

“Kalvos & Damian: The Car Guys of New Music”

A Presentation to the Colloquium at Wesleyan University, March 29, 2018

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From 1995 to 2008, two composers going by the pseudonyms “Kalvos” and “Damian” hosted an eponymous radio show. It became the first new music show online in the U.S., where they interviewed more than 350 composers in the studio and on road trips, set up 48 on-air concerts including a full opera with a cast of 40, arranged the first trans-Atlantic internet/radio simulcast between Vermont and the Netherlands, put on a major new music festival with 37 concerts in one weekend, held a two-day international composer combat, and won international recognition including the prestigious ASCAP/Deems Taylor Award—and they did it entirely on small contributions and by a wacky, seat-of-their-pants imagination. And in 2010, they disappeared after 560 programs. Who were they? Why did they do it? What happened to them? Here is the story of “Kalvos & Damian”—the “Car Guys” of new music.

Kalvos & Damian’s New Music Bazaar

BACKGROUND—BECAUSE THINGS ARE SO COMPLICATED

Background on us: David Gunn and I are both lifelong composers. We always took our work seriously, but not our attitudes toward new art and music and its pretensions. I was Project Director for an arts group in Trenton, New Jersey, that gave concerts and festivals of unusual material, from 1973-1978. The largest was the Delaware Valley Festival of the Avant-Garde, modeled after Charlotte Moorman’s annual New York Avant-Garde Festival, where I had played every year. David Gunn and I met through a former student of mine who thought we would be good collaborators on new music. That was 1973, and we’ve remained friends for the past 45 years. Our radio experience was mostly as guests on many stations, such as WOR in New York; the erstwhile WTTM in Trenton; WVPR in Vermont; WUHY (now WHYI) in Philadelphia as guests on Terry Gross’s not-yet-nationally-syndicated “Fresh Air”; and guest-hosting new music shows on KSPC in Claremont, California, and WXPB in Philadelphia. As composers, we had always loved radio as an undistracted acoustic medium.

IMAGE: TRANSMEDIA DV AG FESTIVAL 1

IMAGE: TRANSMEDIA DV AG FESTIVAL 2

IMAGE: NYAG FESTIVAL

THE BEGINNING—BECAUSE THINGS SEEMED SO SIMPLE

Our journey as broadcasters began in the Spring of 1995 when concert pianist Michael Arnowitz—whom I had met first when he performed in a large composition I had written in 1986 called *Mantra Canon* for orchestra, chorus, two pianos, six percussionists, and descant soprano—contacted me, saying the station manager of WGDR-FM (the tiny Goddard College community radio station that could broadcast 912 watts out of Plainfield, Vermont) needed a 90-minute Saturday afternoon summer replacement show. Station Manager Stu Bautz asked Michael to find someone to fill the slot, and Michael thought I might like to do something with a new music show.

IMAGE: DAVID GUNN

IMAGE: DENNIS AND DAVID

IMAGE: MICHAEL ARNOWITT

IMAGE: MANTRA CANON

I contacted longtime colleague David Gunn, and we agreed to do the show as a comic pair—though with the knowledge of a lifetime as composers. We tossed around names and decided we would use our collective pseudonym (“Kalvos Gesante”, which we’d derived from Scrabble tiles years before when collaborating on a parody sci-fi novel in the mid-1970s) and something else. Like the Catholic saints Cosmos and Damian, I said: “Damian”. It was 90 minutes, so David said, why not a sesquihour? “Kalvos & Damian’s New Music Sesquihour” was born. Clearly, with a name like that and a subject of new music, it was going to be short-lived.

IMAGE: COSMAS AND DAMIAN

IMAGE: K&D FIRST LOGO

We showed up at the appointed time for training on the ancient broadcast board, but station manager Stu Bautz did not. Less than five minutes before airtime, Stu arrived, took our FCC applications for an educational license, showed us the broadcast board, and we were on the air.

IMAGE: OLD BROADCAST BOARD

IMAGE: FCC LICENSE

We spun up an LP recording of Wagner’s overture to *Die Meistersinger* (not un- incidentally the theme to “Saturday Afternoon at the Opera” at the local NPR classical monolith), then slowed it to a mocking stop and played a piece of new music, Kenneth Gaburo’s *Exit Music I: The Wasting of Lucreczia*—a wild piece of screaming and

instrumental thrashing that had been my doorbell when I lived in Trenton, New Jersey.

AUDIO: SHOW #1 INTRO

That was the chaotic start to “Kalvos & Damian”—which we just called “K&D”. I interviewed David on the first show, he interviewed me on the second. Over the subsequent 10 years, neither of us as interviewers acknowledged who we actually were, though most people suspected that “Kalvos” and “Damian” were Dennis and David or David and Dennis. Since our voices often sounded the same, the audience never quite knew who was who. It became our standing joke for the next 560 radio shows.

David wrote a humorous and intricate essay to start each show, read over music that was the likely topic of the day—breaking the classical music rule of listening to music as a kind of religious event. Eventually the essays were woven into a long, complicated, and absurdist story of the day’s composer guest and Beano Bengazi.

IMAGE: BEANO CHART

But the traditions of Kalvos & Damian were in the future; during the first two weeks of K&D that we talked to each other, we also contacted every composer in Vermont, searching for eleven guests to fill the remainder of our 13-week summer slot. We found them. It was a good run—fun, funny, and at last a splash of new music on the Vermont airwaves so lacking on the Vermont Public Radio classical monolith.

Then, at the end of that short run in early September, two things happened. The first was that Stu asked us to continue the show, which was getting surprisingly good feedback from listeners; he offered us an expanded slot of two hours. The 90-minute “Sesquihour” became the two-hour “Bazaar”.

And then he told me that Goddard had installed this new thing called a “web server”—remember, this was 1995, just three years after the World Wide Web had arrived with its single website in Switzerland—and would we like to use it? Over the weekend I taught myself page markup (Hypertext Markup Language, HTML) and clumsy editing software called vi, and the next week I had the nascent website up with essays, playlists, and guest pages. For most composers, K&D gave them their very first web pages—some of which remain today as those composers’ only web presences.

IMAGE: FIRST COMPOSER PAGES

Goddard College had only half of a T-1 line to serve the entire campus in those days. That’s half of 1.544Mbps, a tenth of what the average household has for broadband now. So we couldn’t stream shows. Instead, we sent—with the innocence of the early internet

—the *original show airchecks* on DAT (remember that?) to the brand-new company AudioNet, founded in September 1995 and owned by a guy named Mark Cuban and his pals. Cuban answered our emails and handled the transfer to an online format. AudioNet soon became broadcast.com and was sold in 1999 to Yahoo for \$5.7 billion. Yes, that Mark Cuban, who answered our emails and converted our DATs, now owns the Dallas Mavericks and has a net worth of \$3.7 billion.

IMAGE: AUDIONET LOGO

IMAGE: MARK CUBAN YOUNG

IMAGE: MARK CUBAN MAVERICKS

AUDIO: DIALUP MODEM

We provided AudioNet the shows to convert to RealAudio version 1.0. If you ever heard RealAudio 1.0 as your default listening format, then you're probably at least 40 years old today and have mercifully forgotten that sound.

AUDIO: WALKER EXCERPT

Yet it was enough in those days for some listeners with a top-of-the-line 14K modem to hear us online. And they did. Hundreds of them. Our first fan email was from Lithuania, where a listener had connected with a guest composer who was related to her. (Although the first mp3 players appeared on September 9, 1995—one week before we went online—RealAudio was strong in the field because it operated at dialup speeds.)

With those early emails from far away, we knew something was up. There was a hole that wasn't being filled. Amazon and Auction Web (eBay) both opened in 1995 as did we, but Kalvos & Damian was before the era of before Google (1998) or PayPal (1999) or Wikipedia (2001) or Facebook (2004) or the word “podcast” (2004) or YouTube (2005). Twitter appeared the year *after* we ended our broadcasts, the iPhone a year after that. Today there are at least 1.9 billion websites; when we went online in 1995 there were fewer than *twenty-five thousand*. And it turns out we were first new music show online other than “Two New Hours” hosted by Larry Lake and produced by David Jaeger, both composers, which launched on the CBC.ca a few weeks before ours.

IMAGE: TWO NEW HOURS LOGO

NO MONEY—BECAUSE THERE WAS NO MONEY

So with this new internet available, what did we do? Excitement in our minds, we searched for more guests—more Vermont composers first, 22 in all in 1995. Our first out-of-studio guests were by phone, but they weren't satisfactory. They didn't have that

improvisatory feel of being face-to-face, so with few exceptions, all future interviews were done in the studio or on the road. Composers drove to the WGDR studios from nearby states. And then we found really cheap airfare to Europe.

Let me take a diversion. The world of new music is strangely connected. In the early 1980s, I was teaching computer software and hardware with the young Community College of Vermont. I taught out of my living room. My advisor, originally from Berlin, told me she went to school with a composer named Clarence Barlow. I should send him my music, she said. It would be fun, she said.

I sent a package, and Clarence never responded—until a few years later when the phone rang and this voice said, “Hello! This is Clarence Barlow. I’m at a train station in Montpelier Junction and need a ride to visit Gabrielle.” I gave him the ride. We talked music and the next day shared scores and recordings. He said I’d do much better in Europe and he would make that possible if I ever wanted to go there. Two years later my wife Stevie and I submitted an abstract to the First World Congress on Medicine and the Arts in Rotterdam; we were accepted. We took Clarence up on his offer, stayed at his places in Cologne and Amsterdam, and eventually stayed in Europe for six months. He connected me with many composers, and it was that group of composers who formed the core of our first European interviews and ultimately many of the projects that make Kalvos & Damian famous in its day.

There is more to this story, but it’s safe to say that Clarence was a pivot point for me and, later, K&D, and even later, my change of attention toward me own work.

IMAGE: CLARENCE BARLOW

So David Gunn and I headed for Europe on my 47th birthday, March 14, 1996, with a few hundred dollars in our pockets and promises of floors to sleep on. We interviewed composers in Amsterdam, Delft, Cologne, Brussels, Wiesbaden and Paris. We collected interviews, some in definitely non-studio circumstances: Mary Oliver in the car on the way back to Amsterdam; Maria de Alvear in Cologne, while she prepared us a sizzling lunch; Henning Berg in his chaotic studio of artificial jazz intelligence; Peter Beyls in his studio with another artificial intelligence avant-garde music system after searching through the Walloon half of the school to find the Flemish half; and then hitting rush hour mapless to search for Kaija Saariaho, Marc Battier, Eliane Radigue and Rhys Chatham.

We visited Kaija Saariaho, then a sometimes-played but largely overlooked composer. As mother and wife of Jean-Baptiste Barrière, she was overshadowed by other composers in Paris. I asked her about that. What was it like being Finnish, woman composer among the French men? What I got in response was what I’ve always thought

of as the “Ice Queen” moment, where she explained, with cold, gentle anger and absolute clarity, exactly how she felt overlooked and demeaned. But then, 20 years later, she would be the one to have her opera presented at the Metropolitan Opera—not the colleagues who dismissed her.

AUDIO: KAIJA SAARIAHO

We had plenty of fun on the trip, too. We staged a shot with David getting himself thrown out of IRCAM; the guard was only too happy to oblige the two absurd Americans. Our trek back to Amsterdam was highlighted by composer Nic Collins arrogantly deciding we knew too little about him to be interesting hosts; David, who had caught a cold, sniffed his way through the interview, in more ways than one. In all, we brought back 19 interviews. David’s case of wine and souvenirs was stolen on the Amtrak coming back north through Springfield, Massachusetts.

IMAGE: GUNN OUT OF IRCAM

We had little projects and talks in progress everywhere. One K&D project was student mentoring, in cooperation with the Vermont Midi Project, a composition program in elementary and secondary schools. Vermont students gathered online in their schools via IRC (Internet Relay Chat, the first social media) in 1997 to speak with composers such as Laurie Spiegel, Rhys Chatham, Eliane Radigue, Eve Beglarian, Daron Hagen, Pauline Oliveros, Anne La Berge, and many others. Later, some of the Europeans came to Vermont to give seminars at Midi Project events.

IMAGE: K&D MENTORING

Guests joined us in the studio, some from far away. Fred Ho and Scott MX Turner did our first live concert from the performance studio that we dubbed “Studio Z”, followed a few weeks later by Pauline Oliveros. I’d met Pauline when I was a student and she was giving a seminar at Douglass College—an experience of electronic music and deep listening that I’d never forgotten, so I was delighted when she drove the four-hour journey from her Kingston, New York, studio to ours in Plainfield, Vermont, to talk about her work and play her just-tuned accordion in Studio Z.

IMAGE: FRED HO

IMAGE: PAULINE OLIVEROS

AUDIO: PAULINE OLIVEROS

In our second year, we began broadcasting the interviews recorded in Europe, while taking a trek to Toronto to speak with composers there—Udo Kasemets, Ann Southam, James Tenney, Linda Catlin Smith, John Oswald, Sarah Peebles, and others—

interleaving those recordings with the European ones, live guests in the studio, and additional recordings made in New York City.

IMAGE SEQUENCE: KASEMETS, TENNEY, PEEBLES, SOUTHAM

Kalvos & Damian was, in many ways, like the internet of the late 1990s itself, chaos. We were open for anything.

On a cold winter day in February 1997, the Middlebury Opera came to our performance studios. The *entire* Middlebury Opera. All of it. 40 performers and the director, composer Su Lian Tan, squashed into Studio Z. We used every microphone and every volunteer at WGDR to get the student production of “Gimpel the Fool” on the air, together with interviews. We had to borrow time from the following program. It worked, and it was a success. But we were dancing on the edge—even if we didn’t know it.

AUDIO: GIMPEL THE FOOL

We squeezed in a trek to New York and interviewed several composers, including Michael Torke—an interview that goes down in infamy with at least one person: Torke’s agent. We were sitting in Torke’s apartment and, with our knowledge as composers with experience in the mechanics of the field, kept badgering him . . . What was he writing? Why? Was he really in it for the money, since his pieces were such audience-pleasers? And he said, emphatically, yes, it’s about getting commissions and royalties and pleasing the audience. His agent slumped and slid down the wall into the corner while the three of us laughed. The interview was broadcast in two parts; we heard from listeners shocked at the honesty. For years, Torke himself considered it his best interview.

TRANSITIONS AND FORMALITIES AND BUREAUCRACIES

It was all great fun, but then things caught up: the Digital Millennium Copyright Act (DMCA) and what we called the “Golden Bruce Affair”. The DMCA addressed the new issue of using recordings online, as opposed to those used in radio. We were both. We scrambled to get releases to use guests’ and commercially released recordings of past shows and future show music on the web. We received almost 100% cooperation, removing the few commercial pieces for which no releases were forthcoming and—just as we breathed a sign of relief—ran smack into a composer offended by our description of one of his works as ‘knotty’. He demanded we take down his music and his interview, which we did, but then he threatened to sue us personally, along with the station and the college. Goddard College, skittish about anything by this point as they were financially shaky and were about to shut down their campus programs, dumped it all on us. We decided to confront the issue directly, and accused the composer of harassing us. He

stopped. And we named the “Golden Bruce Award” for him, giving it to organizations who displayed rude or embarrassing behavior in the field of new music.

IMAGE: GOLDEN BRUCE

The Golden Bruce Affair provoked us into being not just the funny guys but also serious advocates for composers. And our experience during the European interview series gave us an idea. Stevie’s daughter was David Dramm and Anne La Berge’s babysitter when we lived in Europe, so we worked with David and Anne to create a concert at STEIM (Studio for Electro-Instrumental Music) in Amsterdam during Gaudeamus Music Week. The five-hour “Amsterdramm” concert would be broadcast both locally and in Vermont as we interviewed from both sides of the Atlantic—me at STEIM and David at WGDR in Vermont. It would also be a large-scale cybercast, fed from STEIM to Haarlem’s Vuurwek Internet to Jesse Kanner Internet in Los Angeles and back via a private IP to WGDR to go on the air. Oh, yes, those were the early days.

IMAGE SEQUENCE: STEIM, DRAMM LABERGE, ANDRIESSEN

It was close to perfect, except for two glitches. The translation time on the computers from audio to compressed stream and from compressed stream to audio was slow, resulting in a second or two of delay—acceptable even by contemporary news broadcast standards. The second glitch, however, was the release of the so-called Starr Report that same evening. The claims against Bill Clinton were being downloaded by the tens of thousands on an internet not quite capable of handling the traffic. By then there were 2.4 million websites on the still-maturing internet, and conversions and packet slowing caused a delay of 17 seconds in the Netherlands-Vermont-Netherlands exchange.

LIVE DEMO WITH AUDIENCE

In 1999, we interviewed composers visiting Dartmouth College as well as a trip to Europe and gathered another dozen interviews, including Frederick Rzewski in his Brussels flat playing for us excerpts of his new compositions in progress and Godfried-Willem Raes and Moniek Darge playing their new crop of musical robots at Logos Foundation in Gent. An interview with Martijn Padding was aborted when his car was hit by a motorcycle on the way to his flat in Amsterdam. I called in to WGDR from Prague to co-host one show with David. The chaos increased along with demands on our time. Later that year, we presented a live on-air concert with Robert Duckworth in Athens, Georgia; Roddy Schrock in the studio; and Tadashi Usami in Tokyo.

IMAGE: LOGOS/RAES/DARGE

We also made another trek to New York City for interviews at the American Music

Center, at composers' homes, and at composer Mary Jane Leach's apartment. Most of these interviews stretched two shows and were broadcast all the way through 2000, folded in between live guests and three more in-studio concerts. At his Westbeth apartment, David del Tredici denied that his switch to so-called New Romanticism was a rejection of atonality. No, he said, he was just changing; atonality had been, in his word, "sexy," and proceeded to play one of his earlier atonal pieces on a correspondingly out-of-tune piano.

AUDIO: DEL TREDICI PLAYS

Even at home in Vermont, there was concert madness. We had a K&D show with Eric Ross that ended up spawning our three-theremin concert with him in Burlington, Vermont, to a sold-out house; who has three theremins in one place? Exactly.

IMAGE: GUNN THEREMIN NEWSPAPER

On December 6, 2000—little more than five years after having been offered the Goddard College web server to play with—we were honored at Lincoln Center for our pioneering work by being presented with the ASCAP/Deems Taylor Award for Internet Journalism. David and I, Kalvos and Damian? The Car Guys of New Music? It was a nice night, good food and a few hundred bucks, but then it was quickly back to work on the radio show.

IMAGE: ASCAP AWARD

And there were *so many composers!* What to do next? We had momentum, so why not have a festival? In 1999, we had already decided it might be a good idea to have some sort of composer gather; I'd directed several huge festivals in my New Jersey days as well as helping to organize biennial festivals of Vermont composers. Why not a K&D festival, indeed?

So on the heels of the ASCAP/Deems Taylor Award, on January 8, 2001, the Ought-One Festival of NonPop was born—what we would call "The Woodstock of NonPop". The invitation would be wide open. Goddard College would be the site. Locations were secured, and on April 24, invitations went out to all our guests. Any once or future guest could make an appearance, do a performance, or arrange with performers to have something performed. It would be glorious in the rural environs of Goddard College. Fundraising was underway. Underwriters were found. The Governor issued a proclamation for August to be known as "New Music Month".

IMAGE: PROCLAMATION

IMAGE: POSTER

And then the Goddard College officials caught wind of our phrase, “The Woodstock of NonPop”. Imagining waves of pot smoke and trampled tulips (yes, they were worried about trampled tulips), they weren’t having it. They scheduled a meeting with a list of impossible demands. Forty days before the festival, they pulled out. We lost our venue. And with it, our major sponsors were gone—Mackie, Tascam, Sony Music, Coda, Sibelius, Sweetwater, Syntrillium, Fostex, Genelec, JBL, Amtrak, JetBlue, Twelve Tone, and the New England Culinary Institute. Our halls. Our food. Our housing. Our electricity. Gone, with fewer than six weeks until the Ought-One Festival was set to open.

We started over, secured church venues in downtown Montpelier—the smallest state capital in the U.S.—on a promise of a few dollars rent, and arranged for discounts at local B&Bs and motels. We fundraised insanely. David did composer/artist relations. I did scheduling and management. Stevie took over the hospitality, finding healthy, local goods and a local chef. Kawai donated a grand piano for the event. David, Stevie and I dug in. We made it up. There *would* be a festival. And so publicity was everywhere including cover stories in all Vermont’s newspapers and announcements and interviews on commercial radio, All except the ever-galling, arch-conservative Vermont Public Radio covered us extensively.

And we successfully presented 37 concerts on a single weekend with 56 individuals and ensembles: Douglas Geers, Elaine Thomazi Freitas, Joseph Benzola, John Levin, Loons in the Monastery with Samuel Claiborne, James Bohn, Ensemble Wireworks, Logos Duo, Brenda Hutchinson, Brian Johnson, Michael Manion, Jon Appleton, Keith Moore, Joseph Celli and Jin Hi Kim, Ensemble VCX, Larry Polansky and Kimo Johnson, Margaret Lancaster, Beth Griffith, Drew Krause, Phil Kline, Martin Fumarola, Mary Jane Leach, Peggy Madden, Mary Lou Newmark, Jean Piché, Odd Appetite, Beth Anerson, Robert D. Polansky, Greg Hall, William Harris, Elodie Lauten, Michael Lowenstern, Gary Barwin, John Kameel Farah, David Cleary, Johnny Reinhard, Daniel Goode, Elma Miller, Matthew Fields, Martha Mooke, Patrick Grant, Robert Duckworth, Bill Gilliam, Nurit Tilles, Manfred Clynes, Tom Heasley, Eve Beglarian, Michael Arnowitz, Kyle Gann, Eleonor Sandresky, Non Sequitur, Tom Hamilton, Dennis Darrah, plus a room of electroacoustic installations coordinated by Larry Austin.

IMAGE SEQUENCE: MANION, NEWMARK, MOOKE

DOWNSLIDE

Hardly two weeks after Ought-One, at the height of our gratitude over the ASCAP Award and the Ought-One Festival going so well, came 9/11. Like most of our

colleagues, we were in shock. But shock was not enough. On September 15, we put out a call for composers to send their musical responses to the tragedy—and they poured in, more than 30 of them. On October 29, the *New York Times* featured the K&D site in “The Music of Grief”, a syndicated story by Matthew Mirapaul. We’d gone from the Car Guys of new music to what the *Times* called “the show’s serious nature”.

IMAGE: NY TIMES 9/11 ARTICLE

And, to some degree, 9/11 was the start of our downslide—too much responsibility, too much interview preparation, too many website updates (by then thousands of pages, images, audio files, and supplementary materials), and too many hours spent handling email requests. Social media did not yet exist. And, by this time, there were more than 29 million websites, a thousand times more than when we started. We were ten years old as a show and in our mid-fifties as composers, and we felt we were no longer needed in an era of so much more online new music.

After Ought-One and 9/11, we had enough concerts to fill almost a year of K&D shows, folded in with live conversations and David’s interview trek to the California and Washington. Steve Layton’s interview was truncated due to David’s recording miscues, and David lost his camera off the side of the Washington State Ferry. It was an omen.

ANECDOTES

There were many more side stories to K&D. One composer was interviewed twice, as himself and as his alter ego; he visited and sang to our ponies in the paddock, but they moved as far away as the fences would allow. Jon Appleton kept insulting us in foreign languages, enjoying whatever he said immensely. We asked composers to create station IDs for us: “You’re listening to Kalvos & Damian’s New Music Bazaar—your Red Alert for new music!” and other variants such as “Your One Stop for Nonpop” or “Nonpop, Non-stop” or “All Nonpop, All the Time”.

AUDIO: MANY STATION IDS

Speaking of NonPop, that was Kalvos & Damian’s contribution to the conversation. When we created the Ought-One Festival, a possible description came up in our discussions with composer Phil Kline. “Nonpop” sounded just about right—like non-fiction, it wasn’t a negative but rather a fluid category. On a disk shape, there would be Xenakis’s 100% nonpop on one edge with Kesha’s 100% pop on the other. So we stopped saying classical music or concert music or art music—one of which stank of powdered wigs and the rest of which applied to almost any kind of music—and used nonpop from then on.

We also noticed composers were quite vain about their images, both visual and verbal. There's the Golden Bruce story of the composer who was offended by his work being called knotty, of course, as well as several composers—interestingly, all Europeans—asking us to take down the photographs we took of them, using formal poses instead. Others asked that their youthful interviews be removed from the K&D site because what they said might interfere with their careers. Some were more bemused in retrospect, such as Anthony Joseph Lanman. We entitled the 2004 interview with him “clueless and exhuberant”. 14 years later he wrote that, yes, we had “called it” with our description of him—but, he wrote, “your show was a major influence on me in terms of having the courage to start podcasting. Thank you for taking a chance on a clueless kid back then. It was an amazing experience for me!”

David had written an essay for every show, and every six weeks or so he also collected what he called “listenable snippets” of those recent shows to create “Best of the Bazaar”.

AUDIO: BEST OF THE BAZAAR #77

Most touching was that we played an excerpt of Prokofiev's *War and Peace* one day. Not long afterward we received an email from Belgium; the man wondered if we could perhaps send a copy of the whole recording to him. Why, we asked back, and he wrote:

“This version means something to me as my mother sang the role of Akhrosimova (Ljubica Vrsajkov). She is now 74 and thinks that it is the best recorded peace of her singing. However, she does not have the record but would love to have it, to listen to it, to show it to her students (she gives singing lessons) and finally, to leave something from her career to my brother and me. Now, if it is out of print, I do not know. It is possible, as it is a disk from 1961. I have been looking for it in Belgium, so far without any success. So that's the story. Thanks for giving me hope, Zarko.”

Perhaps it was a lie, just a story to obtain an out-of-print recording. Still, I boxed up and sent the original LP set to Belgium. And some weeks later a new CD recording of *War and Peace* and a box of Belgian chocolates arrived, along with a letter in Cyrillic and Zarko's translation; here is an excerpt:

IMAGE: THE LETTER

IMAGE: YOUNG LJUBICA

IMAGE: OLD LJUBICA

“Peace, in my opinion, should always be spelt with capital P. The woman who writes to you lives in the Balkans, in Yugoslavia and its capital, Belgrade.

“And so, it happened that an old woman be honoured by a wonderful gesture of a young stranger that moved me profoundly. People say ‘From a heart to heart.’ It is too little to say thank you, but you ... have made me the most beautiful gift in my life (excluding my family).

“I am opera singer, member of the world reknown Belgrade Opera. I have begun my career with important roles such as Carmen in Bizet’s opera and Azzuchina in Verdi’s *Il Trovatore*. In the meantime, however, I have performed my two most important roles: I have given birth to two sons. My elder son, Zarko, who is 40, you already know. My younger son’s name is Milan, who is 36 and has a beautiful voice.

“I give you, my most sincere greetings.

“Ljubica VRSAJKOV SIVCEV, Belgrade, Yugoslavia”

She died in Belgrade on November 13, 2009.

THE WIND-DOWN

We made another trip to New York in 2002, one to Los Angeles and San Francisco in 2003, and a last one to Europe in 2004. We booked more live in-studio concerts. The schedule was packed. Plus, the waiting list of composers was growing long when I heard again from Clarence Barlow—the composer whose story began my recollections today. He was a great supporter of other composers, setting up concerts and festivals but, he said, it was time for him to concentrate on his life as a composer ... and wasn’t it my time, too?

Yes, it was. So David and I set the date. Roughly ten years after our first show went online, on our 537th program, we would shut down. While continuing our broadcasts, we put the wheels in motion. It would be a “Komposer Kombat”. Rules would be set by 9:00 on the morning of a two-show weekend—one day each for electroacoustic and acoustic works—and finished compositions would have to arrive by noon. Five singers and instrumentalists would rehearse the acoutic ones, and the selected finalists would be performed live on the afternoon show, directed by Ravi Rajan. Prizes would be awarded, and food and fun would be had by all.

And that is exactly what happened. Nearly 40 pieces were composed and submitted, and the winner was Rafael Leonardo Junchaya’s four-minute *Magnificat* for two voices, oboe, horn and clarinet.

AUDIO: JUNCHAYA MAGNIFICAT

That was it. At the end of show #537 on September 17, 2005, K&D said goodbye and went off the air.

One thing that's guaranteed, though: Being the first online means being the first to be forgotten. There were 65 million websites by 2005. In less than a decade since, K&D went from the web's premiere new music reference to a derelict site—left largely as it was after the final online shows of 2008. 30 of our former guests are now dead.

Noizepunk & Das Krooner took over the online presence for a few years with composers Gene Pritsker and Charles Coleman. We did 23 occasional online shows ourselves as “Kalvos & Damian: In The House!” over the years, including live streams from two Vermont Contemporary Music Ensemble concerts where we acted as their Car Guys-style hosts. Today we exist only for now-and-again events, such as a two-day marathon 20th anniversary event in 2015 and co-sponsorship of the North Country Electronic Music Festival in 2016 and 2017.

AUDIO: K&D SHOW IDS

SUMMARY STUFF

50 famous guests:

Laurie Anderson, Jon Appleton, Larry Austin, Eve Beglarian, David Behrman, Joseph Celli, Rhys Chatham, David Del Tredici, Reena Esmail, Kyle Gann, Peter Garland, Daron Hagen, Fred Ho, Brenda Hutchinson, Jin Hi Kim, Joan La Barbara, Anne La Berge, Elodie Lauten, Mary Jane Leach, George Lewis, Benedict Mason, John McGuire, Martha Mooke, Paul Moravec, Mary Lou Newmark, Pauline Oliveros, Terry Winter Owens, Larry Polansky, Eliane Radigue, Godfried-Willem Raes, Johnny Reinhard, Frederick Rzewski, Kaija Saariaho, Eric Salzman, Alex Shapiro, Linda Catlin Smith, Ann Southam, Laurie Spiegel, Su Lian Tan, James Tenney, Michael Torke, John Trubee, Calliope Tsoupaki, Michel van der Aa, Gwyneth Walker, Erling Wold, Pamela Z, Peter Zummo, Richard Zvonar

Live concerts:

2010: VCME—at their concert.

2009: VCME—at their concert, Brick Elephant—at their concert.

2005: Anti-Social Music, Rami Bar-Niv, Antoinette and Nora Jacobson, Brian Johnson, Jenny Lin, Gregory Mertl, Elizabeth Panzer, Yvette Perez, Larry Polansky, Brian

Sacawa, Baruch Skeer, Pamela Z, Pamela Zero, Peter Zummo, Komposer Kombat

2004: Cindy Lubar Bishop, Tim Cummings, Nancy Bloomer Deussen, Peter Girard,

Joan La Barbara, Elizabeth Panzer, Su Lian Tan, Erling Wold

2003: Nathan Davis, Ha-Yang Kim, Odd Appetite

2002: Michael Boriskin, Cory Carlick, Howard and Lori Fredrics, Tom Heasley, and 19 concerts from the Ought-One Festival

2001: Robert Duckworth, Roddy Schrock and Tadashi Usami, and 8 concerts from the Ought-One Festival

2001: Ought-One Festival (56 individuals and ensembles): Douglas Geers, Elaine Thomazi Freitas, Joseph Benzola, John Levin, Loons in the Monastery (Samuel Claiborne), James Bohn, Ensemble Wireworks, Logos Duo, Brenda Hutchinson, Brian Johnson, Michael Manion, Jon Appleton, Keith Moore, Joseph Celli and Jin Hi Kim, Ensemble VCX, Larry Polansky and Kimo Johnson, Margaret Lancaster, Beth Griffith, Drew Krause, Phil Kline, Martin Fumarola, Mary Jane Leach, Peggy Madden, Mary Lou Newmark, Jean Piché, Odd Appetite, Beth Anerson, Robert D. Polansky, Greg Hall, William Harris, Elodie Lauten, Michael Lowenstern, Gary Barwin, John Kameel Farah, David Cleary, Johnny Reinhard, Daniel Goode, Elma Miller, Matthew Fields, Martha Mooke, Patrick Grant, Robert Duckworth, Bill Gilliam, Nurit Tilles, Manfred Clynes, Tom Heasley, Eve Beglarian, Michael Arnowitz, Kyle Gann, Eleonor Sandresky, Non Sequitur, Tom Hamilton, Dennis Darrah, plus installations coordinated by Larry Austin

2000: James Bohn, Dennis Darrah, Scott MX Turner and the Devil's Advocates

1999: Dennis Darrah, Phil Kline

1998: Amsterdramm (David Dramm, Huib Emmer, Jacqueline Oskamp, Louis Andriessen, Ruth Dreier, Anne La Berge, Philip Mechanicus, Kevin Whitehead, Frances-Marie Uitti, Clarence Barlow), Anton Lukoszevieze

1997: Su Lian Tan and full Middlebury Opera

1996: Fred Ho, Pauline Oliveros, Scott MX Turner, Barbara Wellspring

1995: Rip Keller, Bea Phillips, Larry Polansky