

Attila Molnár

Babes – Bolyai University

Cluj – Napoca, Romania

Performative German in Sándor Vály's *Die Toteninsel*

This presentation analyzes the improvised lyrical opera *Die Toteninsel* by the multimedia artist Sándor Vály. The project was deemed by the artist as a reconstruction of a lost work, specifically the musical aspect of an original German language libretto written by Karl Georg Zwerenz in 1919, telling the story of Arnold Böcklin's painting of the same name *Die Toteninsel*. The multilingual examination of the piece lies in the opera's performative dimension. Since Vály specifically casts himself and his actors without having any German language knowledge whatsoever, the actual singing and interpretation of the original text ends up being largely improvised. Thus, the performed German transforms into an entirely different language, becoming a performative tool, cutting ties with the rigorously written native German. Metaphorically, Vály's initially planned reconstructive work turns out to be more of a deconstruction of language, form, and genre.