolo, E-flat clarinet, and bells. It is briefly handed off to flutes, muted trumpet, vibraphone, and chimes in m. 7 before the first group rejoins to complete the first half of the melody leading into m. 10 (Fig. 3.2).



Figure 3.2: “Sad Jane” mm. 5-10

The second half of the melody is motivic and is based on both the contour and rhythm of the last four pitches in m. 10 (Fig. 3.3). The contour of these four pitches has an INT of <+, +, ->, and is retained in its entirety in mm. 11 and 12. From a CSEG perspective, it is useful to split the contour, as more similarities can be observed. The first three pitches of m. 10 have a CSEG of <0

1 2>, and this is preserved in mm. 11 and 12. Measure 13 is a slight variant with a CSEG of <1 0 2>, and it serves as a useful transition to the remainder of the melody because mm. 14, 16, and 17 have a CSEG of <2 1 0>, which is a retrograde of the original <0 1 2>. The CSEG of the last two pitches in m.10 is <1 0>, and this descending motion is retained in all iterations of the contour.

A second instance of contour retention occurs toward the end of the first movement, beginning in m. 41. The contour is five pitches with an INT of <- , + , - , +>. It is repeated again in each of the subsequent measures until the end of the movement at m. 46 (Fig. 3.4). These measures foreshadow the use of this contour in the next movement in mm. 54-65, where it is highlighted and more easily heard.

The figure shows a musical score for measures 10 through 17 of the piece "Sad Jane". The score is written in treble clef with a key signature of one sharp (F#). The time signature changes from 7/8 to 5/8 and back to 7/8. Above the notes, Contour Segment Equivalence Groups (CSEG) are indicated by angle brackets containing numbers representing pitch intervals. Measure 10 has CSEGs <0 1 2> and <1 0>. Measure 11 has <0 1 2> and <1 0>. Measure 12 has <0 1 2> and <1 0>. Measure 13 has <1 0 2> and <1 0>. Measure 14 has <2 1 0> and <1 0>. Measure 15 has <2 1 0> and <1 0>. Measure 16 has <1 0>. Measure 17 has <2 1 0> and <1 0>. The notes in measures 10, 11, 12, 14, 15, and 17 are connected by a long slur, indicating a continuous melodic line.

Figure 3.3: "Sad Jane" mm. 10-17, contour retention

Figure 3.4: “Sad Jane” mm. 41-46

Measures 54-58, 60, and 65 feature INT <- , + , - , +> in its entirety, but even in m. 59 where the meter only allows for four eighth notes in the bar, the contour begins the same way <- , + , -> (Fig. 3.5). From a CSEG perspective five of the contours, a majority, are <1 0 4 2 3>. Measures 54 and 56 do not have this CSEG although they have the same <- , + , - , +> contour. The CSEG for these two measures is <3 2 4 0 1>, a retrograde of the measures that follow them. Lastly, observe the slight transformation of INT <- , + , - , +> in the previously mentioned measures to <- , + , - , -> in mm. 62-64. In these measures the last three pitches have a CSEG of <2 1 0>, and they are emphasized through the addition of tenuto articulations. Recall that CSEG <2 1 0> was featured at the end of the melody in mm. 14, 16, and 17. Zappa uses the <2 1 0> contour to foreshadow the return of the melody, which returns only two measures later in m. 67. Zappa’s retention and transformation of the <- , + , - , +> contour coupled with the CSEG retrogrades, and the utilization of the <2 1 0> contour provides the listener with a sense of continuity and similarity through these measures, yet it allows for a hint of uncertainty as to why each measure sounds slightly different. This is an excellent example of Zappa’s use of contour as a tool in providing musical coherence.

Fig. 3.5: “Sad Jane” mm. 54-64

Zappa does not utilize isomelism to a great degree in “Jane,” but it is a technique that he slyly employs to provide some variation to the recurring melody in the first half. One section in the melody where the rhythm is changed at each occurrence is m. 15 (Fig. 3.6). In the second statement of the melody, the two sixteenth notes become compressed into two sixteenth-note triplets at the end of m. 35. In m. 77 the opposite occurs and the two sixteenth notes become augmented into two eighth notes during the third statement of the melody.



Figure 3.6: “Sad Jane” mm. 15-16, 35-36, 77-78

There is another subtle change to the melodic statement, but this time it is in the opening portion (Fig. 3.7). Zappa re-bars the opening of the third melodic statement at m. 66; instead of two measures of 4/4, the note values are grouped into one measure of 4/8 and two measures of 5/8. The rhythmic values are almost identical to the initial statement (one half note, followed by eight eighth notes and another half note), but the final half note is now shortened to a quarter note, necessitating the meter change. A second reason for re-barring mm. 66-68 could be that the initial harp accompaniment in the opening fit in the 4/4 meter while the accompaniment in mm. 67-68 falls more readily into 5/8.

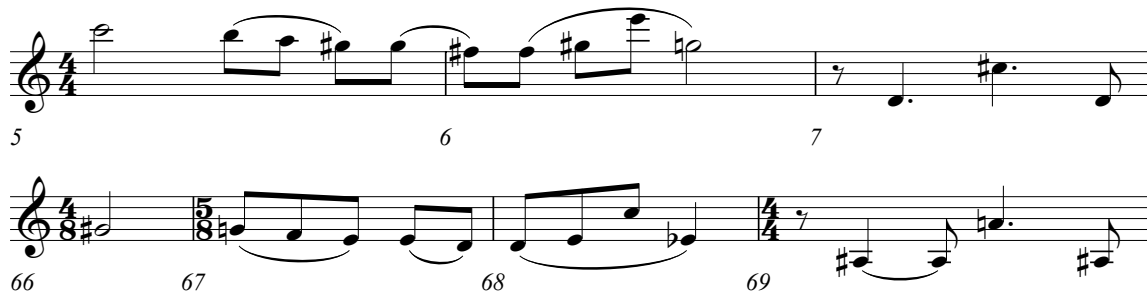


Figure 3.7: “Sad Jane” mm. 5-7, 66-69

Using mm. 18-23 as the basis for variation, isomelism is reasserted and can be observed in mm. 81-85 (Fig. 3.8a/b). The succession of pitches from the earlier measures is duplicated at a T-4 transposition, although with one discrepancy in the tenth pitch. The rhythm is not greatly

changed here—basically a diminution by half of the original—but serves as an example of Zappa’s melodic variation.

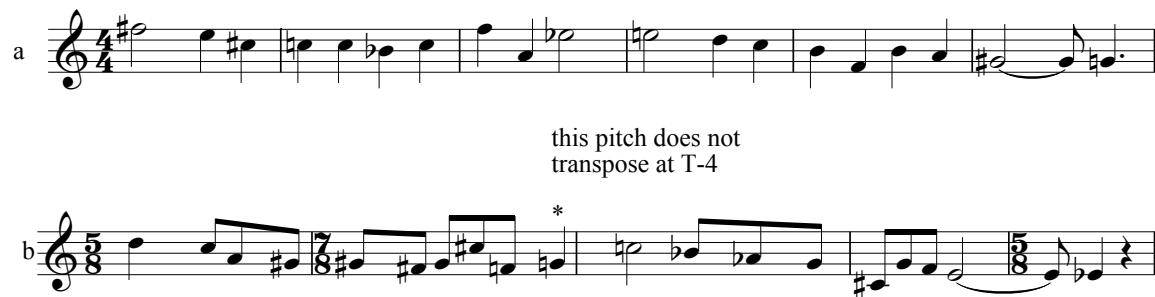


Figure 3.8: “Sad Jane” (a) mm. 18-23 and (b) 81-85

The final example of isomelism is a 34-pitch phrase that occurs at the end of “Jane.” However, to find the initial statement of this phrase one must go back to “Bob,” where it originally appears beginning in m. 234 at the end of the third movement (Fig. 3.9a). It is repeated for the first time at the onset of the fourth movement in m. 249 (Fig. 3.9b), but the phrase is broken up three times by two dotted-half note bell tones. The second repetition of this phrase begins at m. 291 (Fig. 3.9c). It is the closing phrase of “Bob,” and it is the last bit of music heard before the segue into “Jane.” This repetition is uninterrupted and occurs at a T-1 transposition from the original phrase.

When this phrase appears in “Jane” at m. 162 (Fig. 3.9d), it occurs at the end of the coda section that began 11 measures earlier. The phrase is now at a T-3 transposition with respect to mm. 234-237 (Fig. 3.9a), but is immediately followed by a repetition at the original pitch level (Fig. 3.9e). It is interesting to note that the final statement in “Jane,” which happens to be the end of “Bob/Jane,” is the same melody that closes the fourth movement of “Bob.” Zappa titled that movement “Bob Meets Jane,” which perhaps indicates that he wanted to use this phrase to provide an overt connection between the two halves.

Harmonic Structure

A characteristic of Zappa's orchestral compositions from the late 1970s to early 1980s was the use of chord structures that emphasized pitch spacing and pitch class diversity, much in the style of Varèse. Varèse is known for using the analogy of a crystal and the process of crystallization to describe how his works were formed, specifically referring to the crystal's external and internal structure. On the most basic level, the external structure is analogous to the highest and lowest pitches heard at any given time, and the internal structure describes the different ways that pitches can be spaced within the outer boundaries.¹¹ Zappa's chords were catalogued in a collection he termed "The Chord Bible." The contents of the Chord Bible are not available, but they can be deduced through a close examination of Zappa's works during this time period. In a 1987 interview, Zappa gave the following description of the Chord Bible:

Every composer has notes, chords, and rhythms that he likes to hear. Some people keep it all in their head and some people will jot down little sketches. Several years ago I made a classification of all of my favorite chords plus the order in which I preferred to hear the pitches in the chord arpeggiated. It's all broken down from three-note, four-note, five-note, six-note, eight-note chords. The chords are in different classifications, starting with those chords that have a minor second as the uppermost interval, major second, minor third, blah blah blah, all the way down to the fewest chords that have a minor ninth as the upper interval of the chord. There are real dense-voiced chords and chords that cover four or five octaves.¹²

Clement goes into great detail about how the chords are constructed and possibly organized in the Chord Bible,¹³ and he believes that there may also be different versions of the Chord Bible that Zappa used.¹⁴ For the purposes of this document I will use Clement's nomenclature for describing the chords, which involves two characteristics: one, the scales from which they are drawn; two, their density, or vertical spacing (in pitch). The density, *D*, will be

¹¹ Jonathan W. Bernard, "Varèse's Space, Varèse's Time," in *Edgard Varèse: Composer, Sound Sculptor, Visionary*, ed. Heidi Zimmermann and Felix Meyer (Woodbridge, Suffolk: Boydell Press, 2006), 150.

¹² Frank Zappa, "Zappa on Jazz From Hell," *Music & Sound Output*, March 1987, 28.

¹³ Clement, "A Study of the Instrumental Music of Frank Zappa," 198–216.

¹⁴ Brett Clement to Vu Nguyen, "Zappa Dissertation," March 20, 2012.

labeled using the semitones between pitches, beginning with the lowest pitch. For example, a chord consisting of C1, G1, D2, and F#2 will be labeled D[7-7-4].¹⁵ I will also only refer to the chords relevant to the discussion of “Jane.” Examining “Jane” in this way allows an avenue for identifying what makes it sound uniquely “Zappa.”

Figure 3.10 shows two of the primary chords used in “Jane.” They are both based on the diatonic scale, and they are labeled according to the root, indicating whether they are based on the Lydian or Dorian mode.¹⁶ There is a predominance of four perfect 5th intervals in each chord type. In the Lydian primary chord D[4-7-7-1-7-7] there are two stacked fifth chords, set-class (027), above the Lydian pedal. In the Dorian primary chord D[7-7-1-7-7-4] the (027) sets are stacked from the Dorian root with the major third interval at the very top.

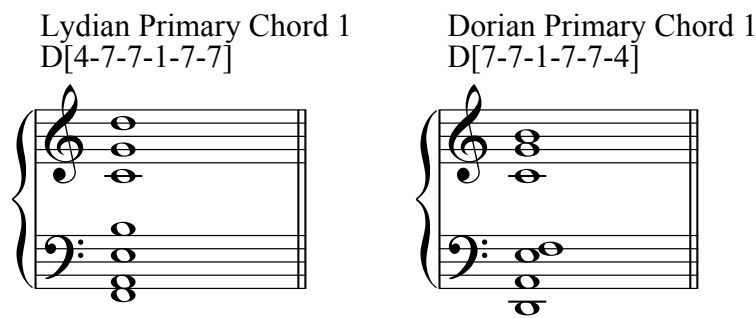


Figure 3.10: Lydian and Dorian primary chords from Chord Bible

In the previous section, I looked at how the melody was used to delineate the form of the first half of “Jane.” The second half of Jane, as previously mentioned, is based on an improvised guitar solo that was later transcribed. The challenge with listening to this is the non-repeating form. The first half of “Jane” benefitted from the use of the repeating melodic statements to delineate the form, but Zappa does not have that at his disposal in this second half, as nothing

¹⁵ Clement, “A Study of the Instrumental Music of Frank Zappa,” 202.

¹⁶ There are derivatives to these primary chord densities that Clement confirms, but Zappa does not employ them in “Jane.”

repeats. To solve that problem, he uses 7-note chord densities juxtaposed with sparse (027) trichords to provide the listener with aural markers.

Because “Jane” was written during the earlier period of the Chord Bible, Zappa’s use of these harmonies is rather basic. There is a pre-composed melody, and each melodic note is assigned a chord to harmonize it. In the first three movements of “Jane” it is the melody introduced at m. 5 that was previously discussed. In the last movement, it is the transcribed guitar solo that serves as the melody. Zappa describes:

For instance, you say, “This section will contain all chords that are made of five notes; each chord must contain these intervals—a third, half-step, and a fourth, and a major seventh.” Then you set about randomly constructing—first you write a line, then you harmonize the line with five-note chords that adhere to that formula. Then you work it out with voice leading.¹⁷

This technique is employed from the beginning of the transcribed melody, which appears to be in D Dorian (Fig. 3.11). A chord harmonizes each melodic pitch, with the melodic pitch being the highest note of the chord. Although this method of composition results in textures that are essentially homorhythmic, notice how Zappa takes advantage of the close relationship between the Lydian primary and Dorian primary chords, using them in alternation to provide contrary motion between the inner voices of the chords.

In mm. 104-118, Zappa employs a different method of harmonization, and turns to variants of the (027) trichord in repeated staccato eighth notes to provide a different texture to the music (Fig. 3.12). Because the (027) chord is based on intervals of a fifth, it can exist in a few different forms: (1) as stacked fifths, (2) as a sus-2 chord, or (3) as a sus-4 chord, and Zappa utilizes all three variants in these 15 measures. In addition to providing textural variety to the Chord Bible harmonies, it also allows for rhythmic variance since each melodic note is not

¹⁷ Dan Forte, “Zappa,” *Musician*, August 1979, 42.

attached to a specific chord. He takes advantage of this by providing a third layer in the timpani and contrabass in mm. 112-116 to help outline the (027) chord, which also provides some tonal ambiguity as to what the root of the (027) construction should be.

Zappa returns to the Chord Bible harmonization technique in mm. 119-140, and introduces certain chord densities that have yet to be confirmed, including $D[2-1-2-2-2]$ and $D[1-2-1-2-2-2]$, which appear to be based on an ascending melodic minor scale. Measures 141-148 constitute a return to the (027) chords with a transition in mm. 149-150. The coda then begins in m. 151.

In the transition measures of 149-150, the full 7-note harmonization is not present (Fig. 3.13). There are two stacked fifth trichords, but the major third interval (F-natural) that should be at the top of the chord is missing. The scalar content in mm. 162-163 is transposed up a minor third in m. 163. The passages appear to be in D Lydian and F Lydian, respectively, but with a frustrated leading tone that does not resolve upward. The F-natural in the last measure, played by the bells and delayed by one beat, could potentially be the missing resolution to the Lydian scale, and could also be the missing F-natural in mm. 149-150 (Fig. 3.14).

4 7 4 7 4 7 7 4 7 4
 7 7 7 7 7 7 7 7 7 7
 7 1 7 1 7 1 7 1 7 1
 1 7 1 7 1 7 1 7 1 7
 7 7 7 7 7 7 7 7 7 7
 7 4 7 4 7 4 7 4

7 4 7 4 7 4 7 4 7 4
 7 7 7 7 7 7 7 7 7 7
 1 7 1 7 1 7 1 7 1 7
 7 1 7 1 7 1 7 1 7 1
 7 7 7 7 7 7 7 7 7 7
 4 7 4 7 4 7 4 7 4 7

Figure 3.11: “Sad Jane” mm. 94-101. Chord Bible harmonies accompanying the melody.

(027) sus-2 (027) sus-4

(027) sus-2 (027) sus-2 (027) sus-2 (027) sus-4 (027) sus-2

(027) sus-4 (027) sus-2 (027) sus-4 (027) sus-2 (027) sus-4 (027) sus-2 (027) sus-4 (027) sus-2

Figure 3.12: “Sad Jane” mm. 104-116. Melody accompanied by (027) trichords

(4)?
7
7
1
7
7

4
7
7
1
7
7

Figure 3.13: “Sad Jane” mm. 149-152. Transition into the coda.

(027)

Figure 3.14: “Sad Jane” mm. 162-167

“Sad Jane” for Wind Ensemble

The idea for this project began in the spring of 2010 with my initial research into programming a Zappa composition on my doctoral conducting recital to complement Varèse’s *Intégrales*. After discussions with one of my graduate committee members, Dr. Jonathan Bernard, noted Zappa and Varèse scholar, I decided on *Dupree’s Paradise* for the recital. In continued discussions with Professor Timothy Salzman and Dr. Bernard in the months following the recital, I was drawn to the idea of adding a Zappa composition to the wind repertoire. There were already quite a few of his works arranged for mixed chamber ensemble and recorded by the Ensemble Modern, but the only wind ensemble arrangements I knew of were versions of *Dog Breath Variations* and *Envelopes*. Considering a large core of the compositional output of Zappa’s idol—*Hyperprism*, *Octandre*, *Intégrales*, *Ionisation*, *Density 21.5*, and *Déserts*—used wind and percussion instruments, it seemed appropriate to create an arrangement for wind ensemble. After much listening and careful consideration I decided that “Sad Jane” would translate well from orchestra to wind ensemble.

I began work on the arrangement once I was able to obtain a copy of the score to “Jane.” In correspondence with Gail Zappa about the project, it was apparent that we both wanted to make sure that the arrangement honored and stayed true to the original work as much as possible.¹⁸ To that end, and after much time spent listening to the orchestral version with the score, I decided to use the existing wind and percussion parts essentially as Zappa had written them. This seemed in line with the two versions of “Envelopes” for orchestra and wind ensemble. One practical adjustment that was needed was a slight reduction of the instrumentation in certain sections. The saxophone family was also included in the instrumentation. These adjustments

¹⁸ Gail Zappa, e-mail to author, March 15, 2012.

were made to reflect a more typical wind ensemble instrumentation. A comparison can be seen below:

<u>Original Orchestral Instrumentation</u>	<u>Wind Ensemble Instrumentation</u>
Piccolo	Piccolo
Flute 1-4	Flute 1-4
Oboe 1-4 (4 doubles English horn)	Oboe 1-3 (3 doubles English horn)
B-flat Clarinets 1-4 (3 doubles E-flat; 4 doubles bass clarinet)	B-flat Clarinet 1-4 (3 doubles E-flat; 4 doubles bass clarinet)
Bassoons 1-4 (4 doubles contrabassoon)	Bassoons 1-3 (3 doubles contrabassoon)
	Soprano Saxophone
	Alto Saxophone
	Tenor Saxophone
	Baritone Saxophone
Horns 1-8	Horns 1-4
Trumpets 1-4 (4 doubles flugelhorn)	Trumpets 1-4 (4 doubles flugelhorn)
Tenor Trombones 1-4	Trombones 1-4
Bass Trombone	Euphonium
Tuba	Tuba
Piano	Piano
Harp	Harp
Timpani	Percussion 1-5 (Timpani included in Perc. 1)
Percussion 1-6	Drumset
Strings	Contrabass

Because of the change in instrumentation, there were sections of the wind ensemble arrangement that required a redistribution of parts to both ensure that all of the voices were covered in addition to retaining the character and quality of the original version. In mm. 27-30 Zappa utilizes the eight horns at his disposal in addition to the bass trombone and tuba to sound some tightly constructed chords. In the wind ensemble arrangement I used the four trombones, euphonium, and tuba in addition to the four horns (Fig. 3.15).

The image shows a musical score for a wind ensemble, specifically measures 27-30 of "Sad Jane for Wind Ensemble". The score is arranged in six staves. The top two staves are for Horns 1 & 2 and Horns 3 & 4, both in treble clef. The next two staves are for Trumpets 1 & 2 and Trumpets 3 & 4, both in bass clef. The fifth staff is for Euphonium (Euph.) in bass clef, and the sixth staff is for Trombone (Tba.) in bass clef. The music features various dynamic markings: *molto vib* (vibrato), *mf* (mezzo-forte), *normal*, and *f* (forte). A section of the score is marked *a2*. The key signature has one sharp (F#) and the time signature is 4/4. The score includes slurs, accents, and dynamic hairpins.

Figure 3.15: “Sad Jane for Wind Ensemble” mm. 27-30

How I chose to transcribe the strings was dependent on what other instruments were already playing, the tessitura of the string parts, and the timbre desired at any given point. In general, the contrabass parts remained in the contrabass; the cello parts were given to either the bassoon, bass clarinet, tenor saxophone, or baritone saxophone; viola parts were given to the bassoon, clarinet, alto saxophone, or tenor saxophone; lastly, the violin parts were given to the flute, oboe, clarinet, or soprano saxophone. Figure 3.16 illustrates an example of a passage that was originally scored only for strings and its subsequent transcription.

0

II. WHAT JANE'S BODY REALLY LOOKS LIKE

FASTER ♩ = 80

47 48 49

Fl. 1, 2 *mp* *a2* *molto vib*

Fl. 3, 4 *mp* *molto vib* *molto vib*

Bsn. 1, 2 *mp* *molto vib*

T. Sax. *mp* *molto vib*

Bari. Sax. *mp*

Hn. 3, 4 *arco mp* *molto vib*

Cb. *mp*

50 51 52 53

Fl. 1, 2 *molto vib* *f* *molto vib* *a2* *molto vib*

Fl. 3, 4 *molto vib* *f* *molto vib* *molto vib* *sfz*

Bsn. 1, 2 *molto vib* *f* *molto vib* *molto vib* *sfz*

T. Sax. *molto vib* *mf* *molto vib* *molto vib* *sfz*

Bari. Sax. *mp* *mf* *molto vib* *molto vib* *sfz*

Hn. 3, 4 *molto vib* *f* *molto vib* *molto vib* *sfz pizz*

Cb. *mp* *f* *molto vib* *molto vib* *sfz*

Figure 3.16: “Sad Jane for Wind Ensemble” mm. 47-53

There were also places in the arrangement where a combination of instruments was used to represent the string section. In mm. 119-121, the string sound is meant to be full, so instead of using only one instrument per line, voices were doubled to create a fuller sound in the wind ensemble (Fig. 3.17).

The image displays a musical score for a wind ensemble, specifically measures 119 to 121 of the piece "Sad Jane". The score is arranged in a standard orchestral format with multiple staves. The instruments listed on the left are: Bcl. (Bass Clarinet), Bsn. 1, 2 (Bassoon), Cbsn. (Contrabassoon), Sop. Sax. (Soprano Saxophone), A. Sax. (Alto Saxophone), T. Sax. (Tenor Saxophone), Bari. Sax. (Baritone Saxophone), Tp. 1, 2 (Trumpet), Hn. 1, 2 (Horn), Hn. 3, 4 (Horn), and Cb. (Cello/Double Bass). The score is divided into three measures, with measure numbers 119, 120, and 121 clearly marked. Dynamics markings such as *fff*, *mf*, and *ff* are present throughout the score. The Cb. part includes the instruction "arco" in measure 119. The overall texture is dense, with many instruments playing active parts.

Figure 3.17: “Sad Jane for Wind Ensemble” mm. 119-121

The decision to reduce the percussion parts from six players to five players stemmed from the desire to include the drumset part played by Chad Wackerman on the LSO recording, which would be played by the sixth player. On the recording, the drumset helps provide a steady pulse against which the polyrhythms of the melody can be referenced. Bernard cites the third movement of “Jane” and the drumset part, specifically, when discussing pulse in Zappa’s acoustic concert ensemble (ACE) music:

Two big concerns for Zappa the ACE composer would seem to be rhythm and pacing. As to the first, something must take the place of the constant reinforcement of pulse provided by a rock or jazz rhythm section in music that does not make use of such devices; Zappa's ACE music can seem rudderless when this need is not somehow supplied. Sometimes, stopgap measures seem to have been resorted to: one notices, for example, in the LSO's recording of the third movement of "Sad Jane" that there is a drumset part in the texture even though

none is specified in the printed score. Does this discrepancy simply reflect a copyist's oversight? Or was this part added in the recording session when it became clear that the score as originally conceived did not have sufficient rhythmic coherence?¹⁹

Either scenario posed by Bernard could potentially be possible, but what is not up for question is whether the part is supposed to be there, as Zappa obviously included it on the 1983 recording. In addition to being on the album, a drumset can also be heard in the last movement of “Jane” on the 1984 AZA performance. This performance occurred with Zappa’s supervision, which reaffirms the fact that the part is integral to the performance of the piece. With the importance of the drumset part and with typical wind ensemble instrumentation not requiring more than six percussionists, it seemed to be worth exploring the possibility of collapsing the percussion parts in order to include it in the wind ensemble arrangement. Once the decision was made to proceed, there was not a problem with collapsing the percussion parts.²⁰ The most challenging measures occur toward the end of the piece in mm. 158-160 (Fig. 3.18).

The image shows a musical score for percussion parts in measures 158-160. The score is written for a variety of percussion instruments, including Timp., Sleigh Bells, Maracas, Cast., Concert SD, Claves, Bell Tree, Picc. SD, Fld. Dm., T-T, Gong, and BD. The score is divided into three measures: 158, 159, and 160. Measure 158 shows a complex rhythmic pattern for the Concert SD and Picc. SD. Measure 159 shows a complex rhythmic pattern for the Concert SD and Picc. SD. Measure 160 shows a complex rhythmic pattern for the Concert SD and Picc. SD. The score includes dynamic markings such as *mf*, *f*, *p*, and *sfz*. The score also includes performance instructions such as "w/ drum stick", "Field Drum", "on rim", "Castanets", "Sleigh Bells", "Maracas", "Claves", and "To Bells".

Figure 3.18: “Sad Jane for Wind Ensemble” mm. 158-160

¹⁹ Bernard, “Listening to Zappa,” 92. Correspondence is still underway with Chad Wackerman, drumset player on the LSO recordings about the drumset parts to those pieces.

²⁰ A potential issue in the future might arise with the percussion parts for “Bob,” as the parts are more involved in that piece.

Summary

There are several reasons why many of Zappa's orchestral compositions can be challenging to listen to. In this chapter, these difficulties were explored in analysis of "Bob" and "Jane," and differences between the two were made apparent, indicating that "Jane" was the easier of the two to grasp. Reasons for this difference included: Zappa's melodic construction, which used motivic repetition, contour retention, and isomelism to aid with musical familiarity; his repetition of the melody to define a form in the first half of "Jane;" and his use of Chord Bible harmonies juxtaposed with the less dense (027) chords in the second half of "Jane" to define the form, even though the entirety of it was based on an improvisation. Background regarding the decision to create a wind ensemble transcription of "Sad Jane" was also discussed, which included a lack of Zappa compositions available to the wind ensemble that desires to perform his music. The process of transcribing string parts and instrumentation changes from the orchestral version were identified along with justifications for those changes.

Future research that would complement this document could include a number of avenues. The question still remains about where the source material for the last movement of "Jane" originated, and how it was or was not transformed in the orchestral composition. Locating either an audio source or the transcription manuscript would ideal in answering that question. There is also the mystery regarding the omission of a drumset part in the score to some of these orchestral pieces. Furthermore, an analysis of "Bob in Dacron" could aid in further confirmation of densities contained in Zappa's Chord Bible and their usage in Zappa's music.

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APPENDIX A

TRANSCRIPTION DETAILS

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