

Lorenzo Pompa / Marc Sabat : **Father's suit and watch (2009)**

Father's suit and watch is a singing dancing sculptural setting by artist Lorenzo Pompa and composer Marc Sabat, combining recorded video and audio with live performance. The piece may be presented in concert as a pocket opera, or in a museum setting as performative installation.

The scenario follows a 1930 recording of the song *House Carpenter* by American singer and banjo player Clarence Ashley. In this old-time ballad also known as *The Daemon Lover* a woman is seduced by an "old true love" to abandon her husband and child and run off to sea. She comes to bitterly regret her decision and in the end both she and her lover are sunk "for to rise no more".

Struck by Ashley's performance, Pompa decided in 2003 to make a film of himself improvising movements to the song on a self-built wooden stage. Using rough analog video, he shot 12 takes over 60 minutes. Three years later, having met during a residency in Edenkoben, and sharing a curiosity about visual arts, music, and the possibility of discourses between them, Pompa and Sabat began working together on the project which has become *FSW*.

In response to Pompa's video material Sabat created a music score. Treating both the Ashley cut and various recordings of his own compositions, made between 1993 and 2005, as artifacts, he commissioned a colleague, composer/producer Michael Hynes, to make an hour-long remix. These two raw materials, footage and soundtrack, became a starting point for collaboration.

Pompa and Sabat edited the video following the music, creating a dance montage from sampled movements and sequences, interspersed with footage of the empty stage. The ten stanzas of the song text came to appear as silent film title cards, suggesting a narrative in ten tableaux. Once this film was completed, the "video ballet" form became clear: *FSW* would also include a setting with live performers: a singer, dancer, and several instrumentalists.

The first concert version was presented in 2009 at the KlankKleurFestival Amsterdam, played by Trio Scordatura, with pianist Samuel Vriezen and live choreography by Soo-Jin Yim Heil. In 2011 a chamber version performed by the artists with guest musicians was presented at Villa Massimo, Rome and at The Stone, NYC.

The title "Father's suit and watch" is taken to refer to personal artifacts, to remembrance of those things that connect us to our past.



HOUSE CARPENTER

as sung by Clarence Ashley

*Well met, well met said an old true love
Well met, well met said he
I'm just returning from the salt salt sea
and it's all for the love of thee*

*Come in, come in my old true love
And have a seat with me
It's been three-fourths of a long long year
since together we have been*

*Well I can't come in or I can't sit down
For I haven't but a moment's time
They say you're married to a house carpenter
and your heart will never be mine*

*That's I coulda married a king's daughter dear
I'm sure she'da married me
But I've forsaken her crowns of gold
and it's all for the love of thee*

*Now will you forsaken your house carpenter
And go along with me
I'll take you where the grass grows green
on the banks of the deep blue sea*

*She picked up her little babe
And kisses gave it three
Says stay right here my darling little babe
and keep your pappa company*

*Well they hadn't been on ship but about two weeks
I'm sure it was not three
'Til his true love began to weep and mourn
and to weep most bitterly*

*Says: are you a-weepin' for my silver or my gold
Says: are you weeping for my store
Are you weeping for that house carpenter
whose face you'll never see any more*

*No it's I'm not a-weepin' for your silver or your gold
Or neither for your store
I am weeping for my darling little babe
whose face I'll never see any more*

*Well they hadn't been on ship but about three weeks
I'm sure it was not four
'Til it sprung a leak in the bottom of the ship
and it sunk 'em for to rise no more*