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The orientalist Csoma and the minimalist Szemző, creating along the linguistic unknown

Sándor Kőrösi Csoma/ Alexander Csoma de Körös, a 19th – century Orientalist, set out on an Asian expedition in search of the Unknown with thirteen living and dead languages. He believed that the ancestors of the Hungarians had once lived in the area of Uighuria, but there were no further finds or linguistic evidence to prove it. Thousands of kilometres divided him from his home and the destination he dreamed about, but he braved the many dangers and discovered other languages, ancient texts, and legendary and historical facts along the way.

When the contemporary minimalist artist Tibor Szemző started to compile the images, music and texts for his film about Csoma, he decided to include Csoma's languages in the film, even though Szemző was not familiar with most of them. The resulting films from 2006 use Csoma's languages through the voice of background narrators, while the main narrator in the Hungarian film version is Mari Töröcsik and in the English version Susanna York (*Az élet vendége – Csoma – legendárium, A Guest of Life – Alexander Csoma De Körös*). A decade later, Tibor Szemző took up the subject again, this time not with the main narrators of László Sárdi's script, but with a narration created by himself. With his team he created the cinema concert *Ezüstmadár és a biciklis / Silverbird and the Cyclist*, which is still on the programme.

The presentation shows how the languages of these two parallel productions, known and unknown to a wider audience, relate to each other, and how the linguistic unknown is bridged for the viewer. These code – switchings are not stumbling blocks, but a flow within one type of verbal musicality to another. While the background languages enunciate and verbally enrich what is seen visually, there is the narrative voice, telling a beautiful, exciting, and quite different story.