While at American University in Washington, DC, the composer **Houston Dunleavy** was journalist **Daniel Pearl's** voice teacher. Houston writes, "When the news of Danny’s death came through in 2002, I, like thousands of musicians and journalists around the world, was rocked. It took me a long time to think about placing my reactions to all of this into music. At first, I wanted to write a work for violin, as Danny had been a violinist. However, when I was approached by violist **Brett Deubner** for a new work, I thought that a concerto for viola might have a timbral quality that could be just as exciting as the violin, but with an extra sombreness that only the viola could convey."

The concerto, a juxtaposition of ethnic musical elements, begins with a keening melody on the penny whistle, while the second section of the work, played by viola, bongos, and the entire ensemble, presents constant interjections from a harsh, even barbaric set of chords which represent the intrusion of barbarism into Danny’s life. This instability of rhythm comes to an end with a lament for viola and brass chorale. Over descending chords, one can hear the piccolo’s keening and the Middle Eastern scales in the viola, bringing the work to a quiet close.

The title, **"A Kiss Before the World's End,"** Dunleavy says, "reflects the premature end of something more than the life of a good man, as tragic as that was. Instead, it acknowleges the end of a world for those left behind as well, and the pain and loss such an end leaves in its wake."