

Ensemble Ambrosius is a group that concentrates in contemporary music, using mostly Baroque instruments. Ambrosius was formed in 1995 and from the very beginning the music of American composer Frank Zoppa (1940–1993) has been one of our main focuses.

The members of Fosemble Ambrosius have all gone through extensive studies of the performance practice of early music and have at some point studied in the Sibelius Academy, Helsinki, I myself become interested in contemporary music and Zappa in high school - up until then I had only been involved with classical music. However. as I continued my classical studies, I met the multi-instrumentalist Jonte Knif, who shared my Zappaenthusiasm. With harpsichordist Ere Lievonen we eventually performed Uncle Meat with 2 harpsichords and a Baroque cello in 1995. This occured

at the final concert of an early music summer course where the oboist, Jasu Moisia, was present in the audience. Soon after that Jasu joined us, and what was originally intended as a one-time musical joke led to the forming of Ensemble Ambrosius.

As we started to play Zappa's music, it became evident to us that the most demanding thing was to be able to retain the rhythmicality and metric pulse of the music. How to simulate the smooth co-operation of the rhythm section of the rock group — particularly the drums and the bass — was the crucial question.

However, before being able to play a single note, we needed to notate the music somehow. The arranging of "The Zappa Album" followed the good old Steve Vai -method: every note of the album was first transcribed from the tope and then arranged to the

ensemble. Of the 15 pieces selected for this disc. Ere Lievonen arranged 5 pieces, the remainder having been completed by myself. Ere prefers to be extremely detailed in his arrangements, whereas I try to write down as few notes as possible, leaving the keyboard instruments, lute and cello a plentiful of liberties. In preparing my own arrangements I found it extremely useful having also toured with a big-band-sized Finnish rock group for the past five years, thus getting the vital first-hand knowledge of how the music of a large, amplified group functions. This knowledge has been very important in learning how the "styling" of FI's music can be adopted for a classical combination

As the musicions of Ensemble Ambrosius are professionals in the field of Baroque music, it was natural for us to also apply the concept of the Baroque basso continuo group to our interpretation of Zappa. In a basso continuo group of the Baroque period, various musicians accompanied the melody with chords, improvising contropuntal material. The desired chords were specified in scores with numbers above the bass line. As we played Zappa, we soon learned that in a large Baroque basso continuo group the liberties and rules of accompanying the melody rhythmically and harmonically are pretty much the same as with the rhythm section of a rock group. That made it possible for us to arrange Zappa's music for a nonamplified ensemble, and still retain the rhythmicality and metric pulse.

A Colli Virtaperko.

UIII VIRTOPERKO, Ensemble Ambrosius

### 1. NIGHT SCHOOL ( ARR. ERE LIEVONEN )

Josu Moisio, baroque aboe, glockenspiel Matti Yanhamäki, baroque violin Ere Lievonen, harpsichord Jonte Knif, organ Tuukka Terho, archlute Jani Sunnarborg, baroque bassoon Olli Virtaperko, baroque cello

### 2. SOFA ( ARR. OLLI VIRTAPERKO )

Josu Moisio, baraque oboe, glackenspiel Jonte Knif, harpsichard, soprano recorders Ere Lievanen, organ Tuukka Terho, archlute,baraque mandoline Jani Sunnarborg, baraque bassoon Olli Virtaperko, baraque cello

### 3. THE BLACK PAGE #2 ( ARR. VIRTAPERKO )

Josu Moisio, baroque aboe, glackenspiel Jonte Knif, meladica Ere Lievanen, harpsichard Olli Virtaperka, baroque cello

### 4. UNCLE MEAT ( ARR. VIRTAPERKO )

Josu Moisio, baraque aboe Ere Lievanen, harpsichard Jonte Knif, organ Tuukko Terho, archlute Jani Sunnarborg, baraque bassoon Olli Virtaperko, baraque cello

### 5. IGOR'S BOOGIE ( ARR. LIEVONEN )

Jonte Knif, melodica Ere lievonen, harpsichard

#### 6. ZOOT ALLURES ( ARR. VIRTAPERKO )

Jasu Moisio, baroque abae d'amore Jonte Knif, meladica Ere Lievonen, argan Tuukka Terho, archlute Olli Virtaperko, baroque cella

### 7. BIG SWIFTY ( ARR. VIRTAPERKO )

Jasu Moisio, baroque aboe d'amore Jonte Knif, meladica Ere Lievonen, organ Tuukka Terho, baroque mandoline Olli Virtaperko, baroque cello

### 8. T'MERSHI DUWEEN ( ARR. LIEVONEN )

Josu Moisio, baroque oboe Ere Lievonen, harpsichord Jonte Knif, harpsichord Tuukka Terho, baroque mandoline Olli Virtoperko, baroque cello

### 9. ALIEN ORIFICE (ARR. VIRTAPERKO)

Jasu Moisio, baroque abae Jante Krif, argan, meladica Ere Lievanen, horpsichord Tuukka Terho, archlute, baroque mandoline Jani Sunnarbarg, baroque bassoon Olli Virtaperka, baroque cello

# 10. THE IDIOT BASTARD SON (ARR. VIRTAPERKO)

Topi lehtipuu, lead vocal Matti Vanhamaki, boroque violins 1 & 3 Tuomo Suni, boroque violin 2 Jasu Moisio, baroque oboe Jani Sunnarborg, oboe da caccia Jonte Knif, dulcimer Ere Lievonen, organ Tuukka Terho, archlute Olli Virtoperko, baroque cello, vocal

### 11. RDNZL (ARR. VIRTAPERKO)

Josu Moisio, glockenspiel Tuukka Terho, boroque mondoline Jonte Knif, dulcimer Joni Sunnarborg, harpsichord Ere Lievonen, orgon Olli Virtaperko, baroque cello

## 12. THE ORANGE COUNTY LUMBER TRUCK (ARR. VIRTAPERKO)

Jasu Moisio, boroque oboe d'amore Joni Sunnarborg, melodica Tuukka Terho, baroque mondoline Ere lievonen, harpsichord Jonte Knif, organ Olli Virtaperko, baroque cello

### 13. ECHIDNA'S ARF ( OF YOU ) ( ARR. LIEVONEN )

Jasu Moisio, baroque oboe d'amore, baroque oboe Matti Vanhamaki, baroque violin Tuukko Terho, boroque mandoline Ere Lievonen, harpsichard Jonte Knif, argan Joni Sunnarbarg, baroque bassoon Olli Virtaperko, baroque cello

### 14. INCA ROADS ( ARR. VIRTAPERKO )

Jasu Maisia, baraque abae, glackenspiel Matti Vanhamaki, baraque violin Tuukko Terha, archlute, baraque mandoline Ere Lievonen, harpsichord Jonte Knif, dulcimer, organ Jani Sunnarbarg, baraque bassoon Olli Virtaperko, violoncella piccola, baraque ceilo

### 15. G-SPOT TORNADO ( ARR. LIEVONEN )

Josu Moisio, baroque oboe, glackenspiel Matti Vanhamaki, baroque violin, glackenspiel Ere Lievonen, harpsichord Jonte Knif, argan, percussion (smali wooden hammer) Joni Sunnarborg, baroque bassoon Olli Virtaperko, baroque cello

SPECIAL THANKS TO JUHA ROMPPANEN, JAANA KAASTINEN, JOHANNES NORRMAN, HEIKKI POROILA. MIKA HAMMAR, ANTTI IKONEN, EERO TARASTI, ALI N. ASKIN, TODD YVEGA AND GAIL ZAPPA VERY SPECIAL THANKS TO TOPI LEHTIPUU (LEAD VOCAL ON "THE IDIOT BASTARD SON") AND TUOMO SUNI (2ND VIOLIN ON "THE IDIOT BASTARD SON").



### ENSEMBLE AMBROSIUS

Jasu Moisio Motti Vanhamäki Jonte Knif Ere Lievonen Tuukka Terho Jani Sunnarborg Dlii Virtaperka boroque oboe, boroque oboe d'amore, glockenspiel boroque violin chomber organ, melodica, horpsichord, dulcimer horpsichord, chamber organ archlute, boroque mandoline boroque bossoon, oboe da caccia boroque cello, violancello piccolo



When Todd Yvego first told me about this recording of FI's music done by a Finnish ensemble on baroque era instruments. I was of course very curious but also a little bit suspicious whether such a concept would work with FI's music - at first glance it did not look like the ordinary approach to this music at all. But when one thinks twice there are in fact many moments and elements in FZ's works that evoke references to renaissance and baroque music - for example on the 'Uncle Meat' album, with all the harpsichords, processed woodwinds and organs. How logical that the title track of this very album became an initial moment of Ensemble Ambrosius.

What made me even more curious was the fact that many pieces I saw on their track list were numbers which (in FZ's original recordings) utilized rock rhythm sections, a lot of electric and/or electronic instruments and other tools unknown to the baroque

era. They even had arranged two pieces which originally had been realized with the Synclavier - pure electronic music, so to speak... Well, the more I thought about it, the more doubts I had: how would they handle all these elements which are so essential to these compositions? What would the performances of the grooving and swinging sections sound like? How would they handle the solo improvising sections? And how would the compositions survive such a radical change? Would the music still have that uniqueness of being entertaining and heavy at the same time? Or would it become just another boring performance of "so-called classical musicians" trying to play pop-rockjazz-or-whatever-you-want-to-callit-kinda-music...?

But after listening to the first tracks I soon thought that these guys were really rocking. There were great arrangement ideas, wonderful colors,

unconventional usage of instruments, unexpected turns and cool combinations. And all this brilliantly played with just the right attitude to make this music work. It's so very convincing how the possibilites of these instruments were extended in order to make this music (which was conceived for a completely different sound world) work so well on them. Obviously they had also had fun, for there wasn't a hint of stiffness. It all sounded so easy. I can well imagine however that it WAS indeed a lot of work (just think of the transcription job, since they didn't use any printed material...).

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So, about 30 minutes into the recording I had forgotten about all these issues — the used (and not used) instruments, playing techniques, musical styles, basso continuo, transcriptions, etc. I was just enjoying the music, which was so familiar, but yet sounded so different.

I'm sure that this CD will find many, many like-minded listeners, who will enjoy this very unusual and daring project. If they are already familiar with Zappa's compositions they hopefully will discover new aspects in his huge body of work. Or, if they are new to this composer (and maybe only have listened to music of the pre-Haydn era played on aut-stringed instruments with a tuning of A = 415 Hz), they might find this an interesting starting point to check out more of his stuff. as recorded by FI himself - on original instruments of the 20th century.



Ali N. Askin, July 2000

