

**GUY KLUCEVSEK**

HOPE DIES LAST



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- Total Time: 52:00

**A**t age six, after seeing Dick Contino on television, I cajoled my dad into buying me an accordion, and I've been playing ever since. In my teens, I began to “make things up” for my first band, The Fascinations, which played at weddings, parties, and high school dances. These early tunes were in traditional social dance music forms, mostly polkas and waltzes. However, I also composed a piece in the style of the Twist, a dance craze in the early 60s. The first long-form piece I wrote was *Variations on an Original Aeolian Theme*, in 1970. These early experiences with social dance music and theme-and-variations form left such a deep impression on me that I have returned to them time and again throughout my career.

On this album, there are Klucevsek-ian takes on the tango (*Slango*), hora (*Feel the Bern*), waltz (*A Certain Slant of Light*, *Seesaw Song*, *Hope Dies Last*, *How Slow the Whistle Sang*), and hornpipe (*Hornpipe*). Almost every piece incorporates some element of theme-and-variations, including many of the social dance-influenced pieces. However, my approach to creating variations is somewhat unconventional, e.g., in *Just Plain Folk*, the melody is presented three times, almost melodically identical each time, except that each iteration is in a different style. In *Seesaw Song*, the melody and harmony continually expand both in length and in distance away from the tonal center, which acts as a fulcrum (hence the title). For *Flying Vegetables of the Apocalypse*, I posed a question to myself: do we experience a melody in the same way if it is presented unchanged but set against a different background, e.g., if the background is increasingly dense canonic counterpoint or a different meter? For me, the answer was a resounding “yes.”

The exploration and adventure continue.

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Guy Klucevsek". The signature is written in a cursive, flowing style with a long horizontal stroke extending to the right from the end of the name.



**1 Slango** (2020) 1:45

**Todd Reynolds** violins | **Guy Klucevsek** accordions

A pseudo-tango in a 7/8 meter.

**2 Feel the Bern** (2019) 2:31

*(for Alan Bern)*

**Alan Bern** accordion

I wrote this to showcase the technical and improvisational prowess of my dear friend and long-standing duo partner, Alan Bern.

**3 Prelude No. 2** (2018) 2:38

*(for Nathan Koci)*

**Nathan Koci** accordion

Composed for Nathan Koci as an introduction to the chromatic free bass system, which comprises four-and-a-half octaves of single notes in the left hand, with no pre-set chords. (He performs it here on an accordion which was mine for many years.) The harmonies shift ever-so-slowly over bass pedal tones – a technique that dates back to at least the 17<sup>th</sup> century, as featured prominently in the music of Henry Purcell.

**4 Seesaw Song** (2018) 3:50  
*(for Will Holshouser)*

**Will Holshouser** accordion

A musical gift to Will Holshouser, in which I tried to reflect his easy-going and good-natured personality, which makes him such a delight to be around.

**5 Dear Werner** (2018) 2:42  
*(in memory of Werner Strobel)*

**Guy Klucevsek** accordion

Dedicated to Werner Strobel, who was one of my oldest and dearest friends, dating back to the 1980s, when we were both working with the Philadelphia-based Relâche Ensemble – Werner as sound designer/audio engineer extraordinaire, and myself as a musician.

## 6 **Flying Vegetables of the Apocalypse** (1988, 2022) 3:17

**Todd Reynolds** violins

When Todd Reynolds invited me to contribute a piece to his repertoire for multiple violins – i.e., live + pre-recorded – I decided to adapt this particular piece as it was inspired by Steve Reich's *Violin Phase* (1967), a piece which led to a whole genre of works for multiples of the same instrument. For this arrangement of *Flying Vegetables of the Apocalypse*, Todd used 3 violins, and, for the bass line, an octave violin, which is a standard violin with strings tuned an octave lower than usual.

The music was inspired by the case study of Witty Ticky Ray, from the Oliver Sacks book, *The Man Who Mistook His Wife for a Hat*.

A melody is first presented in 3/4, played by a single violin over an ostinato, also in 3/4; then a second time with two violins in canon at an interval of three beats over an ostinato in 5/4; and a third time with three violins in canon one beat apart over a 7/4 ostinato. Once these gnarly bits have been sorted out, things settle into a comfy 6/8 groove, clearing space to feature Todd's lyrical and creative sides.

## 7 **Winter is an Etching** (2021) 3:36

(after Stanley Horowitz)

**Jenny Lin** piano | **Todd Reynolds** violin

This is my second piece inspired by elements of winter in New York, the first being a solo accordion piece, *Ice Flowers* (2009) (recorded on “Teetering on the Verge of Normalcy” Starkland). The title is taken from a four-line poem about the seasons by Stanley Horowitz. It is written as a piano solo, with the option of adding an improvising instrumentalist. This is a live recording of the premiere performance at Roulette (Brooklyn, May 2022), in which violinist Todd Reynolds improvises an obbligato line over the written piano part.

## 8 **A Certain Slant of Light** (2021) 1:53

(after Emily Dickinson)

**Jenny Lin** piano

During several long periods of isolation during the pandemic, I was drawn to the piano, an instrument for which I had not written in quite some time. This piece, as well as *Winter is an Etching*, came out of that period.



## 9 **Hornpipe** (2015) 1:55

**Bachtopus** (accordion quartet) | **Guy Klucevsek** accordion, piano

I originally wrote this as a solo for accordionist Jeanne Velonis, then arranged it for the Bachtopus Accordion Ensemble, of which she has long been a member. This recorded version is designed to capture the informal feeling of an Irish “session” – i.e., an impromptu gathering of musicians who join together to play a familiar tune, typically with melody instruments accompanied by a rhythm instrument. In that spirit, I joined the proceedings on accordion and on piano, an instrument I observed being used for rhythm in Cape Breton sessions during a visit there.

## 10 **String of Garlands** (2021) 4:16 *(in memory of Anne Garland)*

**Bachtopus** (accordion quartet)

Commissioned by Bachtopus

At the opening of this piece, I imagined a giant octopus encountering the world’s largest accordion, i.e., a Bachtopus. After this startling initial confrontation, the parties settle down to work together for the benefit of all mankind.

## 11 **Just Plain Folk** (2020) 2:40

### **The Smudges:**

**Jeff Gauthier** violin | **Margaret Parkins** cello, whistling  
Commissioned by The Smudges

The title refers to the folk-like quality of the tune, which is presented simply and with minimal artifice. Each time the melody appears, it is played in a different style – first in straight 8th notes, then with a slight swing feeling, and finally, in the style of a strathspey, characterized by the “Scotch snap,” a short-long rhythmic figure. These three formal sections are separated by improvised interludes, one featuring the whistling talents of Margaret Parkins.

**12 Music of Chants** (2015) 2:27  
*(in memory of John Cage)*

**The Smudges:**

**Jeff Gauthier** violin | **Margaret Parkins** cello

Originally written for solo free bass accordion, this piece is arranged here for violin and cello, in collaboration with the performers. Open string drones on the instruments feature prominently, in imitation of the hurdy-gurdy.

**13 Hope Dies Last** (2020) 2:42  
*(in memory of Ann Snitow)*

**Todd Reynolds** violin | **Guy Klucevsek** accordion

I wrote this piece when New York City was being hit particularly hard by Covid, and many of my family and friends were contracting it. When looking for a title, I discovered the phrase “Hope Dies Last” among a list of old proverbs, and decided it perfectly captured how I was feeling at that time.

## **INDUSTRIOUS ANGELS SUITE** (2010)

*(After Emily Dickinson)*

Commissioned by Laurie McCants for her *Industrious Angels*, a piece described as “a solo hand-crafted-story-spinning-shadow-puppet-memory-play-with-music.” McCants’s script was partly inspired by the life and work of the American poet, Emily Dickinson. The music, in turn, was inspired by McCants’s script and stage wizardry, and specific Dickinson poems. I used phrases from these poems as titles for the individual pieces in this suite.

### **14 “A Chant for Industrious Angels”** 3:07

Jenny Lin piano

### **15 “The Landscape Listens”** 2:20

Todd Reynolds violin

### **16 “A Little Madness in the Spring”** 2:16

Jenny Lin toy piano | Jerome Kitzke heavy breathing

### **17 “How Slow the Whistle Sang”** 1:39

Jenny Lin piano, celeste | Todd Reynolds violin

### **18 “An Ear Can Break a Human Heart”** 2:19

Jenny Lin piano | Todd Reynolds violin | Guy Klucevsek accordion

### **19 “Industrious Angels Finale”** 3:21

Jenny Lin piano | Todd Reynolds violin | Guy Klucevsek accordion



**Guy Klucevsek** (b. 1947) is a prolific composer and a world-renowned accordionist. In addition to composing over 150 works, Klucevsek has also commissioned pieces from Mary Ellen Childs, William Duckworth, Aaron Jay Kernis, Jerome Kitzke, Alvin Lucier, Stephen Montague, Somei Satoh, Lois V Vierk, and John Zorn.

Klucsevsek has performed and/or recorded with Laurie Anderson, Alan Bern, Bang On A Can, Brave Combo, Anthony Braxton, Anthony Coleman, Dave Douglas, Renée Fleming, Bill Frisell, Rahim al Haj, Robin Holcomb, Teiji Ito, Phillip Johnston, Kepa Junkera, the Kronos Quartet, Natalie Merchant, Pauline Oliveros, Estelle Parsons, Present Music, Relâche, Todd Reynolds, and Zeitgeist. His performances have graced the Adelaide Festival, the Berlin Jazz Festival, Carnegie Hall, Lincoln Center, Spoleto Festival USA, BAM Next Wave Festival, and the children’s television show, “Mr. Rogers’ Neighborhood.”

Klucsevsek is a recipient of the United States Artists Collins Fellowship, an unrestricted \$50,000 award given annually to “America’s finest artists.”

His 1987 project, “Polka From the Fringe,” a collection of polkas composed for Klucsevsek by Fred Frith, Christian Marclay, David Mahler, Peter Garland, John King, Mary Jane Leach, Elliott Sharp, Bobby Previte, Carl Finch, et al., toured worldwide and was released on two CDs by EVA. This project was named “Best Recordings of 1992” on WNYC’s “New Sounds.”

In 1996, Klucevsek founded Accordion Tribe, an international ensemble of composer/accordionists. The ensemble toured internationally from 1996-2009, released three CDs on Intuition, and was the subject of Stefan Schwieter's award-winning documentary film, "Accordion Tribe: Music Travels." Klucevsek has composed the scores for dance-theater pieces by Karen Bamonte, Angela Caponigro, David Dorfman, Maureen Fleming, Hellmut Gottschild, Victoria Marks, Stuart Pimslar, Claire Porter, and Sandy Silva. He has also composed for music-theater pieces by the Bloomsburg Theatre Ensemble, Ping Chong, Dan Hurlin, and Laurie McCants.

As a soloist, leader, and co-leader, Klucevsek has released over twenty-five recordings on Starkland, Tzadik, Winter & Winter, Innova, Review, Intuition, CRI, Steinway and Sons, and XI. His Starkland recording, "Transylvanian Software," was cited by *Stereo Review* as a "Recording of Special Merit." Klucevsek can also be heard on John Williams' orchestral scores for the Steven Spielberg films "The Terminal," "Munich," "Indiana Jones and the Kingdom of the Crystal Skull," and "The Adventures of Tintin."

In 2020, Klucevsek published his first collection of accordion scores, "Vignettes: Short Pieces for Accordion." In 2022, he was honored with a 75th birthday celebration presented by Roulette in Brooklyn, and was commissioned to compose and arrange music for the international touring project "Little Amal Walks," which celebrates hope and solidarity for displaced people everywhere.

**Thanks to:**

Anthony Creamer III for his generosity and on-the-ground help; Jerome Kitzke for the loan of his toy piano and for schlepping it between his home and the studio; Jim Staley and Roulette Intermedium for presenting my 75th birthday concert in 2022, during which many of these pieces were premiered—two of the tracks used on this recording (4, 7) were recorded live at that concert; all the performers for bringing this music to life and making it their own; and last but not least, Tom Steenland and Starkland for once again providing me with an outlet for my work.

*Music of Chants*, originally released on The Smudges' "Song and Call" CD, is used here with the kind permission of Cryptogramophone.

**Bachtopus Accordion Ensemble:**

Robert Duncan, Peter Flint, Mayumi Miyaoka, and Jeanne Velonis.

### **Producers**

Jeanne Velonis (tracks 1, 3, 5, 13,18,19)  
Jeanne Velonis and Guy Klucevsek (9, 17)  
Guy Klucevsek (8, 14-16)  
Jeff Gauthier (11,12)  
Robert Duncan (10)  
Todd Reynolds (6)

### **Recording Engineers**

John Kilgore (1, 8, 9, 13-19)  
Jeanne Velonis (3, 5)  
Jeff Gauthier (11, 12)  
Robert Duncan (John Kilgore, remix) (10)  
Todd Reynolds (6)  
Andreas Kolik (2)

### **Locations and Dates**

John Kilgore Studios (1, 6, 8, 9, 13, 14-19); New York, June 2022  
Casa Klucevsek (3, 5); Staten Island, New York, summer 2019;  
mixed at Woodgrove Lab, Dobbs Ferry, New York  
Outerborough Studios (6); North Adams, MA, summer 2022  
Andreas Kolik Studio (2); Berlin, fall 2019  
Goat Park Studio (12); Claremont, CA, summer 2022  
Roulette (4, 7); Brooklyn, New York, May 2022

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