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THIS MONTH'S FEATURE

SUE MEDIA PRODUCTIONS
Sue Zizza & David Shinn

Audio & Sound
Award-Winning Audio & Sound Productions

SueMedia Productions creates audio drama programs for public radio (along with audio production services such as master recording, post production, mastering, etc.). Specializing in transmedia storytelling, SueMedia Productions creates content for radio, film, TV and audio marketplaces.

About the Creators:



Sue Zizza

Sue Zizza is the founder, executive producer and director of SueMedia Productions. For more than 20 years, Sue has produced award-winning audio dramas for public radio and audiobooks. She is an Audie award-winning producer of audiobooks, audio drama, radio plays and much more. Her work has also been honored by The Gabriel Awards, The International Festival of New York, The National Federation of Community Broadcasters, PRX Zeitfunk Award, and the Communicator Awards.

When she's not producing and directing, Sue specializes in manual SFX (Foley) effects for audio productions, film, television and the stage. Sue also

teaches audio arts and sound production at New York University's Kanbar Institute for Film and Television at the Tisch School of the Arts.

David Shinn is SueMedia Productions' master engineer, studio manager and sound designer/engineer and SFX (Foley) artist for stage and studio productions.

He also specializes in Studio Design and Audio Recording, Multi-track Mixing, and Editing. From 1998 until 2006 he co-produced the nationally syndicated Radio Works series.



David Shinn

Q & A

SHOWCase spoke with SueMedia Productions founder Sue Zizza,

How did SueMedia Productions get started? What was your mission?

We started producing audio drama for public radio in the mid-1980s, and by 1998, David Shinn and I were running SueMedia Productions together. However, it wasn't until 2008 that we began producing unique event-based drama specials.



For 13 seasons, we produced 'The Radio Works,' which was a showcase series that featured the work we were producing along with the work of others. In 2006, I began to feel like I really wanted to get back in the studio to produce something new. In 2007, a friend asked if I would help with the sound for a stage production about Jack Kerouac. This became SueMedia's first release, *Jack's Last Call: Say Good-bye to Kerouac*, created in time for the 50th anniversary of the publication of *On The Road*.

We had such a great time working with the author and the actors, recording the material on location at Gunther's Tap Room where Kerouac drank, and meeting many of Jack Kerouac's friends, we decided we wanted to keep on this path – producing one hour, audio narrative specials around different events and people, as they inspired and moved us.

Our 'production style' continues to evolve to fit what is the most effective and engaging way of telling the story we are currently working on. Over the last number of years, we have continued to produce hour-long drama specials for public radio, such as *William's Leap For Freedom*, and *Never Again War: The Sacrifice of Käthe Kollwitz*, as well as audiobooks.

Is your forte to produce narrative performances, as opposed to a documentary style or news magazine format?

I began my broadcast career as a journalist when I was an undergraduate at Hofstra University. I loved reporting and doing feature stories for the university station, but, in my heart, I have always been drawn to audio fiction. My first and most influential mentor was Jeffrey Kraus at then-WVHC, who taught us all how to incorporate dramatic elements into all aspects of radio production. It didn't matter if you were producing a music show or doing play-by-play for a sports show, Jeff showed us how to tell our stories in sound in a way that made a real impact on the listener.

From our first meeting, David and I realized we had in common a great love of story-telling and as a result, we've not only produced original new works like the most recent *Never Again War*, but also helped to launch HEAR Now: The Audio Fiction and Arts Festival – the only U.S.-based audio fiction festival, now in its 4th year.

Additionally, we've been able to teach others some of our multi-cast style. This past August, thanks to the Deyan Institute in Los Angeles, we were able to work with student voice actors, interested in creating more fully realized audio book characters, and with great professionals like Bronson Pinchot and P.J. Ochlan, we used scenes for the upcoming *Mozart's Cook* program in our classes.



And this month on December 17, we're hosting a fundraising webinar about studio design and build-out called "*Custom Studio Build-out: Using Off the Shelf Ingredients for Audio Performers and Producers.*" David is a real master at soundproofing, microphone selection, vocalbooth studio ventilation, and more. Anyone interested can find out more at: <http://tinyurl.com/studiowebinarinfo>

How do you choose which subjects will get the SueMedia treatment?



Each story is unique and has a story of its own as to how it came to us. They've all come in different ways, and I think our job is to be open to possibilities. For example, with our production *Never Again War: The Sacrifice Of Käthe Kollwitz*, I had actually been out looking for interesting plays of 'social significance' for another series I'd been working on. I raised the idea of this play, which was written by Helen Engelhardt, but they never picked it up.

Then in 2013, when I was working on program ideas for the HEAR Now Festival, we began crafting live and recorded audio presentations for the National WWI Museum, in Kansas City, where the festival takes place, and asked if Helen Engelhardt would be open to having her play presented in 2015 as part of the festival.

Helen thought this was very exciting, to have her audio play performed live at the national WWI Museum. Cast members Yelena Shmulenson (Käthe Kollwitz) and Robert

Fass (Peter Kollwitz) joined Helen in Kansas City, to present *Never Again War*. An audience feedback session helped to further shape our radio production, which we released for Veterans Day 2015.

Can you talk more about *Never Again War: The Sacrifice of Käthe Kollwitz*?

Helen's play about Käthe Kollwitz's life is based on extensive research, and a visit to Germany in 2002. Käthe Kollwitz's son was killed in 1914, during the opening weeks of World War One. For the rest of her life, she used her art in the service of her grief and opposition to war. Two of her sculptures, *Die trauernden Eltern* (The Grieving Parents), stand in the German Soldiers cemetery near Vladslo, Belgium, where her son is buried, and she was renowned for her body of work dedicated to depicting the lives of the working poor.



Käthe Kollwitz

The show is hosted by Marsha Mason, Academy Award nominee and Golden Globe winner, and offers a different, in-depth perspective of Germans opposed to war, as well as the complexity of motivations among European youth at the beginning of the 20th century. It is a lovely, meditative production of a story from a point of view very rarely, if ever heard, on American radio.

The story begins in Berlin in February 1914, at a party in the Kollwitz home, celebrating the 18th birthday of her younger son, Peter. A few months later, as soon as war begins on August 1, Peter implores his parents for permission to join his older brother Hans, who has already volunteered to become a soldier in the army.

To support the idealism of her sons to offer themselves for sacrifice on behalf of the Fatherland, the socialist Käthe finds herself supporting her sons in a war she deeply disapproved of. By the time our play concludes, two weeks before Germany's defeat at the end of World War II in April 1945, Kollwitz has learned that every war is answered by a new war until everything is smashed because every war already carries within it the war that will answer it, as World War II answered World War I.

Who is your target listener for *Never Again War*?

Listeners who are interested in World War I and World War II. Listeners who are interested in artists' lives, particularly women artists. Listeners who love being immersed in audio drama, music, and sound effects, that creates worlds in their minds.

We released this for Veteran's Day 2015, but her story is so wide-reaching we hope stations will also consider it for Women's History month.

What are some other productions that SueMedia has undertaken?

The Witches of Lublin is an original, one-hour Passover audio drama for the ages. Set in 17th Century Poland, it tells the story of women musicians who must find a way to hold onto their music and religion, if not their lives.



William's Leap for Freedom, an original one-hour special for Black History month, tells the story of a freed slave, William Wells Brown, who then becomes the first published African-American author in the U.S.

Jack's Last Call, which can be aired March, the anniversary of Jack Kerouac's birth, or October, when fans remember his death, tells the story of the writer's last days on Long Island.

What are some topics or issues you plan to address in the future?

One program we're currently working on is *Mozart's Cook*, an original fictionalized serial about the young life of Wolfgang Amadeus Mozart.

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