

# ONE WIND TO ANOTHER: SVEN DAIGGER TALKS TO MARCEL DUCHAMP'S MOTH KING

(Sven Daigger im Windgespräch mit Marcel Duchamps Mottenkönig)

March 8 - April 21, 2014

## KMD - KUNSTHALLE MARCEL DUCHAMP

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A project realized in collaboration with the Staatliches Museum Schwerin and part of its exhibition, *The Revolution of the Romantics - FLUXUS made in USA* (March 13 - June 9, 2014).



Taking center stage in *One Wind to Another: Sven Daigger talks to Marcel Duchamp's Moth King* is a plant known in the German vernacular as Mottenkönig because of its strong odor that is capable of repelling moths and other insects. It is commonly known in English-speaking countries as Pink Spur. It is against the painterly, romantic backdrop of Lake Geneva that a musical composition by Sven Daigger now enters into a dialog with this plant, the roots of which steadily continue to ramify and can be observed through the tiny windows of the Kunsthalle Marcel Duchamp. Sven Daigger's composition for soprano, pianoforte and electronics is a musical interpretation of Christian Morgenstern's poem *Windgespräch* (Two Winds in Conversation).

Talking to a plant furthers its growth, as the ancient adage goes. The Moth King in question, however, has been nurtured less by spoken words than by the spirit of Marcel Duchamp, for this plant, with its light-green leaves and – if well tended – pinkish violet flowers, is a cutting from a plant given by the artist to Jasper Johns in New York during the 1960s. After a very roundabout journey it found its way into the Duchamp Research Center of the Staatliches Museum Schwerin and from there was given as a gift to the artists and co-founders of the Kunsthalle Marcel Duchamp, Stefan Banz and Caroline Bachman, who for many years have been devoting themselves, both artistically and academically, to the oeuvre of Marcel Duchamp.

Although the Moth King propagates itself through its cuttings, it is basically the same plant that existed half a century ago. In the course of time, however, it has become a fabric woven with stories full of images and anecdotes. Thus the Moth King transcends its mere existence as a plant and becomes a myth, the kind of myth that at times raises doubts about its true origin. Is it really a cutting from a plant that once belonged to Marcel Duchamp?

This myth-laden Moth King now meets up at the KMD with a sensuous, masterly piece for the pianoforte that harks back to the musical language of Romanticism. One of the central elements of the composition is a musical citation from Johannes Brahms, which the latter had in turn borrowed from the Romantic composer Robert Schumann. Just like the cuttings from the Moth King, it has made its way from one station to another and—in a completely new context—enters into a dialog with the unknown.

Here set to music, Christian Morgenstern's poem is likewise a dialog between two strangers: an insignificant breeze meets a restless, widely traveled wind that simply cannot wait to move on:

*"You mean you never knew  
Berlin—Rome—Timbuktu?"*

*"No, I only know these woods,  
I'm, like, just a local wind—  
been to Johnson's Dry Goods?"*

*"No, kid.  
Bye, now! Gotta fly!  
Madrid—Trieste—Shanghai."*

Thus it is around the Romantic idea of traveling the world that *One Wind to Another: Sven Daigger talks to Marcel Duchamp's Moth King* revolves. Daigger's composition is a mental voyage that will transport visitors to the KMD into another world, if only for a moment. It is a musical wind that evokes the fleeting and the immaterial, momentarily capturing whatever is forever in a state of motion and change. Duchamp's Moth King too is constantly on the move: for every new owner of one of its cuttings becomes involved in new ideas, in new interpretations, in new contexts of use and meaning. Indeed, it beats—entirely in keeping with Duchamp's habitually dialectic, never finite way of thinking—the moths out of old clothes. In other words: when Daigger's musical wind wafts about Duchamp's pungent plant, the effect may indeed be infra-thin but it is also an invitation to the visitor to engage in an artistic discourse.

Katharina Uhl

Sven Daigger, born in Eberbach/Neckar in 1984, studied composition in Rostock and Salzburg from 2007 to 2012. Daigger is a scholarship student of the German National Academic Foundation and winner of the first prize in the contests "2011 Earplay Donald Aird Memorial Composers Competition" (USA) and "recherche" (Austria 2011). He is currently continuing his study of music theory with Dr. Jan Philipp Sprick at the Music Academy and Theater in Rostock as well as his study of composition at the Music Academy in Karlsruhe with Prof. Wolfgang Rihm.