

Ibsen at the Theatrical Crossroads of Europe: A Performance History of Henrik Ibsen's Plays on the Romanian Stages, 1894-1947

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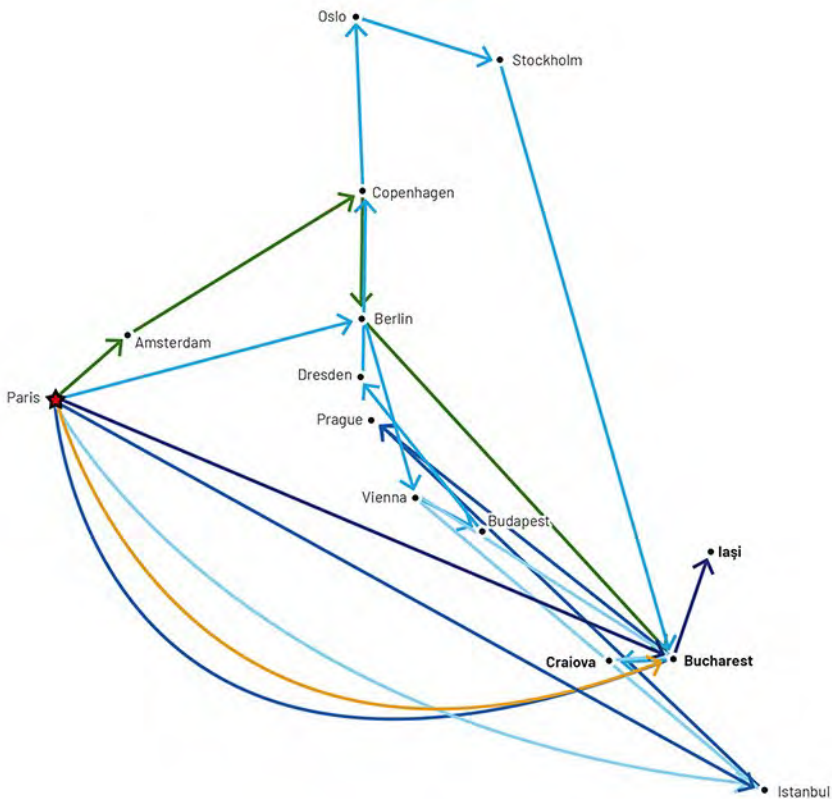
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Gianina Druță

IBSEN AT THE THEATRICAL CROSSROADS OF EUROPE

A Performance History of Henrik Ibsen's Plays
on the Romanian Stages,
1894-1947



[transcript] Theatre Studies

Gianina Druță
Ibsen at the Theatrical Crossroads of Europe

Gianina Druță, born in 1992, is an associate professor of drama and theatre at the Faculty of Education and International Studies, Oslo Metropolitan University, Norway. She took her PhD with a thesis on Ibsen's early performance history in the Romanian theatre. She graduated from the Faculty of Letters, Babes-Bolyai University Cluj-Napoca, Romania. Since 2015 she has been responsible for the Romanian dataset in the performance database IbsenStage. Her research activity focuses on Scandinavian literature, theatre studies and Digital Humanities.

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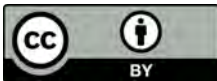
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Contents

Acknowledgements	9
Introduction	13
Part One	15
1.1 Methodological and theoretical framework	15
1.1.1 Methodological framing	15
1.1.2 Digital humanities framework. IbsenStage Database	15
1.1.3 Theatre historiography and practice of acting	17
1.1.4 From nation building to post-colonial theory and intercrossed histories	18
1.2 What is Romania? Preliminary considerations	24
1.2.1 At the crossroads of history	25
1.2.2 Territorial fluidity	27
1.2.3 Cultural influences	28
1.3 Previous research on Henrik Ibsen's presence on the Romanian stage	32
1.4 Dataset	37
1.5 Periodization and patterns revealed by the data	37
1.5.1 Periodization	37
1.5.2 Patterns	38
Part Two	41
2.1 The appropriation of foreign cultural models in the reception to Henrik Ibsen in Romania The foreign language Ibsen tours on the Romanian stage	41
2.2 The French model	43
2.2.1 French Ibsen tours in Romania	44
2.2.2 Final remarks	57
2.3 The Italian model	58
2.3.1 A realist overlapping: Ermete Zacconi and Alfredo de Sanctis as Osvald	62
2.3.2 Emma Gramatica. A <i>verismo</i> Nora	68
2.3.3 A 1940's <i>Love's Comedy</i> . Corrado Pavolini	72
2.3.4 Final remarks	72

2.4	The German model	73
2.4.1	Burgtheater. 1884, <i>The Pretenders</i>	74
2.4.2	The Golden Age of the German Ibsen on the Romanian stage. Stars and ensembles	75
2.4.3	Ibsen performances during the German occupation of Bucharest (1916–1918).....	79
2.4.4	Alexander Moissi: a “public order disturber” Osvald	81
2.4.5	Final remarks	87
2.5	Minor reception models. Hungarian and Yiddish Ibsen performances on the Romanian map	88
2.5.1	The Transylvanian Henrik Ibsen (1879–1945).....	88
2.5.2	The Yiddish tours	96
2.6	Conclusions	102
Part Three		105
3.1	How much Ibsen? Ibsen’s “acclimatisation” in the Romanian theatres’ repertory	105
3.1.1	General repertory statistics	106
3.1.2	Ibsen in the repertory	106
3.1.3	Final remarks	107
3.2	What is the Romanian national theatre? The National Theatres caught between laws, politics and money	108
3.2.1	Theatre as a “good” of the State	109
3.2.2	Theatre and state finances	113
3.2.3	The National Theatre’s management	114
3.2.4	Legislation and repertory	119
3.2.5	Conclusions	126
Part Four		129
4.1	Romanian Ibsenites.....	129
4.1.1	Introduction.....	129
4.2	Section One. Production Hubs	141
4.2.1	National Theatre of Iași Hub: State Dragomir, Aglae Pruteanu and Napoleone Borelli	141
4.2.2	Private Companies Hub. Ion Manolescu and Mărioara Voiculescu	172
4.2.3	National Theatre of Bucharest Hub	184
4.2.4	Conclusions Production Hubs	197
4.3	Section Two. Character sites	198
4.3.1	Introduction.....	198
4.3.2	The Romanian Osvald thread. Constantin I. Nottara, Aristide Demetriade and Ion Manolescu	199
4.3.3	The Mrs Alving of the Romanian stage.....	213
4.3.4	Petre Sturdza: The “subversive” Latin Dr. Stockmann of the Romanian stage	227
4.3.5	Conclusions Character Sites	241
4.3.6	Final remarks	243

Part Five: Conclusions	245
Part Six: Technical Appendix. Networks	255
6.1 Three layers	256
6.2 Ibsen network layer	256
6.3 Romanian Ibsen key contributors layer	257
6.4 National network layer	258
6.5 Final remarks	259
Figures	261
Bibliography	309

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To conclude, I agree with Barbu Fundoianu, who considered that

trebuie să-l iubești mult pe Ibsen și să știi iubi [...] ca să ai curajul să renunți la un omagiu mediocru, în schimbul unei critici cu respect făcută (one must be capable of a great love towards Ibsen and must be capable of love in general [...] in order to give up a mediocre homage for a respectfully expressed criticism; my translation) (1920: 1).

I hope that this book fulfils his expectation.

Introduction

The aim of this book is to investigate the performance history of Henrik Ibsen in the Romanian theatre from the end of the 19th century to the first half of the 20th century.

On the one hand, the quantitative analysis of data on the early Romanian productions of Ibsen's plays between 1894 and 1947 reveals that he was not performed with great frequency in either the major state or independent theatres. Yet, it is equally clear from a qualitative analysis of memoirs, reviews and theatre historical inquiries that his dramaturgy had a significant impact on the development of the staging and acting practices in the newly emergent Romanian theatre.

In other words, at the heart of the early Romanian reception to Ibsen there is a contradiction between the moderate to low number of productions and their obvious consistency. To interrogate and explore how this contradiction created a unique Romanian Ibsen tradition up to 1947, this research employs four distinct viewpoints.

Firstly, this research considers the diversity of influences coming from multiple European theatre cultures and their effect on the dissemination of Ibsen's plays in Romania. For this purpose, I analyse the contribution of touring productions in five languages: French, Italian, German, Hungarian and Yiddish. These tours introduced Ibsen to the Romanian audience in the late nineteenth and early twentieth century. Their wide variety of interpretative strategies and their geographical spread across the country laid the foundations for the rich aesthetic diversity of early Romanian productions of Ibsen.

Secondly, this research accounts for the way in which the most powerful cultural and political constraints on the field of the Romanian Ibsen productions shaped a landscape of contradictions. Commercialism, protectionism and aesthetics were the strongest forces at work within the unstable administrative, financial and legislative structures. Thus, the constantly changing context was often simultaneously both in favour of and against Ibsen's presence in the repertory. On the one hand, the protectionist and commercialist aims of the theatre legislation had a negative impact on the position of Ibsen as a foreign playwright in the repertory. On the other hand, the aesthetic principles in the legislation worked in Ibsen's favour as they strengthened the position of the canonical playwrights on the Romanian stage. Thus, these institutional constraints on the Romanian theatre field up to 1947 framed the paradoxes encompassing the Romanian Ibsen productions.

Thirdly, this research seeks to explain how the national Ibsen production history within the decentralised Romanian theatre culture supported the interpretative diversity enacted in the mix of foreign and local practices. For this purpose, it focuses on the impact of the Ibsen experiments conducted by the major Romanian actors and directors in three key sites: the National Theatre of Iași, the private theatre companies, and the National Theatre of Bucharest. The thesis groups the early Romanian Ibsenites and attaches each cluster of artists to these three production hubs. Then it charts the artists' knowledge of major tendencies in the European theatre practice, and analyses how they crafted eclectic combinations of local and foreign practices in the local Ibsen productions of each key location.

Fourthly, this research pursues a close-up analysis of the interpretative strategies used in the performance of three popular Ibsen characters on the Romanian stage prior to 1947: Oswald and Mrs Alving from *Ghosts*, and Dr Stockmann from *Enemy of the People*. These case studies, focusing on the interpretative options of six star actors, provide a further examination and illustration of aesthetic diversity. Each of them built their own acting recipes by combining their knowledge of the major European practices of acting, influences from the fluid, decentralised Romanian theatre culture, and their personal experience of performing Ibsen's characters. As no interpretative tradition gained dominance in the productions of Ibsen in Romania prior to 1947 because of the institutional decentralisation and fluidity, these unique aesthetic strategies developed in a very free environment. The star status of these actors supported their aesthetic, creative mixing of a variety of acting genres in the characterisations; their Ibsen experiments contributed to the modernisation of the Romanian repertory and practice of acting.

Finally, this research does not seek to synthesise these viewpoints into a fixed, standardised and essentialist definition of the Romanian Ibsen tradition prior to 1947. Instead, it seeks to explore the multiple interactions between theatre cultures, institutions, artists, and interpretative approaches in performing Ibsen within the constantly changing geo-spatial boundaries of Romania before communism. On the one hand, the research findings reveal that the very fluidity of the Romanian geographical, political and cultural space nourished the assimilation of multiple cultural influences and created a truly European theatrical site of diversity. The linguistic complexity made it easy for the numerous European interpretative strategies of performing Ibsen to interact and mingle in multiple, playful ways over a period of roughly fifty years in Romania. On the other hand, the incessant instability and mobility of the institutional forces of constraint did not support the long-term coagulation of these numerous theatre practices into a dominant trend. Instead, it enhanced the diversity by leading to the emergence of several – albeit short-lived – alternative patterns in the Romanian Ibsen productions. Eventually, their rather quick dissolution indicates that the cosmopolitan Romanian Ibsen tradition before the communist era successfully resisted any definitive categorisation and remained inherently marked by openness, diversity and creative freedom.

Part One

1.1 Methodological and theoretical framework

1.1.1 Methodological framing

The argument of this thesis builds upon a multifarious, interdisciplinary theoretical framework and methodology. Digital humanities, theatre studies and historical studies are equally relevant, hence interdependent in this approach. The inherent connection between these fields is influenced by the range of materials I have employed in this research, which entailed the use of both close and distant reading. In addition to previous research on the reception of Henrik Ibsen in Romania and across the world, this thesis is based on Romanian theatre history studies, biographies and memoirs, as well as a large amount of archival material including theatre reviews, revenues sheets and receipts from Ibsen performances. All the aforementioned materials have provided the background information for the IbsenStage Database, which I constantly refer to as a starting point and framework for this research. However, this thesis is not a pure digital inquiry of Ibsen's history on the Romanian stage. In fact, I have regularly returned to traditional theatre historiographical analyses in order to deepen the premises opened by the digital framework.

1.1.2 Digital humanities framework. IbsenStage Database

The dataset registered in IbsenStage Database (Hanssen 2019: 6) is the starting point for this research and its framework. In addition to map visualisations and lists provided by IbsenStage, I use graphs and statistics based on manually organised datasets of the archival materials. In the context of my research, IbsenStage helped me to delimit the temporal framework of the thesis, strengthened or confirmed my research premises, and offered me a wide range of criteria to organise, select and structure the data set analysed. The digital humanities tools thus made it possible not only to recreate the context, but also to select those aspects that required a zoom-in look.

Previous research using digital humanities tools to study Ibsen's worldwide reception constitutes the background of my approach. The book *A Global Doll's House. Ibsen and*

Distant Visions of Julie Holledge, Jonathan Bollen, Frode Helland and Joanne Tompkins and the volume on *Ibsen on the German Stage 1876–1918. A Quantitative Approach* of Jens-Morten Hanssen are the two main examples of quantitative analysis I refer to in the context of my research. Using Franco Moretti's studies (2007, 2013) as the main background, these inquiries choose specific datasets, which are investigated in light of the patterns revealed by the data. Networks, graphs, maps and trees are the main tools to identify them, while the research focuses further to explain their origin and relevance:

Looking from a distance at the 3787 records of *Et dukkehjem* productions in the IbsenStage database, we see patterns in the data that guide us towards new sites of enquiry. When we reach these sites, we zoom in to look at the work and lives of particular artists, commercial and government funding, specific performances, genres of adaptation, and multiple versions of a single scene to find the evidence that can help explain the global success of the play. No single performance is examined at great length, but full details of all the productions mentioned are held in IbsenStage. (Holledge et al. 2016: 6)

I employ the same approach in my thesis, where map visualisations, graphs, lists and statistics that accompany my analyses have the same function as in *A Global Doll's House*:

It is one thing to amass information in a database and visualise its content. It is another actually to interrogate what these data tell us: what new research possibilities emerge from the accumulation of information? No diagram can show us why an artist chose to produce this play, or how an audience received it; nor can it reveal the complexities and extraordinary richness of the adaptations and translations of the play. Yet visualisations of production data can indicate the transmission of Ibsen's play through time, across space, and between artists working in the theatre. They can reveal patterns that provoke further investigation. The methods used in the digital humanities provide the opportunity to ask questions that were not previously imaginable. (ibid: 8)

Nevertheless, while the dataset employed in *A Global Doll's House* or in *Ibsen on the German Stage 1879–1917* includes a generous number of events and contributors, the Romanian dataset is far smaller, leaving less room for digital investigations. At points, network analyses, graphs and statistics simply confirm information easily identifiable with traditional research tools. However, Digital Humanities tools still are appropriate in the context of this thesis, because they offer a stable framework to structure the premises and the historiographical material; they eliminate arbitrary selections; and, finally, they open up the possibility to compare various datasets and further identify similarities and differences in the reception to Ibsen across geographical, political or linguistic borders. The investigation of a small dataset such as the Romanian gains accuracy through a Digital Humanities approach and is easier to integrate into a wider picture of Ibsen's impact as a world dramatist.

1.1.3 Theatre historiography and practice of acting

A theatre studies framework is necessary when focusing on theatre history. While the digital humanities tools shape this approach, the close-up investigation of the patterns revealed in the maps, graphs and networks requires traditional theatre historiographical research methods. Thomas Postlewait's volume on theatre historiography guided my research in terms of what a theatre event is, how to pursue the analysis of historical documents, how to work with periodisation and how to understand a historical context. None of these concepts – event, document, period and context – are given or fixed realities. In Postlewait's words, "change the context, change the meaning. And if we change the historical questions, we may change both the event and the context" (2009: 79). Instead, these categories depend on a valid interpretation that could say what actually happened with an individual event or a series of events described in a document belonging to a certain period and in relationship to a specific context:

The descriptive mandate of historical study is the recording of actions and events. This is done in order to answer the basic question of who, what, where and when. By means of descriptive details, the historian provides a representation of human actions, placed within a shaping context. The explanations provide answers to how and why. In a cumulative manner, the events [...] provide a developmental order [...] that may achieve some kind of narrative significance. (ibid: 89)

Thus, Thomas Postlewait's approach is not only a handbook of how to pursue a theatre historiographical research, but also an incentive to critical thinking and a warning against pejorative assumptions and superficial analyses.

Beside the theatre historiographical framework, the thesis is shaped by Joseph Roach's volume on *The Player's Passion: studies in the science of acting*, as the Romanian practice of acting is mainly actor-based in the period I analyse. The memoirs, biographies and theatre histories I use all point to the way in which actors performed. Yet, these accounts seldom name the acting schools to which the actors belonged, nor refer to differences between acting genres. In this context, Roach's book is more than a history of acting exploring how "conceptions of the human body drawn from physiology and psychology have dominated the theory of acting from antiquity to the present" (Roach 1985: 11). By showing "how the inner workings of the actor's body have been variously understood by critics and theorists who knew something about the physiology of emotion" (ibid: 12), the study suggests how we should read the language of the actors who describe the preparations, creation and enacting of their roles. It is thus a helpful tool to "identify" the various acting genres employed by actors and to acknowledge how they integrated them in the interpretation of their roles. However, instead of being a manual of definitions of acting genres, Roach delves into the complex issue of the factors informing their evolution. Thus, the history of sciences, the history of the body and the theatre history are put together, revealing the contradictions, misunderstandings and unclear readings shaping the interpretation of the art of the actor in time, pointing at the changing, dynamic nature of the terms that inherently dwell in the actors' language. Thus, Roach warns the reader to think and read carefully and critically terms that might

seem simple to decipher, when, in fact, they acquired different meanings depending on the theatrical context and acting paradigm in which they were employed:

If each age prides itself on having attained the right answers about how the world works, it prides itself equally on being able to view theatrical exhibitions of human feeling that are more realistic and natural than those of the previous age. In fact, each acting style and the theories that explain and justify it are right and natural for the historical period in which they are developed and during which they are accepted. In order to understand historical styles of acting in the context of their contemporary settings, we must therefore restore the meaning of outmoded terminology and explanatory principles. Before we label an acting style as artificial, we should have at least made an effort to understand what its practitioners meant by natural. (ibid: 15)

Roach's volume is relevant to my approach because its detailed explanatory presentation of the science of acting's evolution is also an answer to how one should approach the terminology employed in actors' memoirs and biographies. Terms such as "natural", "real", "realism", "emotion" or "psychology" seem to need no longer further explanation today. However, they have had completely different meanings for actors throughout time. It is particularly relevant for the actor-based Romanian practice of acting to understand the changing nature of the acting science, the actors' use of terminology, and the way in which their accounts explain their actual interpretations on stage. Thus, Roach's book is an essential theoretical tool for this thesis.

1.1.4 From nation building to post-colonial theory and intercrossed histories

The Romanian theatre life was not separated from the political national ideal, neither in 1859, when the Union of the two Principalities of Moldavia and Wallachia took place, nor in 1918, when the inclusion of Bessarabia, Transylvania, Bukovina, Banat and Crișana led to the foundation of Greater Romania. In fact, Romania is no different from other national states, which assumed the theatre as "the appropriate site for nation building" (Kruger 1992: 6) in the 19th century and at the beginning of the 20th century. In this respect, Loren Kruger's influential analysis of cultural legitimization of the national states through theatre in England, France and America offers a valid framework for Romania. The concept of "theatrical nationhood [which] manifests itself fully only in the course of the nineteenth century with the rise of mass national politics" (ibid: 3) applies to the emergence of the Romanian theatre as an institution supporting the emergence of the national state. Moreover, the relevance of Kruger's approach is revealed by Norway's example too, since the thesis discusses the cultural contact between two national theatre cultures newly emerged during the 19th century. Henrik Ibsen himself is symbolically associated with the process of national emancipation of Norway, a process enhanced by his international acknowledgment. Thus, the role ascribed to the theatre as nation-building tool implies, according to Kruger, "a natural affiliation between theatre and public politics on a national scale" (ibid: 6). Moreover, "the intersection of political, economic and aesthetic spheres in the institution of theatre as well as the ambiguity of those relationships makes theatre an exemplary site for investigating the complex and contradic-

tory relationships among the discourses and practices sustaining cultural hegemony” (ibid: 13).

The exploration of the “cultural hegemony” concept mentioned by Kruger addresses additionally the question of post-colonialism, which cannot be separated from the process of national building in the 19th century. Both Romania and Norway were seen as unofficial cultural colonies at the periphery of Europe, overshadowed by and under the influence of the major political and cultural powers of the time. However, while the foundation of a national state was pursued all over Europe, its implementation depended on the specificity of the local contexts.

Zoltán Imre draws even further on this argument using Kruger’s approach as a starting point when he focuses on the history of the Hungarian Theatre of Pest founded in 1837. The Hungarian example serves as a comparative tool for the Romanian example because of its similarity regarding the understanding of the concepts of national theatre and nation building. Imre distinguishes between two 19th-century perspectives upon the national theatre, illustrating the opposed Western and Eastern understanding of how this artistic institution should contribute to the development of a national culture. He differentiated between an “imperial” reading of the national theatre ideal focused on integrating the entire nation, and a resistance-oriented reading of the national theatre as a means to fight imperial tendencies:

The notion of a national theatre was not only used by certain social groups to represent themselves on stage, but also regarded as a means for the integration of an entire nation, as in France, Denmark, Sweden, and Germany; or even an empire, as in Russia, Austria, and Great Britain, either from ‘below’ or ‘above’. The debates on and later the realizations of national theatres, however, took also place within the context of and against oppressive imperiums such as those in Poland, Hungary, Romania, Croatia, Norway, Serbia, Ireland, and in some respects Scotland.¹⁹ In these countries, the establishment of a national theatre was regarded as an (idealistic) expression of political, cultural, and economic unity and independence. The national theatre was to represent the often unified image of the nation, and to maintain an (often single and fixed) national identity and an (often homogeneous and dominant) national culture. (Imre 2008: 77)

According to Imre, both Hungary and Romania were undoubtedly in the second category, in which the nation-building process through theatre was, more than anything else, a reaction to the imperialism of the major cultural and political models. However, the process of building a national theatre culture in these countries was, ironically, indebted to “imperial” cultures such as France, Germany or Austria, which served as institutional and administrative models for smaller communities. While the greater countries’ imperialism was rejected at the political level, their cultural models were much more likely to be adopted.

In any case, the overall framework of the cultural interactions shaping the development of the national theatre in smaller European communities during the 19th century seems to fulfil all the conditions of post-colonialism, regardless of whether the imperial influences were assumed by acceptance or rejection. This is no less applicable to theatre

and drama studies, as Helen Gilbert and Joanne Tompkins demonstrate in their volume on *Post-colonial drama: Theory, practice, politics*. Although the authors focus on post-colonial drama in some of the previous colonies of the British Empire, they overtly state that “post-colonialism’ is not specific to a particular imperial regime, even though it often refers to the former colonies of the British Empire” (Gilbert and Tompkins 1996: 4). In fact, “theatre anthropologists and interculturalists have examined the theatre forms and styles of other cultures and often embraced the possibilities inherent in adopting them for use in a western context” (ibid: 9). The idea that “post-colonialism addresses reactions to colonialism” (ibid: 2) involves both acceptance and rejection of a major cultural model in minor cultures, regardless of geography and politics. In this sense, post-colonial theory can also be applied to the European context by framing the interactions between major and minor cultures.

The Romanian example of nation building through theatre and, in the context of this thesis, of Ibsen’s reception seems very fit for a post-colonial framework. The situation of a minor culture situated at the periphery, under the influence of the major European models, reveals a post-colonial context that applies to the Romanian theatre life as well. The story of how these influences were accepted or rejected, of their transmission and inclusion in the peripheral Romanian culture, is clearly of post-colonial inspiration.

However, I argue that post-colonial theory is not enough to describe *all* kinds of dynamics of interaction between major and minor cultures in the context of the development of Romanian theatre culture and in the case of Henrik Ibsen’s reception on the Romanian stage. While the beginnings of the Romanian theatre as a national theatre can be explained by using a post-colonial framework, its further evolution is more complex and exceeds the boundaries of the linear process of introduction-transmission-reception described in the post-colonial theory. Although the main keywords – introduction, transmission, reception – governing Henrik Ibsen’s reception on the Romanian stage remain the same, the process of cultural transfer is anything but linear. In fact, the peripheral position of the Romanian space and its culturally complex structure question the validity of a linear post-colonial framework, by pointing to examples that escape clear categorisation. Instead, the dynamics of cultural transmission assumed a more fluid form in the Romanian theatre, to which terms such as entanglement, crossing or interweaving are much more suitable.

Concepts such as “interweaving performance” proposed by Erika Fischer-Lichte in *The Politics of Interweaving Theatre Cultures: Beyond Post-Colonialism* deal with fluid forms of interactions in theatre and performance. Hence, it might seem applicable in this case. Yet, it is rooted “in the context that brought them forth – that is, postcolonialism” (Jain, Jost and Fischer-Lichte 2014: 4). Moreover, one should bear in mind that “exchanges between the theatrical forms of neighbouring and later also of distant cultures occurred wherever we have some evidence of theatre. Theatre’s interaction with elements from other cultures has been a perpetual instrument and vehicle for change and renewal” (ibid: 1). Therefore, the reason why Fischer-Lichte’s concept is inappropriate for the Romanian analysis of Ibsen’s reception lies in the methodological implications it entails. Firstly, interweaving performance aims to

provide an experimental framework for experiencing the utopian potential of culturally diverse and globalized societies by realizing an aesthetic which gives shape to unprecedented collaborative policies in society. By permanently probing the emergence, stabilization, and destabilization of cultural identities, these performances can transfer their participants into states of in-betweenness, which allow them to anticipate a future wherein the journey itself, the permanence of transition, and the state of liminality, is indeed constitutive of their experience. What is perceived as an aesthetic experience in these performances will be experienced as everyday life in the future. (ibid: 11–12)

Then, Fischer-Lichte states that

the processes of interweaving performance cultures are per se political processes. They relate to the politics of globalization, dealing with new paternalistic forms of exchange and the inequalities emerging from them. The contributions highlight different transformative aesthetics, which turn out to be political. (ibid: 17)

In other words, the concept of interweaving performance mainly relates to globalisation and politics as factors governing the aesthetic dimension of theatre in the contemporary world. The very content of the concept makes it thus inappropriate in the context of this thesis. These characteristics make the concept inappropriate for an inquiry not only of the phenomena in the history of theatre of the first half of the 20th century, but also of the exchange relationships characteristic in the Romanian theatre history of the time.

While the aforementioned concepts regarding post-colonial drama and interweaving performance intersect with the topic of this thesis, none can really help us grasp the essence of Henrik Ibsen's early reception on the Romanian stage. This is why I have turned to history and social sciences to find a theoretical tool that can consider the fluidity of the exchange relationships between cultures both diachronically and synchronically.

Histoire croisée is the concept that I have found most relevant not only for the constantly shifting framework of this research, but also for the stable elements within it. Michael Werner and Bénédicte Zimmermann proposed it in the volume *De la comparaison à l'histoire croisée* (2004), and later refined it in a concise version in the article *Beyond Comparisons: Histoire croisée and the challenge of reflexivity* (2006: 30–50). The concept belongs at the crossroads of social sciences and history, but the authors state its relevance for inquiries in other research areas. In this thesis, I use *histoire croisée* to investigate a theatre history topic.

What is *histoire croisée* and how is it different from other concepts used not only in history and social sciences, but also in theatre and performance studies? Werner and Zimmermann present it as a “relational” concept that offers an alternative approach to comparative and transfer studies concepts, and highlight how it changes our understanding of history. For instance, comparative studies employ a synchronic perspective, while transfer studies – to which post-colonial studies belong – appeal to a diachronic one. Consequently, comparative studies work with static, non-temporal frameworks, while transfer studies discuss transformation processes unfolding over time. However, comparative studies and transfer studies have not developed methodological tools for case-

studies that require a multiple perspective, diachronic and synchronic at the same time, such as Henrik Ibsen's reception in the Romanian theatre history up until the middle of the 20th century:

Quite often, however, a situation is more complex than this, bringing into play movements between various points in at least two and sometimes several directions. Such activities may follow each other in a temporal sequence [...] but may also overlap one another, partially or wholly. They may also crisscross and engender a number of specific dynamics through various kinds of interrelationships. All of these cases are resistant to any analysis that merely establishes a relationship between a point of departure and a point of arrival. (Werner and Zimmermann 2006: 37)

The main advantage of using *histoire croisée* in theatre and performance studies is its flexible framework, which is both diachronic and synchronic, both temporal and spatial. The notion of interweaving performance discussed by Erika Fischer-Lichte might seem similar to the elastic framework of *histoire croisée*, since “to cross is also to crisscross, to interweave, that is, to cross over several times at a tempo that may be staggered” (ibid: 38). However, the concept of “interweaving performance” addresses only specific temporal frameworks, whereas *histoire croisée* considers a multiple framework, which is not confined to a limited time-span. This flexibility is relevant when discussing the fluidity of the national context and the emergence of Ibsen on the Romanian stage through numerous foreign influences, across a very fluctuating temporal and spatial framework. In addition, it helps us follow the contribution of the Romanian Ibsenites and the temporal and spatial overlappings in their Ibsen activity in a very elastic diachronic and synchronic frame.

The flexibility of *histoire croisée* also allows the researcher to employ multiple viewpoints upon one research object. Thus, *histoire croisée* enables us to analyse “a variety of directions and multiple effects” (ibid: 37) by focusing “on a multiplicity of possible viewpoints and the divergences resulting from languages, terminologies, categorizations and conceptualizations, traditions, and disciplinary usages” (ibid: 32). This freedom to apply multiple viewpoints is particularly useful when the research object resists the isolation into a single framework. In this thesis, the multiplicity of foreign influences, of factors affecting the repertory, of theatre institutions and of interpretative approaches reveals a complex Romanian Ibsen world, which refuses the confinement to a single perspective.

The multiplicity of viewpoints most often entails intersection, which is central to the *histoire croisée* concept and to Ibsen's dissemination on the Romanian stage until 1947 at all levels, privileging “a multidimensional approach that acknowledges plurality and the complex configurations that result from it. Accordingly, entities and objects of research are not merely considered in relation to one another but also *through* one another, in terms of relationships, interactions, and circulation” (ibid: 38). Flexibility, multiplicity and intersection reveal that *histoire croisée* is oriented towards the analysis of the transformative dimension – processes – supported by intercrossings. This is helpful when an object changes to various degrees, yet its interaction with other elements does not necessarily lead to a new, hybrid product, suspending thus the merging process:

Such transformations [...] may also derive from asymmetry (the elements are not affected in the same manner). In this respect, intercrossing can be distinguished from intermixing. The latter emphasizes the specificity of the product of hybridization [...] and brings us beyond the original elements [...]. In contrast, *histoire croisée* is concerned as much with the novel and original elements produced by the intercrossing as with the way in which it affects each of the “intercrossed” parties, which are assumed to remain identifiable, even if in altered form. (ibid: 38)

In such a case, the suspension of hybridisation entails that the various elements in the mix preserve their individuality to a certain extent. This transformative dimension of the concept allows the researcher to acknowledge the subtle changes that do not affect the individuality of an element, as well as the tensions and contradictions emerging in any intersection: “This process-oriented dimension is a fundamental aspect of inquiry into any intercrossings. It points toward an analysis of resistances, inertias, modifications—in trajectory, form, and content—and new combinations that can both result from and develop themselves in the process of crossing.” (ibid: 38) The focus on processes is of utmost importance in assessing the uniqueness of the Romanian Ibsen tradition. This transformative aspect of the concept helps us identify whether this history is marked by hybridisation, coexistence or by other kind of intercrossing. Moreover, it highlights the fluctuations and the characteristics that mark the evolution of the Romanian Ibsen productions and its encounter with foreign theatre traditions as a continuous process, instead of displaying it as a static, unchanging landscape.

The constant fluidity, variation and transformation do not exclude patterns of stability, as we will see in the Romanian history of Ibsen productions. In fact, the intertwining and mapping of stability and change marking our story is at the heart of this concept. Hence, this research requires a constant readjustment of the spatial, temporal and methodological frames initially established. This “implies starting from the object of study and the situations in which it is embedded, according to one or more points of view—previously defined, it is true, but subject to continual readjustments in the course of empirical investigation” (ibid: 47). Thus, in contrast to the unique external point of view assumed in comparative studies, and to the fixed diachronic frames in transfer studies, *histoire croisée* questions constantly both the spatial and temporal frames encompassing the research object and does not take for granted their stability: “One of the contributions of *histoire croisée* is that it makes possible the articulation of both of these dimensions, [...] [it] enables the synchronic and diachronic registers to be constantly rearranged in relation to each other.” (ibid: 50) Thus, “*histoire croisée* engages in a to-and fro movement” (ibid: 50) and allows the readjustment of the reference frames if and when the research object requires it.

These characteristics indicate that *histoire croisée* encourages a thinking from within the research object, which entails reflexivity and awareness of change, variation and fluctuation. Historicization and pragmatic induction are the concept’s two mechanisms that “generate forms of reflexivity” (ibid: 49). On the one hand, historicisation asks the researcher to analyse the intersection of the temporal and spatial frameworks by constantly remembering that time and space are exposed to variation and fluctuation. On the other hand, pragmatic induction fosters awareness by driving the researcher away from the

rigid, essentialist explanation and use of contexts. Instead, it helps the researcher acknowledge the fluctuating nature of the context in relationship with the research object:

Such a lazy usage [of context] is replaced by an analysis of the manner in which individuals actually connect themselves to the world, the specific construction of the world and the elements of context produced by this activity in each particular case, and finally the uses arising from such construction. (ibid: 47)

The fluctuating geographical boundaries across time of the Romanian cultural space at the crossroads of Europe constantly signals how important “whereof and whence one is speaking” (ibid: 44) is. In this respect, the early history of Ibsen on the Romanian stage reveals that intercrossings are “intrinsically related to the object of research” (ibid: 39). The numerous foreign Ibsen productions, the territorial, political, linguistic and ethnic complexity of the Romanian cultural space, the intertwined factors affecting the national theatre life and the mixed interpretative approach of the Romanian Ibsenites all indicate that intercrossing is an intrinsic characteristic to this research. Awareness regarding the fluctuation of the contexts and the rejection of rigid, fixed, essentialist structures is therefore paramount in establishing what is specifically Romanian in the European Ibsen tradition.

Finally, this research uses *histoire croisée* to highlight and unwrap the “thick fabric of interweavings” (ibid: 49) in Romanian Ibsen productions until the middle of the 20th century, without falling into the trap of “relativist indecisiveness or infinite speculative relationships” (ibid: 49). Instead, it adopts the concept’s relational focus and aims to reconstruct Ibsen’s early history on the Romanian stage by showing the processes through which multiple, divergent, yet often interdependent perspectives emerged. To sum up, the concept of *histoire croisée* becomes a useful methodological tool, which enables us to acknowledge the fluidity of the numerous processes affecting the evolution of the Romanian national theatre and the early reception to Ibsen on the Romanian stage until the middle of the 20th century. The fluidity intrinsic to this concept matches the fluidity of the nation-building frames and aesthetic dimensions of Ibsen’s early reception on the Romanian stage, without ignoring the unchanged aspects of this history. Thus, instead of limiting my approach to a post-colonial, diachronic framework, the conceptual framework proposed by *histoire croisée* opens up for more nuanced answers to my research investigations.

1.2 What is Romania? Preliminary considerations

To begin with, a thorough discussion on the influence of Ibsen on the Romanian theatre practice requires that I explain the meaning of “Romania” and “Romanian” in the context of this research. Of course, this is not the first attempt to answer the apparently simple question: *What* is Romania? While the history of Romania has explicitly been the task of the Romanian researchers, foreign researchers such as Keith Hitchins and Kather-

ine Verdery engaged with it brilliantly.¹ Yet, either isolated from the world or inherently integrated within the larger historical landscape, *Romania* has been hard to define as a national, historical or cultural content. Both Romanians and foreigners have struggled to grasp the “national essence”² or the specificity of this cultural space – in other words, the Romanian-ness of Romania. The historical facts and the cultural imagery mingle in the pursuit of an invincible definition. While other countries are specifically identified with a precise landmass and a symbolic imagery rooted in a common cultural heritage, no precise categorisation can be applied to Romania. Instead, its dominant characteristic is the fluid territorial and cultural framing. From this perspective, Romania’s is a *histoire croisée* in which the changing frames were not simply the result of changing contexts and symbolic content, but generated, in turn, new contexts and symbolic contents. Concretely, the entangled history of Romania and its fluid framing is evident in the changes that affected its territory until 1945, when it achieved its final, stable form, and in its relationship with the major and minor cultures, which influenced the national culture. In the next section, I will consider these two perspectives in order to demonstrate the openness and the fluidity of the Romanian cultural space.

1.2.1 At the crossroads of history

The entire Romanian history, both before and after the establishment of the national state, is an example of intercrossed histories. Romania as a national state was practically born in 1859 with the union of Wallachia and Moldavia principalities and was the clear product of the national ideology enacted during the 19th century. Yet, its ambiguous, fluid and contrasting nature is no less visible, in spite of the national principles seeking to reunite “large aggregate communities and individual united by factors such as common descent, language, culture, history, or occupation of the same territory” (nation, n.1, n.d.). This entanglement existed long before Romania became a national state, and still exists today. Therefore, Romania as a national product is not a fixed, but rather a highly dynamic and paradoxical object.

The debate on how fluid and ambiguous the Romanian cultural space has ever been stems not only from Romania’s position on the map, but also from its political status among the other European countries throughout time (Figure 1). This ambiguity is enacted in the image of Romania located at both the crossroads and the periphery of the

1 The historical facts presented in this part’s brief account on the Romanian history can be further visited and documented in Keith Hitchins’s volumes (1994; 2014). Lucian Boia’s volumes (2001a; 2001b) also keep track of the most relevant facts in the Romanian history.

2 Katherine Verdery problematises the notion of “national essence” in relationship with the Romanian cultural space and explains her option for this specific “idiom”, as she calls it herself. She mentions that “the idea of a Romanian ‘national character’ played a crucial part in consolidating and institutionalizing a national ideology” (Verdery 1995: 103). However, the main debates of the Romanian intellectuals did not revolve around the “national character”, but employed “a broader notion, *specificul național*, which means, literally, the ‘nationally specific’, or the ‘national specificity’, less cumbersome rendered here as the ‘national essence’” (ibid: 103). Further on, I will also refer to the Romanian national specificity using the same denomination as Katherine Verdery, namely “national essence”.

major European civilisations, and, thus, simultaneously connected to North, South East and West. In Lucian Boia's words, "the first difficulty with Romania is deciding where it belongs on the map of Europe. In which zone are we to place it: Eastern Europe, the Balkans, Central Europe?" (2001a: 11) Katherine Verdery also suggests that "defining the nation between East and West" (1995: 110) was one of the main concerns of the Romanian intellectuals throughout history:

A Romanian scholar has observed that 'from the middle of the last century, that is, since the beginning of modern Romania, systematically every two or four decades the drama of alternatives has been unleashed. The problem posed during it was, invariably, what path of development to follow. The dispute would flare overnight and last a good while, then subside in favour of one of the camps...But then some major social-political event would unleash the confrontation again in a new phase of this unbreakable cycle.'¹⁰ One participant in that cycle remarked, 'West or East, Europe or the Balkans, urban civilization or the rural spirit? – [since 1860] the questions are still the same.'¹¹ The questions posed in this 'drama of alternatives' were central to the discussion that produced and perpetuated the Romanian national ideology. At the heart of the discussions were the debates concerning the national essence of Romanian as a people. (ibid: 110)

One might argue that such divisions are "somewhat artificial" (Boia 2001a: 12), as Lucian Boia states, but history has proven that they have not merely had a symbolic value, but are supported by and have generated facts. In this sense, the Romanian cultural space is a peripheral space marked by entanglements in light of its neighbouring the greatest European cultures around, such as the Italian (Roman), the Greek, the Russian, the German and the French. While the political context played a crucial role and determined the presence of various foreign models, it is also true that the geographical location of the Romanian territories at the crossroads of Europe enabled a constant flow of cultural influences. Romania is a geographically intertwined landscape within the European framework and Lucian Boia is right to assume that

this permanent 'frontier' situation has had two complementary and contradictory effects. On the one hand, it gave rise to a certain degree of isolation, an attenuated reception of outside models, the perpetuation of traditional structures and a mentality attached to indigenous values. On the other hand, it produced an extraordinary combination of ethnic and cultural infusions from all directions. Romania is a country which has assimilated, in different periods and in different ways from one region to another, elements as diverse as Turkish and French, Hungarian and Russian, Greek and German. It would be hard to find such a varied mixture anywhere in Europe [...]. Situated as it is at a crossing point of roads and civilizations, the Romanian space is an open space par excellence, characterized by a permanent instability and a ceaseless movement of people and values. (ibid: 11–12)

1.2.2 Territorial fluidity

Undoubtedly, the constant changes that marked Romania's territorial evolution demonstrate the country's fluid nature in an international context (Figure 2). Romania as a national state was founded in 1859 after the Crimean War (1853–1856) through the “Smaller Union”. Then, the state was consolidated in 1918 at the end of World War One through the “Greater Union”, only to lose and regain again parts of its territories in 1940 and 1944 during World War Two. However, Romania's borders have never changed after 1945 again. How did these moments enact the territorial fluidity of Romania?

In 1859, “Romania” was known, in fact, as “The United Principalities of Moldova and Wallachia”. The union of the two regions was the indirect result of the Crimean War (1853–1856). More concretely, the Russian and Ottoman Empires, who had previously treated the two principalities as politically dominated lands, offered them the *de facto* possibility to decide over their internal political matters. This partial political freedom led to nationalist initiatives such as the *ad-hoc* gatherings where people expressed their opinions on the union of Moldova and Wallachia. These initiatives were quickly followed by the union of the two principalities in 1859, when both chose Alexandru Ioan Cuza as their unique prince. This political *fait accompli* – “the Smaller Union” – generated controversies among the Western European powers, yet was finally approved at the International Conference of Paris the same year. However, the country was named “Romania” only in 1866, when the new prince, Karl of Hohenzollern-Sigmaringen, promulgated the first Romanian constitution.

In 1918, the concept of Romania as a national state acquired new dimensions through the integration of new territories at the end of the World War One. The Treaty of Versailles (1919), together with other smaller peace treaties such as Trianon, Neuilly or Sèvres, reconfigured the international political landscape, leading to the birth of new national states, or the consolidation of earlier founded ones. Such an example was Romania, which integrated all the other Romanian historical regions – Transylvania, Banat, Crișana, Bessarabia and Bukovina – within its boundaries. This union is called “The Greater Union” and the “Greater Romania” was both a political reality and an “imagined community”, in Benedict Anderson's terms (2016).

Yet the union contravened the political interests of the Russian and Ottoman Empires, and of the Austro-Hungarian Monarchy alike, as well as the national interests of the Hungarians who wanted to build their own national state including Transylvania. This political context meant that World War Two also marked the territorial history of Romania. In 1940, Romania definitively lost Bessarabia, Southern Dobruja (“Quadrilateral”) and the northern part of Bukovina, and temporarily lost the northern-western part of Transylvania³ until 1944.

3 “Prin raptul sovietic din 1940, România pierdea [...] Basarabia și [...] Bucovina și o populație covârșitoare de 3.700.000 locuitori, în majoritatea lor covârșitoare, români. [...] Dar pentru poporul român, calvarul abia începea: prin Dictatul de la Viena din 30 august 1940, România a fost obligată să cedeze o foarte mare parte a Transilvaniei, cuprinzând Maramureșul, Crișana și nordul acesteia, inclusiv Clujul. [...] Iată bilanțul pierderilor teritoriale ale României, în cel mai blestemat an al istoriei sale: Basarabia, Nordul Bucovinei și ținutul Herței, Sudul Dobrogei, Nord-Vestul Transilvaniei.” (Through the Soviet taking over [...] Bessarabia and [...] Bukovina in 1940, Romania lost a popula-

As far as Transylvania is concerned, its territorial status was the most challenging among all the other Romanian historical regions until 1945 (Figure 3). The main reason is its striking multicultural complexity given by the cohabitation between Germans, Hungarians and Romanians. Although the Romanians living in Transylvania were granted the same status as the other minorities during the Habsburg Empire, under the dualist Austro-Hungarian Empire between 1867 and 1918, Hungarians ruled Transylvania. They aimed for a homogenisation of the area culturally and religiously, which would have facilitated its potential future integration in the national Hungarian state. The Hungarian-Romanian battle to win Transylvania has always been subject of debate, as none of the two states has been either purely innocent or guilty throughout history.⁴ Werner and Zimmermann's theory is especially relevant here, as Transylvania is a clear example of *histoire croisée*: "In central and eastern Europe, though, there were not the same homogeneous culturally defined populations [...]. Areas like [...] Transylvania had a measure of regional consciousness, but a German, a Hungarian or a Romanian could equally claim to be a good Transylvanian." (Webb 2008: 15) However, the dispute over Transylvania was won by Romanians in the long run, as the Greater Union of 1918 and the end of World War Two prove it.

Finally, the constant territorial readjustments indicate that "Romania" as a national state and "Romanian" were not fixed, but fluid realities, at least until the middle of the 20th century.

1.2.3 Cultural influences

As Ibsen is performed in multiple languages in Romania, we need to understand the fluidity of the cultural composition of this geographical space, because it concerns both the Romania's territorial evolution and its interaction with other cultures. Here, Werner and Zimmermann's concept of *histoire croisée* can be fully applied as the Romanian cultural space is marked by numerous intercrossings, in which neither the autochthonous, nor the foreign elements assume a fixed function or shape. The relationship between the autochthonous and the foreign elements and even between the foreign elements themselves can equally display interdependence, dominance, submission, acceptance, rejection, or no influence at all, but just the mere coexistence of two different cultures.

In the following, I discuss the intercrossings related to the influence of the major foreign cultures within the Romanian cultural space. I argue that the presence of such influences and the changes affecting their dominant position was not only a matter of politics and national boundaries, but also of cultural entanglements: "culture and intellectual activity are *inherently* political, – not *underlain* by politics, but *interwoven* with it"

tion of 3,700,000 inhabitants, of whom an overwhelming number were Romanians. [...] But the tragedy was just starting for the Romanian people: the Vienna Diktat of August 30, 1940 forced Romania to cede a great part of Transylvania, including Maramureș, Crișana and its Northern part, together with the city of Cluj. [...] This is the overview of Romania's territorial losses, in the most cursed year of its history: Bessarabia, Northern Bukovina and the Herta region, Southern Dobruja, North-Western Transylvania; my translation) (Stamate 1997: 71–74).

4 A balanced analysis of the entanglements that characterise the history of Transylvania is offered by Blomqvist, Iordachi, and Trencsényi (2013).

(Verdery 1995:106). Moreover, given the position of the Romanian cultural space both at the crossroads and at the periphery of the greater political entities ruling Europe from antiquity to modern times, there could be no single dominant influence. In fact, these influences met in the area of Europe where Romania is located.

This entangled history started in antiquity, when the local inhabitants of today's Romania were the Dacian or Gets/Getae⁵ people. During the second Roman-Dacian war (105–106 AD), the central part of Dacia overlapping the present Transylvania became part of the Roman Empire as the farthest East European territory ever conquered. In other words, the province of Dacia was not only at the periphery of the Empire, but also at its very border. The inhabitants assimilated the Latin language and the Roman institutions, and even the remaining Dacian territories overlapping the present Romanian regions of Moldavia and Wallachia were influenced by the cultural, political and economic contact with the Roman world. Later on, the reference to the Italian model and the ideal of a Romanian national state including Moldavia, Wallachia and Transylvania as “Romania” used Latin kinship and the coexistence within the Roman Empire as the main argument.

The position of the Romanian lands at the intersection of the dominant foreign models continued into the Middle Ages. Moldavia, Wallachia and even Transylvania were at the northern border of the Ottoman Empire. Their ambiguous status was enhanced by the fact that the three principalities were not Ottoman provinces governed by Turk pashas; they were merely under the Empire's suzerainty, which allowed them to choose their own rulers, although they paid a yearly tribute. The Turkish influence is obviously undeniable, yet I address here the Phanariote Greeks⁶ influence in light of their role as mediators of the French and Italian cultures in Moldavia and Wallachia between 1711 and 1821, when they ruled the two principalities. Despite the Phanariots' bad reputation due to the political instability that characterised the principalities under their rule, the two regions developed culturally. Their peripheral status allowed for a diminished Turkish and Greek influence, which was counterbalanced by the immersion of the French and Italian influences ironically mediated by Phanariots, as Pompiliu Eliade indicates (1982: 116–144). The main reason behind their contribution is their position as ambassadors of the Ottoman Empire, whose rulers refused to learn the languages of the “pagans”. Thus, the Phanariots – as intermediaries between the Turks and the rest of Europe – mastered French and Italian as diplomatic languages, and were acquainted with these respective cultures. As rulers of the Moldavia and Wallachia principalities, they used their knowledge of French and Italian for the cultural development of these countries situated in-between the oriental Ottoman Empire and the occidental Christian world.

At the beginning of the 19th century, when the Russian-Turkish war of 1828 ended, the Ottoman dominance of Moldavia and Wallachia was replaced by Russian. In fact, the Russian dominance in the Romanian principalities had already been anticipated by a previous war with the Turks, between 1806 and 1812, when Moldavia lost its eastern half,

5 Dacian was the Roman denomination, while Gets/Getae was the Greek denomination.

6 The Phanariot epoch was a period of political decay in the history of the Romanian principalities, which had lost the right to appoint local rulers because of several attempts to undermine the authority of the Turks through an alliance with the Russian Empire.

Bessarabia.⁷ Once the Ottoman Empire's power diminished, the Romanian lands preserved their peripheral position in the 19th century with respect to the Russian Empire, while remaining a territory crossed by both Turks and Russians.

Although the Russian influence also marked the cultural development of the Romanian principalities, the Russian officials were mostly responsible for the growing ascendance of the French element in the principalities, especially by means of manners, clothes and language (Eliade 1982: 145–160). Eventually, the newly acquired French language enabled the boyars to also come into contact with French political ideas.

The Russian political domination in the principalities was not the only transmission channel for the French model. The Greeks had also mediated the ideals of the French revolution in Moldavia and Wallachia. For instance, the 1821 revolutionary movement led by Tudor Vladimirescu, in collaboration with Alexandru Ipsilanti, the leader of the Eteria, a Greek secret society, stemmed from the national ideals promoted by the French revolution (ibid: 161–226).

Thus, at the beginning of the 19th century, the importation of the Western model of modernisation was mediated by both the Greeks and the Russians. This highlights once again Romanian culture's position at the intersection of major cultural models from both the East and the West.

When the French model became the ruling reference after the revolutionary movement of 1821 and after the adoption of the *Organic Regulations* in 1829–1830, Romanian society turned more and more towards France. This did not mean the dissipation of the tensions between Turkish, Russian and French supporters in the political field. However, the establishment of the *United Principalities of Moldova and Wallachia* in 1859, whose name was changed in 1866 into *Romania*, was clearly indebted to the West, both politically and ideologically. The major foreign influences were French and, after 1859, German.

The French influence was fundamental for the establishment of the national Romanian state in 1859 not only because of the French Revolution's principles, but also because of the very concrete support of France to the political union of the two principalities of Wallachia and Moldavia. Russia's defeat in the Turkish-Russian Crimean War (1853–1856) and the Ottoman Empire's increasingly weak position in South-Eastern Europe facilitated the union and independence of the Wallachia and Moldavia principalities. This was a method to ensure political security at the crossroads and periphery of the greatest Western and Eastern European political entities of the time.

After 1859, the German influence started to gain more and more power and even outweigh the French influence. Although these models worked within Romanian society in parallel, tensions did arise between them. This explains why Lucian Boia labelled them the “French myth” and the “German countermyth” (Boia 2001b: 160–165). While I agree with Boia's perspective on the two models as opposite, I consider his view on them as “myths” to be reductionist.⁸ Hence, I appreciate that Keith Hitchins's depiction of the

7 Today's Republic of Moldova. In the interwar period (1918–1940), Bessarabia was part of Romania.

8 The main criticism towards Lucian Boia's enquiry regards his approaching historical facts by means of historical imagery that tends to reduce the history to a mythological, essentially discursive construct. This kind of approach risks distancing itself from the historical facts, which only become an

French and German tendencies as “models of development” (Hitchins 2014: 121) is more accurate.

The German influence on the Romanian culture is particularly connected to the political context. When the Prussian Prince Karl of Hohenzollern-Sigmaringen became Romania’s ruler in 1866, the newly established national state gained strength and a more secure position in the region of South-Eastern Europe marked by political instability. Besides, he was also related to the French monarch Napoleon III, which implicitly ensured the recognition of Romania as a national state in Europe, and protected the country from further intrusions and claims of the Ottomans and Russians. Yet the German influence upon the Romanian culture was not confined to the presence of a king with German roots in the country, and is also evident as the principalities of Wallachia and Moldavia were the Eastern neighbours of the Habsburg/Austro-Hungarian Empire. In addition, the regions of Transylvania, Banat, Bukovina and Crişana where numerous Romanians lived, were situated at the Eastern border of the same Empire.

As far as Transylvania is concerned, this region must be analysed separately because of the Hungarian elites’ ownership claims in opposition to the Romanian elites’ claims that the area should be part of Romania because of the Daco-Roman legacy. However, regardless of their dispute over Transylvania, the German influence had been powerful in the area since the Middle Ages because of the Hungarian and Austrian rulers who decided to colonise the area. The Transylvanian Saxons arrived in the Sibiu (Hermannstadt) area in the 12th century, when King Géza II of Hungary wanted to defend the kingdom’s Eastern borders from attacks by foreign invaders. Later, in the 18th century, the Banat Swabians inhabiting Timişoara (Temeswar) arrived courtesy of the Austrian Emperor Charles VI. Both groups contributed not only to the development of the region, but also to a permanent German cultural influence in the Romanian cultural space. In contrast to the Hungarians, Germans remained a minority group in Transylvania, yet with a significant contribution for Romanians in the literary and theatrical fields. Nevertheless, Hungarians still exert a powerful influence on Transylvania as far as political, cultural and social institutions are concerned, highlighting the area’s unique linguistic, ethnic and cultural entanglements once again.

The dissolution of the great Empires and the establishment of the national states at the end of World War One did not mean that the foreign influences disappeared from the Romanian cultural space. The French and the German models remained the main references. Yet World War Two changed this pattern, turning Romania back to the previous ambiguous situation caused by its position in-between East and West. Beside the territorial changes, Romania’s participation in World War Two is marked by its changing sides, fighting first against the Soviet Union, then turning against Germany towards the end of the war.

To sum up, the ambiguity and the complexity of the Romania cultural space was determined by its position at the crossroads of Europe throughout history which led to a constant exposure to the influence of several Eastern and Western European cultures. Yet the Romanian society never fully assimilated any of them, either willingly or by force

artificial instrument in a fictionalised historical discourse. However, many of Boia’s statements are valid in light of the support they are offered by the historical facts.

throughout its history. Regardless of the dominant foreign influences that marked the Romanian cultural space, within it there was also a strong commitment to respect for the “national essence”. The shifting territorial design and the mixed influences that crossed the Romanian cultural space both before and after the foundation of a Romanian national state are the proof of a *histoire croisée* marked by constant fluidity. The constant tension between foreign and national values or, in other words, between Europeanism and autochthonism, is still unresolved in today’s Romania. This fluidity marked the local theatre practice and, hence, the early reception of Henrik Ibsen on the Romanian stage.

1.3 Previous research on Henrik Ibsen’s presence on the Romanian stage

Although previous research on Henrik Ibsen’s reception in Romania is not extensive, it has the utmost significance. Specialists in Romanian literature, universal and comparative literature, theatre studies and Scandinavian studies, have approached the topic, but there are still gaps that require new data to replace old material lost through inadequacies in condition or archival storage.

Previous researchers started their inquiries on Ibsen in Romania by employing a literary rather than a theatre studies approach. Their investigations are full of biographical and literary references, and previous research on Ibsen’s theatrical reception has focused on reconstructing the chronology of the performances. Although this latter research has not provided critical analysis of Ibsen performances on the Romanian stage, it is an indispensable contribution to further research in this direction. The chronological display of the Romanian Ibsen performances based on the information provided by the books and articles has provided the materials for the IbsenStage Romanian dataset. Thus, the fieldwork of previous researchers has provided the factual framework for this thesis. As the information is sometimes incomplete or incorrect, this research also has corrected minor errors in pre-existing event records, enhanced the information within these records, and added new records of stagings into the database.

There are four significant moments in the research on the Romanian reception of Ibsen that paved the way for this study: the lecture of Gheorghe Adamescu held in 1928; the book published by Ovidiu Drîmba in 1956; the book published by Ion Vartic in 1995; and the various pieces of research on the reception of Ibsen in the Romanian theatre published by Sanda Tomescu Baciu.⁹

Gheorghe Adamescu was the first researcher who investigated Ibsen’s reception in the Romanian theatre. The lecture he gave at Ibsen’s commemoration in 1928 was later

9 Other researchers also wrote brief articles on the topic occasionally, yet in this section I have only considered those whose contribution marked a turning point in Romanian Ibsen research. One of these secondary contributors is Lucian Sinigaglia (2008; 2009; 2010) whose three articles on Henrik Ibsen in Romania promise an investigation into both the literary and theatrical reception. However, the articles neither add new information, nor propose a new approach, but rather keep to the same path as the previous researchers. Moreover, recurrent inaccuracies, a lack of reliable references, and the poor quality of the critical approach make this contribution less relevant here. Another similar example is an article of Valeriu Munteanu (1977: 13–15).

published in a booklet together with a list of translations, a short chronology of the Romanian Ibsen stagings, and a bibliography of the most valuable contributions on Ibsen published in periodicals at the time. The lecture focused on the biography of the playwright and on literary aspects from his plays, only briefly touching upon Ibsen's Romanian stagings in the concluding part. Beside its historical and documental significance, the final part of Adamescu's lecture is relevant to this research because it highlights the negative reception of Ibsen's plays in the Romanian theatre until 1928:

Putem afirma că piesa jucată la Teatrul Național din București n'a avut succes; Nici Strigoii, în 1897, n'au avut o soartă mai bună; După războiul, teatrul lui Ibsen a început a fi mai bine primit pe scenele noastre. (We can state that the play performed at the National Theatre of Bucharest was unsuccessful; The *Ghosts* performance in 1897 did not have any better destiny; After the war, Ibsen's theatre started to be better received; my translation.) (Adamescu 1928: 23)

But, in spite of these these first negative reactions, Adamescu indicates Ibsen's status as a canonical playwright in Romania:

Este incontestabil că orice părere ar avea cineva despre unele construcțiuni ale lui, oricât de greu s'ar înțelege unele piese ale lui, Ibsen rămâne un dramaturg genial, care a înnoit poezia dramatică. (It is indisputable that no matter the opinions regarding some of his [dramatic] structures, or the difficulties in understanding some of his plays, Ibsen is still a brilliant playwright, who renewed dramatic poetry.) (ibid: 24)

Approximately 30 years later, at the Ibsen celebration of 1956, Ovidiu Drîmba published the book *Însemnări despre teatrul lui Ibsen [Notes on Ibsen's theatre]* (1956)¹⁰. The text has a similar approach to that of Adamescu, as Drîmba starts his account by focusing on biographical and literary aspects. The contact of the Romanian culture with Ibsen's work is then approached through a chronology of the first Romanian translations and of all the performances that took place on the national stage. Drîmba also points to the large number of articles, reviews, interviews and translations based on Ibsen's works published in periodicals. However, in contrast to Adamescu's brief remarks on Ibsen's presence on the Romanian stage, Drîmba adopts a highly praiseful, even partisan view on the literary and theatre reception of Ibsen in Romania, thus augmenting the symbolic value of the playwright that Gheorghe Adamescu acknowledged in his lecture. In fact, the critic uses Ibsen's local reception as an example to demonstrate that the Romanian culture also adopted the European theatre canon. Undoubtedly, Drîmba provides valuable historical information, yet his approach focuses more on Ibsen's symbolic importance than on the assimilation process of his plays on the national stage.

In 1995, approximately 40 years after Drîmba published his investigation, Ion Vartic's *Ibsen și teatrul invizibil. Preludii la o teorie a dramei [Ibsen and the invisible theatre. Introduction to drama theory]* (1995) became the most powerful book on Ibsen's theatre reception in Romania. The study consists of four chapters and focuses mainly on drama theory. In the

10 Republished in Drîmba (1997).

first three chapters, the author accounts for the impact of Ibsen on the modern theatre writing through a comparative literary approach. However, it is the detailed chronology of the Romanian Ibsen performances in the fourth chapter that is of interest to this research. Vartic demonstrates accuracy in his descriptive overview, which was built on numerous theatre reviews and memoirs that document the performances. The information on performances and the bibliographical material mentioned in this book constituted the main source material for the events registered in IbsenStage and the basis for my further archival research.

Vartic's chronological account is organised by play, yet the historical tracing and description of the performances of each play do not provide the reader with a critical perspective on Ibsen's reception in Romania. Vartic addresses each play and the individual events one by one. There is no connection between them, and no larger panorama of their temporal and spatial distribution to help the reader configure the development of Ibsen's reception on the Romanian stage based on criteria other than chronology and play. Vartic recreates the history of each event by repeating the reviewers' opinions, yet he seldom investigates the status of Ibsen performances in the changing context of Romanian theatre history. His main intention is to present a chronology, while any investigation into the patterns concerning Ibsen's reception in Romania is secondary to his project. This explains why the critical commentary appears as a concluding appendix at the end of the fourth chapter and does not sit at the core of the analysis.

For the purpose of this research, the hypotheses presented by Vartic in the book's final chapter on "Why is Ibsen (not) staged?" (ibid: 236–249) deserve further exploration. This chapter is not only the conclusion of the entire book, but also an invitation to further investigate the reception of Ibsen in the Romanian theatre:

Timp de un secol – adică între 1895 și 1994 – pe scenele românești au fost realizate 109 montări ibseniene. E mult, e puțin? Greu de spus deocamdată. (For almost a century, – between 1895 and 1994 – there have been 109 Ibsenian mise-en-scènes. Is this a lot, or not? Difficult to appreciate for the moment; my translation.) (ibid: 236)

Vartic does not provide the reader with a statistical overview, yet he points that Ibsen was constantly performed on the Romanian stage for a century (1895–1994), compared to other playwrights:

Tatăl neîntrecut al teatrului modern sau *zeul Ibsen* pare să fie, în perioada menționată, mult mai prezent pe scenele noastre decât urmașii săi, adică Strindberg, Hauptmann, Pirandello, Cehov, O'Neill, Miller, Tennessee Williams, și chiar decât Shaw (jucat intens la noi) [...]. [...] istoria modernă a spectacologiei românești îl are, în mod constant, alături pe Ibsen. (For the aforementioned period, the *unsurpassed father* of the modern theatre or *Ibsen, the god*, seems to be more present on our stages than his successors, namely Strindberg, Hauptmann, Pirandello, Chekov, O'Neill, Miller, Tennessee Williams and even Shaw (intensely staged here) [...]. [...] the modern Romanian performance history has constantly had Ibsen by its side; my translation.) (ibid: 236)

To add more, Vartic highlights the Romanian audience's great interest in Ibsen's realist plays, whereas the early and the late works were mainly absent from the repertoires. For

instance, *An Enemy of the People*, *Ghosts* and *A Doll's House* were performed the most during Henrik Ibsen's early reception on the Romanian stage. The critic also considers that Ibsen's Romanian reception was influenced not only by the development of the national theatre, but also by the changes in the political context. Thus, he claims that the Romanian audience witnessed more successful and influential Ibsen productions in the first half of the 20th century than in the communist period. However, he neither explores the historical argument, nor the notion of "success" in clarifying Ibsen's impact on the Romanian stage.

Vartic also touches on the topic of the audience response to Henrik Ibsen's plays at the end of the 19th century. He sees them as challenging, both nationally and internationally:

Primele reacții ale spectatorilor au fost violent negative. [...] Asemenea efecte s-au înregistrat, cu duimul, și în lumea bună a culturii europene. (The spectators' first reactions were violently negative. [...] But similar reactions could easily be found in Europe's high-culture societies; my translation.) (ibid: 239)

He further explains this reaction by suggesting: "Cum bănuia Maiorescu, publicului nu i-a fost deloc ușor să se atmosferizeze în spațiul cerebral al acestui tip de dramă" (as Maiorescu supposed, it was not easy for the public to acclimatize to the cerebral space of this type of drama; my translation.). (ibid: 238). However, Vartic does not insist on: 1. who the audience was and which criteria regulated their presence at the theatre; 2. how the audience split throughout time once the theatre market had grown; or 3. differentiate between critical and financial impact.

Moreover, Vartic considers Ibsen's early Romanian stagings as a proof to demonstrate that the Romanian culture was connected to the main European theatre traditions and movements of the time. While the critic does not analyse the relationship of the Romanian and the foreign cultural space specifically with regard to Ibsen, his references to the Romanian theatre culture's encounter with the French, German and Italian interpretations of Ibsen on the national stage invite further investigation. Beside the recognition of Ibsen as a canonical playwright in the Romanian theatre, Vartic's undeniable critical legacy also consists of aspects such as his emphasis on the role of the Romanian actors or directors in disseminating Ibsen on the local stage and their impact on future generations of Ibsen interpreters. Vartic highlights that Ibsen was constantly part of the repertoire performed or directed by great Romanian actors such as Artistizza Romanescu, Aglae Pruteanu or Petre Sturdza, and directors such as Paul Gusty, leading to the playwright's continuous presence on the national stage. In addition, the critic points at the impact of the French, Italian and German Ibsen traditions on the Romanian actors and directors, and thus highlights how the Romanian theatre culture is deeply connected with the European.

Vartic's groundbreaking study highlights the most important aspects that I will also focus on, namely the historical context, the foreign theatre influences upon the Romanian theatre and the role of cultural agents in promoting Ibsen. The comprehensive bibliographic reference make Vartic's book the most important resource to which I have constantly returned, as no other Romanian scholar has built a Romanian Ibsen dataset so rigorously.

After 1995, the Romanian Ibsen research had Sanda Tomescu Baciú as the main promoter not only of Ibsen studies, but also of Scandinavian studies in general.¹¹ She contributed to the development of a research hub concentrated on Scandinavian literature where both students and renowned scholars were involved.¹² Thus, Ibsen's Romanian reception became a relevant research topic, even though the few studies that were written focus mainly on literary aspects.¹³ In addition, the studies on Ibsen written by Gheorghe Adamescu, Ovidiu Drîmba and Ion Vartic highlight an academic practice marked by discontinuity across decades. By contrast, Sanda Tomescu Baciú's contribution to the promotion of Scandinavian studies led to a constant interest in and development of Ibsen research among the Romanian researchers. The articles she wrote on Ibsen's Romanian reception are a proof of her constant contribution to the field, as she briefly investigated the reception of Ibsen in the Romanian theatre both at the turn of the 20th century and in the communist period (2010: 79–86). Her studies are marked by a theatre historiographical approach, investigating either all plays performed in a specific period (Tomescu Baciú 1994: 504–511) or just a single play – *A Doll's House* (Tomescu Baciú 1993: 416–419) – in order to analyse the impact that Ibsen's dramas had on “the conscience of the audience” (Tomescu Baciú 1994: 504). In contrast to previous studies, Sanda Tomescu Baciú's approach is focused not only on the chronology of the stagings, but also on the contexts encompassing the productions. This approach also applies to the project *Skisser over mot-takelsen av Henrik Ibsen i noen rumenske tidsskrifter* [*Sketches regarding Henrik Ibsen's reception in some Romanian Journals*] (1999), developed by some of Sanda Tomescu Baciú's students. Such projects demonstrate the recent enthusiasm for conducting research on Ibsen's Romanian reception.

To conclude, the previous researchers provide more of a descriptive history than a critical analysis of Henrik Ibsen's reception in Romania. However, their contribution has been essential in the construction of an accurate Romanian IbsenStage dataset. Finally, they point at premises and details further explored in the following parts. Thus, this thesis is indebted to the data provided by previous researchers and takes one step further in investigating Ibsen's reception on the Romanian stage.

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- 11 Sanda Tomescu Baciú is Professor of Norwegian Language and Literature, founder and Head of the Department for Scandinavian Languages and Literatures at the Faculty of Letters, Babeş-Bolyai University, Cluj-Napoca, Romania.
- 12 Sanda Tomescu Baciú's book *Peer Gynt și miturile nordice* (2000) is a literary-mythological analysis of *Peer Gynt* based on her PhD dissertation *Mitologie nordică și reflexele ei în literatura norvegiană* (1998); Crina Leon's book *Henrik Ibsen și cultura germană a timpului său* (2011) approaches Henrik Ibsen's contact with German culture; other short literary studies published by MA students and PhD candidates in *Studia UBB Philologia* also reflect the major interest in a literary perspective on Ibsen's drama: Simina Răchiteanu, “Transcendence and Religious Imagery in Ibsen's *Master Builder*” (2014: 101–109); Anamaria Ciobanu, “From Ibsen to Beckett: Aspects of Human Condition” (2015: 133–147); Gianina Druță, “The Mythological Body as an Expression of the Misfit in *Peer Gynt*” (2015: 189–198).
- 13 The most concrete example is the 2006 issue of *Studia UBB Philologia*, which focused solely on the reception to Henrik Ibsen in Romania and among the Romanian literary and theatre critics. The issue celebrated the 100th anniversary of Ibsen's death and included studies by Mircea Muthu (2006: 105–107) and Ilinca Stihî (2006: 109–114).

1.4 Dataset

The dataset associated with the landmass and with the institutional theatre structure I have presented so far includes IbsenStage recordings up until 1947, filtered by country and language as the main criteria. The dataset points at:

- 1 playwright
- 6 languages
- 16 works
- 37 directors
- 511 actors
- 275 events

Additionally, I used 272 theatre reviews on Ibsen performances published prior to 1947, as well as revenue balance sheets, receipts and other archive materials as evidence to ascertain the reception to the plays. References to all these resources are registered in IbsenStage at the “Sources” field of each event of the dataset considered in this thesis.

1.5 Periodization and patterns revealed by the data

1.5.1 Periodization

The patterns guiding the further elaboration of my argument are interconnected with the periodization I have chosen. In this regard, the historical material was not enough to frame my research, and I relied on interrogation of the IbsenStage data to identify the time span and the research patterns to be investigated. Spatial, temporal and linguistic criteria guided the database searches and framed my hypotheses, while contributors and works lists confirmed and structured the information revealed by the archival material.

The periodization of this thesis is fluid concerning both the starting and finishing points in order to allow some flexibility in the analyses of performances, tours, and multiple seasons of single productions. Yet, given the impact of the historical facts upon the development of the Romanian theatre, my analysis of Henrik Ibsen's reception on the national stage takes 1947 as its final temporal edge. The time span is further governed by spatial and linguistic criteria. Although this thesis focuses on Ibsen performances in Romanian, the constant presence of foreign performances, within the fluid frame of the national territory, made it mandatory to consider their contribution to the development of local theatre productions of Ibsen's plays. Thus, the temporal frame is flexible, while not going beyond 1947.

To begin with, 1894 is the year when the National Theatre in Iași staged the very first Ibsen play in Romanian, *Doctorul Sălceanu* (a local version of *An Enemy of the People*), marking the beginning of Ibsen's reception in Romanian. However, 1879 is both the year of the first performance in Hungarian within the actual Romanian territory, and also the very first Ibsen performance in Hungarian. The final year of the Hungarian frame considered in this thesis is 1945. 1884 is the year of the first Ibsen performance in German

registered within the actual Romanian territory, whereas the final year of this temporal frame is 1940. As far as other linguistic temporal frames are concerned, they are all integrated within the 1879–1947 period. For instance, the French Ibsen performances staged in Romania cover the 1894–1911 period, the Italian ones were staged between 1907–1910 and in 1940, whereas the Ibsen performances in Yiddish took place in 1923 and 1927.

Two main reasons emphasise 1947 as an endpoint of this thesis and as a turning point in the Romanian theatre history, which explains why my research on the early reception to Ibsen on the Romanian stage stops in this year. Firstly, 1947 marked the actual beginning of the communist era. In 1947–1948, the communist government began its activity in the social, cultural and political fields. In this sense, the transition years between 1945 and 1947 were, as Miruna Runcan states, a “*No Man’s Land*” (2003: 207). In the theatre field, Law no. 265 on the organisation of theatre, opera and philharmonic institutions (*Lege pentru organizarea Teatrelor, Operelor și Filarmonicelor de Stat precum și pentru regimul spectacolelor publice 1947: 6198*) adopted on July 18, 1947 marked the dissolution of the private theatre companies due to the nationalization of all cultural institutions. Secondly, the statistics based on the IbsenStage dataset for the period 1894–1947 support the historical argument and mark 1947 as the division line. The small number of Ibsen performances at the end of World War Two and the lack of Ibsen Romanian stagings for the six years between 1948 and 1956 during the early years of the communist regime also suggest that 1947 saw the end of an important chapter in Romanian theatre history, both aesthetically and institutionally, which was followed by a completely altered theatre world.

1.5.2 Patterns

According to the timeframe identified, four of the IbsenStage relational database fields were interrogated to produce the data patterns analysed in this thesis: Language, Country, Contributor, and Work.

A simple temporal inquiry of the IbsenStage events sorted by year and visualised in graphs reveal the frequency of the plays (Figure 4, Figure 5). The number of events sorted by year is quite even, with small differences from one year to another. Nevertheless, the average number of events is low. Another aspect revealed by these graphs is that there were only a few years in which Ibsen was not staged. Moreover, the frequency of events by year does not change radically when language criteria is added or subtracted from the inquiry. This points to a contradictory finding: while the low number of events per year seem to indicate a lack of interest in attending Ibsen performances, the even numbers and the presence of Ibsen on the Romanian stage almost every year points to a constant interest from spectators in his plays. The investigation of this contradiction is at the heart of the thesis.

An obvious pattern revealed through the mapping function of IbsenStage, which allows for searches by Language/Country (Figure 6, Figure 7), was the importance of the foreign influences crossing the Romanian reception to Ibsen. This makes the impact of external influences upon the Romanian theatre reception one of the main investigations of this thesis. Additional data interrogations led to the selection of Contributors – actors and directors – with a significant interest in promoting and presenting Ibsen on the Romanian stage. The selection of these contributors was based on the number of their as-

sociations to records in the IbsenStage dataset. Statistics of the plays performed on the Romanian stage guide the selection further. They are connected to the two patterns above because they provide further information about the most performed plays and the most relevant actors in Ibsen productions. The statistics on plays also reveal the most important venues and institutions where these performances took place, and bring us one step closer to other patterns hidden in the data. Additionally, IbsenStage highlights the most toured cities and the institutions that staged Ibsen most frequently.

IbsenStage is not the only collection of data that I have analysed from a quantitative perspective. The reception patterns revealed in the theatre critical discourse are also based on an initial quantitative sorting of the 272 theatre reviews that I have gathered in the course of this study. This dataset frames the analysis of the critical discourse on Ibsen performances. The financial data concerning the revenues from Ibsen performances also frame the reception approach used in this thesis, as these documents illustrate the commercial impact of the productions, and complete the picture of the contrasting, fluid reception to Ibsen on the Romanian stage. Finally, more detail on the data interrogation can be found in the technical appendix in Part Six of this thesis.

Part Two

2.1 The appropriation of foreign cultural models in the reception to Henrik Ibsen in Romania

The foreign language Ibsen tours on the Romanian stage

Who brought Ibsen to Romania? When and where did Ibsen arrive? What plays by Ibsen were performed on the Romanian stage and who was in the audience that attended these performances?

To answer these questions, we must consider the fluidity of both the Romanian cultural space and of its national theatre life in relation to foreign cultural influences. We must look at the spatial and temporal intercrossings of the foreign cultures travelling *through* the Romanian theatre culture.

Ibsen's emergence on the Romanian stage was characterised by fluidity, which is evident from the various acting traditions introduced through foreign tours. The cartographic visualisations by language in IbsenStage indicate the utmost importance of the foreign performances marking Ibsen's early Romanian staging (Figure 8). The complexity of the 1894–1947 period emerges immediately, with Ibsen being performed in six languages: Romanian, German, French, Italian, Hungarian and Yiddish. Besides, in no later period was he staged in so many languages.

The chronology of the foreign-language performances on the Romanian map reveals that most productions were staged mainly between 1890 and 1920 (Figure 3, Figure 4). A look at the global Ibsen production indicates that this is not necessarily late, given that the first Ibsen performance in the United Kingdom took place in 1889, whereas the first Ibsen performance in France took place in 1890. This means that Ibsen's plays started to reach audiences outside Scandinavia and the German-speaking theatre world in the 1890s. Thus, the presence of the foreign Ibsen tours in Romania is connected to his early reception on the European stages. For example, the majority of the German performances took place between 1900 and 1917, the French performances are registered between 1906 and 1911, whereas most Italian performances were staged between 1907 and 1910. The number of Hungarian-speaking events in IbsenStage reveals also a high frequency of performances between 1890 and 1912.

This landscape reveals the numerous national foreign models influencing the Romanian theatre and points at their unstable interactions. Besides, the foreign traditions were not stable either, bringing different, even conflicting local Ibsen traditions to Romania. The intersection of foreign theatre cultures embodied in the Ibsen tours is both spatial and temporal, hence any investigation has to be approached diachronically and synchronically at the same time because their intercrossings do not emerge with a clear point of departure or arrival. They neither embody a diachronic post-colonial transmission process, nor entail a comparison between two coexisting cultural models. The interaction between the national and the foreign theatre cultures, as well as the interaction between the foreign theatre cultures themselves on the Romanian stage is best diagnosed through their intersections. The concept of *histoire croisée* opens up the possibility of investigating the foreign tours through the diachronic and synchronic intercrossings of the traditions they brought into the Romanian theatre, thus influencing Ibsen's local reception. In other words, the mapping of the Ibsen theatre traditions crossing Romania is not stable, as elements of these intercrossings can either stay the same or change, whereas others appear or disappear in time. In fact, the temporal and spatial frameworks of these tours are as fluid and mobile as the spatial and temporal framework of the Romanian state and national theatre, requiring a constant readjusting of the analysing frame.

The interrelationship between the Romanian theatre and the various Ibsen theatre traditions was dependent on the foreign model used in each of the tours. The fluidity of the Romanian cultural space and of the Romanian Ibsen tradition was enhanced by the intercrossings of both *major* and *minor* foreign models. Their impact and intertwining are suggested by the IbsenStage visualisation of foreign tours by language as performed on the early Romanian stage. In addition, I have created maps of the tours associated with the various foreign models. They are inherently marked by spatial and temporal overlappings, while preserving a high level of autonomy.

Each model has its own story marked by multiple layers, as well as different levels of permeability when it comes to their interaction with other models. IbsenStage points at five such models that have the French, Italian, German, Hungarian and Yiddish touring performances at their core. These foreign-language performances had not only different motivations for travelling to Romania, but also different impact on the audiences. On the one hand, the French, German and Italian theatre practitioners were mainly motivated by financial gains. On the other hand, the Hungarian performances, and the German performances that took place in Bucharest during World War One, highlight the political contexts of the time, whereas the presence of Yiddish and Hungarian productions is connected to presence of the respective ethnic groups in the Romanian cultural space.

The three major foreign models marking Ibsen's appropriation in the national theatre until 1947 are enacted by the French, German¹ and Italian tours; the Hungarian and the

1 An objection might arise here, if one considers the presence of a German minority group in Romania. This would lead to the analysis of the German model as a minor, instead of a major one. I agree that Germans, Hungarians and Jews belong as minority groups to the domestic foreign heritage of the Romanian cultural space and are among the elements proving its fluidity. However, for the purpose of our topic, I preserve the German model as a major one for at least one reason. The presence of German natives in Romania and the proximity with the Habsburg/Austro-Hungarian

Yiddish tours are minor models. The term “minor” here refers to the minority groups of Romania, of which the Transylvanian Hungarians were the strongest quantitatively, whereas the Jews were a smaller group mostly tied to Bucharest and Iași.

My analysis of the foreign performances addresses the fluidity of intersection by looking at major contributors and tracing the network of events. The purpose is not only to illustrate the theatre traditions that came into the country, but also to analyse how they spread internationally through the key-artists who included Romania in their touring circuits. Finally, I consider how the influences of these theatre traditions expanded beyond the touring circuits both spatially and temporally.

The staging of foreign productions also suggests that the audiences in Bucharest and Iași knew several foreign languages and, thus, could attend theatre performances in French, Italian and German.² Nevertheless, if the stagings in French and Italian were not always connected to the presence of the respective minority groups, the stagings in Hungarian and Yiddish were predominantly associated with the respective ethnic groups that have been part of the Romanian society. Finally, the German stagings reveals a combination of both aspects. In Sibiu and Timișoara, Germans were a powerful minority group, so ethnicity clearly influenced attendance at performances, yet in cities such as Bucharest or Iași, it was mainly the local audience who participated at the German performances.

In the following, I analyse separately each foreign model and its contribution to Ibsen's emergence on the Romanian stage, always keeping in mind their temporal and spatial intersections.

2.2 The French model

The French model influenced Romanian culture at the political, educational, legislative, artistic, linguistic, architectural and social level to such an extent that it became a topic both positively and negatively assessed by Romanian historians. For example, Pompiliu Eliade (1982: 1–8) and Eugen Lovinescu (1992) supported the French model and its contribution to Romania's modernisation. On the other hand, Titu Maiorescu criticised the superficial appropriation of the foreign models (1868: 301–307), while he supported the German model instead (1882a; 1882b; Alterescu 1971: 447–451;). Moreover, the fascination for Paris as *centrum mundi* in politics, arts and social life was enhanced by the Latin kinship between the French and the Romanians.

The French model represented one of the most powerful influences upon the Romanian theatre. A relevant example is the first Romanian theatre law issued on April 6, 1877 (Lege pentru organizarea și administrarea teatrelor din România 1877: 2313–2315). The law took inspiration from the French system of the Comédie-Française in order to establish how the Romanian “Dramatic Society” would be organised (Massoff 1969: 12–14). The

Empire must have also encouraged foreign companies to visit the country. Therefore, the German influence exceeded the mere national boundaries pointing at this model as a major one.

2 The overviews of the foreign language tours that visited Romania before communism given by Massoff (1969; 1972; 1974; 1976; 1978) in each chapter of his books on the Romanian theatre history support this statement.

repertory is further evidence, as the numerous French plays competed successfully with both Romanian and other foreign plays. The most performed French dramatists included Victorien Sardou, Henry Bataille, Henry Bernstein, Henry Kistemaekers, Georges de Porto-Riche, Alexandre-Dumas-père, Alexandre Dumas-fils, Victor Hugo and Georges Feydeau³. This list also indicates that most performed genres were comedies, melodramas and vaudevilles.

The impact of the model is also visible in the contact between Romanian and French practitioners. On the one hand, the Romanian theatre life was marked by the contribution of French practitioners since the second half of the 19th century.⁴ On the other hand, Paris was a pole of attraction for the Romanian theatre practitioners, including Romanian Ibsenites such as Aristizza Romanescu, Aglae Pruteanu, or Mărioara Voiculescu who wanted to develop their acting skills either by observing the performances of the French actors or by taking classes with them.⁵ Moreover, Eduard (Édouard) de Max, Maria Ventura⁶ and Elvira Popescu are examples of Romanian actors who successfully embarked upon a parallel stage career on the Parisian and Romanian stages. To add more, Alexandru Davila is one example of Romanian director who was inspired by the French actor, director and manager André Antoine in his initiatives to develop the state and private theatre institutions in Romania (Alterescu 1980: 160–172; Vasiliu 1965: 93–94, 97).

Since the French model was powerful in the local theatre life both before and after Ibsen emerged on the national stage, the key-question here is which French traditions shaped his early reception in Romania?

2.2.1 French Ibsen tours in Romania

IbsenStage holds records of 12 French events in Romania between 1894 and 1911, highlighting André Antoine, Gabrielle Réjane, Suzanne Després and Aurélien-Marie Lugné-Poë as the main contributors (Figure 9). If Després and Lugné-Poë visited Romania together and performed Ibsen here several times between 1906 and 1911 (10 events), both André Antoine and Gabrielle Réjane performed Ibsen here just once, in *Ghosts* (*Les Revenants*) in 1894, respectively *A Doll's House* (*Une maison de poupée*) in 1897.

Of the four plays the French actors performed for the Romanian audience – *A Doll's House*, *Ghosts*, *Hedda Gabler* and *The Master Builder* – *A Doll's House* was most staged, as Després and Lugné-Poë performed it during each of their Romanian visits. The other three plays – *Ghosts*, *Hedda Gabler* and *The Master Builder* – were only staged once by the French actors.

These tours overlapped spatially in Bucharest, the Romanian capital city, which dictated the main tendencies in the local theatre life in terms of not only Romanian, but

3 The overviews on the theatres' repertoires in Massoff (1969; 1972; 1974; 1976) support this statement.

4 Relevant examples are Nini Valéry (actress and soprano), Victor Boireaux Delmary (actor and director), or Alexandre Gatinéau (stage manager).

5 One such example is Aristizza Romanescu who took classes with the French actor Louis-Arsène Delaunay.

6 She performed the role of Nora in a Romanian production of *A Doll's House* from 1918.

also foreign languages productions. Després and Lugné-Poë performed in Craiova (1906, 1907) and Iași (1911) too. Nevertheless, the French tours did not cross temporally, as they performed in the country in the following order: André Antoine in 1894, Gabrielle Réjane in 1897, and Suzanne Després and Aurélien-Marie Lugné-Poë between 1906 and 1911.

An overview of Ibsen's French reception at the end of the 19th century is necessary so that we understand the impact of the traditions brought by the French Ibsen performances on the early Romanian theatre practice. Kirsten E. Shepherd-Barr (2012: 56–80) has addressed the most important aspects of Ibsen's French reception; she preserves Joan Templeton's idea of a "battle for Ibsen" (1998: 71–82) between the naturalist approach of Antoine and the symbolist approach of Lugné-Poë, but highlights that the French reception did not entail these approaches alone. Shepherd-Barr insists that the approach of Gabrielle Réjane was an alternative (2012: 61) to the avant-gardist and experimental theatre practice of Antoine and Lugné-Poë. The French artists presented all these three divergent interpretations of Ibsen to the Romanian spectators.

The impact of these key practitioners on French and non-French theatre was considerable. The French companies touring Ibsen to Romania also performed across Europe, and in the case of Réjane, even North America. Réjane was already a symbol of the French theatre itself during her lifetime, named as "the toast of the French capital" (Marker and Marker 1989: 60) even before her successful rendition of *Nora*. The English audience considered that "Madame Réjane is the Parisienne, is all Parisiennes, incarnated" (Meunier 1894: 197). However, she was not alone in being acknowledged as a pillar of French theatre. André Antoine and Aurélien-Marie Lugné-Poë were experimentalists responsible for the development of new directions in the practice of acting: Antoine represented the naturalist-realist path, Lugné-Poë represented the symbolist path.

As Romania was a commercial market for these tours, the companies' aesthetic aims were subordinated to commercial ones. The presence of the French Ibsen on the Romanian stage was determined by financial considerations: the repeated presence of the same production performed by the same company indicates success, whereas an isolated production suggests reduced impact.

2.2.1.1 André Antoine, 1894

Ibsen was performed for the very first time in French on the Romanian stage in April 1894 when André Antoine chose *Ghosts* as touring production and interpreted the role of Osvald. The performance was staged at Teatrul Liric [The Lyrical Theatre]⁷ in Bucharest (Alterescu 1971: 82) approximately one month after the first Romanian Ibsen performance of *An Enemy of the People* in Iași, as well as three years before *Ghosts* would be performed for the first time in Romanian in 1897, marking the emergence of Ibsen on the local stage. His touring repertoire consisted of seven French⁸ and two Norwegian plays (Massoff 1969: 337–338): Bjørnstjerne Bjørnson's *The Bankrupt* and Ibsen's *Ghosts*. In terms of reception, Antoine "și-a exprimat mulțumirea pentru felul cum au fost primite spectacolele lui,

7 Most foreign performances that visited Bucharest took place here.

8 *La dupe* (Georges Ancey), *Marriage d'argents* (Eugène Bourgeois), *Blanchette* (Eugène Brieux), *Bourbouruche* (Georges Courteline), *La Fille Elisa* (Edmond de Goncourt), *Jacques Damour* (Émile Zola/Léon Hennique), and *Un beau soir* (Maurice Vaucaire).

promițând că va reveni” (expressed his gratitude for the way in which his performances were received and promised to return; my translation.) (Massoff 1969: 338). Yet, when he returned to Romania, he decided not to perform the Norwegian plays. In 1897, he chose an exclusively French repertoire.

At an international level, IbsenStage reveals Antoine’s presence as contributor in 12 events. *Ghosts* is associated with 11 of these events, whereas *The Wild Duck* was only performed once. The database also indicates Antoine’s lasting interest in touring with Ibsen for 13 years between 1890 and 1903. French, Italian, German, Dutch and Romanian audiences could all witness Antoine in *Ghosts*. Moreover, the staging of *Ghosts* was not only the artist’s first Ibsen production on May 30, 1890, but also the very first French Ibsen production, hence its significance.

The Romanian audience met Antoine’s naturalist version of Ibsen, “featuring all the things that irritated critics like François Sarcy, such as turning his back to the audience and whispering” (Shepherd-Barr 2012: 61). This approach shaped the acting, the stage design and the repertoire, in order to deliver the audience a piece of real life, that is, a “slice of life”:

Antoine offered spectators a new brand of realism/naturalism: a *slice of life* [...] that brought audiences face to face with themselves and with their environment. Decors followed the patterns of reality. A revolutionary acting technique was also instituted [...]: actors and actresses no longer declaimed in stiff and studied ways, as was the style in state-subsidized and boulevard theaters. They walked and talked, comported themselves on stage as they did in shops, on the streets, and in their homes. [...] Nor did the performers upstage each other. Antoine had abolished the star system. His company worked as a unit – a cohesive whole. (Knapp 1988: 866)

Such an acting perspective proved to be demanding for the spectators who were surprised by

felul de interpretare cu totul degajat al actorilor, ce nu se sfiau să joace [...] cu spatele la public, să țină mâinile în buzunare, să coboare tonul [...], aparent fără să țină seama dacă puteau fi auziți de cei din sală. (actors being completely relaxed, and unafraid to perform [...] by turning their back to the audience, keeping their hands in the pockets, lowering their voice [...] apparently without taking into consideration that they cannot be heard; my translation.) (Massoff 1969: 338)

The Romanian historians also highlighted “excesul de studiu al rolurilor – atitudini, gesturi, tăceri chiar, calculate până la amănunt” (excessive study of the roles – attitudes, gestures, silences even, that were all calculated in detail; my translation) (ibid: 338) and pointed at exaggerations hidden in a too-precise representation of life on stage. In other words, the excessive preparation of the roles in the naturalist approach led to exaggerated portrayals of real-life interactions in which the pathological dimension appeared to be artificial instead of real.

On the one hand, Ion Vartic appreciated that the Romanian audience reacted “moderately”⁹ enthusiastic to Antoine’s *Ghosts*. On the other hand, Ioan Massoff claims that “succesul turneului lui Antoine a fost de necontestat” (the success of Antoine’s tour was indisputable; my translation) (ibid: 338) and that “interpretarea lui Oswald din aşteptata piesă *Strigoii* de Ibsen este întâmpinată cu admiraţie” (the interpretation of Oswald in the long-awaited play *Ghosts* was received with admiration; my translation.) (Alterescu 1971: 82). The “moderate” reception applied to the overall content of the repertoire; this illustrates that “a slice of life” theatre was less appealing to the “high audience”¹⁰ than the world of comedies, farces, melodramas or vaudevilles. The historians point to the contrast between the repertoire of Antoine which portrayed a “lume mărunţă, cenuşie” (petty, grey world; my translation) (ibid: 82), and the repertoire of other foreign theatre companies that were privileging entertainment in their stagings. Even if most of the spectators were not enthusiastic about “supleţea jocului lui Antoine” (the suppleness of Antoine’s acting; my translation) (ibid: 82), the overall reception to his tour was positive. A theatre review written by Laura Vampa contains positive remarks about the audience’s response to Antoine’s *Oswald*, but also comments on the lack of Ibsen performances in Romania previously. She suggests this was a reason for the low number of attendees and for the moderate impact:

Când am văzut, cu prilejul reprezentaţiunilor date de Antoine, teatrul mai gol la piesa lui Ibsen *Les Revenants*, mi-am zis că publicul nostru e prea tânăr pentru piesele artistului Norvegian. (When I saw the theatre mostly empty at the staging of Ibsen’s *Ghosts* on the occasion of Antoine’s performances, I told myself that our audience is too young for the Norwegian artist’s plays; my translation.) (Vampa 1894: 1)

An empty theatre hall at Ibsen performances was a recurrent image in the epoch’s reviews, indicating that Ibsen’s plays were seldom a commercial success. This perception is reflected in the reviews of the early staging of Ibsen in Romania, for both foreign and national performances. Antoine toured to Bucharest in 1894, only a month after the first Romanian Ibsen performance in Iaşi; his production of *Ghosts* was the first Ibsen play to be staged in Bucharest. Thus, the context indicates that this “young” audience was simply unaware of Ibsen’s international reputation:

Puţini, cred, chiar dintre acei cari se aflau în sală, aveau idee de Ibsen, cu toate acestea de la început piesa s-a impus, a coprins toate spiritele şi-a câştigat toate simpatiile. [...] erau momente în care se simţea că entuziasmul era la culme, şi, dacă nu isbucneau aplauzele şi pentru autor şi pentru interpret – era numai fiindcă nu voia nimeni întreruperi, îşi dedeau seama toţi că asemenea banalităţi nu-şi aveau locul în faţa analizei, a studiului adâncit, şi a geniului neîntrecut al artistului, care apucă înaintea tuturor să ne arate nu numai relele şi viţile omenirii, dar chiar isoarele lor [...]. (I believe very few of the audience had any idea of who Ibsen was. Yet the

9 “primirea moderată ce i s-a făcut la Bucureşti în 1894 celebrului Antoine” (the moderate reception of the famous Antoine in Bucharest in 1894; my translation) (Vartic 1995: 168).

10 “publicul ‘înalt’ nu se simte atras” (the “high” audience does not feel attracted; my translation) (Alterescu 1971: 82).

play gained authority from the very beginning, surrounded all the spirits and won everyone's sympathy. [...] [T]here were moments when one could feel an absolute enthusiasm, and, if the audience did not enthusiastically applaud both the author and the performer, it was only because no one desired interruptions; they acknowledged the inappropriateness of such banalities when faced with a profoundly analytical performance of an unsurpassable genius, who showed us not only the evil and the vices of humankind, but also their very origin; my translation.) (ibid: 1)

The reference to Ibsen's "Northerness" completed the description, using the sobriety of Ibsen's plays as a reason for the audience's difficulty in assimilating the story of the play:

Ibsen cu pătrunderea, cu filozofia pe care i-a dat-o viața lui cam încercată, într-un mijloc unde nu era înțeles și unde clina neguroasă te apleacă fără voie la melancolie și la reflexiuni, ne dă nu niște bucăți de petrecere, dar niște studii adânci, fiziologice și psihologice ale pornirilor omenești. [...] Ne "distrează" mai puțin, e adevărat, dar ne face să ne gândim mai mult la nimicurile vieții, să ne dăm seama de multe fenomene sociale și de cauzele lor. (It is because the depth of his mind and philosophy resulting from his challenging life in an environment where he was not understood and where dire predicaments inclined him towards melancholy and reflection, that Ibsen does not provide us with entertaining plays, but deep, physiological and psychological studies of human behaviour. [...] It is true that his plays do not amuse us, but trigger us to think more of the emptiness of the existence, to become aware of the social phenomena and their causes; my translation.) (ibid: 1)

This does not make Antoine's performances less valuable. On the contrary, if the commercial impact was weak, the aesthetic impact was definitely strong, as revealed by its influence over the development of the Romanian practice of acting.

2.2.1.2 Gabrielle Réjane, 1897

The actress Gabrielle Réjane is registered in 15 IbsenStage events, with 14 events pointing at *A Doll's House* and Nora as her most powerful contribution between 1894 and 1903. As 11 of the 14 IbsenStage events demonstrate it, she performed this role mainly between 1894 and 1897 during her European and American tours. However, in Romania she appeared in this role only in 1897 at Teatrul Liric [The Lyrical Theatre] in Bucharest, when she was touring with Théâtre de Vaudeville's troupe. With the exception of *A Doll's House*, she only included French plays in her repertoire (Massoff 1969: 415). But, similarly to Antoine, when she came back to Romania in 1901, 1905, 1910 and 1914 (Alterescu 1971: 83), she refrained from performing Ibsen and chose an entirely French repertory instead.

When it comes to the Ibsen tradition that Réjane presented to the Romanian audience, Kirsten E. Shephard-Barr states that she "steered away from these two dominant modes of presenting Ibsen" (Shepherd-Barr 2012: 62), that is from the naturalist and symbolist interpretations. Réjane represented the tradition of the "boulevard" theatre and provided "the first [...] mainstream theatrical success for Ibsen" (ibid: 61). She employed a declamatory acting style and her performances were representative for the star-system tradition in which the roles were selected so that they gave the actress the opportunity to display her skills. Réjane belonged to the same tradition as other great

actresses of her time such as Sarah Bernhardt or Mademoiselle Rachel. “Réjane, like her rivals, inherited a Romantic tradition of acting, only rarely was she sublime, and only very rarely indeed, only despite herself almost, was she ‘tragic’. Mostly was she witty, ironical and wonderfully physical.” (Stokes 2005: 122) Stokes also points at Réjane’s inclination towards naturalism and realism in her acting, in contrast to her Romantic predecessors: “The terms of Réjane’s success show a like adhesion to the newer naturalism of established mechanics, and critical appreciation of her career rested upon the way in which she transformed, deepened and complicated the predictable workings of her popular repertoire [...]” (ibid: 122) The audience in London noticed that her acting had “one firm claim upon realism” (ibid: 136), while taking a distance from the Romantic acting conventions. Thus, “the French ‘impersonal’ manner, surviving even Rachel’s Romantic approach to tragedy, still present in Bernhardt, remained a preserve of the alien, from which Réjane’s mixture of observation and provocation offered a plausible escape” (ibid: 136).

There is little information about the production of *A Doll’s House* staged in Romania in 1897. The historians insist she impressed the audience “prin simplitatea jocului, printr-o sensibilitate emoționantă, prin naturalețe” (through the simplicity of her acting, the moving sensibility and the naturalness; my translation) (Massoff 1969: 415), suggesting a realist interpretation of Nora. However, they give no clear definition of “simplicity”, “naturalness” or “sensibility”. Thus, while we could incline towards an interpretation of her approach as naturalist or realist, Kirsten E. Shephard-Barr presents the actress as belonging to a different theatre trend, privileging a combination of Romanticism with realism. Her reviews may just be signalling a contrast between her acting and the predominantly declamatory Romanian acting of the time. A simple, sensitive and natural acting could just have been the description of an acting paradigm that did not employ declamation. In Réjane’s interpretation of Nora, Fredrick J. Marker and Lise-Lone Marker detect a combination of acting styles she most likely proposed too in her performance for the Romanian audiences:

Réjane transferred [...] the robust spirit of Sardou’s pert, saucy washerwoman to Ibsen’s heroine – a spirit of personal rebelliousness that became one of the twin pillars of her distinctive attack. The end result was neither Sorma’s bitter hostility toward Helmer nor Duse’s elegiac tone of loss and regret. ‘For Réjane’, Bang writes, ‘the play became a work about revolt’. [...] This revolt was prepared and counterbalanced by the acute, sustained sense of fear that Réjane made the other supporting pillar of her interpretation, and which she fuelled with all of her own enormous nervous energy. (Marker and Marker 1989: 61)

Since this was the first time that a Romanian audience had seen a performance of *A Doll’s House*, the critics referred to the controversy that surrounded the play: “s-a stărnit o animată discuție chiar în sala teatrului, publicul fiind împărțit în ceea ce privește comportarea eroinei lui Ibsen.” (a lively discussion unleashed in the theatre hall, as the audience was divided regarding the behaviour of Ibsen’s heroine.) (Massoff 1969: 415) Réjane chose not to perform Nora in her Romanian tours after 1900. (Alterescu 1971: 82)

2.2.1.3 Suzanne Després and Aurélien-Marie Lugué-Poë, 1906–1912

Suzanne Després and Aurélien-Marie Lugué-Poë's presence on the Romanian stage is recorded between 1906 and 1912 with 10 events in IbsenStage. They toured Romania with Ibsen performances five times (1906, 1907, 1908, 1909, and 1911) and performed not only in Bucharest, but also in Craiova (1906, 1907) and Iași (1911). The Ibsen play they staged most in Romania was *A Doll's House*, but they also performed *The Master Builder* (1901) and *Hedda Gabler* (1911). Their performance of *The Master Builder* was also the premiere of the play on the Romanian stage. Apart from their Ibsen productions, they performed mostly French playwrights, as well as Italian, German, Russian, and even a Romanian play.¹¹

Suzanne Després and Aurélien-Marie Lugué-Poë were the most prominent French contributors who travelled with Ibsen productions in Europe. IbsenStage points at 43 events with Suzanne Després performing in leading roles between 1895 and 1937, as well as 111 events in which Aurélien-Marie Lugué-Poë is registered as actor and/or director between 1892 and 1934. These events are testament to their powerful contribution to the dissemination of Ibsen's works.

There are few archival traces left of the Suzanne Després and Aurélien-Marie Lugué-Poë's Ibsen performances in Romania. We know that their Romanian tour was part of a larger initiative of the state that involved cultural exchanges in order to encourage cooperation between France and Romania. Ioan Massoff indicates that the most influential national theatre ensembles were granted a state subsidy to travel across Europe and advocate for France as a powerful and trustworthy diplomatic partner (1972: 269). This subsidy made it easier to cope with the touring costs in Romania, particularly since foreign companies had to pay taxes on each performance. Després and Lugué-Poë's return to Romania suggest that their tours were successful financially in spite of the costs (ibid: 269), and Lugué-Poë remembers "les beaux soirs de nos représentations de Bucarest" (the beautiful evenings of our performances in Bucharest; my translation.) (Lugué-Poë 1933: 248).

Suzanne Després and Aurélien-Marie Lugué-Poë are mostly known for their activity at *Théâtre de l'Œuvre*, but historical data points at the fact that the theatre was not open to the theatregoers in Paris for about 13 years in the first decade of the 20th century (1899–1912).¹² During those years, *Théâtre de l'Œuvre* was acknowledged as an international enterprise mainly outside of France, which is reflected in the IbsenStage dataset.

11 For instance, the repertoire performed in 1906 included, apart from Ibsen's *A Doll's House*, *Le détour*, *La Fille Elise*, *Poil de Carotte*, *La robe rouge*, *La Massière*, *Le jaloux* and *Fedra*, which were all French plays. Instead, the repertoire performed in 1907 included both French plays, such as *Denise*, *L'Ainé*, *Rosine* and the Italian play *Gioconda*. In 1908, the actors added a French adaptation of the Russian *The Kreutzer Sonata* to a repertoire including the same Italian play *Gioconda* and still dominated by French plays such as *La Parisienne*, *Poil de Carotte*, *La Rafale*, *Sapho* and *Denise*. The tour of 1909 was even more diverse, as it included not one, but two Ibsen plays, *A Doll's House* and *The Master Builder*, together with the same Italian play *Gioconda*, the German play *Electra*, and the French plays *Amoureuse*, *Poil de Carotte*, *Le détour*, *Le jeu de la morale et du hasard* and *Le fardeau de la liberté*. Finally, apart from Ibsen's *A Doll's House* and *Hedda Gabler*, the repertoire performed in 1911 was exclusively French, including *Andromaca*, *Fedra*, *La Fille Elise*, *Poil de Carotte*, *Les Marionnettes* and *La Sacrifiée* (Massoff 1972: 163, 164, 189, 226, 270, 388).

12 *Théâtre de l'Œuvre* was closed in 1899 and reopened only in 1912, as several resources signal: "Lugué-Poë closed the Théâtre de l'Œuvre in 1899 but revived it in 1912, and again for a time after World

One of Lugné-Poë's early aims was to establish *Théâtre de l'Œuvre* as an international organisation named *L'Œuvre internationale* with activity in Brussels, London and The Hague. His first attempts with this initiative date from 1895, but ended in 1896 as a result of poor management:

L'Œuvre, internationale par son répertoire, le serait aussi parce que chacun de ses spectacles serait donné successivement à Paris, à Bruxelles, à la Haye et à Londres. [...] Au bout de quelques mois l'échec fut évident. Pièces mal choisies, qui n'avaient rien à voir avec les grandes reconstitutions promises, interprétations médiocres et hâtives. [...] En juin 1896, *L'Œuvre internationale* semblait bel et bien enterrée. (L'Œuvre is international not only because of its repertory, but also because of each one of its performances would be successively organised in Paris, Brussels, Hague and London. [...] After several months, the failure was obvious. The plays were poorly chosen and had nothing to do with the great performances promised, and the interpretations were mediocre and rash. [...] By June 1896, *L'Œuvre internationale* seemed completely buried; my translation.) (Robichez 1955: 134–135)

In 1906, when Lugné-Poë took over as the impresario for *L'Œuvre internationale*, the project revived and in the first decade of the 20th century Suzanne Després and Aurélien-Marie Lugné-Poë toured extensively together, often without any other partners, presenting a unique repertory unlike that of other Parisian theatres.¹³ It was during their international tours, which brought them – especially Suzanne Després – global recognition, that they performed in Romania.¹⁴ According to Jacques Robichez, this period marked “l’expansion triomphale de L'Œuvre sur les routes du monde entier” (the

War I.” (Britannica ACADEMIC, n.d.); “Relevons une dernière fois le rideau qui vient de se baisser, le soir du 21 juin 1899, sur la scène de L'Œuvre” (Robichez 1957: 471).

- 13 “Et, vers 1900, se dessine une des grandes maximes de L'Œuvre : indépendance complète du répertoire des tournées et du répertoire parisien. Quand Lugné-Poë va en Norvège en 1897, en 1898, en 1899, en 1902, un autre principe l'inspire : l'économie. Il y va seul avec Suzanne Després. [...] Voyages sans prétentions, non sans efficacité. [...] En 1906, une nouvelle carrière, une fulgurante carrière, commence pour lui, celle d'impresario. Un impresario revenu de ses illusions” (Robichez 1955: 135–136).
- 14 “L'‘étoile’ maintenant c'est Suzanne Després. En peu d'années elle s'est fait une réputation mondiale. Dès 1906 elle a joué en Europe Centrale, en Turquie, en Amérique de Sud, en Allemagne, en Alsace, en Belgique, en Hollande. En 1907, elle retourne en Allemagne et parcourt Danemark, Suède, Norvège. 1908 et 1909 sont pour elle et Lugné-Poë des années de voyages incessants. C'est la grande époque de *L'Œuvre internationale*. Janvier 1908 : Anvers, Liège. – Février, mars : Verdun, Strasbourg, Colmar, Luxembourg, Mulhouse, Bâle, Francfort, Dresde, Prague, Vienne, Budapest, Bucarest, Constantinople, où les représentations de *Maison de poupée* ‘furent prétextes à des manifestations dans les harems des vieilles familles bourgeoises’, Le Caire, Alexandrie. – Mai : Londres. – Juin : Strasbourg, Marseille. – Octobre : Bruges, Bruxelles, Verviers, Metz, Strasbourg, Colmar, Moulhouse, Cologne, Munich. L'année 1909 n'est pas moins chargée. Avril et mai : Stuttgart, Munich, Vienne, Budapest, Craïova, Bucarest, Jassy. – Juillet et août : plus de quarante représentations à Buenos-Ayres, une à Dakar, à l'escale du retour. – Novembre et décembre : Berlin, Hanovre, Brême, Dusseldorf, Barmen, Luxembourg, Sainte-Marie-aux-Mines” (Robichez 1955: 138–139).

triumphant expansion of *L'Œuvre* on the circuits of the entire world; my translation.) (Robichez 1955: 144).

Suzanne Després and Aurélien-Marie Lugné-Poë presented a symbolist version of Ibsen to the Romanian audience, which contrasted to the naturalist Ibsen of Antoine. Their performances revealed “antinaturalistic settings, the actors’ lines being pronounced in a monotonous, oneiric tone and with slow, emphatic movements” (D’Amico 2014: 15) and “hieratic, plainchant intonation and performances taking place behind a scrim” (Shepherd-Barr 2012: 61). These extreme symbolist performances reflected Lugné-Poë’s “vision of the theatre [that] went beyond the visible world, directly into the occult, sometimes nightmarish, transcendental domains” (Knapp 1988: 872) and secured “Ibsen’s full and final breakthrough in France” (Shepherd-Barr 2012: 61). However, they were highly controversial, not just for Ibsen, who hardly approved of them, but also with Scandinavian audiences. Georg Brandes objected to their symbolist stagings, claiming that Ibsen wrote realist plays:

Et George Brandès à la même époque partait en guerre contre les ‘interprétations fantastiques’ de *L'Œuvre* et proclamait très haut qu’Ibsen était un dramaturge réaliste que des hurluberlus, en France, avaient systématiquement déguisé en Symboliste. Lugné se trouvait en somme dans une fâcheuse situation : on s’apercevait qu’il était plus ibsénien qu’Ibsen! (At the same time, George Brandès was going to war too against the ‘fantastic interpretations’ of the *L'Œuvre* and claimed loudly that Ibsen was a realist playwright who was systematically disguised into a Symbolist by eccentrics in France. In sum, Lugné was in a disagreeable situation: we could see that he was more Ibsenian than Ibsen!; my translation.) (Robichez 1955: 15)

Eventually, the symbolist interpretation of Ibsen was accepted as a compromise to ensure the playwright’s international dissemination, but it was not considered a plausible aesthetic option:

Mais les Norvégiens au début le pardonnaient à Lugné-Poë comme ils lui pardonnaient son jeu somnambulique qui faussait les intentions d’Ibsen et de Bjørnson, ôtait la vie des personnages, mais les enrichissait en même temps d’une profondeur et d’une gravité nouvelles. (But the Norwegians initially forgave Lugné-Poë and his somnambulistic plays that falsified Ibsen and Bjørnson’s intentions, deprived the characters of life, at the same time enriching them with a new profundity and solemnity; my translation) (ibid : 14)

Kirsten E. Shepherd-Barr claims that the symbolist approach to Ibsen “ultimately did more harm than good to the French understanding of Ibsen [...] playing him in a mode that we might not see (as he himself did later) as not just incompatible but risible” (Shepherd-Barr 2012: 62).

What kind of symbolist Ibsen arrived in Romania together with Suzanne Després and Lugné-Poë? Firstly, none of the Romanian historians has actually named the tradition they presented on the local stage as “symbolist” to the extent Shepherd-Barr, D’Amico and Knapp indicate. In fact, no one ever mentioned “symbolism” at all. Instead, the descriptions of Després and Lugné-Poë’s performances indicate that symbolist and re-

alist means were combined so that “predomină tonul simplu și grav al limbajului scenic despuiat de convenții, dar nu de poezie” (the stage language that dominates employs a simple and low tonality, and is cleared of conventions, without being devoid of *poetry*; my translation.) (Alterescu 1971: 84). Giuliana Altamura clarifies this conundrum, pointing at the fact that when *Théâtre de l'Œuvre* closed its doors in 1899, Lugné-Poë moved away from the extremely symbolist and experimental approach of Ibsen¹⁵. French theatre history also indicates that Lugné-Poë proposed a milder version of symbolist theatre, including realist elements. This historical division implies that by the time Suzanne Després and Aurélien-Marie Lugné-Poë visited Romania between 1906 and 1911, they most likely did not present an experimental symbolist approach of Ibsen to the local audience. Instead, they probably played an interpretation of Ibsen infused with both symbolist and realist elements. Robichez also highlights that their approach changed at the turn of the century:

Il est désormais engagé dans une nouvelle direction. Il a rompu avec les Symbolistes français en juin. Il répudie définitivement leurs paradoxes de mise en scène. De 1897 à 1899 il présente les drames du Nord dans une interprétation plus simple, mais qui ne va pas toutefois jusqu'au réalisme intégral. (Henceforth, he assumed a new direction. He broke with the French symbolists in June. He repudiated definitively their paradoxes concerning the mise-en-scène. From 1897 to 1899 he presented a simpler interpretation of the dramas of the North, which, however, did not aim at an integral realism; my translation.) (Robichez 1955: 27)

Robichez indicates that the keyword describing Després and Lugné-Poë's theatre activity around 1900 was no longer symbolism, but realism. It is also clear that the artists did not make a radical transition from extreme symbolism back to Antoine's naturalism/realism. Robichez describes their approach as “un réalisme poétique qui se nuance souvent d'un comique âpre, parfois ricaner, toujours profondément original” (a poetical realism which is often nuanced by means of a rough humour, sometimes sneering, always profoundly original; my translation) (*ibid.*: 27) or “*réalisme mitigé*”:

Un réalisme mitigé, c'était la formule à laquelle Lugné s'arrêtait pour son propre jeu et pour sa mise en scène. Suzanne Després reprenait les rôles qu'avait créés Berthe Bady. Elle n'usait pas des mêmes moyens. Elle était plus humaine et plus simple. Son influence fut certainement considérable dans l'orientation nouvelle de l'Œuvre. (A nuanced realism [*réalisme mitigé*], this was the formula that Lugné chose for his own acting and mise-en-scène. Suzanne Després got the roles previously interpreted by Berthe Bady. She did not use the same means. She was more human, simpler. Her influence was certainly considerable in the new direction assumed by the L'Œuvre.) (*ibid.*: 16)

15 “La chiusura dell'Œuvre annunciata nel 1899, sebbene non definitiva, segnò effettivamente la conclusione della fase che – più che altro per semplificazione, come s'è visto – è stata detta *simbolista*, ma che forse sarebbe più opportuno definire *sperimentale*” (Altamura 2014: 407).

While “poetical” indicates that some symbolist traces remained in Lugné-Poë’s “realist” approach, what did *mitigé* entail? Since the word *mitiger* means “édulcorer quelque chose, l’adoucir en y mêlant quelque chose d’autre” (making something sweeter or milder by combining it with another element; my translation) (*mitiger*, n.d.), *mitigé* indicates that the extreme symbolist phase of Lugné-Poë and Després’s activity was followed by a tempered realism, clearly “sweetened” by a symbolist touch.

Accordingly, Lugné-Poë and Després brought this “sweet” and “mild” symbolist-realist version of Ibsen to Romania. The Romanian critics did not find extreme symbolist elements in Suzanne Després’ interpretation, but balanced renditions:

A emoționat cu jocul ei simplu, izbutind să scoată efecte dintr-o mișcare bruscă, dintr-un cuvânt șoptit parcă din adâncuri misterioase. (She moved [the audience] with her simple acting and managed to create effects through sudden movements, through words whispered as if from mysterious depths; my translation.) (Massoff 1972: 388).

Ioan Massoff points precisely to the realist brush in her symbolist interpretation:

Marea actriță a emoționat și de data aceasta publicul, prin jocul său sincer, lipsit de orice emfază, printr-o economie dusă la extrem a mijloacelor exterioare. [...] spectacolele cu Suzanne Després au avut o certă valoare artistică, în ciuda faptului că această simplitate a mijloacelor scenice a surprins pe unii, obișnuiți să se vorbească pe scenă “altfel decât în viață”. (The great actress moved the audience with her sincere acting that lacked any emphasis, and with an extreme economy of her external means. [...] Although this simplicity of the acting surprised some of those used to people on stage speaking ‘differently than in [real] life’, the performances of Suzanne Després had an unquestionable artistic value; my translation) (*ibid.*: 189–190)

This comment on the actress’ speech indicates how she turned from a symbolist “monotonous”, “hieratic” and “oneiric” approach to a realist one, reminding us of Antoine’s principle of actors talking on stage as in real life. Robichez ties Després to the theatre innovations of both Lugné-Poë and Antoine, stressing the realism of her acting:

Ce n’est pas une grande tragédienne, c’est une femme simple qui n’a pas dépouillé tout à fait les aspects familiers et un peu populaire de son personnage. [...] On retrouve dans son jeu les leçons de Lugné-Poë, de Worms et d’Antoine. (This is not a great tragedienne, but a simple woman who has not deprived her character of its familiar and popular aspects. [...] We encounter the lessons of Lugné-Poë, Worms and Antoine in her acting; my translation.) (Robichez 1955: 141)

In fact, according to Robichez, her acting dictated the realist turn in the theatre managed by her husband by taming its symbolist approach. The local description of Després and Lugné-Poë’s Ibsen performances in Romania as a combination of “mysterious depths” and “simplicity” of the acting language supports the analyses of Robichez, Altamura and Shepherd-Barr. It is also clear that Suzanne Després did not employ the declamatory

acting style that was typical, not only for the French, but also for Romanian actresses at the time:

Suzanne Després, socotită în epocă, cea mai de seamă interpretă a dramei moderne. Neavând ca înfățișare nimic ispititor, cu o “față palidă, un cap plin de griji, în ochi licăriri stranii”, departe de “linia marilor comediene franceze”, Suzanne Després a încântat totuși prin jocul său simplu, însoțit de gesturi puține, dar cu atât mai convingător. (Suzanne Després was considered the greatest interpreter of modern drama. She had nothing tempting in her appearance, and her ‘pale face, a head burdened with sorrows and strange glimmers in her eyes’ had nothing in common with the ‘appearance of the great French comediennes’. Yet, Suzanne Després delighted through her simple and therefore more convincing acting, accompanied by few gestures; my translation.) (Massoff 1972: 163)

The Romanian actor George Ciprian also noted that Suzanne Després’s realist acting marked by simplicity tempered her symbolist interpretation in the interpretation of Nora in *A Doll’s House*:

O Noră poate nu destul de potrivită ca înfățișare dar de un clocot interior mistuitor și de o putere de pătrundere rar întâlnite – ridicând marea scenă finală, cu mijloacele cele mai simple, la înălțimi nebănuite.” (She may probably not be the best Nora in terms of physical appearance, but [she performed] with such an inner, consuming fire, and with such a seldom encountered penetrating power, that she elevated to an unexpected standard the great final scene by the simplest means; my translation.) (Ciprian 1965: 172)

The actress emphasised this balance in her view of Nora: “În Nora nu e o singură femeie care trăiește, sunt toate femeile.” (Nora is not just an individual woman, she is a symbol of all women everywhere; my translation.) (Cocea 1911: 2)

2.2.1.3.1 Lugné-Poë and the Romanian-French theatrical “chemistry”

The international activity of *Théâtre de l’Œuvre* was not confined to touring productions or the aim of creating a platform for cooperation between theatre enterprises. The international mark that Lugné-Poë put on *Théâtre de l’Œuvre* also was reflected in the contributions of the numerous foreign actors and directors who participated in the ensemble. Robichez highlights the transnational dimension of *Théâtre de l’Œuvre* as one of its specificities:

On parlera roumain sur la scène de l’Œuvre, russe, hollandais, danois, italien et Lugné-Poë apparaîtra quelquefois comme le portier d’une sorte de Babel du théâtre. (People would speak Romanian on the stage of l’Œuvre, then also Russian, Dutch, Danish, Italian. Therefore, Lugné-Poë sometimes had the appearance of a doorkeeper of a theatrical Babel; my translation.) (Robichez 1955: 140)

Such renowned actors as Eleonora Duse and Ermete Zacconi collaborated with Lugné-Poë too.

Some of the foreign contributors participating in the activity of the ensemble were Romanian. Two of them took part in the Ibsen productions staged by Lugné-Poë's *Théâtre de l'Œuvre*, both during and after the company's extremely symbolist phase. They were Édouard de Max and Alexandre Mihalesco.¹⁶ The IbsenStage records confirm their status as Ibsen contributors. Édouard de Max is registered in seven events associated with the *Rosmersholm* production of 1893–1894; Alexandre Mihalesco also appears in seven events, but in association with several plays between 1924 and 1934: *Ghosts*, *The Wild Duck*, *A Doll's House* and *Rosmersholm*.

Édouard de Max worked as actor in Lugné-Poë's ensemble and is most remembered for his performance as Ulrik Brendel in *Rosmersholm*. Kirsten E. Shepherd-Barr reminds us that Ibsen “famously complained about the way Brendel was electrically lit on his entrance in *Rosmersholm*” (2012: 61). The Brendel that Ibsen was referring to was performed by the Romanian actor Édouard de Max. He acted in Lugné-Poë's experimental symbolist productions and in 1893–1894 participated in *Théâtre de l'Œuvre*'s tour to Brussels, Liège, Amsterdam, The Hague and Oslo, where he performed in front of Ibsen. Regardless of the criticisms of the production's extreme symbolism, the performance by Édouard de Max was treasured by Lugné-Poë, who mentions him in his Ibsen memoirs:

Si le tragédien Édouard de Max, interprète de Ulrich Brendel, s'égara quelque peu dans sa dernière scène—où il apparut fantomatique—de Max était difficile à retenir—il faut néanmoins se souvenir que sa création fut acclamée et que Bang put [...] télégraphier le triomphe de la soirée...et Ibsen se rapprocha de nous. (Although the tragedian Édouard de Max, interpreter of Ulrich Brendel, was going somewhat astray in his last scene—the one where he had a ghostly appearance—because de Max was difficult to restrain—we must nevertheless remember that his creation was acclaimed and that Bang could [...] send by telegraph the message about the triumph of that evening...Then Ibsen approached us; my translation) (Lugné-Poë 1936: 40)

Neither Lugné-Poë nor French theatre historians such as Jacques Robichez acknowledged that Édouard de Max was Romanian. However, the Romanian historian Ioan Masoff mentions him among with a number of other Romanian actors who were successfully performing in French on the French stage, in spite of their foreign origin (1969: 225). This omission is understandable with regard to Édouard de Max as he studied at the National Conservatoire of Dramatic Arts of Paris. He was a student of Gustav Worms and was educated according to the norms of the Romantic declamatory style and was to become one of the epoch's greatest tragedians in Paris. His symbolist interpretation of Brendel in *Rosmersholm* was influential even when *Théâtre de l'Œuvre* moved to a milder, “poetical” approach combining symbolism and realism:

Il fallait qu'il subsistât une faible brume autour de ces pièces. Pour Ulric Brendel, dans *Rosmersholm*, on ne pouvait, sous peine de rompre le charme, le montrer tel qu'il apparaissait aux Norvégiens: un simple pochard verbeux et truculent. Il fallait

16 The names of these contributors were slightly adapted once they moved to France, in order to fit the French pronunciation. It is the case of both Eduard de Max, who became Édouard de Max, and of Alexandru Mihalescu who became Alexandre Mihalesco.

garder au personnage un peu de la poésie dont de Max, à la création, l'avait trop généreusement revêtu. (There had to be a shallow fog around these plays. As for Ulric Brendel in *Rosmersholm*, we could not present him just how he appeared to the Norwegians, like a simple, verbose and picturesque drunkard, because it would have been painful to destroy the charm. We had to preserve a bit of the posity with which de Max had too generously endowed the character; my translation.) (Robichez 1955: 16)

Alexandre Mihalesco not only acted with *Théâtre de l'Œuvre* like Édouard de Max, he was also the director of a production of *Ghosts*. Mihalesco also performed in a Romanian Ibsen production of *An Enemy of the People* staged in 1912 at the National Theatre of Bucharest. When Mihalesco moved to France, he participated in Ibsen productions at Lugné-Poë's *Théâtre de l'Œuvre* and with Georges Pitoëff's company. Jacques Robichez mentions both Mihalesco and de Max, but he only acknowledges Alexandre Mihalesco as Romanian:

Quant à Mihalesco il reviendra jouer à l'Œuvre, mettra en scène certaines pièces d'Ibsen. Faire monter, pour des Français, une pièce norvégienne par un comédien de Bucharest, voilà l'une de ces expériences de chimie théâtrale à quoi Lugné se complaît. (As far as Mihalesco is concerned, he would come back to perform at the l'Œuvre and he would stage some of Ibsen's plays. To let an actor from Bucharest stage a Norwegian play for a French audience – this is one of the experiences of theatrical chemistry in which Lugné would indulge; my translation.) (ibid: 139–140)

The careers in Paris of these two actors proves that the “theatrical chemistry” between the French and Romanian theatre practitioners exceeded the boundary of the French tours performing Ibsen on the local stage. These interactions reveal the fluidity of constant exchanges not only in the local, but also in the transnational theatre history to which the Romanian theatre belongs.

2.2.2 Final remarks

To sum up, the influence of the French model upon the Romanian early reception of Ibsen reveals itself as a spatial intercrossing of various theatre traditions. Despite their simultaneous presence on the French stage, these traditions did not cross temporally on the Romanian stage: André Antoine's *Ghosts* was shortly followed by Gabrielle Réjane's *A Doll's House* at the end of 19th century, whereas the first decade of the 20th century belonged to Suzanne Després and Aurélien-Marie Lugné-Poë. The three traditions they brought to Romania – naturalist theatre, boulevard theatre and symbolist theatre – were inherently conflicting, yet they were all well received. However, the tours of Després and Lugné-Poë must be considered the most influential with audiences as they staged Ibsen almost every time they returned to Romania. In contrast, the performances by Gabrielle Réjane and André Antoine reached fewer people and had less influence despite the critics' appraisal.

The long-term impact of the French interpretative approaches to producing Ibsen worked differently than the short-term impact of the individual performances. The influence upon the national theatre life was strongest in the case of Antoine. His model of

an independent theatre promoting a naturalist/realist repertory, acting and staging, and a homogeneous ensemble was implemented in Romania by Alexandru Davila. This initiative shaped the evolution of both the national and private theatres. Some of the most important Romanian Ibsen contributors were actors and actresses who had collaborated with Davila and were inspired by Antoine. The long-term impact of Després and Lugné-Poë was less significant; it followed a different path of cultural exchange.

The French approaches to performing Ibsen presented on the early Romanian stage offered conflicting alternatives to producing his plays. Their positive reception proves both the fluidity of the Romanian theatre environment and its capacity to absorb and employ conflicting traditions in various ways, for shorter or longer periods. In this respect, the French example reveals that the Romanian history of Ibsen was marked by constant cultural exchanges, escaping the national boundaries, yet simultaneously preserving them. I will return to this discussion on the influences of the French interpretative models later in this thesis in an in-depth analysis of the Romanian Ibsen tradition.

2.3 The Italian model

The Italian tours intensified the entanglement of traditions revealed in the performances of the French theatre companies that brought Ibsen on the Romanian stage. Although the Italian model seems less prominent than the French, given that IbsenStage only records 5 events on the Romanian map between 1907 and 1940 (Figure 10), they are surprisingly similar.

The connection between the Italian and the Romanian culture can be traced back to Ancient Rome. This common legacy is first and foremost evident in the linguistic similarity which fostered continuous interaction between Italians and Romanians throughout time. The chronicler Grigore Ureche's famous statement from the 17th century that "de la Râm ne tragem" ([Romanians] come from Rome; my translation) (Ureche 1967: 37), points at the Roman Empire's rule and domination in Dacia between A.D. 106 and 271 as proof. The national history further indicates that Italians have had the status of middlemen on Romanian lands, as experts in fields such as architecture, medicine, religion, politics or arts, since the Roman rule in the province of Dacia, in the Middle Ages and in the modern times:

Secole de-a rândul s-a manifestat o prezență ocazională a unor indivizi sosiți aici pentru a-și exercita diversele profesii sau meserii, ca de exemplu medici, negustori, profesori, în special de limba italiană sau latină, arte plastice sau muzică, muzicieni, cântăreți de operă și actori voiajori, arhitecți, ingineri și mulți alții. (For centuries, there was an evident occasional presence of individuals who came here to practise their diverse professions or crafts. They were, for example, doctors, merchants, teachers, especially of Italian or Latin language, fine arts or music, musicians, opera singers and touring actors, architects, engineers and many others; my translation.) (Dorojan 2017: 14)

The historian Ion Cârja highlights the importance of the “Italian model” for the Romanian cultural space, especially in the religious and political fields:

Roma a devenit o referință spirituală și ecleziastică importantă, odată cu Unirea românilor din Transilvania cu Biserica Romei și înființarea Bisericii Greco-Catolice [...]. În procesul de formare a celor două națiuni și state naționale moderne, român și italian, a existat un paralelism al momentelor definitorii [...]. Pentru statul român modern, în a doua jumătate a secolului al XIX-lea, s-a vorbit de un ‘model italian’, atât la nivelul acțiunii și al construcției politice interne, cât și în ceea ce privește politica externă și alegerea sistemului de alianțe (Rome became an important spiritual and ecclesiastic reference, once the Union of the Transylvanian Romanians with the Church of Rome took place and the Romanian Greek Catholic Church was born. [...] A parallelism of the essential moments marked the building process of the two Romanian and Italian nations and national modern states [...]. In the case of the Romanian modern state of the second half of the 19th century, the ‘Italian model’ was often invoked, with regard to political action and internal structure, as well as external politics and choice of systems of alliance.) (Cârja: 8)

The presence and influence of a still under-investigated Italian minority in Romania adds to this cultural kinship, as Giulio Vignoli’s research on the spread of the Italian minority group across Europe “Gli Italiani dimenticati” [*The forgotten Italians*] (2000) proves. The volume *În căutarea țărâmului promis. Italienii din România* [*In search of the promised land. The Italians of Romania*] does justice to the topic, painting the Romanian cultural space as an attractive destination for Italian immigrants in the second half of the 19th century and the beginning of the 20th century:

Este mai puțin cunoscut, pentru unii chiar surprinzător, faptul că în trecut spațiul românesc a putut constitui o țintă pentru emigrația italiană. Tânărul stat român, unificat la 1859 și independent din 1878 era, alături de Imperiul Habsburgic (devenit din 1867 Monarhie Austro-Ungară), la începuturile unui proces de modernizare care a necesitat, între altele, aducerea de mână de lucru specializată pe care italienii o puteau oferi. (It is less well known, and even surprising for some people, that the Romanian cultural space could constitute a target for the Italian emigrants in the past. The young Romanian state, unified in 1859 and independent since 1878, together with the Habsburg Empire (which became the Austro-Hungarian monarchy in 1867), was at the beginning of a process of modernisation. This implied, among other things, the need to bring the specialised workforce the Italians could offer here; my translation) (ibid: 8–9)

Eventually, their presence influenced Romanian culture’s modernisation at all levels:

Chiar dacă italienii au fost mereu prezenți în spațiul românesc ca medici, secretari ori ambasadori ai domnilor români din Principate, sau ca zugravi și constructori de biserici și catedrale în Transilvania, ei ajung la noi în număr suficient de mare pentru a putea constitui o comunitate odată cu demararea procesului de modernizare, care a necesitat mână de lucru specializată, inexistentă pe plan intern. (Although Italians were always present in the Romanian cultural space as doctors, secretaries,

ambassadors of the Romanian princes in the Principalities, or as painters, and church and cathedrals builders in Transylvania, they arrived here in a sufficiently great number to create a community once the process of modernisation required a specialised workforce that did not exist locally; my translation.) (ibid: 11)

This long history of interactions created a strong background for the visit to Romania of Italian theatre practitioners who participated in Ibsen performances both in Italy and Romania, and who eventually enhanced the Italian influence upon the Romanian theatre culture. However, not all renowned Italian contributors performed Ibsen on the Romanian stage. Whereas Ernesto Rossi, Tommaso Salvini, Adelaide Ristori, Eleonora Duse and Ermete Novelli did not include Ibsen in their repertoire when they toured Romania, actors such as Ermete Zacconi, Alfredo de Sanctis and Emma Gramatica did. The Italian tradition of performing Ibsen became a model for the Romanian actors and influenced their approach as powerfully as the French tradition.

The analysis of the Italian Ibsen performances on the Romanian stage must start by looking at the impact of the Italian acting system upon the local performance history and Ibsen tradition at the turn of the 20th century. Italian theatre at that time was dominated by the actor. Armando Petrini considers the actor “il *dominus* assoluto della scena” (the absolute *dominus* of the stage; my translation) (Petrini 2018: 272). *Il capocomico*, *il grande attore* and *il mattatore* are more than simple designations of function, they are institutionalised terms defining the evolution of Italian theatre and point to the organisation of theatre life around the theatre company structure led by a *capocomico*. *Il capocomico* chose the repertory and distributed the roles according to a scheme of *ruoli*¹⁷ that remained stable long into the 20th century.¹⁸ The most important actor – *grande attore* or *mattatore* – in the ensemble, was also its manager, and the director/*metteur-en-scène*.

The structure of the Italian companies was also influenced by the absence of institutions such as a National Theatre and conservatoires. With few exceptions, most of their members “inherited” the “trade” from parents or other relatives, so theatre was a family affair driven by the *figli dell’arte*. This ensured the efficient functioning of the enterprise, compensated for the lack of a state theatre, and mitigated the difficult financial situation of the actors. Since the Italian actors performed more on tour than in a fixed location, they achieved a certain celebrity particularly if their careers stretched beyond Italy.

This institutional structure characterised by the practice of extensive touring and by *il capocomico* is visible in the repertory. The commercial value of the foreign plays gave them a strong position in the repertory and they outnumbered the Italian plays. The repertory was controlled by *il capocomico* not only in terms of selection, but also of interpretation. They decided on the play, the acting style and the *mise-en-scène*, and the performance highlighted their skills. The dramatic text was a pre-text, a fluid framework arranged according to the commercial interests of the company and the aesthetic aims

17 *Emploi* in the French system.

18 “Sappiamo che le compagnie itineranti o di giro avevano i caratteri d’una piccola impresa economica gerarchicamente organizzata e assunta da un capocomico, da cui dipendevano la scelta del repertorio e i modi della sua esecuzione, sulla base di ruoli maggiori (*primo attore/attrice, brillante, caratterista, padre/mare nobile*), minori (*amorosi giovani, seconda donna, generico primario, promiscuo, ingenua, secondo brillante ecc.*) e generici” (Bottoni 1999: 13).

of the *grande attore* or *mattatore*. The freedom assumed by *il capocomico* in relationship to the text is mainly visible in its domestication, as it entailed “tagliando, spostando, aggiungendo” (cutting, moving, adding; my translation) (Alonge 1988: 14) without remorse. This relationship developed constantly in the timespan analysed, moving from the actor’s outright control of the dramatic text towards a more balanced approach. The changes in the actor’s status were simultaneous with the rather slow, smooth transition from a romantic to a *verismo* acting in the Italian theatre practice. As a consequence, the actor would dominate the Italian theatre until as late as the 1930s, when the playwright and the director slowly started to gain more power.

In Roberto Alonge’s words, the tensions that characterise the perspective of the “great actors” on the dramatic text reveal a “dualismo dei poteri” (dualism of powers; my translation) (ibid: 210):

Un comportamento sostanzialmente schizofrenico dell’attore italiano, che avverte l’esigenza del mutamento ma lo teme, che aspira al cambiamento ma lo respinge. Oppure arriva – con geniale e forse inconscia lucidità – a *mimare la trasformazione per mostrarne l’impossibilità*. (A substantially schizophrenic behaviour of the Italian actor, who understands that a switch is required, but fears it; who aspires for a change, but rejects it. Or, with a genial and probably unconscious lucidity, he even *mimes the transformation to show its impossibility*; my translation) (ibid: 210)

The historical overview on the status of the actors in the Italian theatre history developed by Armando Petrini is based on the changes that marked their approaches to acting and to the dramatic texts. *Il grande attore*, the actor of *verismo*, *il mattatore* and the “interpreters” are Petrini’s (2018: 286–289) categories and they demonstrate that even though the director and the ensemble practice gained more power in theatre cultures such as the French, the German or the Russian, the star-actor continued to dominate the Italian theatre tradition until late in the first half of the 20th century. The Romanian audience witnessed these changes in the Italian theatre culture through the Ibsen performances that toured from Italy to Europe and the world during this period of transitions, tensions and intersections.

According to the IbsenStage dataset, the Italian Ibsen performance that toured Romania between 1907 and 1940 overlapped spatially in Bucharest. Nevertheless, in contrast to the French model that also highlights the dominant position of the Romanian capital city in the country’s cultural life, the temporal pattern is different. While all French Ibsen performances took place at the turn of the 20th century, the Italian performances cover a larger timespan, revealing three different contexts in Ibsen’s early Romanian reception. For instance, the two stagings of *Ghosts* taking place in 1907, with Alfredo de Sanctis, respectively Ermete Zacconi, highlight a temporal overlapping enhanced also by the French stagings of *A Doll’s House* starring Lugné-Poë and Després that were performed the same year in Bucharest and Craiova. Shortly after, in 1910, Alfredo de Sanctis came back to Bucharest with the touring production of *Ghosts*. The two other Italian performances that appear on the IbsenStage map point at larger temporal gaps. Emma Gramatica performed as Nora in *A Doll’s House* in 1927, whereas Corrado Pavolini directed the only production of *Love’s Comedy* witnessed by the Romanian audience and performed

as late as 1940 by the troupe of *Compagnia dell'Accademia di Roma*. What characterises these Italian Ibsen moments? Which traditions did they represent, how were they interrelated, and what was their impact?

2.3.1 A realist overlapping: Ermete Zacconi and Alfredo de Sanctis as Osvald

In 1907, the theatregoers in Bucharest could see both the performance of *Ghosts* starring Ermete Zacconi and the performance of *Ghosts* staged by Alfredo de Sanctis's touring company. Although I discuss them separately, both actors chose a *verismo* acting approach. Roberto Alonge and Armando Petrini categorise them both as *mattatori*. The IbsenStage database indicates that the international impact of Zacconi's performances of *Ghosts* was stronger than that of the local Ibsen performances of Alfredo de Sanctis, in spite of their both sharing a *verismo* aesthetics. Thus, these two performances of *Ghosts* reveal more than a mere spatial and temporal overlapping on the Romanian stage, as they indicate both changes in the Italian practice of acting and their effect upon both Italian and foreign audiences.

2.3.1.1 The Italian intertwining of acting practices

The history of the Italian practice of acting did not have a clear trajectory of definitive changes and fixed borders. The path from Gustavo Modena, to the generation of the *grande attore* represented by Ernesto Rossi, Adelaide Ristori and Tommaso Salvini, followed by Giovanni Emanuel, and culminating with the generation of *il mattatore* embodied by Ermete Zacconi, Ermete Novelli and Eleonora Duse, was marked by a constant to-and-fro movement. The anticipations and re-appropriations of the acting practices of the Italian actors in the second half of the 19th century impacted on the interpretations of Ibsen not just on the Italian stage, but across Europe. For this reason, we need to contextualise the very understanding of *verismo* in relationship with the Romantic practice of acting and with the privileged position of *il grande attore* and *il mattatore* on the Italian stage.¹⁹

We know that both Alfredo de Sanctis and Zacconi focused on Osvald when staging *Ghosts*, displaying a *verismo* interpretation. What is the story behind the *verismo* ingredients they put into their Ibsen interpretations? The classification of Armando Petrini places Alfredo de Sanctis and Ermete Zacconi as both *mattatori* and *verismo* actors because they were disciples of Giovanni Emanuel,²⁰ who initiated the transition from Romanti-

19 Although the phenomenon of the "great actor" (*grande attore*) was not encountered in Italy alone, Italian theatre scholarship highlights the peculiarity of this concepts in the Italian domain, which was longer and more strongly dominated by actors than in neighbouring theatre cultures such as the French or the German. For instance, in France and Germany, the end of the 19th century marked the advent of the art of directing, whereas in Italy the real establishment of the director as a prepotent theatre agent happens only towards 1930 (Petrini 2018: 272, 282–284, 290).

20 "d) *L'attore del Verismo*. La quarta generazione comprende gli attori che partecipano del clima artistico e culturale del Verismo, da ciascuno interpretato a proprio modo, e a volte in modi del tutto originali. Sono questi soprattutto i casi di Giovanni Emanuel (1847–1902) e Giacinta Pezzana (1841–1919), artisti che non solo realizzano alcune interpretazioni memorabili [...] ma

cism to *verismo* on the Italian stage.²¹ Emanuel was concerned with a detachment from Romantic acting, which involved tailoring the script to highlight the abilities of the actors instead of adapting to the text's intentions. He sought to return primacy to the dramatic text:

Cerca ovviamente di rinnovare rispetto ai moduli recitativi del *grande attore*. Lavora di lima, attenua la dimensione *passionale* del personaggio shakespeariano; si preoccupa di evitare ogni tentazione declamatoria. Ma soprattutto fonda un diverso rapporto con il testo. [...] Emanuel si muove propriamente in un'ottica di piena accettazione della legge dello scrittore. (He is obviously trying to renew the recitative form of the *grande attore*. He is working at polishing, diminishing the *passionate* dimension of the Shakespearian character; he is preoccupied with avoiding any declamatory temptation. But, above everything, he establishes a different relationship with the text. [...] Emanuel is specifically moving towards a view in which the laws of the writer are fully accepted; my translation.) (Alonge 1988: 213)

Despite an apparent openness to the text, Alfredo de Sanctis and Ermete Zacconi still performed according to the logic of *il mattatore* and dominated their productions. In this respect, *il mattatore* was a re-appropriation of the Romantic *grande attore*. The thread of the Romantic acting is thus recognisable in the behaviour of the spectators who

[n]on si aspettano di vedere *Spettri* di Henrik Ibsen [...] ma l'*Osvaldo* concepito da Ermete Zacconi [...]. Il teatro del grande attore è, in questo senso, un *teatro del personaggio* (were not expecting to see *Ghosts* by Henrik Ibsen [...], but the *Osvaldo* created by Ermete Zacconi [...]. In this respect, the theatre of the *grande attore* is a *theatre of the character*; my translation) (Petrini 2018: 273–274).

Alonge points to the similarities and differences between *il grande attore* and *il mattatore*. These differences concern the attitude towards play, characters and playwright. If the Romantic interpretation of *il grande attore* focused on the character, Alonge warns us that the *verismo* interpretation of *il mattatore* focused on the author's intentions: "Il mattatore interpreta l'autore, e non il personaggio." (The *mattatore* interprets the author, not the character; my translation.) (1988: 206) Yet Alonge rightly suggests that this apparent change in the Italian actors' respect for the play did not actually mean its acceptance:

Ma quando si dice che l'imporsi della drammaturgia costringe il *mattatore* a un maggior rispetto dei testi, si indica soltanto l'emergere di una nuova linea di tendenza; non siamo certo alla fedeltà filologica o al modo di rapportarsi tipico del teatro di regia. (But when they say that the empowerment of the dramaturgy is a constraint for the *mattatore* to a greater respect towards the texts, this indicates

riprendono anche un'istanza riformatrice, in specie Giacinta Pezzana [...]. Non a caso si tratta della prima vera guida artistica di Eleonora Duse" (Petrini 2018: 287).

21 "Ma soprattutto ci sono in Emanuel grandi capacità pedagogiche, che fanno di lui un fortunato maestro di attori – da Zacconi a Virginia Reiter, da Alfredo de Sanctis a Ferruccio Garavaglia – che segue nei loro primi passi con generosità, assicurando loro parti di crescente importanza e riservando a se stesso ruoli minori" (Alonge 1988: 216).

only the emergence of a new tendency; we are not exactly at the moment of the philological loyalty or of that relationship typical for the theatre of the directors; my translation) (ibid: 216)

If *il grande attore* focused on his/her acting qualities by performing the character of the play, *il mattatore* did the same, but performed the author, and whereas the actors abandoned the custom of isolating the character from the context the play, they still adapted the roles and plays to their skills, even if this risked distancing themselves from the author's perspective.

The kinship between the *verismo* and the Romantic Italian actors is actually very close, and the shift from one genre to the other entailed more of a polemical debate on subtle differences in acting than a real break in theatrical practice. This is illustrated by Alessandro D'Amico in his example of various death scenes as performed by the Romantic and the *verismo* Italian actors:

Si veda il tema della morte in scena, uno dei do di petto dell'attore verista. Se ne può tracciare un albero genealogico, che dalla morte della Ristori nell' *Elisabeta d'Inghilterra* [...] si dirama verso la lenta agonia di Ernesto Rossi nel *Luigi XI* e verso l'infarto di Salvini nella *Morte civile* [...]. Da Salvini derivò la morte per delirium tremens nell'*Assommoir*, cavallo di battaglia di Emanuel: che a su volta ispirò il finale epilettico di Zacconi negli *Spettri*, poi adattato anche all'*Otello*. (Look at the subject of the death on stage, one of the moments of climax [in the performances] of the *verismo* actor. We can trace a family tree, which ever since the death of Ristori in *Elisabeta d'Inghilterra* [...] branches out towards the slow agony of Ernesto Rossi in *Luigi XI* and towards the heart-attack of Salvini in *Morte civile* [...]. The death by *delirium tremens*, which was the warhorse of Emanuel, derived from Salvini; in turn, Emanuel inspired the epileptic final of Zacconi in *Ghosts*, which was also adapted for *Othello*; my translation.) (D'Amico 1990: 37–38)

In other words, Ibsen's *verismo* interpretation of Ermete Zacconi and Alfredo de Sanctis had more Romantic inflections than imagined, both because of and in spite of the pathological, organic renditions it entailed. The break between Romantic and *verismo* acting was based on the different use of the codes of beauty and passion. On the one hand, the crude renditions of the bodily reactions on stage in the *verismo* acting broke the code of beauty that was essential to Classicism and Romanticism. However, the Italian actors preserved the code of passion in the *verismo* acting, ensuring an essential tie with Romanticism. The passage through these various acting traditions is also revealed in how the Italian actors alternated, re-designed, broke with or re-appropriated these two codes. The issue was essentially connected with the perspective upon the body and its representation on stage. In this respect, the scientific evolution in biology, medicine and psychology influenced the actors' view upon the body as a tool to express passion and beauty. Particularly in a theatre that was so focused on the actor, these scientific discoveries shifted the actors' views on the body as aesthetic tool. Whereas the passionate body remained a common element, for the Italian actor it was the absence or presence of the beautiful body that defined the border between the Romantic and *verismo* acting.

The *verismo* versions of *Ghosts* presented by Alfredo de Sanctis and Ermete Zacconi on the Romanian stage was subtly rooted in the Romantic acting style and supported the actor as the *dominus* of the stage. Roberto Alonge has argued that the realist tradition followed a different path in Italy to its French, German and Russian counterparts, mainly because of the lack of an established tradition supported by a stable theatre institution. He argues that whereas the realist theatre movement across Europe is rooted in the evolution of the directing art as a way of breaking with the actor based tradition, the story of Italian realism – *verismo* – was different. The lack of an Italian national theatre tradition made the Italian *verismo* an experimental phase implemented by actors rather than a change attributable to the emergence of the director.²² The Italian *verismo* served as a connection between older and newer generations of actors, revealing both similarities and distinctions in their acting:

Non è dunque incauto ipotizzare che l'attore italiano, nella sua secolare ricerca intorno alla naturalezza, abbia svolto da Modena fino a Zacconi un discorso ininterrotto, il cui legame con le poetiche classica, romantica, verista, è assai meno rigido di quanto si possa credere. (It is not incautious to presume that the Italian actor, whose research revolved around the naturalness for centuries, from Modena to Zacconi, developed an uninterrupted discourse. Its connection with the classic, poetic, romantic, *verismo* poetics is even less rigid than one could possibly think; my translation.) (D'Amico 1984: 29)

Finally, the Ibsen interpretations of Alfredo de Sanctis and Ermete Zacconi mirror this evolution of the Italian theatre on the Romanian stage in the temporally overlapping productions of 1907.

2.3.1.2 Ermete Zacconi and the Ibsen “terror”

Ermete Zacconi was an essential agent for Ibsen's worldwide reception. Roberto Alonge depicts both Zacconi and Eleonora Duse as “i vettori della diffusione in Italia dell'ibsenismo” (the vectors of Ibsenism's dissemination in Italy; my translation) (Alonge 1988: XI) and IbsenStage supports this statement. Zacconi is associated with the success of *Ghosts* on the Italian stage, and with the breakthrough of *verismo* in the Italian theatre. IbsenStage data highlights Zacconi's preference for Oswald, a role he started to perform in 1892, and 74 of 96 events register his contribution in this role in local and foreign performances. Undoubtedly, *il mattatore* Zacconi not only introduced Ibsen to Italians, but contributed to the Norwegian playwright's international dissemination.

22 “Non dobbiamo cioè enfatizzare il legame fra il mattatore e la drammaturgia di fine secolo, fra il mattatore e il verismo. Fuori d'Italia il naturalismo è strettamente connesso con le forze teatrali più vive (che sono però i registi, non gli attori): si pensi al Théâtre Libre [...]. Laboratori nei quali si approfondisce un'indagine destinata a gettare le basi del teatro novecentesco, a fondare una moderna estetica del teatro. Ma fuori d'Italia esiste una precisa tradizione attorica da rispettare. I registi si legano al naturalismo perché da quello traggono stimoli teorici che rinforzano la battaglia per la rottra e il cambiamento. In Italia invece l'attore è più libero, non ha il peso di una tradizione, gode quindi in definitiva di una apertura alla sperimentazione linguistica più ampia che sfrutta pienamente. Gli attori, da autentici cavalli di razza, hanno la capacità di presagire sensibilità nuove anziché limitarsi a riflettere quelle dominanti” (Alonge 1988: 207).

Giuliano D'Amico's analysis of Zacconi's *Ghosts* performances in 1892 highlights the actor's interpretative approach as the most astonishing aspect of the play: "Through this 'pathological' rendering he managed to create a theatrical effect that 'mesmerised' the audience and granted him long-lasting success. Nevertheless, Zacconi also had to face criticism for his naturalistic²³ and pathological interpretation of the character" (D'Amico 2013: 132). In addition, Roberto Alonge's remarks on "il contestatissimo Osvald di Ermete Zacconi" (the most contested Osvald of Ermete Zacconi; my translation) (Alonge 1990: 84) indicates the controversies arised in the Italian and European theatre communities alike because of this pathological approach of the role. Ibsen expressed a dislike of Zacconi's interpretation too: "Zacconi recita sotto il mio nome un dramma, Spettri, che non è il dramma mio." (Zacconi uses my name to recite a drama, *Ghosts*, that it is not my drama; my translation.) (Ogetti 1951: 21) Zacconi's Osvald is the most telling example of the use of *verismo* acting in the history of Ibsen at the turn of the 20th century. Alessandro Tinterri portrayed Zacconi as "il cosiddetto mattatore, capace di favorire al massimo grado l'immedesimazione, enfatizzando le sue attitudini istrioniche" (the so-called *mattatore*, able to privilege the identification [with the role] to the largest extent, emphasising his histrionic attitudes; my translation) (1990: 20). In addition, Lucia Re writes that Zacconi:

Esteriorizzava completamente i suoi personaggi [...] e ne faceva degli esseri patologicamente sovraeccitati e esageratamente contorti nei movimenti e nelle espressioni facciali, seguendo la teoria lombrosiana delle passioni delittuose eccessive e deformanti. (He was completely externalising his characters [...] and was making of them human beings that were pathologically overexcited, exaggeratedly twisted in their movements and facial expressions, in accordance with the Lombrosian theory of the criminal, excessive and distorted passions; my translation.) (Re 2002: 133)

Zacconi presented an Osvald to the Romanian audiences that was shaped by this "sintomatologia clinica" (clinical symptomatology; my translation) (Alonge 1990: 88).

According to Alonge, Zacconi further domesticated an already domesticated translation of *Ghosts* by Enrico Polese Santarnecchi.²⁴ His re-domesticated version of Polese travelled across Europe, burnishing Ibsen's fame. This "refurnished", "naturalised" Ibsen arrived in Romania. How did the audience react?

23 We notice the confusion of naturalism and *verismo* acting which is rooted, most probably, in the inaccurate overlapping of the literary definition of naturalism with the definition used in the science of acting. This overlapping is relevant indeed to literature, where Italian *verismo* has the same characteristics as French naturalism, but this does not apply to the theatre field. The risk of overlapping these two concepts becomes even greater as *verismo* and naturalist actors performed in both Italian *verismo* and French naturalist dramas. Nevertheless, their views on acting and staging were different. On the one hand, *verismo* was a variant of realism that privileged a pathological interpretation, and hence focused on the representation of the illusion of life in the acting. On the other hand, naturalism focused on presenting a copy of life itself and rejected the representation of the illusion of life in the acting.

24 Giuliano D'Amico provides an extensive analysis of the role played by Icilio and Enrico Polese in the dissemination of Ibsen's plays in Italy and the changes they made within Ibsen's texts so that they fitted the local audience's taste (2013: 95–275).

The Romanian spectators disapproved of Zacconi's interpretation of Ibsen, despite the actor's international reputation. According to M.-Faust Mohr, his performance as Oswald caused confusion among the spectators who left the performance "cu nervii complectamente zdruncinați" (with completely shaken nerves; my translation) (1937: 119). This applied not only to Ibsen's *Ghosts*, but also to the rest of the plays in his repertoire.²⁵ "Terror" was the keyword summarising the reaction of those who rejected not only Zacconi, but also his pathological *verismo* interpretation:

Zacconi, mare 'tehnician', a zguduit mai mult decât a emoționat, spre deosebire de Novelli, [...] și care, așa cum s-a spus, 'se străduia să îmbrace cruda realitate în haina frumosului'. Într-un fel, Zacconi a însemnat o decepție: pe când la reprezentațiile cu Novelli s-a plâns sau s-a râs, la cele cu Zacconi spectatorul mai mult s-a cutremurat. (Zacconi, a great 'technician', managed to shake more than to emotionally move, in contrast to Novelli. [...] It was said that that the latter 'was striving to dress the cruel reality with the garment of beauty.' In a certain sense, Zacconi constituted a disappointment: while Novelli's performances made the spectator either laugh or cry, Zacconi's performances left the same spectator rather shaken; my translation.) (Massoff 1972: 226)

The actor did not come back to Romania, but his influence and that of his *verismo* interpretation did impact on the Romanian practice of acting. His Oswald was a reference point, and it was considered both positively and negatively in the Romanian theatre environment. Petre Sturdza was mainly influenced by the Italian *verismo* and referred not only to Ermete Zacconi, but also to Ermete Novelli and Eleonora Duse as models for his interpretation of Ibsen, as will be further discussed in Part Four of this thesis.

2.3.1.3 Alfredo de Sanctis and his Ibsenian family

Zacconi's *Ghosts* performance overlapped spatially and temporally the performance of Alfredo de Sanctis. Alda de Sanctis Borelli and Napoleone Borelli were also part of the latter's touring ensemble, thus making the tour a family affair, in accordance with the Italian tradition of *figli del arte*. The tours with *Ghosts* taking place in 1907 and 1910 in Bucharest represent their only Romanian tours, and the historians give no information about these productions, merely depicting the troupe as "una dintre cele mai bune trupe de turneu din câte s-au perindat în ultimul timp prin București" (one of the best touring groups that visited Bucharest lately; my translation.) (Alterescu 1971: 85). IbsenStage registers Alfredo de Sanctis's company in 50 Ibsen events over a period of approximately 30 years (1893–1924). *Ghosts* was Alfredo de Sanctis's favourite play, as demonstrated by 21 of the 50 IbsenStage events. He also performed in *Love's Comedy*, *Pillars of Society*, *An Enemy of the People*, *Rosmersholm*, *The Lady from the Sea*, *John Gabriel Borkman* and *When We Dead Awaken*. Yet *Ghosts*, as both the first and the last Ibsen play he performed, survived the longest in the repertoire. The concentration of events is greatest between 1893 and 1910, with the Romanian performances taking place at the end of this touring period in

25 The repertory of Zacconi included plays by Roberto Bracco, Paolo Giacometti, Girolamo Rovetta, and Ivan Turgenev, that is, mainly an Italian repertory.

1907 and 1910. The Romanian tour to Bucharest in 1907 also represented the ensemble's first travel outside Italy (Popescu 2000: 80–82).

Alfredo de Sanctis toured mainly in Italy, therefore the Ibsen performances presented to the Romanian audience had a special status in the company's typical route. This also applies to the performances by Alda Borelli de Sanctis and Napoleone Borelli. The company performed a repertory of mainly Italian and French plays, and sporadically included German and Norwegian (Ibsen) plays.²⁶

Ioan Massoff highlights the *verismo* approach of Alfredo De Sanctis when he acknowledges that the Italian actor provided an extreme interpretation in 1907: "Cu o mască mai puțin mobilă decât a lui Novelli, de Sanctis a impresionat câteodată până la teroare" (With a mask that was less mobile than Novelli's, de Sanctis managed to impress to such an extent that he created an atmosphere of terror; my translation) (Massoff 1972: 190). However, in 1910, barely three years after, the same historian highlights the actor's turn towards a more balanced *verismo* interpretation:

A fost o surpriză: de Sanctis își schimbase stilul de joc, renunțând la exagerări, atât în dramă, cât și în comedie; a jucat nuanțat, cu gesturi puține, redând cu finețe stările sufletești, fără să 'terrorizeze' pe spectatori. Verismul actorilor italieni trecea printr-o perioadă de evoluție spre un stil mai uman. (It was a surprise: de Sanctis had changed his acting style, renounced exaggerations in both drama and comedy; he performed nuancedly, with few gestures, and finely embodied states of mind, without 'terrorising' the spectators. The *verismo* of the Italian actors was going through a period of evolution towards a more human style; my translation.) (ibid: 308)

Eventually, Alfredo de Sanctis moved away from the pathological approach of Zacconi marked by an extreme interpretation, and his performance of Ibsen's characters adopted a more balanced aesthetics inspired by realism and its acting techniques.

2.3.2 Emma Gramatica. A *verismo* Nora

The Italian Ibsen story in the Romanian lands experienced a gap from 1910 until 1927 when Emma Gramatica came to Bucharest with a touring performance of *A Doll's House*. Gramatica is registered in 57 IbsenStage events between 1894 and 1930. She performed mostly in *Ghosts* (34 events), while *A Doll's House* is the next most performed Ibsen play in her repertoire (17 events). A look at the IbsenStage map of these events indicates that Emma Gramatica played mainly for the Italian audience, but travelled to perform in the greatest European capitals of the day too.

Armando Petrini labels Emma Gramatica as a *figlia d'arte*, like some of the other Italian actors performing Ibsen in Romania. According to the historian's categorisation, she

26 The repertoire performed in 1907 consisted of plays by Emile Fabre, Paolo Giacometti, Giuseppe Giacosa, André de Lorde and A. Foley, Mélesville, Hermann Sudermann, and Henrik Ibsen, whereas the repertoire of 1910 consisted of plays by Emile Fabre, Giuseppe Giacosa, Carlo Goldoni, André de Lorde and A. Foley, Girolamo Rovetta, Victorien Sardou, Silvio Zambaldi, and Henrik Ibsen (Massoff 1972: 190, 308).

belongs to the actor-interpreters' generation, which came after the epoch of *il mattatore* whose main spokesmen were Zacconi, Novelli and Duse. In Petrini's words, the actor-interpreters

mantengono alcune caratteristiche del grande attore, soprattutto per ciò che riguarda lo stile e il modo di formare e gestire la compagnia, ma che sul piano della recitazione, complice un maggior protagonismo degli scrittori [...], si pongono in modo più stringente il problema dell'interpretazione e della resa scenica del testo che scelgono di recitare. (preserve some characteristics of the *grande attore*, especially those regarding the style and the manner to establish and manage the company. However, at the level of the recitation, the playwrights achieve a major [recognition] as protagonists. [The actors] question in a much more stringent manner the interpretation and the staging of the text they choose to recite; my translation.) (Petrini 2018: 289)

In contrast to *il grande attore*, who interpreted the character, and to *il mattatore*, who interpreted the author through their star performance, the actor-interpreter no longer monopolised the text. Emma Gramatica belongs to this generation of Italian actors who acknowledged the primacy of the text and marked a transition from the generation of Zacconi and Duse. Yet, this is not to say that the actor-interpreters did not experience the tensions between the star-based system and the ensemble-based system, as the production of *A Doll's House* with Gramatica as Nora demonstrates it. This shift is apparent in Gramatica's acting approach marked by a transition from Romanticism towards *verismo* as the actress approached the end of her career. For instance, when she performed in Romania, her acting was characterised by *verismo*. Petrini makes a clear generational distinction between Giovanni Emanuel, Ermete Novelli, Ermete Zacconi and Emma Gramatica, especially because her approach was moderate and imbued with discrete poetic notes compared to the *verismo* approach of the previous generation of Italian actors:

Ha tuttavia lasciato sempre, in ogni genere, il segno di una vivida intelligenza. Notata, agli inizi, per le sue note romantiche, nella maturità si affermò piuttosto nei tratti d'un *verismo* talvolta crudo, e anche ingrato, ma da cui, almeno nei momenti migliori (*Casa di bambola...*), seppe trarre accenti d'una accorata poesia di caratteri delicatamente intimisti e crepuscolari. (She has a vivid intelligence. She was known, at the beginning, for her Romantic nuances, while at maturity she expressed herself through a sometimes cruel, even wretched *verismo*. From the latter she knew how to extract the accents of an accurate poetry, which was delicately intimate and crepuscular, at least in her best moments (*A Doll's House...*); my translation.) (Enciclopedia dello spettacolo: 5: Fan-Guard 1958: 1555)

IbsenStage places her performance of *A Doll's House* in Romania at the Theatre "Carol cel Mare" ("Eforie") in Bucharest in a tour that the actress organised in 1927, and which had its premiere on March 31 the same year in Budapest. Apart from Ibsen's play, Gramatica

included plays from the Italian, French, German and British repertory²⁷ in her 16 performances in Bucharest (Alterescu 1973: 115). The reception to her tour was generally positive (ibid: 115), and her performances in the Italian and British plays generated the greatest enthusiasm:

Spectacolele ei constituie izbâanzi, provoacă ovații tumultuoase. Se vorbește despre polivalența talentului, despre glasul, despre limbajul ochilor, al mâinilor ei care “flutură neîncetat, la înălțimea capului, care subliniază cuvântul, punctează fraza, schițează într-un gest de nesfârșită sensibilitate urmarea, acolo unde textul e mut”. (Her performances constitute triumphs and provoke tumultuous ovations. People talk about her polyvalent talent, voice, language of the eyes, hands that “fly ceaselessly at the height of her head, highlighting the word, stressing the phrase, sketching what follows in a speechless text by using a gesture of endless sensitivity”; my translation). (ibid: 115)

From this review, we can surmise the spectators' positive reception of her balanced *verismo* acting. However, her approach of Ibsen was criticised. For instance, Scarlat Froda's evaluation was largely negative. Her age was his strongest reason for criticism and he contrasted Gramatica's performance as Nora with her previous attempt at the role 15–20 years earlier:

A fost o categorică desmințire a tuturor iluziilor noastre. Nu se poate spune că Emma Gramatica nu e bine în rol. Ce e grav e că rolul n'o mai cuprinde. Vedeti cât e de mare tragedia actorului. [...] Desigur că dacă tu spectator, pozezi atâta putere de autosugestie încât să vrei să-ți închipui cum trebuie să fi fost Emma Gramatica acum douăzeci de ani în acest rol, o vei găsi extraordinară. Pentru ceea ce e însă azi, nu poți rămâne decât decepționat. (It thoroughly shattered all our illusions. One cannot say that Emma Gramatica was not optimal in the role. But what is grave indeed is that the role does not fit her anymore. You can see how terrible the actor's tragedy is. [...] Of course, if you, as a spectator, possessed such a power of visualisation to imagine how Emma Gramatica must have been in this role twenty years ago, you would find her extraordinary. As for her current expression, you cannot be but disappointed; my translation.) (Froda 1927: 4)

Gramatica performed Nora for almost 30 years, by the time she came to Romania in 1927 she was already 53 years old. Froda claimed that although Gramatica's depiction of Nora was correct from a psychological point of view, she was, however, not physically fit for a plausible interpretation of the role anymore:

E foarte just acest punct de vedere artistic pe care Emma Gramatica îl îmbrățișează, și noi îl aplaudăm. Numai că pentru redarea lui, artista nu mai are mijloace, sau chiar dacă le are n'o mai prind. Toate acele ‘minauderii’, cochetării, expansiuni și răsfățuri, n'o prind cum nu mai pot prinde nici un om de la o anumită vârstă în sus. Sânt stridente și enervează. [...] Oricât de mare bunăvoință am avea, nu mai putem

27 The most renowned of them were *Magda* (Hermann Sudermann), as well as *La dame aux Camélias* (Alexandre Dumas-fils) (Massoff 1976: 170).

aplauda scena tarentelli și nici un fel de moment de calinerie după cum tot în jurul Emmei Gramatica ne-a impresionat, în schimb, în scenele de dramă, în care vârsta nu contează [...]. (The point of view embraced by Emma Gramatica is very just, and we applaud it. But the actress does not have the means to convey it anymore or, if she has them, they no longer fit her. All those “minauderies” [demureness], coquetries, expansive gestures and fondling are just as unsuitable for her as for any other person that has reached a certain age. They are ostentatious and annoying. No matter how much indulgence we might have, we cannot applaud either the Tarrantella scene or any other endearment anymore. At the same time, Emma Gramatica’s acting skills in the scenes in which age does not matter are impressive; my translation.) (ibid: 4)

Froda also criticised her superficial acting in the final act and the ensemble’s lack of balance:

Acolo unde însă și concepția rolului ne-a apărut deformată e ultimul act în scena explicației. E problema însăși a piesei și tocmai aici, Nora n-a apărut nici convinsă de marea decizie pe care o ia părăsindu-și soțul și copiii, nici halucinată de un ideal social, nici condusă de o convingere a drepturilor pe care le apără prin gestul ei. A jucat complet indecis și a plecat ca și cum s-ar fi supărat pe bărbatul ei. S’a redus astfel întreaga piesă la un caz personal, deplasându-se opera din rangul de idee pe care-l ocupă. A contribuit la această impresie și ansamblul submediocru [...]. (But the moment when even the conceptual approach to the role seemed distorted was the scene of the debate in the final act. [The scene] encompasses the very essence of the play and it is precisely here that Nora seems neither convinced of the great decision she had taken to leave her husband and children, hallucinated by a social ideal, nor by the conviction of the rights she was protecting through Emma’s gesture. She acted in a completely irresolute manner and left as if she was annoyed because of her husband. Thus, the whole play was reduced to an individual case, displacing the play from the conceptual level it represented. The sub-mediocre ensemble contributed to this impression; my translation.) (ibid: 4)

The end of the review presents a critical judgement of the relationship between Romanian theatre and the foreign models filtered through Gramatica’s performance:

Nu trebuie ca dintr-un spirit de imitație sau copleșiți de o sugestie colectivă să aplaudăm pe un artist oricât de mare ar fi – și d-na Emma Gramatica e desigur una dintre cele mai mari – în toate rolurile pe care le joacă. (One is not supposed to applaud an artist, no matter how great – and Mrs Emma Gramatica is certainly one of the greatest –, while succumbing to the spirit of imitation or collective suggestion; my translation.) (ibid: 4)

Froda suggests that the audience shared his negative reaction to Gramatica’s performance in *A Doll’s House*, despite approving of her mild *verismo* interpretation, and he criticises the uncritical appropriation of major foreign theatre traditions by Romanian theatre.

2.3.3 A 1940's *Love's Comedy*. Corrado Pavolini

The staging of *Love's Comedy* in 1940 was not only the last performance in Italian in Romania, but also the only performance of *Love's Comedy* on the local stage. Despite the scarce information about this production, its presence in Romania suggests that it was a consequence of the political context of World War Two. *Love's Comedy* was a touring production that arrived on Romanian territory in December 1940 (Enciclopedia dello spettacolo: 6: Guari-Mak 1959: TAV.LXIV), approximately two months after Romania joined World War Two on the side of the Axis Powers. As Italy was part of the Axis, the two countries strengthened their cultural contacts. This cultural policy had started before the war and was managed by the Italian Cultural Institutes in Romania.²⁸ The performances of 1940, including *Love's Comedy*, were part of the cultural exchanges between Romania and Italy that were imposed by the war. In addition, the production was organised by *Compagnia dell'Accademia di Roma* and directed by Corrado Pavolini. He was the brother of Alessandro Pavolini, renowned for his activity in the fascist government, especially as Secretary of the Republican Fascist Party (Pavolini, Alessandro, n.d.; Pavolini, Corrado, n.d.). In fact, both brothers were proponents of fascism. Their cultural interests revolved around journalism, literature and literary criticism, and, in the case of Corrado, also around theatre. This explains his presence in Romania and the staging of Ibsen's *Love's Comedy*.²⁹

Apart from its political significance, the production also demonstrated the movement of Italian theatre culture towards an ensemble system led by a director. Gramatica had anticipated this tendency, but in *Love's Comedy* its fulfilment was visible with the entire ensemble performing in the production. The play has never been performed again on the Romanian stage.

2.3.4 Final remarks

The Italian Ibsen tours between 1907 and 1940 demonstrate the dominance of star actors and *verismo* acting. Ermete Zacconi, Alfredo de Sanctis and Emma Gramatica reflect the nuanced evolution from a star system to an ensemble-based system through their Ibsen performances. They also illustrate a history of the Italian practice of acting marked by fluid transitions from one generation of actors to the other. Instead of revealing contradictions, the debates regarding the evolution of the Italian practice of acting, from classic to romantic and then to *verismo*, highlight numerous meeting points, with subtle differences allowing for smooth transitions. Eventually, the passage from one acting genre to another was intertwined with the passage from a theatre dominated by actors – *il grande attore, il mattatore* – to a theatre that acknowledges the primacy of the dramatic text.

28 For example, the renowned theatre historian Silvio D'Amico held a lecture about the contemporary Italian theatre in Bucharest in 1934. Later on, between March 21–23, 1939, the Studio of the National Theatre of Bucharest hosted three performances of *Compagnia del teatro di Venezia*, managed by Alberto Colantuani (Massoff 1978:202–203, 389–391).

29 Their repertory also included other four Italian and one American play. Ioan Massoff indicates that the other playwrights performed by the Italian ensemble were Carlo Goldoni, Carlo Gozzi, Luigi Pirandello and Thornton Wilder, beside an adaptation done by Silvio D'Amico (Massoff 1981: 48).

Although the Italian actor's Ibsen of *verismo* inspiration was rejected by the local audience, the *verismo* interpretation techniques became a reference point for Petre Sturdza, who was to become the most important Romanian Ibsen contributor. Thus, although the short-term impact of the Italian tours reveals a low power of influence, the long-term influence was undoubtedly strong. From this perspective, the Italian tours changed the Romanian actors' way of performing Ibsen at the beginning of the 20th century.

2.4 The German model

A considerable number of German actors and ensembles from Germany and the Austro-Hungarian Empire performed Ibsen between 1884 and 1924 during their tours within what is today's Romania's border (Figure 11). These external influences affecting Ibsen's early staging in Romania make the foreign intercrossings of theatrical influence even more complex as the number of German-speaking Ibsen productions was higher than that of both the French and Italian performances. As these tours displayed the activity of numerous theatre agents, they entailed a high degree of heterogeneity.

How does the German landscape of 35 Ibsen events look like on the Romanian map? The first observation is that there is no visible pattern. However, the German tours organised by Das Ibsen-Theater aus Berlin, performing in Bucharest, Iași and Sibiu, are the most numerous. Sporadic productions from Deutsches Theater starring Agnes Sorma, Deutsches Theater der Modernen, and Alexander Moissi's ensemble add heterogeneity, whereas productions from the German ensemble that performed in tandem with the Romanian ensemble at the National Theatre of Bucharest during the German occupation of the capital city in World War One (Massoff 1974: 137–141, 152–166)³⁰ complete this uneven landscape.

To understand the impact that the German tradition of staging Ibsen had on the Romanian theatre, it is paramount to look at the Romanian-German cultural interaction. According to Keith Hitchins, the Romanian culture was strongly marked by the German "model of development". Factors such as the power exerted by the Habsburg/Austro-Hungarian Empire at all societal levels in Transylvania, the existence of a Saxon minority group in Sibiu, and the presence of the occupying German army in Bucharest during World War One opened for ceaseless cultural contact.

However, in contrast to the French or Italian models, the Romanian theatre experienced the German model in a much more discrete manner, with Paul Gusty, stage manager and then director at the National Theatre of Bucharest, as its subtle promoter. Romanian actors were also influenced by their German counterparts. One example is Arisztizza Romanescu, who took inspiration from Adèle Sandrock's interpretation of Rebekka West for her approach of the same role in the Romanian premiere of *Rosmersholm* in 1895 (Romanescu 1960: 124). In the 1920s, the German elements gained even more power in the

30 The performance in German of *Peer Gynt* provided by a local ensemble in Timișoara in 1940 complicates the German story even more by bringing the German ethnic group into the already complex landscape. However, after 1940, no Ibsen play was presented in German on a Romanian stage until 1960.

Romanian theatre life. The two most relevant examples are Agatha Bârsescu whose acting perspective was rooted in her experience on the stage of Burgtheater in Vienna; and Mărioara Voiculescu whose performances as Peer Gynt in 1924/1925 and as Mrs Alving in 1943/1944 were inspired by the expressionist aesthetics of Max Reinhardt.

German theatre was no unitary system, so *which* part of the model was carried in the Ibsen German tours to the Romanian lands? Firstly, the map suggests that there were multiple trajectories: there was a major separation between the theatre produced in Berlin and Vienna; and the political division of the German-speaking world also fostered significant autonomous theatre life in minor cities with theatre troupes touring from these locations making an impact on foreign audiences just like the most famous ensembles. Secondly, the German theatre experienced conflict between star actors and ensembles, just like the French and Italian theatre cultures. Without dismissing the contribution of the star actors, the Germans tended to focus more on the ensemble system, which implicitly empowered the directors. Otto Brahm and Max Reinhardt's contribution was crucial not only to the history of German theatre, but also to the dissemination of Ibsen's plays. Thirdly, the German actors and directors created Ibsen productions using Romanticism, naturalism, and Expressionism, thus generating a diverse acting landscape.

Of the 35 IbsenStage German-language event records, I will focus on five moments in the German history of Ibsen on the Romanian stage as they reflect the intertwining of the above three factors: 1. The performance of *The Pretenders* organised by Burgtheater in 1884; 2. The performance *A Doll's House* in Bucharest in 1901 starring Agnes Sorma; 3. The touring performances of the German Ibsen ensembles of Gustav Lindemann, Maria Rehoff and Ludwig Stärk organised in 1900–1902, 1905 and 1912; 4. The productions performed by the German ensemble on the stage National Theatre of Bucharest in the period of the German occupation in Romania in 1916–1917; and 5. The performance of *Ghosts* in Bucharest in 1921 starring Alexander Moissi.

2.4.1 Burgtheater. 1884, *The Pretenders*

The very first Ibsen performance in German was *The Pretenders* and took place in 1884 in Oravița³¹, which is today part of Romania's territory. *The Pretenders* was a single performance staged by the Viennese Burgtheater during a tour managed by Adolf von Willbrand³² (Bota 2013: 115). Ionel Bota does not provide any details of the event, but Willbrand's tour must have been an important theatrical event. The choice to stage Ibsen could have been a personal initiative of the manager, pointing to the early Ibsen tradition on the German stage.

31 A small town in the South-Western Romania, in the region of Banat, which was part of the Austro-Hungarian Empire before 1918. It was peripheral not only with respect to Vienna, but also to other major Transylvanian and Romanian cultural centres, such as Sibiu, Cluj-Napoca or Bucharest. The Theatre of Oravița is the oldest theatre established on today's Romanian territory, and it echoes the Viennese tradition. The Burgtheater of Vienna was the main architectural inspiration source, and the tours that visited Oravița highlight the German influence on the local theatre environment too (Bota 2013; Florea et al. 1965: 198–200; Massoff 1961: 112–113).

32 He was the manager of the theatre between 1881 and 1887.

The Pretenders was not only the first Ibsen play ever mounted on a German stage on January 30, 1876, it was also the first Ibsen play performed at the Viennese K.K. Hofburgtheater³³ in October that same year. At that time, the manager was Dingelstedt, who had refused to stage *The Pretenders* in 1872. W.E. Yates adds that “not one of his problem plays had been seen in the old Burgtheater by the time it closed in 1888” (1996: 80). In any case, it was under Dingelstedt’s management that *The Pretenders* was eventually staged in 1876, suggesting that the label “problem plays” just applied to the realist plays. When the play appeared in the touring repertory in Oravița, Adolf Wilbrandt had taken over from Dingelstedt as the Burgtheater’s manager (80).

This production is significant in the landscape of the German Ibsen events as it borders on what Jens-Morten Hanssen has described as the Ibsen “silence” of 1882–1884 (2019: 63). The short-lived presence of the play in the repertory points at both the aesthetic profile of Burgtheater, and the fact that “performances of Ibsen’s historical plays” – such as *The Pretenders* – “assume only a marginal role” (ibid: 32). Declamation was the main acting technique employed when performing in Ibsen’s historical plays. As Adolf Wilbrandt was the manager of Burgtheater at the time and also a supporter of the Romantic theatre conventions, then Romantic acting was most probably the norm in the performance of *The Pretenders* that visited Oravița. David E.R. George has categorised Ibsen as neo-classical playwright in the second half of the 19th century, and in the 1870s (George 1983: 67–68) Romantic acting was the norm. Adolf Wilbrandt supported this approach judging by the classical inspiration of the Burgtheater repertory, which included “Molière, Shakespeare, Calderon, and most strikingly, the Greeks” (Carlson 1972: 192) rather than contemporary plays. However, the repertory performed in Oravița did not reflect this tendency: Victorien Sardou, Adalbert Stifter, Eugène-Marie Labiche and Karel Hynek Macha were included (Bota 2013: 115).

The performance of *The Pretenders* probably had as little influence on the small stage of Oravița, as it had had on the German stage: “Ibsen [...] as a neo-classicist [...] had nothing particularly original to offer the development of German drama.” (George 1983: 68) However, its importance as historical document cannot be denied, as the performance is an example of a Romantic interpretation of an Ibsen play, and of Burgtheater’s early approach to performing Ibsen on the Romanian and German stages.

2.4.2 The Golden Age of the German Ibsen on the Romanian stage. Stars and ensembles

1900–1902 was the most prolific period for performance of Ibsen in German on the Romanian stage. While 1900 in Romanian Ibsen history is primarily associated with two productions starring Agatha Bârsescu, in the following year there were two productions of *A Doll’s House* in Bucharest under the management of Deutsches Theater and Deutsches Theater der Modernen. The Deutsches Theater production is of particular significance as it starred Agnes Sorma as Nora. 1901 was also the year that Das Ibsentheater aus Berlin, under the direction of Gustav Lindemann, toured Romania with four Ibsen productions. In 1905 and 1912, Lindemann’s activity was continued by Maria

33 Further referred to as Burgtheater.

Rehoff and Ludwig Stärk with a company using the same name. Maria Rehoff was the leading actor in eight of these events, whereas Ludwig Stärk only appeared in one *Ghosts* performance. As these three contributors were all part of the process of developing the ensemble system on the German stage, I analyse their activity together. By contrast, Agnes Sorma's performance followed the star actor tradition on the German stage and I analyse her contribution separately from the ensembles.

2.4.2.1 Agnes Sorma's Nora

In 1901, the theatregoers in Bucharest met the production of Deutsches Teater with Agnes Sorma as Nora.³⁴ Statistically, IbsenStage holds records of Sorma in 63 events, with her in the role of Nora in 55 of them. Jens-Morten Hanssen highlights Sorma as a central linking agent in the contributor-contributor network based on German-speaking Ibsen performances not only in Germany, but also on the European and American stages between 1876 and 1918 (2019: 190–191). Together with Duse and Réjane, she was at the centre of Ibsen's recognition as a world dramatist. She gained recognition for performing not only Nora, whom she had in her repertoire from 1894 (Marker and Marker 1989: 58), but also for her performances as Regine and Mrs Alving in the long-debated productions of *Ghosts* of Max Reinhardt staged in 1894 and 1906. These productions mark different moments both in the Ibsen's German reception and in Sorma's career. In the 1894 *Ghosts* she interpreted the role of Regine from a naturalist perspective (Williams and Hamburger 2008: 116–118). In 1906, as a member of the ensemble of her previous companion Reinhardt,³⁵ she turned to Expressionist acting techniques to perform Mrs Alving (Fischer-Lichte 2007: 65–68, 72–75). Her approach of Nora during her Romanian tour in 1901 was most likely naturalist.

The performance of Agnes Sorma as Nora in Romania emphasizes once again the contribution of the star-system to the successful global reception of *A Doll's House*. The star-actor tradition which characterised the French and the Italian stages, was strong on the German stage too until the end of World War One. It was mainly enacted in a “system of solo guest performances” (Hanssen 2018: 118) that secured “public interest, high salaries, and critical attention” (ibid: 124) because it gave the star-actors the freedom to choose a repertoire that would highlight their virtuosity: “individual artists and theatre companies tour out of an expectation to meet public interest wherever they go, to seek new and expanded markets for their ‘products’” (ibid: 123).

Sorma's performance took place a few months after the first Romanian staging of *A Doll's House* in Iași. Considering the debates generated by Réjane's interpretation as Nora, the Romanian spectators showed little interest in Sorma's performance, despite her “classic popularity” (ibid: 122) on the German stage. The performance they saw was typical of the last phase of Sorma's career when her numbers of German performances of

34 The repertoire performed in Romania by Agnes Sorma also included *Faust* (Goethe), *Liebelel* (Arthur Schnitzler) and *Johannisfeuer* (Hermann Sudermann), highlighting her skills and reputation as star actress (Massoff 1969: 491).

35 Reinhardt performed as Jacob Engstrand in the *Ghosts* production of 1894 staged at Deutsches Theater.

A Doll's House were decreasing (ibid: 168). There were low attendances at the performances and Sorma never again performed for a Romanian audience.

2.4.2.2 The German Ibsen ensembles of Gustav Lindemann, Maria Rehoff and Ludwig Stärk

According to Jens Morten-Hanssen, the star system was not the only factor ensuring Ibsen's successful dissemination on the German stage and abroad. In the first ten years of the 20th century, another tendency emerged, with the directors and the ensemble practice becoming more influential as the stars-actors started to lose their power and dominance. As Hanssen notes, Ibsen was "in command of the German stage" (ibid: 153) during this period, and "except for the first decade of the twenty-first century, no decade saw a larger number of German events" (ibid: 153).

A considerable number of German performances took place on the Romanian stages too in the first decade of the 20th century as a consequence of the "growing significance of symbolist plays, the advent of the Ibsen ensembles [and] the tradition of Ibsen cycles" (ibid: 153). The Ibsen ensembles of Gustav Lindemann, Maria Rehoff and Ludwig Stärk visited the Romanian lands in their most prolific period. Between 1901 and 1912, IbsenStage records their presence in 23 events.

According to IbsenStage, *Das Ibsen-theater aus Berlin* – a name that all the three aforementioned contributors used to advertise their troupe – included six Ibsen plays in its repertory associated with 45 events and engaged in an intense touring activity to no less than 20 European cities. The first Ibsen ensemble that visited Sibiu had Gustav Lindemann as its manager, with Maria Rehoff, his wife, as the leading actress. They divorced in 1903 (ibid: 174) so that when the company returned to Sibiu both in 1905 and in 1912, Maria Rehoff was its manager, not Lindemann. In 1905, a less powerful earlier member of the ensemble managed by Lindemann, Ludwig Stärk, visited Sibiu. The IbsenStage events indicates his contribution as actor in Lindeman's ensemble in 1901 (ibid 175–176) during the tours of the troupe to cities such as Sibiu, Bucharest, Iași and Botoșani.

How did these ensembles arrive to Romania? Their story of travelling across Europe performing Ibsen reveals a dynamic relationship between centre and periphery. Jens-Morten Hanssen argues that Ibsen scholars have neglected their activity because they performed Ibsen in culturally peripheral spaces, rather than staying in their original location of central German cities, such as Berlin and Leipzig. "Distributing Ibsen productions from the centre to periphery was their business model" (ibid: 170), argues Hanssen, and this also applies to their arrival to the Romanian lands. When they first visited Sibiu, the city was not part of Romania, it was a peripheral city on the Eastern border of the Austro-Hungarian Empire and Northwestern border of Romania. Lindemann also travelled to Bucharest, Iași and Botoșani, which were at the frontier of the manager's touring area. The later tours by Rehoff and Stärk went no farther than Sibiu; they transformed the future Romanian city into a peripheral German Ibsen location.

The geographical pattern shows that Lindemann had a special relation to the city of Sibiu, from which both Rehoff and Stärk benefited. The theatre of Sibiu had Leo Bauer as its manager between 1893 and 1921, and due to his Viennese roots, he had a particular interest in introducing the local audience to German theatre ensembles. In this sense, he was responsible for the visits of the Ibsen ensembles of Lindemann, Rehoff and Stärk

to the city in 1901 and in 1905 (Alterescu 1971: 97), and most likely in 1912 too. Leo Bauer's contribution was essential for the evolution of the German theatre life in Sibiu, as he supported “timp de mai bine de două decenii singura instituție teatrală profesionistă de limbă germană” (for more than twenty years the only professional theatre institution in the German language; my translation) (ibid: 97) that existed in Transylvania. He maintained constant contact with the German theatres, especially with those in Vienna and Berlin (Alterescu 1971: 96–97; Wittstock 2016).³⁶

A major feature of the German Ibsen ensembles is their focus on staging Ibsen cycles – “a non-fixed set of plays” (ibid: 181). According to Hanssen, this is a German practice which entails that the productions are performed respecting the chronology of Ibsen's works (Hanssen 2018: 177). This unique tradition starts at “the end of the 1880s and continues into the 1920s” (ibid: 176), but has its moment of glory in first decade of the 20th century, when the Romanian audience witnessed it too. The statistical “frequency and density” (ibid: 184) that characterises the Ibsen cycles points at the high “level of consecration and canonization” (ibid: 182) of Ibsen's plays on the German stage in a period when he was barely acknowledged as innovator in Romania.

Another important feature of the ensembles is that they introduced Ibsen's later plays to the Romanian audience. In 1901, the repertory of Lindemann's ensemble consisted mainly of symbolist plays³⁷, as demonstrated by the presence of *Rosmersholm* and *When We Dead Awaken*. In 1905, Maria Rehoff added *A Doll's House* to the touring repertory beside *When We Dead Awaken*,³⁸ whereas her last tour in 1912 included *Rosmersholm*, *The Lady from the Sea*, *Hedda Gabler*, *The Master Builder*, *John Gabriel Borkman* and *When We Dead Awaken* (Wittstock 2016: 124–125). These tours support Jens-Morten Hanssen's statement concerning the dominance of Ibsen's symbolist plays in the repertory of the German ensembles in the first decade of the century (ibid: 122).

The last feature of interest is the acting in the performances of these companies. The theatre critics of *Siebenbürgisch-Deutsches Tageblatt* highlight the modern, controversial aspect of Ibsen's drama by pointing to innovations in acting, and Ursula Wittstock draws attention to the naturalist interpretation of Lindemann, Rehoff and Stärk (ibid: 121, 123). Jens-Morten Hanssen argues that Lindemann “strived for [...] a naturalness without naturalism” (Hanssen 2018: 173), which suggests that Lindemann was most likely distancing himself gradually from the naturalist perspective of Carl Heine and Otto Brahm, while still employing some of the naturalist conventions. Thus, the “naturalness” marking his directing practice indicates a tendency towards realism. The transition of Lindemann from naturalism to realism was most probably determined by his encounter with new acting techniques that enabled a credible depiction of social interaction in Ibsen's late plays. This focus on representing the illusion of life in the context of Ibsen's symbolist plays may have initiated Lindemann's shift towards realism, while also anticipating Reinhardt's stylised realism/Expressionism.

36 For example, the ensemble of Burgtheater and Agatha Bârescu visited the theatre of Sibiu too, but they did not stage any Ibsen production.

37 *Rosmersholm*, *Hedda Gabler*, *Ghosts* and *When We Dead Awaken* (Wittstock 2016: 119–122).

38 The repertory included also plays by Gabrielle D'Annunzio, Edvard Brandes and Hugo Mark (Wittstock 2016: 122).

The Ibsen cycles had no considerable influence on the Romanian Ibsen tradition, in spite of the density and intensity they added in the statistics regarding the presence of Ibsen on the local stage in the first decade of the 20th century. On the one hand, the high number of performances across a wide area (Sibiu, Bucharest, Iași and Botoșani) and within the short timespan of a few weeks confirms the initial strong impact of Lindemann's tour. On the other hand, the impact of Maria Rehoff and Ludwig Stärk's performances was negligible. Although Maria Rehoff is registered with a total of six events, competing with Lindemann who is registered in eleven events in Romania, she only performed in Sibiu. Ludwig Stärk's presence in Sibiu is even more reduced with only one Ibsen event. All the tours shared an ensemble-based approach with the acting and staging techniques moving from naturalism toward realism; their presence on the Romanian stage in the first decade of the 20th century must have left its mark on the Romanian theatre practitioners attracted by the German model.

2.4.3 Ibsen performances during the German occupation of Bucharest (1916–1918)

In 1916, a few months after Romania joined World War One on the Triple Entente's side, Bucharest was occupied by the German troops of August von Mackensen. This forced not only the administration and the royal family, but also most of the population to leave the capital and seek refuge in Iași (Massoff 1974: 145–151). Inevitably, the political situation affected the theatre. A German ensemble³⁹ with actors from different parts of Germany started to perform in tandem with the Romanian ensemble on the stage of the National Theatre of Bucharest. The Romanian audience hardly attended the German performances, not even when the cost of the tickets was reduced:

Întrucât spectacolele (cele mai multe valoroase) ale ansamblului german erau foarte slab frecventate, s-a încercat atragerea publicului printr-o scădere a prețurilor de intrare [...]. Nici a doua reducere a prețurilor de intrare n-a avut efectul urmărit. Limba germană era puțin răspândită în popor, iar acesta ducea o viață plină de lipsuri și amenințări, încât oamenii nu puteai fi atrași în opera de culturalizare a ocupantului hrăpăreț. (Since the (mostly valuable) performances of the German ensemble had a very low attendance rate, they tried to attract the audience by dropping the entrance prices [...]. Not even the second drop of the entrance prices had the expected result. The people had little knowledge of German, and, besides, had a life full of shortcomings and threats, so that they could not be attracted to the occupying force's cultural programme; my translation.) (Massoff 1974: 140)

This was the context for the 4 German Ibsen performances of *A Doll's House* and *Hedda Gabler* that appear on the Romanian map in 1916 and 1917. Their reception was generally positive with elements of mild criticism, but the aesthetic judgements may have been designed to satisfy the German occupiers. The reviews in *Scena* were written by Adolf de Herz (Petrescu 1984: 416), the magazine's selfsame director (ibid: 413), who was of Austro-Hungarian origins (Sasu 2004: 721–722)⁴⁰. The newspaper was published between

39 Simply referred to as "Ansamblul German" in Romanian (Massoff 1974: 155).

40 He was also acknowledged as playwright, manager of the Theatre of Craiova and theatre critic.

1917 and 1918, which further suggests the pro-German attitude of Adolf de Herz. The following statement on the positive reaction of the audience makes us doubt his genuine evaluation:

Dacă diriguitorii reprezentațiilor în limba germană și-au pus în gând să cultive gustul publicului românesc pentru spectacolele cu care până acum era neobișnuit și dacă vrea să-l introducă pe Ibsen, reprezentarea *Norei*, după *Hedda Gabler*, e nu se poate mai bine venită. (If the managers of the German stagings set their mind to cultivate the taste of the Romanian audience by staging uncommon performances the spectators are not used to, and if they wanted to introduce Ibsen, the staging of *Nora* after *Hedda Gabler* is more than welcome; my translation.) (De Herz 1917: 2)

In this context, Adolf de Herz's allusion to German culture as a "civilising" influence in Romania was not innocent.

These performances were a direct consequence of the war and given their presence in a repertory of mainly German plays, they suggest Ibsen's high degree of naturalisation on the German stage (Hanssen 2018: 154).⁴¹ Ibsen could be performed freely in areas occupied by Germans such as Romania, by contrast to the French, Italian and English plays that were constantly troubled by censorship. But this also created an association between his plays and the occupiers' political dominance. Although one might expect to find that, as a consequence, Ibsen disappeared from the repertory of the Romanian theatres both during and after the war, he was a stable presence. *A Doll's House* was performed at the National Theatre of Iași in 1918, when the Germans were also performing Ibsen in Bucharest. Immediately after the war in 1919, the National Theatre of Bucharest staged *John Gabriel Borkman*, the National Theatre of Iași staged *The Master Builder*, and there was an independent performance of *A Doll's House* too. Thus, instead of leading to rejection, Ibsen's naturalisation as German dramatist paved the way for his canonisation as a "modern classic" (Hanssen 2018: 154) in the Romanian theatre during the interwar period. Hanssen summarises the privileged position of Ibsen as canonic playwright during World War One:

He had the advantage of being a canonized dramatist from a small neutral nation with strong cultural bonds to Germany. His controversial plays had long since stopped running afoul of censors, and there were neither political, nor moral reasons to ban his plays. [...] The level of naturalization he had achieved further privileged him. [...] the wartime event numbers testify to Ibsen's enduring position on the German stage. (ibid: 225)

While the reviews of the German performances at the National Theatre of Bucharest may be biased, they do contain valuable information about the industrial and acting aspects of the productions. At the industrial level, the focus on the stage design highlights the directors' prominent role, and points towards an ensemble-based production: "D.Reusch,

41 A few examples of the repertory of the German ensemble which was almost exclusively performing plays of German origin are: *Cyges und Sein Ring*, *Iphigenie auf Tauris*, *Eine Wiener Abend*, *Der Raub der Sabinerinnen*, *Die Versunkene Glocke*, *Vater und Sohn*, *Jugend*, *Wiebteufel*, *Maria Stuart* (Massoff 1974: 138–140, 155).

directorul artistic al ansamblului german, a condus repetițiile *Norei*.” (Mr. Reusch, the artistic director of the German ensemble, led the rehearsals of *Nora*; my translation.) (Spor 1917: 2) In addition, both Adolf de Herz and Rebreanu discuss the symbolic details of the mise-en-scene. For instance, Rebreanu focuses on “the atmosphere in which Ibsen’s symbolism floats heavily, reveals souls, arouses issues, agitates and ascends” (Rebreanu quoted in Muthu 2006: 106). With regard to the acting, both Liviu Rebreanu and Adolf de Herz use adjectives and substantives such as “o Noră dulce, gingașă, zburdalnică” (sweet, delicate, frolic [Nora]; my translation), “will”, “calm”, “temperance”, “symbols”, “truth” (De Herz 1917: 2), “sincerity”, “sobriety”, “intelligence” (Rebreanu 1917: 2) suggest a combination of symbolistic and realist elements. Adolf de Herz applauds the symbolic interpretation of *A Doll’s House* when referring to Ibsen’s entire dramatic work: “La Ibsen toate gesturile sunt simboluri și toate amănuntele au importanța lor.” (In Ibsen’s work, all the gestures are symbols and all the details have [symbolic] importance; my translation.) (De Herz 1917:2) Yet these mentions of the symbolic dimension are not sufficient to identify how the “symbols” appeared on the stage. The critics’ choice of the word “symbolism” itself is misleading as it applies to the literary dimension of Ibsen’s late plays and does not describe how symbolist and realist production elements were combined in the performance. At the time in German theatre, the literary combination of “realism” and “symbolism” was achieved on stage through the transition from naturalism to Expressionism in both the acting and directing. For this reason, the symbolist description of the stage design and atmosphere above can be interpreted as an example of an expressionist approach mixed with stylised realist elements inspired by Reinhardt’s “festive play” (Fischer-Lichte 2007: 68–69). The likelihood that these productions used this combination of realism and Expressionism elements is supported by the probable influence on the actors in the German ensemble in Bucharest of Agnes Sorma and Gustav Lindemann’s Ibsen productions at the turn of the century. Their stagings of Ibsen’s symbolist plays had already started to move beyond naturalism, and in the case of Sorma, were incorporating expressionist elements. Expressionism entered the Ibsen theatre field before the outburst of the war, when Max Reinhardt achieved recognition as an eclectic director of his plays, mixing expressionist elements with realist elements, and leaving naturalism behind.

The role of the director, the focus on the ensemble, and the mix of expressionist and realist elements in these German productions anticipate the next directions in the Romanian Ibsen production. They can be viewed as a transition between the pre-war and interwar Romanian Ibsen, and prefigured the performances of Alexander Moissi.

2.4.4 Alexander Moissi: a “public order disturber” Oswald

The last significant Ibsen production in the German language on the Romanian map starred Alexander Moissi as Oswald in *Ghosts*. His tour took place in December 1921,⁴²

42 “Nach dieser flauen Spielzeit in Berlin verbringt Moissi den Rest des Jahres 1921 auf Tournee durch Europa: mit den *Gespensstern*, *Romeo und Julia*, *Hamlet*, dem Lebenden Leichnam und anderen Rollen bereist er Kopenhagen, Oslo, Stockholm, Prag und Wien, wo er zusätzlich unter der Regie von Josef Danegger als Othello debütiert. Im Sommer spielt er den Jedermann, zur Jahres-

with a repertoire that included *Oedipus Rex*, *Hamlet*, *Othello* and *The Living Corpse* (Alterescu 1973: 113, 582). The audience was enthusiastic about his performances, so that he came back to Romania in 1930⁴³ with the Volksteater from Vienna and in 1932⁴⁴ with Kammer-spiele from Berlin. The only play he performed in subsequent visits that was presented in the first tour was *The Living Corpse*, that is, he never presented another Ibsen production. All his tours, especially the first one in 1921, were popular. His arrival was preceded by a “publicitate zgomotoasă” (noisy advertising; my translation) (ibid: 113), and his behaviour ensured that he was liked by Romanians:

Neinteresat să realizeze mari câștiguri bănești (spre deosebire de majoritatea ‘stelilor’ ce cutreierau lumea), Moissi obișnuia să dea reprezentații gratuite, îndeosebi pentru studenți și muncitori; la București a început prin a da un spectacol cu invitații pentru intelectuali (scriitori, actori, studenți), ceea ce i-a creat o atmosferă de simpatie, exprimată și prin manifestații de stradă. (He was not interested in great financial gains (unlike the majority of the ‘stars’ travelling worldwide). Moissi used to give free performances, especially for students and workers; in Bucharest, for his opening performance, he offered invitations to intellectuals (writers, actors, students). This created an atmosphere of sympathy around him, which was also expressed by means of street demonstrations; my translation.) (Massoff 1974: 326)

Before analysing Moissi’s *Ghosts* performance in Romania, it is important to consider his place in the German and international reception of Ibsen. According to IbsenStage, 34 of the 36 events in which Alexander Moissi is registered between 1906 and 1934 indicate *Ghosts* as the strongest Ibsen play in the actor’s repertoire. The IbsenStage map of these events point at the varied theatre environments that Moissi brought his Ibsen approach to, as well as his success and wide influence as Osvald.

His career has similarities with that of Sorma because of his star profile marked by international tours and guest performances. In Thomas F. Connolly’s words, Alexander Moissi was a “cosmopolitan nationalist” (2010: 83). He was born in the Italian city of Trieste, and since his parents were Albanian, he learned both Italian and Albanian as a child. He was trained in the purest Austrian theatre environment of Burgtheater, which made him eventually one of the most prominent actors in the German theatre world (ibid: 87–88). It is as a German star – “one of the last of this type” (ibid: 89) – that he appears in the international history of Ibsen and this is how the Romanian audience remembered him too.

Which kind of acting techniques did Moissi use on the Romanian stage and how were his performances – particularly *Ghosts* – received? Historians agree that he received a positive reception with only a few negative reservations: “Spectacolele lui Moissi [...] au entuziasmat și au uimit.” (The performances of Moissi [...] generated enthusiasm and awe; my translation) (Massoff 1974: 327) or, in Alex Călin’s words, Moissi “a entuziasmat

wende tritt er in Rumänien auf, um dann erneut nach Oslo und Kopenhagen zu reisen” (Heininger 2005: 84).

43 His repertory included plays by Leo Tolstoy and Luigi Pirandello (Massoff 1976: 320).

44 His repertory included plays by Hugo von Hoffmanstahl, G.B.Shaw and Leo Tolstoy (Massoff 1978: 44).

sala arhiplină” (generated the enthusiasm of an overcrowded theatre hall; my translation) (Călin 1921: 5).

Alex Călin wrote the most significant critical text on Moissi’s Oswald. He suggests that the actor’s naturalist approach marked by a pathological acting disturbed the audience:

În prezența spectatorilor îngroziți, torturați, demoralizați, Moissi redă treptat, etapă cu etapă, progresele îngrozitoare și distrugătoare, pe cari le face paralizia generală. (In front of the terrified, tortured and disheartened spectators, Moissi renders, step by step, the frightening and destructive progression of a general paralysis; my translation.) (ibid: 5)

Călin’s depiction reminds of the “terror” that actors like Ermete Zacconi caused among the spectators because of the pathological interpretation of Oswald. Călin found that his “reducțiune de mijloace și de efecte care uluiește, prin concentrarea interiorizată a jocului său” (reduction of means and effects, through the introspective absorption of his play, was astonishing; my translation) (ibid: 5) and described his “gesturi strânse, grimase puține, mișcări sacadate, o infinită variațiune de tonuri și o expresie continuu schimbată în ochi” (concentrated gestures, subtle grimaces, abrupt movements, an infinite variation of nuances and a continuous change of expression in the eyes; my translation) (ibid: 5). These remarks suggest a deviation from a *verismo* interpretation, highlighting instead an expressionist interpretation of Oswald. Yet there was an ambiguity between these two genres in his performance as Ioan Massoff indicates:

Au surprins simplitatea mijloacelor sale de exprimare, fața sa de o mobilitate uimitoare, îndeosebi vocea miraculoasă [...], care urca nebănuite culmi, capabilă fără efort de infinite nuanțări și variații – voce ce era în stare să străbată întreaga gamă a simțirii umane. Având darul de transfigurare, propriu marilor inspirați, Moissi dădea impresia că improvizează. (The simplicity of his expressive means was surprising, his face had an overwhelming mobility, and his miraculous voice [...] that was rising above unsuspected heights, effortlessly capable of infinite nuances and variations. This voice could go through the entire range of human feelings. Since he had a gift for transfiguration that was specific of the great inspired [actors], Moissi gave the impression that he was improvising; my translation.) (Massoff 1974: 327)

Ion Marin Sadoveanu adds further evidence in favour of an expressionist tendency in the acting:

Cum frământă pictorul culorile, muzicantul sunetele, poetul vorbele, tot așa Moissi își frământă gestul, privirea și glasul. Și virtuozitatea amalgamului acestuia ajunge să ne îmbete simțurile. (The turmoil of Moissi’s gesture, look and voice resembles the turmoil in the painter’s colours, in the musician’s sound and in the poet’s words. The virtuosity of this amalgam inebriates our senses; my translation.) (1921 quoted in Alterescu 1973: 113)

Finally, Ioan Massoff focuses on the “o simplificare, o stilizare a jocului, în care privirile, tăcerile își aveau înțelesul lor” (simplification, the stylisation of the acting style, in which

the glances, the silences had their own meaning; my translation) (Massoff 1974: 327) and on the “*simplu, dar cu nuanțe infinite*” (simple, but infinitely nuanced; my translation) (ibid: 327) performance, all of which indicate that Moissi was more of an expressionist than a *verismo* actor in his embodiment of Oswald.

This performance of *Ghosts* starring Moissi illustrates the differences between the romantic, *verismo* and expressionist acting, as well the transitions between these genres. Moissi’s reputation as a star actor, and his training at Burgtheater in Vienna under the supervision of the romantic-naturalist actor Josef Kainz (Heininger 2005: 10–15; Connolly 2010: 8), suggest that he was inspired by the Italian *mattatore*’s approach to Ibsen, with its pathological and exaggerated physiological interpretation, combining romantic and *verismo* acting. Yet his career as an Ibsen contributor developed in collaboration with Max Reinhardt: his first performance as Oswald was in the famous *Ghosts* performance of 1906 at the Kammerspiele in Berlin (Heininger 2005: 24–29). His history places him within the transition from Romanticism and realism (*verismo*) that leads to expressionist acting. The expressionist re-iteration of both the romantic codification of beauty and the universal codification of passion was entangled with the *verismo*’s physical codification of passion, which in turn gave birth to new physical archetypes on the stage. Reinhardt’s *Ghosts* production from 1906 was echoed in Moissi’s Romanian performance:

The artist presented an Oswald, whose inner confusion, whose permanent ups and downs, tremours, fits of fear, impotent raging—whose pathetic despair and total mental derangement appeared as frighteningly truthful. Moissi prepared the outbreak of madness in an intelligent and economical manner. Certain distortions of the mouth muscles, a playing of a finger, the groping of someone being harassed, sufficed to justify the catastrophe” (G.L. 1906 quoted in Fischer-Lichte 2007: 73)

or

In certain moments, when the last remainder of self-control dissolves, he suggests the suffering of the paralytic through his characteristic walk, his eye play and the distortion of his facial expression; but he needed to work on such nuances less than others, because such a characterization was ensured by his overall habitus... (Klaar 1906 quoted in Fischer-Lichte 2007: 73)

Moissi distanced himself from both the Italian *verismo* and the French and German naturalist *Ghosts* interpretations:

S-ar fi putut spune că noutatea artei lui Moissi consta în folosirea unor mijloace de expresie, altele decât cele “tradiționale”, ale marilor actori italieni și francezi. (One could say that the novelty of Moissi’s art consisted of the use of means other than the traditional expressive used by the great Italian and French actors; my translation.) (Massoff 1974: 327)

Moissi brought Reinhardt’s “festive plays” to Romania, moving the “nerves” of the spectators and bringing the focus on the theatrical event’s beauty back on stage while depicting a symbolic instead of a realist “slice of life” in his performances. He drew on the classicisa-

tion of the romantic, the *verismo* and naturalist interpretations of Ibsen. By the end of the century, these “traditional” approaches had established realist-naturalist acting as the preferred technique for the performance of Ibsen plays on the major European stages. The subsequent canonisation of Ibsen opened the door to experimental productions of his plays; and as Erika Fischer-Lichte has argued, “as a classic, *Ghosts* could become a cornerstone of Reinhardt’s new theatre” (2007: 76).

Alex Călin’s description of the audience response to Moissi’s *Osvald* is highly charged. He writes that the spectators empathised so much with the actor that “ni se sfredelește în creier întrebarea dacă nu suntem și noi asemuitori lui Osvald” (the question of our similarity to *Osvald* penetrates our brains; my translation) (Călin 1921: 5). His review contains a lively, picturesque and “epic-grotesque” (Vartic 1995: 172) description of both Moissi and the audience, imbued with parodic overtones:

Oameni cari se cunoșteau foarte bine de atâta vreme, de o viață întreagă, cari erau prieteni, cari se stimau, se iubeau, se admirau, fugeau aseară unii de alții, ca dracul de tămâie. Fiecare bănuia în celălalt un strigoi. Și era tragic să vezi cum, după sfârșitul reprezentației, oamenii în loc să se ducă veseli și bine-dispuși în localurile de noapte, aprindeau lumânările, își făceau cruce [...] doar doar or scăpa de groaza strigoilor cari roiau în jurul lor. [...] Dar tragedia nu s-a oprit aici. Odată ajunși acasă, fiecare presupus strigoi a început să-și caute obârșia. S-au petrecut scene înfrorătoare. [...] Date fiind aceste perturbări, s-a luat hotărârea ca Moissi să fie expulzat, ca turburător al liniștei publice. I s-au mai îngăduit doar câteva zile de ședere în București, atâta cât îi trebuie ca să-și mai dea celelalte reprezentații. Reclama fiind sufletul comerțului, cine nu l-a văzut încă, să se grăbească. (People who had known each other very well for so much time, for a lifetime, [people] who were friends, esteemed and admired each other, were running last night one from the other just as the devil runs away from incense. Each suspected that there was a ghost in the other. And it was tragic to see after the end of the performance how people, instead of going cheerfully and in a good mood to the night clubs, they were lighting candles, were making the sign of the cross [...] only to escape the dread of the ghosts swarming around them. [...] But the tragedy did not end here. Once they arrived at home, each supposed ghost started to investigate its origin. Terrifying scenes occurred. [...] Given these perturbances, it was decided for Moissi to be expelled as disturber of the public order. He was allowed to stay in Bucharest for a couple of days only, enough for him to give the other performances. Since the advertising is the very soul of commerce, whoever has not seen him yet must hurry; my translation.) (Les deux masques 1921: 5)

The audience’s dread, its sensuous reactions, and the identification with the character, coupled with the obsessive reactions of the actor, and the concluding remark about Moissi’s expulsion from Bucharest as a “turburător al liniștei publice” (disturber of the public order; my translation) (*ibid*: 5) might suggest the same “terror” as stimulated by Zacconi’s performance. Yet, the refined mockery of an audience assuming a literal interpretation of the actor’s performance is just further proof of Moissi’s expressionist interpretation. The actor substituted the literal naturalist portrayal of terror with an

expressionist depiction of emotions, as Erika Fischer-Lichte indicates in her analysis of the performance that took place in 1906:

Proceeding from the naturalistic acting style as elaborated and advocated by Brahm, but transgressing it, the performance developed a style that was characterized by the most subtle nuances, like the play of the eyes, the cheek muscles, the mouth and by the tiniest gestures and movements. (Fischer-Lichte 2007: 74–75)

One of the critics who felt negatively about Moissi's performance was Nicolae Iorga, who "mărturisește că s-a simțit jignit de performanța scenică a lui Moissi" (confessed that he felt offended by Moissi's stage performance; my translation) (Alterescu 1973: 113). The *verismo* actor Petre Sturdza also rejected Moissi's interpretation, stating that he "îl va prefera pe Paul Wegener" (would prefer Paul Wegener; my translation) (ibid.: 113). These assessments seem to be tied to the intimacy of expressionist acting, which encouraged the spectator to observe the performer's body in close surroundings, thus generating "a feeling of embarrassment, of indiscretion, of perceiving what should not be displayed and perceived in public" (Fischer-Lichte 2007: 75). This aspect of the audience's experience was especially important to Reinhardt. He encouraged the spectator's close participation in the performance within a context of "intimate theatre". Erika Fischer-Lichte gives a comprehensive description of Reinhardt's aims:

This art of acting demanded a new art of spectatorship: while the spectator, sitting rather far away from the stage in an ordinary theatre, was able to imagine what was going on in the dramatic figures and to feel empathy for them, the acting in the Kammerspiele space brought forth a situation of intimacy – out of place, in a way, in a public space like a theatre. [...] by thoroughly investigating the means by which a scene is able to bring forth a particular atmosphere, the performance worked on the senses of the spectators, who could sense this atmosphere physically and were thus drawn into it. [...] This triggered physiological, affective and energetic responses in them. The spectators felt the actors as well as themselves present in an unusually intense way, so that they became uncertain how to behave. (ibid.: 75–76)

This theatrical experiment was first practiced in the *Ghosts* performance at Kammerspiele in Berlin, in 1906, when Moissi performed *Osvald*. It was not until 1921 that the Romanian audience encountered these techniques for the first time in the *Ghosts* performance of Alexander Moissi. We can glimpse echoes of Erika Fischer-Lichte's description of the audience in Reinhardt's theatre in Alex Călin's account of the response to Moissi's *Osvald*. The actor brought to Romania not only another way of interpreting Ibsen, but also another way of interacting with spectators and making them participate so fully in the performance that they became acting entities off-stage.

In the landscape of the German Ibsen performances, Alexander Moissi's *Ghosts* was the best received productions and it had the most powerful effect upon its Romanian audience. Moissi followed the tradition of internationally renowned star performers touring Romania with Ibsen productions, but in contrast to the early naturalist productions of Ibsen, Moissi used an expressionist approach inspired by Max Reinhardt. Moissi showed that there was a new way to perform Ibsen, which implied a new kind

of spectator with a stronger sense of participation in the performance. His impact exceeded that of the previous German Ibsen productions, and the Romanian practice of acting benefitted not only by learning from Moissi's performance, but also from the new expressionist approach inspired by Reinhardt. Moissi's performance as Oswald marked, on the one hand, Ibsen's classicisation and canonisation in the German theatre, and on the other, one of the last foreign Ibsen performances visiting Romania. Eventually, it also helped to cement Ibsen's canonisation within Romanian theatre during the interwar period.

2.4.5 Final remarks

The German Ibsen performances on Romanian territory are the most consistent statistically of the foreign language tours; they are also characterised by temporal and spatial intercrossing. The German ensemble of Lindemann and of Agnes Sorma were in Bucharest in 1901; Rehoff and Stärk's ensembles both performed in Sibiu in 1905. The geographical overlapping reveals further diversity: Bucharest presented the highest number of German performances regardless of genre, industrial approach or political context; Sibiu was only visited by the Ibsen ensembles; Botoşani and Iaşi were occasional destinations. The German performances overlapped the French and Italian tours spatially in Bucharest and Iaşi, and the audiences compared their productions. The German tours also reveal a heterogenous, intertwined spatial dynamics between periphery and centre. The Romanian cities were at the frontier of the German theatre world, especially in the cases of Oraviţa and Sibiu, which were at the geographical border of the Empire; and Botoşani, which is on the border of Romania. While Bucharest and Iaşi were on the periphery of the German touring circuits, they had a central role in Romanian Ibsen productions. They were also major sites in a network connecting German, French and Italian Ibsenite artists. Even this centre-periphery dynamic is entangled because of the importance that the German independent Ibsen ensembles gave to touring Romania and minor venues. They were not tied to a cultural centre such as Berlin, not even when their activity originated in a major city. The German-speaking acting ensemble performing at the National Theatre of Bucharest during the German occupation illustrates a different periphery-centre entanglement: the ensemble was a symbol of the political occupier, but its members came from different parts of Germany and thus reflected the decentralisation rather than the coagulation of the German-speaking theatre. In this unstable landscape, Burgtheater was the only stable institution in an unstable theatrical landscape, yet paradoxically, it had only a minimum impact within the Romanian theatre.

Complex interactions link all the German language performances at the level of acting and staging. Together they show Ibsen's passage from being perceived as a marginal historical playwright performed using Romantic acting techniques, to a controversial, ground-breaking naturalist. The further passage to Expressionism was distilled through realism from Lindemann to the German ensemble performing at the National Theatre of Bucharest. These genre mutations were accompanied by a shift from the star system to the ensemble system. Agnes Sorma belonged to the European star-actor tradition, following in the footsteps of Gabrielle Réjane, Ermete Zacconi and Suzanne Dépres. Gustav Lindemann, Maria Rehoff and Ludwig Stärk brought to Romania the ensemble-based

approach, the Ibsen cycles and the symbolist plays; their unique contribution is remembered as a German Ibsen trademark in the Romanian theatre history, but their impact upon the Romanian audience was unbalanced. While Sorma's performances were heavily outnumbered by those of the Ibsen ensembles, her influence was reinforced through similarity with the other star actresses and star actors who had performed Ibsen on their Romanian tours. In contrast, the model presented by the ensembles performing Ibsen cycles was not integrated into the local stage.

2.5 Minor reception models. Hungarian and Yiddish Ibsen performances on the Romanian map

The *histoire croisée* of Henrik Ibsen on the Romanian stage is not confined to the impact of the major French, Italian and German models on the national theatre life. Hungarian Ibsen performances dominated the Transylvanian region until 1947. In addition, two performances in Yiddish also spice up the Romanian landscape. To analyse the impact of these final tours involves framing these Hungarian and the Yiddish models as minor, in the sense that it is their connection with the respective minority groups that led to their presence on the Romanian Ibsen map. The Hungarian Ibsen performances are tied to the Hungarian population in Transylvania, while the Yiddish Ibsen performances are tied to the Jewish population in South-Eastern Romania. These minor models bring to light interweavings within the entire Central-Eastern European history of Ibsen.

2.5.1 The Transylvanian Henrik Ibsen (1879–1945)

The 111 performances in Hungarian that took place in Transylvania alone between 1879 and 1945 reveals its unique position. In other words, the Ibsen map mirrors a “common historical experience” (Blomqvist, Iordachi, and Trencsényi 2013: 6) that Romanians and Hungarians living in Transylvania share and that is characterised by ceaseless tensions (Mitu 2013: 35–92). The years between 1879 and 1945 saw the greatest number of Hungarian language Ibsen productions in Transylvania. Of the 156 Hungarian Ibsen events registered in IbsenStage that fall within today's Romanian boundaries, 111 events took place before 1945. Whereas 71 of the 111 events are registered before 1918, the remaining 40 events were staged between 1918 and 1945, when Transylvania had become Romanian territory.

Without contextualising these statistics within the overall picture of all the Hungarian productions before and after 1945, they might be misinterpreted as a reflection of the ethnic and political domination of Transylvania before and after 1918. The lower number of Hungarian Ibsen events in Transylvania after 1918 was connected to the political tensions revolving around the situation of the Hungarians in Transylvania before and after the Greater Union. But a distant view also gives a wider perspective and reveals the connections between the Transylvanian and Hungarian datasets in IbsenStage: 922 of the 1132 events in Hungarian were staged between 1879 and 1945. A high number of Ibsen events in Hungarian in Transylvania both before and after 1918 indicates the Hungarian ethnic groups' significant impact in the area's theatre life, independent of political allegiances.

This is understandable in light of three factors: 1. the Hungarian political domination of Transylvania before 1918; 2. the “urban hegemony of Hungarian [...] [that] lasted well into the interwar period” (Livezeanu 1995: 151)⁴⁵ in Transylvania; 3. the “lingering Hungarian hegemony” (ibid: 144) after 1918 which was related to their dominant social status and culture. According to Keith Hitchins, although “the areas of encounter between Romanians and Hungarians were all-encompassing: political, cultural and economic” (Hitchins 2013: 130), “the decisive point of encounter between the elites was not political” (ibid: 126).

The considerable number of Ibsen performances in Hungarian in Transylvania highlights financial and aesthetic interests rather than political or ethnic-based aims. Even if political issues influenced the local cultural life, the Hungarian theatre practitioners in Transylvania did not focus on minority debates in their performances. Aesthetics and commercialism ruled the theatre: “companies were private investments for profit, and economic gain, arising from the private initiative and the business acumen of individuals, went to benefit the owners and stakeholders, not for the cultural development of an ethnic group” (Burciã 2019: 72). The theatre practitioners “were neither active nationalists defending Hungarian interests nor passive observers of the workings of ethnicity among minorities and the Romanian majority” (ibid: 70). The fact that the “artistic principles mattered a great deal” (ibid: 80) was visible in the focus on the “repertory selection and acting talent before ethnic solidarity” (ibid: 80). As a consequence, the tensions between Romanians and Hungarians either before or after 1918 hardly affected the repertory. Pompilia Burciã also indicates “high quality” (ibid: 70) and “business profitability” (ibid: 70) as well as “theatre tours and permanent theatre buildings” (ibid: 70) as the pillars of the Transylvanian Hungarian-speaking theatre life. The Transylvanian dataset indicates that, with regard to the dissemination of Ibsen’s plays, the same importance should be accorded to touring activity and the permanent Hungarian Theatre in Cluj.

The German Ibsen model had an impact on Hungarian-speaking productions because Transylvania and Hungary belonged to the Habsburg, subsequently Austro-Hungarian Empire. This model is most obvious at the industrial level as the Transylvanian dataset indicates the importance of the star actors in Ibsen’s breakthrough on the Hungarian stage between 1889 and 1912. The Hungarian actor-managers and guest actors were inspired by German Ibsen star actors, particularly Agnes Sorma and Alexander Moissi, as is clear from their touring productions of *Ghosts* and *A Doll’s House*. However, there is nothing to suggest that these tours were tied to Ibsen cycles or ensemble-based productions. The German model was also influential at the acting level: prior to 1912, the early Transylvanian Hungarian Ibsen performers used naturalist acting techniques of German inspiration; by the 1930s, evidence suggests there was a shift to German expressionist acting techniques.

The following close examination of the dataset and the Transylvanian theatrical context will examine two key directions in Ibsen’s Hungarian reception: the importance of Transylvania and the Hungarian theatre in Cluj; and the dominance of the actor-managers and of the guest actors within this history.

45 Also, “culturally, Transylvania urban elites were in large part Hungarian and German” (Livezeanu 1995: 135).

2.5.1.1 Transylvania: a focal point in the Hungarian-speaking reception of Ibsen

The most significant aspect of the Transylvanian dataset is the complex geographical distribution of the 111 Ibsen Hungarian performances between 1879 and 1945 (Figure 12). This highlights Transylvania as a major spot in the Hungarian-speaking tradition of staging Ibsen. Although the Hungarian ethnic group was the main audience for these productions, Transylvanian Romanians were also an important part of the audience, as most of them had to learn Hungarian in school (Livezeanu 1995: 143–151). Among the 32 venues where Ibsen was staged (Figure 13), major cities such as Cluj and institutions such as The Hungarian Theatre of Cluj emerge as the most influential (Figure 14) because of the high frequency of Ibsen events (Alterescu 1971: 88–89). The first staging of an Ibsen play in Hungarian, a production of *Pillars of Society* was performed in the Transylvanian city of Arad in 1879.

Transylvania had a dominant position in the Hungarian-speaking theatre world both before and after 1918. It was a province directly administrated by the Habsburgs in Vienna before the establishment of the Austro-Hungarian dual monarchy in 1876. This made the area independent from the Hungarian administration in Budapest and contributed to its dominant status within the monarchy after 1876. Transylvania also constituted almost half of the territory dominated by Hungarians under the dual monarchy. Therefore, it was as important as the Hungarian territory in terms of politics, economy, administration and culture; that it had its own administrative body is evidence of its core positioning. Pompilia Burcică argues that the central role of Transylvania after 1918 was due to commercialist (2019: 77) and nationalist restrictions on theatre life in Hungary, Yugoslavia, and Czechoslovakia in the 1920s (ibid: 77). Hungarian artists from neighbouring countries moved to Transylvania, which they considered a “province of opportunity” (ibid: 84) with a more flourishing theatre life (ibid: 77) than other Hungarian-speaking areas. This context makes it clear why the travelling theatre companies dominated the Transylvanian Ibsen landscape between 1879 and 1945, but this activity by independent actors and private companies did not have a central core. There was no other cultural institution comparable to the Hungarian Theatre in Cluj,⁴⁶ which maintained its presence, in contrast to the many small provincial theatre companies that disappeared prior to the end of World War Two. The Hungarian theatre in Cluj was one of the main institutional pillars of in the Hungarian-speaking theatre life. Also, of the 39 Ibsen events that IbsenStage associates with this institution in Transylvania, 20 events were staged in Cluj, highlighting the city too as a core of the local artistic life.⁴⁷ The status of Hungarian theatre in Cluj was also enhanced by the fact that it was the second most important theatre in the Habsburg Empire before 1876. The situation did not change after 1918, as Cluj-Napoca became a major cultural centre of Romanian theatre life.

46 Due to historical reasons, the institution is mentioned under three different names in the period analysed: *Nemzeti Színház* (The National Theatre), *Magyar Színház* (The Hungarian Theatre), *Kolozsvári Nemzeti Színház* (The National Theatre in Cluj). Nowadays, the theatre is known as Kolozsvári Állami Magyar Színház (Hungarian State Theatre in Cluj-Napoca).

47 The remaining 19 were staged in cities such as Arad, Braşov, Oradea, Sfântu Gheorghe, Sibiu, Târgu-Mureş or Timişoara.

Henrik Ibsen's plays were staged at the Hungarian Theatre in Cluj from 1889, starting with a production of *A Doll's House* with Emília Márkus as Nora. Of the seven plays performed in Hungarian in Cluj between 1879 and 1945 (Figure 15), six were in the repertory of the Hungarian Theatre (Figure 16): *Peer Gynt*, *A Doll's House*, *Ghosts*, *The Wild Duck*, *The Master Builder*, and *John Gabriel Borkman*.⁴⁸ The Hungarian premieres of *Ghosts* on April 23, 1890 and of *The Wild Duck* on November 15, 1906 also took place in Cluj. This Ibsen production history equals or even surpasses that of the National Theatre in Budapest.⁴⁹

Jenő Janovics (1872–1945), the manager of the Hungarian Theatre in Cluj ensured the institution's dominant status in Transylvania. His career as an actor, director and as the manager of the theatre over a period of 50 years is testament to the stability of the institution.⁵⁰ His involvement was not merely aesthetic, he organised the finance for the construction of the two theatre buildings that are still in use today in Cluj-Napoca. He figures in only one record of an Ibsen production as the director of *The Wild Duck* staged in 1906, yet he probably was involved in other Ibsen productions in 1901, or between 1905 and 1933, when he was working as either the stage director and/or manager of the theatre. Regardless of his direct involvement in Ibsen productions, he is acknowledged for renewing the repertory of the theatre by staging modernist playwrights:

Janovics este partizanul creării unui echilibru corespunzător între reprezentarea pieselor de factură clasică și a celor care oglindesc tendințele moderniste. [...] El este cel dintâi director de teatru din Cluj care prezintă și piese ale scriitorilor dramatici scandinavi, ale celor englezi moderni, ale lui Gorki și Cehov. (Janovics is the partisan of creating the proper balance between the staging of classic and modernist plays. He was the first theatre manager from Cluj who also presented plays of Scandinavian and modern English playwrights, of Gorki and Chekov; my translation.) (Alterescu 1971: 90)⁵¹

The prominence of the Hungarian Theatre of Cluj in Transylvania, as well as the merging of aesthetic and commercialist principles in the Hungarian-speaking Ibsen production, was also reflected in the touring movement of companies and actors. IbsenStage

48 With the exception of *The Wild Duck* and *John Gabriel Borkman*, the Hungarian Theatre in Cluj went on tour with all the other four plays.

49 The long history of the Hungarian Theatre in Cluj also reflects its dominant role. The theatre was founded on December 17, 1792 as the first theatre in the Hungarian-speaking world and has had an unbroken history since then. Moreover, only one other similar institution in the Hungarian part of the Empire had a similar status, namely The National Theatre in Budapest (*Nemzeti Színház*). However, the latter was founded much later, in 1837, thus reinforcing the powerful position of the theatre of Cluj in the Hungarian theatre. In addition, these two theatres were permanently connected, as the constant exchange of guest actors proves it. See also Zakariás (2014: 27, 44).

50 Janovics started as actor in 1896, directed plays between 1897–1901, continued as the manager of the theatre between 1905 and 1930, worked as artistic director until 1933, and in 1945 became its manager again for a short period before his death (Zakariás 2014: 27, 29, 45, 47, 127, 129, 131, 133).

51 For a repertory overview, see Zakariás (2015: 61–101).

indicates that the Hungarian-speaking reception of Ibsen was dominated by actor-managers (Figure 14) and guest actors (Figure 17). The Hungarian Theatre in Cluj collaborated constantly with the National Theatre in Budapest and this resulted in the visit of influential guest-actors like Emília Márkus, whose contribution as Nora ensured the success of *A Doll's House*. Pompilia Burcică states that “the managers’ experience and networking abilities gave them strong negotiating power, making sure their business was in full operation and always growing. Their personal skills proved paramount for the survival of their businesses” (Burcică 2019: 76). IbsenStage confirms their crucial role, beside that of the guest actors, in disseminating Ibsen’s plays not just in Transylvania, but in the entire Hungarian-speaking world.

2.5.1.2 Tours and actors

2.5.1.2.1 Actor-managers

In addition to The Hungarian Theater of Cluj, the activity of various touring theatre companies enriched the Hungarian-speaking landscape of Ibsen productions in Transylvania between 1879 and 1945. Their history is more difficult to trace both in terms of acting genres and the theatre production. Only two of the 29 “organisations” recorded in IbsenStage were associated with theatres: *Nemzeti Színház/Magyar Színház/Kolozsvári Nemzeti Színház* (The National/ Hungarian Theatre of Cluj) and *Városi Színház* (The Theatre of Târgu-Mureș); the remaining 27 were companies or ensembles touring Ibsen’s plays across Transylvania. I will focus in this analysis on the three companies that gave the highest number of Ibsen performances between 1879 and 1945: Bokodyné Máté Róza társulata (four events), Krecsányi Ignác társulata (five events) and Hídvégi Ernő társulata (19 events). Although little is known about their Ibsen productions or about their theatre activity in general, we know that they were managed by star actors.

Bokodyné Máté Róza társulata IbsenStage displays a total of six events over a three-year period between 1890 and 1892 for Bokodyné Máté Róza társulata: four took place in Transylvania, one in Slovakia (Levice), while the first one was in Hungary (Jászberény) (Figure 18). The company was located in Budapest,⁵² and its repertory included folklore, comedies and serious dramas.⁵³ *A Doll's House* was its only registered Ibsen production, and Máté Róza Bokodyné, the manager, performed Nora in an extended tour that included cities in the current Slovakia and Hungary, which at the time were part of the Austro-Hungarian Empire. In 1895, she also performed Nora in a production presented in Győr, by her husband’s theatre company, *Antal Bokody társulata*; one short newspaper announcement even suggests that even “her” company was “under the supervision” of

52 Newspapers issued in Budapest between 1886 and 1895 signal the activity of this actress and her theatre company. See, for example: “Színház, zene, képzőművészet” (1888: 5); “Színház, zene, képzőművészet” (1890: 3); “Hazai irodalom, művészet.” 1886: 2094; “A színész-életből.” 1895: 1108; “Irodalom és művészet.” 1890: 3).

53 “A társulat nem kultiválja az operetteket, de annál inkább a népszínműveket, vígjátékokat és komoly drámákat.” (“Színház, zene, képzőművészet” 1890: 3).

Antal Bokody.⁵⁴ In the newspaper *Fővárosi Lapok's* on the April 3, 1895, a few days before the performance of *A Doll's House* of April 6, 1895, Máté Róza Bokodyné discussed the conflict between the aesthetic and the practical aspects of being an actor: “Sorsom. A színpadon: sírni, kaczagni, szeretni, gyűlölni. Az életben: a létért való küzdelem. Győr, 1895. ápril. 3.” (My destiny. On stage: to cry, to laugh, to love, to hate. In life: to fight for existence. Győr, April 3, 1895; my translation.) (“A színész-életből.” 1895: 1108) Whether this statement was or was not related to experience of playing Nora, it encapsulated the situation of most actors and theatre companies of the time.

Krecsányi Ignác társulata The second example is Krecsányi Ignác társulata. The Transylvanian Ibsen career of Ignác Krecsányi (1844–1923) (Arcanum Reference Library, n.d.) as director and manager of this company was strongly connected to Timișoara (Fekete 1911: 151–156) where four of the nine Ibsen events he directed were staged. One of the remaining five events was staged in Transylvania at Târgu-Mureș, and four took place in the Slovakian city of Bratislava and the Hungarian city of and Hódmezővásárhely. Ignác Krecsányi's Ibsen productions cover a period of 20 years, from 1890 until 1909 (Figure 19).

Ignác Krecsányi was renowned in the Hungarian theatre as a provincial theatre director and manager. His touring trajectory included Bratislava, Szeged, Hódmezővásárhely, Fiume, Kosice, Timișoara, Debrecen, Arad and Buda. This circuit maps the geographical distribution of his Ibsen performances, though Timișoara is at its core.

Krecsányi Ignác promoted two of Ibsen's most successful plays: *A Doll's House* and *Ghosts*. He included a Transylvanian city in all his Ibsen tours. On November 14, 1890 he staged *A Doll's House* in Timișoara, with Margit Lázár as Nora; in 1891 he took the production to the Slovakian cities Bratislava (February 3) and Nitra (April 6). In 1905 and 1908 Timișoara presented Krecsányi's *A Doll's House* again, with Anna T. Handrik and Emília Márkus as Nora. In 1900, he toured *Ghosts* and invited Oszkár Beregi to join the ensemble, to perform his renowned Oswald interpretation. This tour started in the Transylvanian city of Târgu-Mureș, and in the same year visited two Hungarian cities, Hódmezővásárhely and Szeged. The last ensemble production directed by Krecsányi was of *The Wild Duck* in 1909 in Timișoara. Ignác Krecsányi attracted celebrated actors to perform the leading roles in his Ibsen productions: two of these actors, Emília Márkus and Oszkár Beregi, were famous for performing Nora and Oswald not only in Transylvania, but in the entire Hungarian-speaking world.

Ernő Hídvégi társulata Ernő Hídvégi's (Hídvéghy) (1871–1950) (Magyar Színházművészeti Lexikon, n.d.) was the actor-manager of Hídvégi Ernő társulata between 1910 and 1914 and he cooperated with other companies and theatre institutions all over the Austro-Hungarian Empire too, in cities such as Kosice, Pécs, Budapest, Cluj or Szeged. Ibsen-Stage data indicates that he had a particular interest in *Ghosts*, as there are 38 events that record his performances in the role of Oswald. One of these performances in 1917, was with the József Nádasí's theatre company in Subotica, the remaining 37 events were presented by his own theatre company between 1901 and 1914. Geographically, 19 events

54 “Salgó-Tarjánban nem nagyon pártolták Bokodyné Máthé Róza színtársulatát, mely Bokody Antal művezetése alatt állt” (“Hazai irodalom, művészet.” 1886: 2094).

(50 per cent) took place in Transylvania, but the map of his tours shows that he also performed in Hungarian, Serbian and Slovakian towns. For instance, the first event of the tour is placed in Gyula, a Hungarian city close to the actual Romanian border. The performance dates are close together, and over a period of four years he toured *Ghosts* across the entire Empire (Figure 20).

The few newspaper reports (“Színházi esték.” 1910a: 5; “Színházi esték.” 1910b: 7; “Hírek” 1912a: 2; “Hírek” 1912b: 3; “Színház és zene” 1912: 7; “Krónika.” 1912a: 5; “Krónika.” 1912b: 4) that we have of his performances give only brief details about audiences’ reactions to the play and the productions. The company had a good reputation and the Ibsen productions were usually received positively.⁵⁵ One review in the newspaper *Békés* recounts an amusing incident at the Gyula première, when the playbill announced a play with four instead of three acts. There was general confusion at the end of the third act when the spectators stayed in their seats waiting for the fourth act to begin. The director was forced to announce the end of the performance to the audience.⁵⁶ The value of this anecdote is that it shows that the audience was unfamiliar with the play and illustrates the importance of the independent touring companies to Ibsen’s dissemination on the Hungarian-speaking stage.

2.5.1.2.2 Guest actors

The guest actors were as important as the actor-managers in maintaining the primacy of the star actor tradition in the production of Ibsen’s plays: they dominated the stage in the touring ensembles and in the ensembles attached to the local permanent theatres. The IbsenStage dataset indicates the constant presence of Emília P. Márkus, Oszkár Beregi and Forgách Sándor as guest actors in leading roles, and suggests the strong impact of their Ibsen interpretations.

Emília P. Márkus (1860–1949) Emília P. Márkus was famous not only for her interpretation of Nora in *A Doll’s House* in the Hungarian-speaking territories, but also because of her contribution as one of the most influential Hungarian actresses at the time. Her impact is comparable to that of Agnes Sorma, Gabrielle Réjane or Eleonora Duse. Of the 22 IbsenStage events in which she is registered as actress, 19 are associated with *A Doll’s House*. Emília P. Márkus was also the first actress to perform Nora both on the Hungarian stage,

55 “Hídvégiék legutóbb Szilágysomlyón játszottak, a hol különösen a *Kisértetek* előadásának volt nagy sikere.” (“Vidék” 1910: 17); “Hidvegyi Ernő stagione-társulata ezidő szerint Szekelyudvarhelyen tartja előadásait zsfolt hazak es a kozonseg altalános elismerese mellett” (“Színház. Művészet.” 1911: 13).

56 “A szinlapok négy felvonásosnak hirdették a darabot, sa közönség a harmadik felvonás után, amelylyel tulajdonképen a darab bevégződött, nem akart távozni a helyéről, tapsolt és várta a negyedik felvouást. Miután azonban a jó Ibsen nem volt kéznél, hogy a publikum várakozását kie égitse, a direktor kénytelen volt a közönséget fölvilágosítani, hogy tévedésből lett a darab a szinlapon 4 felvonásosnak jelezve. A mulatságos jelenetén fölmelegedett hallgatóság erre zajos tapsot közt, emelkedett hangulatban hagyta el a színházat, bár voltak sokan, akik tudni vélték, hogy itt semmi tévedés nincs, csak a társulatnak nincs már kedve a negyedik felvonást lejátszani. Mert kérem humor van ám a vidéken is!” (“Színházi esték” 1910c: 5).

at the National Theatre of Budapest (Nemzeti Színház), on October 4, 1889, and in Transylvania on the stage of the Hungarian Theatre in Cluj, the same year on December 9. Most of her performances – 11 out of the 22 events – were staged in Transylvania, the remaining taking place in well-known Hungarian (Budapest, Debrecen, Szeged), Slovakian (Bratislava, Kosice) and Serbian (Subotica) cities (Figure 21).

Emília P. Márkus is particularly significant because of her guest-actress status at the Hungarian Theatre in Cluj. Her performances caused a visible numerical increase in Hungarian events, not just on the Transylvanian, but also on the Hungarian-speaking stage. Although she was employed at the National Theatre in Budapest, she often performed as a guest actor with companies touring the Austro-Hungarian Empire. Her activity in Transylvania was related only to the theatre of Cluj, where she appeared in Ibsen productions between 1889 and 1913, though she continued her Ibsen performances elsewhere until 1927. Most of her performances as Nora occurred during the same period when Sorma achieved recognition in the same role. Given the German influence upon the Hungarian Ibsen actors, Márkus's Nora probably was based on a naturalist acting technique similar to the one used by Sorma and relied on the same star-actor tradition. In this respect, the Hungarian reception mirrors the German one, highlighting the contribution of the star actresses to the spread of Ibsen's plays.

Oszkár Beregi (1876–1965) Oszkár Beregi's presence on the map of the Hungarian-speaking Ibsen events is even stronger than that of Emília P. Márkus. He also had the status of guest-actor and cooperated primarily with the Hungarian Theatre in Cluj. The 48 events in IbsenStage highlight his rich career and success as Ibsen actor for approximately 30 years (1900–1930) in the Austro-Hungarian Empire (Hungary, Romania, Slovakia, Serbia, Ukraine), and performing even in the United States of America (Figure 22). Although the timespan of his career covers the same period as that of Emília P. Márkus, Beregi visited Transylvania less and toured mostly the Hungarian area of the Empire. IbsenStage displays him in nine events in Transylvania, in contrast to the 25 events staged in Hungarian cities, three events in Serbian cities, five events in Slovakian cities and five events in Ukrainian cities. Of these events, 46 are of *Ghosts* performances. In 1927, he performed *Osvald* in three touring events with the Hungarian theatre of Cluj, five events with local Transylvanian theatre companies⁵⁷, and one event in 1907, with a Hungarian theatre company touring the Romanian town of Lugoj.

Sándor Forgách (1890–1944) In contrast to Emília P. Márkus and Oszkár Beregi who visited Transylvania as guest artists, Sándor Forgách worked at the Hungarian Theatre in Cluj and all the IbsenStage events in which he appears between 1922 and 1936 are with this stable theatre institution, at a time when Transylvania was already part of Romania. He is the actor with the largest number of overall Transylvanian Ibsen events (29 events), 16 of which list him as a performer at the Hungarian Theatre in Cluj (Figure 23). He approached the roles of Peer Gynt, *Osvald*, and John Gabriel Borkman, but was mainly renowned for the first two ones, which he performed most frequently. Sándor Forgách was acknowledged as a “mare tragedian, jocul său fiind influențat de teatrul expresionist”

57 Krecsányi Ignác társulata, Leszkai András társulata, Heves Béla társulata, Mezey Kálmán társulata.

(great tragedian, influenced in his acting style by the expressionist theatre; my translation) (Alterescu 1973: 116), so his obvious counterpart in the German reception of Ibsen would be Alexander Moissi. Both actors had star profiles, with backgrounds in performing tragedies in the Romantic style before turning towards a more expressionist performance style. This connection draws attention again to the debt to the German model in the early pre-war and interwar Hungarian Ibsen production history.

2.5.1.3 Final remarks

The 111 Ibsen performances staged in the Hungarian language across Transylvania between 1879 and 1945 enrich the complex *histoire croisée* of Ibsen on the Romanian territory. They speak about the multi-ethnic structure of Transylvania in which the Hungarian ethnic group dominated the theatre field until very late in the interwar period. The touring companies led by actor managers and star actors reached not only Hungarian audiences, but presumably also German and Romanian spectators across Transylvania. They reveal an Ibsen story that is less about political and nationalist encounters, and more about theatre aesthetics and profitable performances. Finally, these performances are evidence of the importance of Transylvania and the central role of the Hungarian Theatre of Cluj in the emergence and breakthrough of Ibsen on the Hungarian-speaking stage.

2.5.2 The Yiddish tours

In total, IbsenStage holds only eight records of Yiddish events, three of which were staged in Romania, and the remaining five in the United States of America. The timespan covered by these productions is limited to 1910 for the American events; while the Romanian events took place between the wars (two events) and in the Communist period (one event). Prior to 1945, two Ibsen performances were presented in Yiddish in Romania by the Vilna Troupe in 1923, and by the ensemble of the Warsaw Yiddish Art Theater's managed by Ida Kaminska in 1927 (Figure 24). Although we know Ibsen was included in the repertoires of these companies, no further information about specific performances has been uncovered. Yet, we can infer something regarding the theatrical aesthetics used in these Ibsen productions from reviews of other performances by these ensembles and their reception by Romanian audiences.

Firstly, we must understand why Romania was a destination for these Yiddish theatres. The most obvious reason is that there was a powerful Jewish, Yiddish-speaking community in Romania. Moreover, the historian Israil Bercovici claims that Jewish theatre was founded by Avram Goldfaden, "Părintele Teatrului Evreiesc" (the Father of the Jewish Theatre; my translation) (Bercovici 1982: 13) in Romania in 1876, when he came to Iași that year and started performing some of his works there (*ibid*: 16).⁵⁸ As is evident in the IbsenStage dataset, Jewish theatre subsequently expanded across Europe and America.

58 "Teatrul evreiesc, în adevăratul înțeles al cuvântului, a fost întemeiat abia la 1876; atunci el a început să devină un teatru profesionist și să existe ca instituție culturală națională permanentă" (Bercovici 1982: 18).

Romanian theatre historians do not attribute the same importance to the Vilna Troupe and the ensemble of Ida Kaminska: the former receives special attention because of its impact upon the local and international theatre, while the latter is only briefly mentioned as one of the many touring companies visiting Romania in 1927. Despite the difference in their relevant importance, the distinctive features of Jewish theatre emerge to some extent in both troupes: continuous nomadic, transnational tours; the existence of an ensemble; and eclectic performances, characterised by a blend of acting genres.

Yiddish theatre never had a permanent theatre building in Europe. It was marked by a never-ending nomadism tied to a ceaseless touring activity, particularly in Germany, Poland, Romania, Russia and other countries in Central-Eastern Europe. The continuous transnational border-crossing of the Yiddish troupes reveals, paradoxically, a specific interest in promoting the “national essence”. Debra Caplan highlights the companies’ “zigzagging back and forth across national and continental borders with apparent ease” (Caplan 2013: 240). For these “wandering cosmopolitans” (ibid: 316), touring became a “survival strategy” (ibid: 316). Delphine Bechtel adds to Caplan’s description of this theatre movement as “(diasporic) national” (ibid: 240), its aspect of “nomadic enterprise” (Bechtel 2010: 77) and “minor genre practiced by a national linguistic, social and cultural minority” (ibid: 77). This transnational movement, paradoxically joined with nationalist aims, was the most specific characteristic of the Yiddish theatre. Thus, according to Bechtel, “Yiddish theatre was thus ‘international’ from its inception and was perhaps the only theatre in the world whose mode of existence was defined by dispersion and exile” (ibid: 78).

2.5.2.1 The Vilna Troupe

The Vilna Troupe, one of the most successful transnational theatrical businesses of the time, performed *Ghosts* in Yiddish on the Romanian stage in 1923. To infer something about their possible approach with this Ibsen production, we must understand more about the Vilna Troupe and how it arrived in Romania. Debra Caplan indicates that this famous ensemble came from the Russian Empire and it was established in the middle of World War One in today’s city of Vilnius, “as a direct result of the German occupation” (Caplan 2014: 251). It was the process of touring that generated their unique approach on the art of acting and directing:

The troupe did not develop their famous theatrical style at home in Vilna, but rather in Warsaw, Bucharest, London, Vienna, Chicago, and other locales. And, perhaps most poignantly, they did not become the Vilna Troupe in Vilna, their starting point, but rather *en route* to Warsaw. (Caplan 2013: 135)

The landscape becomes even more complex as Debra Caplan highlights that not one, but “six Vilna Troupes were performing around the world” (ibid: 246) in the decade of the 1920s. Based on Caplan’s analysis of their touring paths⁵⁹ and on the fact that Mordechai

59 “1. Mordechai Mazo’s Vilna Troupe: Warsaw, Lodz, Krakow, Czernowitz, Radom, Lublin, Bialystok, Baranovitch, Bucharest, Jassy, Lviv, Kishinev, Vilna, Riga, Belgade, Prague, Vienna. 2. Alexander Azro and Sonia Alomis’ Vilna Troupe: Berlin, Paris, London, Brussels, Amsterdam, the Hague, New

Mazo was the manager of the troupe that visited Romania (Alterescu 1973: 136), we can say with confidence that it was the first of the six Vilna Troupes cited by Caplan that performed in Bucharest. Israil Bercovici claims that the troupe was invited here in 1923 by Isidor Goldenberg, but financial difficulties forced it to leave Romania in 1925.

During these two years the troupe performed a varied repertory,⁶⁰ Ibsen's *Ghosts* included. Quality of the repertory was paramount to the Yiddish theatre practitioners, and they convinced both the Yiddish-speaking and the Romanian-speaking audience to attend their performances.⁶¹ They performed "highly regarded Yiddish authors" (Caplan 2014: 252) and dramatic texts with a "perceived literary value" (ibid: 252). Thus, including *Ghosts* in the touring repertory was most likely a choice based on Ibsen's established European prestige as a modern classic. As the troupe had already staged Ibsen before the close of World War One, the 1923 production suggests a further acknowledgement of his canonical value. The Vilna troupe visit was a significant moment in the aesthetic development of the Romanian theatre, "o revelație în viața culturală a capitalei" (a revelation for the cultural life of the capital city; my translation) (Bercovici 1982: 129). What did this "revelation" witnessed by the Romanian audience entail? The answer lies in the specificity of the theatre tradition brought to Romania by Vilna Troupe, which no doubt was in evidence with the staging of *Ghosts*.

At the industrial level of production, Vilna Troupe was an example of ensemble-based rather than actor-based system. Historians would describe the Vilna Troupe's production style as homogeneous, harmonious and marked by a mixture of different acting conventions: "căldura și sinceritatea jocului armonios, contopit al actorilor" (the warmth and the sincerity of the harmonious, merging acting of the actors; my translation) (Massoff 1974: 366); "omogenitatea trupei, armonia ansamblului" (the homogeneity of the troupe, the harmony of the ensemble; my translation) (Bercovici 1982: 132); and "jocul colectiv, omogenitatea, disciplina lexicală" (the collective acting, the homogeneity, the lexical discipline; my translation) (ibid: 132). Caplan highlights that the founders of the troupe intentionally chose an ensemble-based system as "the hallmark of their style", because this would entail that "there were no 'star' performers and the entire company would rotate roles amongst themselves" (Caplan 2014: 252). Delphine Bechtel suggests that the special attention paid to the building of an ensemble was rooted in a deep conviction of the

York, Chicago, Philadelphia, Boston, Baltimore, Los Angeles, Cleveland, Detroit, San Francisco. 3. Splinter group from Mazo's Vilna Troupe: New York. 4. Second splinter group from Mazo's Vilna Troupe: Warsaw, Lodz, Krakow, Bucharest. 5. Belgian Vilna Troupe: Antwerp. 6. Bronx Vilna Troupe: New York, Chicago, Philadelphia, Boston, Baltimore, Los Angeles, Cleveland, Detroit, Toronto, Montreal, Winnipeg" (Caplan 2013:246).

60 "De la apariția sa a București, ea a impresionat prin imensul 'bagaj spiritual' cu care a venit: un afiș cu zece piese din dramaturgia clasică și contemporană idiș, germană, rusă, franceză, jucate deja în câteva țări în cei opt ani de existență a trupei. Alte zece piese, din aceleași surse, în studiu. Numai în primii doi ani de activitate în România – în 1923–1925 – trupa din Vilna a prezentat treizeci și cinci de piese." (Bercovici 1982: 130) According to Israil Bercovici (130), this wide repertory included the following playwrights: Anski, M.P. Arțiabașev, Șalom Aș, H. Berger, Leon Kobrin, Hermann Sudermann, Peretz Hirschbein, Maxim Gorki, Karl Gutzkow, Ludvig Fulda, Șalom Alehem, Ibsen, Leonid Andreev, Moliere, David Pinski, B.Gorin, Osip Dimov.

61 Their amazing reputation among the Romanian audience even led to their being invited to perform for King Carol (Caplan 2013: 232–233).

theatre practitioners that the Yiddish theatre's mission was to display and promote the group rather than the individual (2010: 92). According to Jolanta Mickute, their aim was to provide not only quality artistic productions for a highly educated audience, but also to reach ordinary people, especially in Yiddish communities, creating in this way a national theatre across Europe (2017: 120). The ensemble system was the most appropriate way to create a theatre for people that aimed to provide both a national repertory and art-theatre productions: "This predominance of the group over the individual reflected the socialist ideal of an aesthetics of the masses; it also paralleled the search for collective meaning, for a national theatre that could express in aesthetic terms the concerns and longings of an entire people" (Bechtel 2010: 92). This perspective was not unique to the Yiddish theatre, it echoed the perspectives of renowned directors such as Stanislavski, Tairov, Meyerhold and Reinhardt.

That the perspective of the Yiddish troupe was anchored in the innovative European theatre approaches of the time was also visible in the acting techniques employed by the ensemble. The Vilna Troupe incorporated multiple theatre conventions, which led to eclectic, unique performances. The switch between realist, naturalist and Expressionist techniques; the use of symbols and atmosphere; and an approach inspired simultaneously by popular art, avant-garde and constructivism were equally present in the productions of the Vilna Troupe.⁶² The critics commented upon the troupe's "changing styles of performance" (Mickute 2017: 113), "fusion modernism",⁶³ and "o sinteză a diferitelor curente din arta teatrală de pe atunci" (a synthesis of the different streams in the theatrical art of the time; my translation) (Alterescu 1973: 139). According to Mickute, this merging was not necessarily the expression of an aesthetic manifesto, as the troupe "followed no single, established theatrical convention" (2017: 116), rather it was a consequence of their constant transnational movement: "They merged staging and stylistic ideas that they picked up as they moved from place to place in Europe, the Americas, South Africa, and Australia." (ibid: 103) In Romanian scholarship, the iconic depiction of the Vilna Troupe's approach was "teatru realist, stilizat" (stylized realist theatre; my translation) (Alterescu 1973: 138). Stylisation is the keyword and alludes to the expressionist principles employed by the ensemble, visible in the "gestul simbolic" (symbolic gesture; my translation) and "atmosfera" (the atmosphere; my translation) (Massoff 1974:

62 "The troupe's work was modernist and hence fresh, in the opinion of its critics. From the outset, the troupe—with modest means but ambitious goals—moved in lockstep with modernist theatrical innovators in western Europe and Soviet Russia. As such, the company adopted select elements of the Meiningen (ensemble work), Stanislavskian-Vakhtangian (ensemble work in flexible realism, or naturalism), and Meyerholdian (avant-garde constructivist) methods of acting and stage direction. In the vibrant Jewish cities of Vilna, Warsaw, and Lodz, this avant-garde phase of modernism emphasized becoming universal and international, in defiance of the old and traditional. [...] According to the troupe's actors, these experimental, modernist elements included symbolism-impressionism, realism, and constructivism" (Mickute 2017: 109–110).

63 "Fusion modernism is a descriptor of the distinct aesthetic developed by the Vilna Troupe, which merged together the stylistic ideas and staging practices that Vilna Troupe actors encountered as they toured. Simply put, "fusion modernism" is an artistic strategy in which travel and cross-cultural interaction fuel creative innovation" (Caplan 2013: 9).

366). Most Romanian historians define the troupe's performances as "expressionist".⁶⁴ In this respect, I agree with Debra Caplan, who considers the presence of these expressionist elements a consequence of the German avant-garde's influence on the Yiddish theatre, especially through the work of Max Reinhardt (2014: 255–256). Additional elements that reinforced the expressionist tendency in their productions came from the popular theatre: expressionist and popular theatre met precisely in the "festive" dimension, which privileged "dramatisation and polarisation of the characters" (Mickute 2017: 123).

Although historians do not give further details about the *Ghosts* performance of Vilna Troupe, the production probably struck the audience as unique, eclectic, and experimental. Since the play had been staged by the troupe during its earlier realist phase⁶⁵ before World War One, the production most probably altered its shape continuously, moving through naturalist, realist, and finally Expressionist approaches, leading eventually to an eclectic mix. The merging into a single genre of realist, symbolist, expressionist and popular acting techniques performed by an established and disciplined ensemble generated most likely one of the most elaborated foreign Ibsen staging presented to the Romanian spectators.

2.5.2.2 Ida Kaminska and the Warsaw Yiddish Art Theater

In 1927, the ensemble of the Warsaw Yiddish Art Theater staged *A Doll's House* with Ida Kaminska as Nora (Kaminska 1973: 59–73) in Bucharest. But which Ibsen did Kaminska bring to Romania and how was it different from the Vilna Troupe's? A significant contrast marks the approaches of the two Yiddish companies: whereas the Vilna troupe focused on the ensemble and was open to playing with the theatrical conventions, Kaminska's production is an example of a star-based approach relying on realist acting techniques.

What is the story behind Ida Kaminska's Nora? It was a family affair involving not only Ida, but also her mother and father, Esther Rachel Kaminsky and Abraham Isaac Kaminsky (Jewish Virtual Library, n.d.). IbsenStage holds records of four events starring Esther Rachel Kaminsky as Nora in 1910, performing with her husband during a tour in the United States of America. Thus, both mother and daughter performed Nora. Esther Rachel Kaminsky was acclaimed as "the Yiddish Duse" (ibid.) and the "mother of the [Yiddish] theatre" (Zer-Zion 2017: 465). Nora was "her most ambitious role" (ibid: 473) and "in her representation of the role, she created wide, ambitious, and universal artistic horizons for the Yiddish theatre of her time" (ibid: 474). The critics Nahum Oyslender, Abraham Abe Cahan and Aleksander Mukdoyni draw attention to different aspects of her per-

64 "teatrul expresionist [...] în montările de la București [...] ale trupei din Vilna" (Alterescu 1973: 320); "În spectacolele [...] trupei din Vilna se recunosc însă principiile montării expresioniste: renunțarea la realism – abstracția devenind parte integrantă a spectacolului, singura capabilă să comunice complexitatea spirituală -, stilizarea geometrizantă a scenografiei [...], folosirea practicabilelor [...]. Expresionismul, născut din neliniștea și protestul obstinat al omului față de realitate, pulverizează realitatea obiectivă [...], își concentrează universul dramatic într-un erou principal [...], aduce în scenă personaje schematizate – tipuri." (ibid: 320–321); "În spectacolele trupei din Vilna [...] se recunosc eforturile regiei și ale actorilor de a se apropia de modalitatea interpretativă expresionistă" (ibid: 321).

65 "When the Vilna Troupe held fast to realism and performed the dramas of Hirschbein, Kobrin, Asch, and Pinski alongside Tolstoy, Hauptmann, Moliere, and Ibsen" (Caplan 2013: 219).

formance: criticising “Kaminska’s representation of Nora’s facile, childlike mannerisms” (ibid: 474), appraising “the great achievement of the Jewish actress who incorporated so skillfully the role of a woman so culturally distant from herself” (ibid: 474), or dismissing her rendition as “confined to the artistic ghetto of Yiddish theatre” (ibid: 474).

It was Ida, her daughter, who performed Nora in Romania, with the ensemble of Warsaw Yiddish Art Theater (Varșever idișer kunst-teater) in 1927–1928. Giulia Randone refers to her adaption and translation of *A Doll’s House*,⁶⁶ and in light of the Jewish theatre tradition, Ida probably borrowed interpretative aspects of the role from her mother. Israil Bercovici says of the actress:

Despre Ida Kaminska se vorbea ca de o artistă remarcabilă, cu largi posibilități, care mergeau de la umoristic la diabolic, de la patetic la glacial, totul cu o ușurință și un firesc profund zguduitoare. (They used to present Ida Kaminska as a remarkable artist, with a great potential, rendering everything from the humorous to the diabolical, from pathetic to glacial nuances, with a superior ease and naturalness; my translation.) (Bercovici 1982: 151)

Thus, Ida Kaminska’s interpretation of Nora was most likely strongly indebted to the realist acting conventions, just like her mother’s interpretation of the role, so the production probably emphasized the impact of the naturalist and realist approaches of Ibsen on the Romanian theatre once more.

2.5.2.3 Final remarks

Within the *histoire croisée* of Ibsen on the Romanian stage, the Yiddish performances tell a differently nuanced story about crossing borders and interweaving theatre traditions that once again signals that Romanian theatre was a permeable environment in which both hybridisation and the coexistence of theatre tendencies was possible. The border-crossing of the Yiddish ensembles maintained their openness to the influence and infusion of other theatre cultures, in contrast to the French, German or Italian touring companies. The huge impact of the Vilna Troupe in Bucharest unexpectedly empowered Romanian theatre as a significant site in the development of the Jewish theatre as it constantly moved across borders, contributing to its unique qualities along with the German, Polish, Russian theatre cultures. Delphine Bechtel summarises the in-betweenness of the Yiddish theatre experience, which was a *histoire croisée* in itself:

Yiddish theatre was both avant-garde and provincial; both ‘in’ and ‘out.’ [...] This position ‘in between two worlds’, both on the fringe and at the center of the unfolding reality, lagging behind and jumping ahead, characterised Yiddish theatre of the first three decades of the twentieth century (Bechtel 2010: 94).

66 “adattatrice e traduttrice in yiddish di opere come *La vergine folle* di Henry Bataille e *Casa di bambola* di Henrik Ibsen” (Randone 2015: 158).

2.6 Conclusions

Until 1947, the Romanian theatre landscape benefited from the influx of various theatrical approaches of Ibsen, drawing plentiful of intersection lines in space and time. The French, the Italian, the German, the Hungarian and the Yiddish theatre practitioners provided the multilingual Romanian spectators with contrasting perspectives on Ibsen. The contrasts between the approaches they conveyed on stage pointed at the ongoing changes in the acting and the directing traditions in the European theatre of the time. In addition, the immediate impact on the audience also contrasted with the long-term influence on the techniques employed by the Romanian theatre practitioners when staging Ibsen. The foreign Ibsen events on the Romanian map depict the national theatre culture as a space marked by entanglements, embodied in a mainly free performance environment. If these touring performances were only exceptionally allowed to be presented in the National Theatres, the private theatre market was much more open to receive them.

The foreign productions brought numerous acting and staging techniques to the local theatre culture. While they were staged mostly in Bucharest, they rarely met in Romania at the same time. However, the temporal overview indicates that the impact of the various productions differed significantly. The timespan between 1890 and 1910 reveals the highest number of events, mainly because of Gustav Lindemann's ensemble and because of the Hungarian actors touring Transylvania. This timespan coincided with Ibsen's global breakthrough due to actors and managers who contributed to an intense international dissemination of his works, and, implicitly, to his emergence as a canonical playwright both on the stages of the world and on the Romanian stage. For instance, foreign Ibsen production were presented to the Romanian spectators almost yearly until 1911, in contrast to the period that followed, when the frequency of such performances started to sink, reaching a very low number between 1927 and 1947.

The question here is whether all these national theatre traditions merged into a hybrid Romanian tradition. The concept of *histoire croisée* becomes useful here, as it emphasizes the probably unique capacity of the Romanian theatre to carry the divergent influences brought from different national traditions by the foreign Ibsen performances. The main result is visible when we see them all employed in the local Ibsen tradition to a lesser or greater extent. Tensions and rivalries did occur, but what is specific to the Romanian Ibsen story is that there was no dominant theatre tradition at the acting level. All the genres introduced by foreign artists – romanticism, naturalism, symbolism, realism and Expressionism – co-existed within the Romanian Ibsen production until 1947. Thus, the tensions between them did not lead to a final confrontation, but contributed to a fluid framework for creative acting and directing.

Only one dominant element emerges in this fluid framework, stemming from the distinction between the actor-system and the ensemble-system. The foreign Ibsen performances nourished an already actor-based Romanian theatre revolving around a star-performer, even at the cost of the play. The ensemble-productions that empowered all characters equally by focusing on their interaction as a whole was less pursued and less influential. Thus, the Romanian Ibsen tradition of theatre production until 1947 displayed a constant tension between an actors' and a playwright's/ensemble's theatre, significantly favouring the star-actors. Their initiatives to stage Ibsen and their choices on how to

stage his plays make even clearer the co-existence of the multiple acting genres in the Romanian Ibsen production. In other words, the Romanian Ibsen tradition was highly dependent on actors until the Communist period; they moved freely in-between acting genres, being both conservative and open to experiments. The many different versions of Ibsen presented by the actors demonstrates their importance in the dissemination of his plays in Romania prior to 1947.

Eventually, the intercrossing of the various Ibsen approaches presented on stage demonstrate that the Romanian Ibsen tradition until the middle of the 20th century was a considerably complex, if not even contradictory, *histoire croisée*. Whereas the French, Italian, German and Hungarian theatre traditions displayed characteristics associated with specific national cultures tied to more or less fixed boundaries, the Yiddish example sits outside a national framework. Yiddish theatre traversed national and territorial boundaries, it borrowed from various national theatre traditions and melted these various influences into a new, singled hybrid theatre culture. By contrast, the Romanian theatre was framed by the national state and national boundaries and its Ibsen tradition did not merge the influences brought into the country by the foreign tours, but allowed for different styles to coexist visibly in the interpretative work of actors. The industrial organisation of the Yiddish and Romanian theatre cultures further enhanced these differences. On the one hand, the Yiddish ensemble-based approach privileged homogeneity, so that techniques adopted from different genres would blend harmoniously on stage. In the Romanian theatre culture actors could employ more freely their own approach, as long as the star still emerged as the strongest performer in the production. In other words, the Romanian theatre tradition resisted a unique, hybrid recipe for performing Ibsen and allowed foreign elements to interact within a single production. Finally, the status of the national theatre as state institution in Romania was completely different from the free, private Yiddish theatrical enterprises that constantly wandered across national borders as in a perpetual exile. The institutionalisation of the Romanian theatre resisted an invisible absorption of foreign influences, preferring a visible re-working of local and foreign techniques in multiple forms. An invisible boundary existed between the various national theatre traditions coming into the country, it favoured their coexistence, yet subtly controlled their assimilation into the local theatre tradition. Ibsen's further establishment on the Romanian stage reveals precisely the theatre practitioners' consciousness of the intersections between the local and the foreign theatre traditions, associated with a deliberate borrowing process, which fostered constantly new ways of performing and staging Ibsen.

Part Three

3.1 How much Ibsen? Ibsen's "acclimatisation" in the Romanian theatres' repertory

The repertory was one of the most discussed aspects in the emergent Romanian theatre, as the National Theatres staged national historical dramas, classic Romanian and foreign plays, comedies, melodramas, vaudevilles, and modern dramas. What was Henrik Ibsen's position in the repertoires of these institutions between 1894 and 1947? To answer this question, I start with statistics (Figure 27, Figure 28, Table 1, Table 2, Table 3) of all the plays included in the repertoires of the four national and two private theatre companies that staged the majority of the Ibsen productions during these 54 years in Romania.¹ I have paid particular attention to the statistics for the years when Ibsen was actually performed. The producing institution, the national origin, and number of plays are the main criteria for the data analysis. The chronological division follows the structure of the theatre seasons, roughly starting between September and November and ending between March and April, and it also includes touring performances. What does the data indicate with respect to the content and to Ibsen's position in the repertory between 1894 and 1947?

1 The primary source of this statistic is Ioan Massoff's account of Romanian theatre history (1969, 1972, 1974, 1976, 1978), and the material available on the topic in the Collection "The National Theatre" at the State Archives of Bucharest, Iași, Craiova and Cluj-Napoca. In this respect, it is possible that the statistics do not offer a complete overview of all plays ever performed on the stages of the National Theatres, except for the National Theatre of Cluj, in which case Massoff's statistics were revised and completed. Given the material on plays available in the collection on "The National Theatre" at the State Archives, the statistics are more accurate for the National Theatres than for the other theatres and private companies. Moreover, the information offered by Massoff includes the names of the annual premieres and, to a certain extent, the names of the plays that had been played previously and were being included in the current season again. However, it is almost never clear whether the overview of the plays performed during a certain theatre season is complete or not. Hence, this uncertainty is inherent to these statistics due to the uncertainty regarding the amount of data available so far.

3.1.1 General repertory statistics

Few differences emerge between the repertoires of the National Theatres and those of the private theatre companies, *Bulandra* and *Mărioara Voiculescu*. The institutions staged both Romanian and foreign plays, revealing that “toate repertoriile sunt eclectice” (all repertoires are eclectic; my translation”) (Firan 1978: 153). Most foreign plays were European, and only seldom non-European, such as American. However, this diversity does not imply a balance in the national origins. In fact, the statistics show that the repertoires were largely indebted to the French, German, Italian and English theatre cultures.

The Francophile tendency was the most dominant. The number of French compared to that of Romanian plays indicates a competition between them in the repertory of the National Theatres. By contrast, Czech, Hungarian, Russian, Yiddish, Greek, Spanish, Swedish, Austrian, American and, finally, Norwegian plays appear in smaller numbers. At certain times, German or English plays dominate. However, for plays such as those from Norway or Russia, the lower numbers are stable, and their influence is best gauged by their permanency in the repertory. The private theatre companies clearly preferred foreign – especially French – plays to Romanian ones.² Finally, the Norwegian plays are almost exclusively by Ibsen.

3.1.2 Ibsen in the repertory

What do these statistics tell us about Ibsen's position in the Romanian theatre's repertoires? To begin with, they indicate that the National Theatre of Bucharest presented the greatest number of Ibsen productions in Romania: 18 out of 54 theatre seasons. The National Theatre of Iași comes second, with 11 out of 54 seasons. The National Theatre of Cluj started its activity in 1919 and staged 8 Ibsen productions in its 29 seasons. The National Theatre of Craiova has the least Ibsen productions, with 4 out of 47 seasons, but the theatre was closed between 1935 and 1942. Finally, the private theatre companies *Bulandra* and *Mărioara Voiculescu* staged Ibsen in 7 theatre seasons. Overall, Ibsen was staged in 41 of 54 theatre seasons. The largest number of Romanian events in a single year between 1894 and 1947 occurred in 1928, when 8 productions were staged as part of the worldwide celebration of Ibsen's Centennial. In the remaining years when Ibsen was performed, the overall number is between 1 and 4 events.³ In the years when Ibsen was not performed the gaps between productions are not overly long, but tend to be of short duration. At no point did a theatre stage more than two Ibsen plays in a single season, not even in 1928.

These numbers suggest that Ibsen was not the most performed foreign playwright in Romania during these years, but despite the low numbers of productions there is a consistent presence of his work in the country, largely because the theatres tended not

2 For example, *Bulandra Company* covered a wide variety of European plays and some Romanian contemporary plays, while *Mărioara Voiculescu Company* staged exclusively foreign plays.

3 Of the 54 years of the analysed time span (1894–1947), 13 years do not register any Ibsen events, 35 years register between 1–3 events a year, 6 years are associated with 3 events yearly, 4 years with 4 yearly events, 5 years with 5 yearly events and only 1 year each with 6, respectively 8 events.

to stage his plays during the same theatrical season. In addition, they seldom staged the same Ibsen play in the same or consecutive seasons. These statistical findings indicate that the Romanian National Theatre was decentralised and there was a diversity in the programming, which resulted in the continuing presence of Ibsen on the Romanian stage.

The IbsenStage Romanian events list records which plays were staged and how often between 1894 and 1947. The 110 events on the map (Figure 25) revolve around 14 plays, with a visible focus on the following three: *Ghosts* (35 events), *A Doll's House* (30 events) and *An Enemy of the People* (19 events). The remaining 11 plays were staged far less often and none of them exceeded 6 events before 1947 (Figure 26). In addition, the National Theatres of Bucharest and Iași staged almost the same number of Ibsen Romanian premieres. Of the 14 premieres, 4 were staged by the National Theatre of Iași: *An Enemy of the People* in 1894, *A Doll's House* in 1901, *Hedda Gabler* in 1902 and *The Master Builder* in 1919. Another 7 premieres were staged at the National Theatre of Bucharest: *Rosmersholm* in 1895, *Pillars of Society* in 1896, *Ghosts* in 1897, *John Gabriel Borkman* in 1919, *The Wild Duck* in 1920, *When We Dead Awaken* in 1924, and *The Lady from the Sea* in 1928. The remaining 3 premieres were staged by Mărioara Voiculescu Company (*Peer Gynt*, 1924), by the National Theatre of Cernăuți (*The League of Youth*, 1928) and by Aristizza Romanescu in a guest-performance in Iași (*Little Eyolf*, 1895). Finally, the most performed Ibsen plays – *A Doll's House*, *Ghosts* and *An Enemy of the People* – were staged most frequently by the National Theatres of Bucharest, Iași and Cluj-Napoca, which highlights their dominance in contrast to the private companies (Figure 35).

3.1.3 Final remarks

Studying production numbers can tell us nothing about the factors responsible for the constant fluctuation in the numbers of foreign as opposed to Romanian plays:

Faptul însă că într-o stagiune (1924–1925), din șaisprezece premiere, douăsprezece sunt cu piese românești nu este, în sine, semnificativ, decât sub raport statistic, pentru că în fond ceea ce dă pondere și valoare unui repertoriu este calitatea și nu cantitatea. (the fact that during a theatre season (1924–1925) 12 of 16 premieres are Romanian plays is not significant *per se* but statistically, because it is the quality and not the quantity that gives weight and value to a repertory; my translation.) (Alterescu 1973: 35)

One cannot judge the aesthetic value and the reception of the various foreign and national plays based entirely on statistics, although they indicate tendencies that require further historical research. For instance, the statistics on number of plays grouped by national origin say nothing about how many times the same play was performed, its quality, its reception and the revenues. The number of plays might also be misleading. Whereas we might interpret the large number of French or Romanian plays as an indicator of their success, it can also indicate the opposite. The real indicators of a play's financial or aesthetic success are in revenues sheets, receipts and theatre reviews.

The statistics indicate a paradox in the Romanian Ibsen productions, as the low number of productions is counterbalanced by their stable position in the repertory. What caused this paradox?

I argue that the low yet even number of Ibsen productions describes the regularity of the institutional fractures in Romanian theatre history. Thus, it indicates the fractures and weak power of absorption in the Romanian Ibsen tradition, without dismissing the influence of the playwright on the local theatre culture. The administrative and financial frames of the theatre institutions directly influenced the emergence of a fragmented Ibsen Romanian tradition, providing the main proofs of fluidity and mobility of this institutional environment. Further on, I analyse these frameworks as the main factors influencing the institutional structure of the national theatres, their repertory, and Ibsen's paradoxical position in the Romanian theatre.

3.2 What is the Romanian national theatre?

The National Theatres caught between laws, politics and money

In order to understand Henrik Ibsen's place in the Romanian theatre, we must look at the Romanian theatre context. The foundation of the national state, local wars and two world wars affected not only the Romanian society, but also its theatre history, because of its constant remodelling until 1947. In this sense, the fluidity of Romania as a national and territorial entity marked the development of its *national* theatre culture.

The Romanian theatre as national institution began in the middle of the 19th century, and is closely connected with the foundation of the Romanian national state in 1859. The Romanian theatre was still young when Ibsen first appeared on the national stage in 1894. In fact, the history of the Romanian *national* theatre almost entirely overlaps the Romanian history of Ibsen's reception, if we consider the dates of the first performances in Romanian, the discovery of the first Romanian dramatic text, and the establishment of the first Romanian national theatres.

Until the middle of the 19th century, the performances marking the beginning of the Romanian national theatre highlight the territorial fragmentation of Romania into Moldavia, Wallachia and Transylvania. The only commonality between these productions is that they were mounted by students and were thus amateur rather than professional initiatives. The very first theatre performance in Romanian took place in 1754 and was initiated by a group of students in Blaj, a small Transylvanian town. The pupils performed *Mirtil și Hloe* [*Myrtill and Chloe*] and even went on a tour entitled "*comoedia ambulatoria alumnorum*" (Alterescu 1980: 23) in 1755.⁴ The cities of Iași and Bucharest witnessed their first Romanian performances in the same conditions as in Blaj, but later. The beginning of

4 This initiative is symptomatic for Transylvania in the context of the region being part of the Habsburg/Austro-Hungarian Empire until 1918. More precisely, Romanian artists from either Transylvania or the two other Romanian-speaking regions would tour as much as the Hungarian authorities allowed them to in the absence of a National Theatre in Romania. This situation would last as late as 1919, when a National Theatre would eventually come into being in Cluj (Ceuca et al. 1994: 8–28).

the Romanian-speaking theatre life in Moldavia is tied to a performance entitled *Mirtil și Hloe* [*Myrtill and Chloe*] organised by Gheorghe Asachi in Iași. The “actors” were the sons of the boyar Costache Ghica and the performance took place in the father’s private mansion on December 17, 1816 (Florea et al. 1965: 164–165).⁵ Theatre life in Wallachia started not long after. Whereas historians agree that the actors were Gheorghe Lazăr’s students at Sf. Sava College, the title of the play, the year and the place differ. Ioan Massoff states that the first performance in Romanian was based on Molière’s *The Miser* and took place in 1818 at Sf. Sava College (Massoff 1961: 87). By contrast, Mihai Florea states that it was based on Euripide’s *Hecuba* (Florea et al. 1965: 146–147) and took place in 1819 at the “Cișmeaua Roșie” theatre hall built with the help of Princess Ralu, the ruling prince’s daughter.⁶

Moreover, the first Romanian dramatic text, a tragedy entitled *Occisio Gregorii in Moldavia Vodae tragedice expressa: Uciderea lui Grigore Vodă în Moldova expusă în formă de piesă de teatru* (1983), was discovered in approximately 1778–1780, proving that Romanian dramaturgy is even younger than Romanian performance history.

Finally, the first official theatre buildings of the Romanian National Theatre were built before the Smaller Union of 1859, namely in 1846 in Iași (Massoff 1961: 326) and in 1852 (ibid: 412) in Bucharest. On the other hand, the foundation of the National Theatres of Cluj-Napoca, Cernăuți or Chișinău was indebted to the Greater Union of 1918. Thus, while the foundation of the national theatres before 1859 prepared the union of the Romanian principalities, the foundation of national theatres after 1918 marked the end of the nation-building process.

3.2.1 Theatre as a “good” of the State

The changing political and legislative context directly influenced the Romanian theatre institutions. Accordingly, the position of Ibsen in the Romanian theatre also moved constantly between a commercial perspective, based on the revenues of the performances, and a perspective based on the value and the contribution of his plays to the public good. In order to assess the impact of this system upon the repertory, privileging Ibsen or not, we must understand *how* and *why* the Romanian national theatre had an ambiguous status until 1947.

5 Further performances were organised in the same way, engaging mostly pupils from the schools of the time. In parallel, the boarding schools of the time were organising performances on their own. For example, Matei Millo, who is tied to the establishment of a National Theatre in both Bucharest and Iași, organised performances while he was a pupil at one of these schools in Iași. Later on, in 1836, a Dramatic-Philharmonic Conservatoire was founded in Iași, but it only lasted until 1838. From that moment on, Costache Caragiale, who had recently arrived from Bucharest, further developed the local theatre activity (See Massoff 1961: 210–240).

6 The pupils of the Sf. Sava College continued their theatre activity until the Philharmonic Society, founded in Bucharest, created a more powerful environment for artistic development. Similar to the example of Iași, this institution did not have a long life either, lasting only until 1837. The above-mentioned Costache Caragiale, who contributed later to the development of the theatre life in both Iași and Craiova, was one of the students attending the institution (See Massoff 1965: 145–209).

The five Romanian theatre laws issued in 1877, 1910, 1926, 1930 and 1937 provide the main proof of how the fluctuating relationship between the State and the national theatres affected the repertory and Ibsen's paradoxical position. Central to this relationship is the contradiction between theatre as a commercial activity and theatre as a public good. In other words, we must understand the roots of the tensions between a theatre controlled by the box-office and popular taste, and a theatre focused on the development of a national culture and the education of the people. This is very important when considering the repertory, because regardless of the plays being chosen for their commercial potential or for their cultural enrichment value, Ibsen is caught in the middle of this debate. In the following, I address this contradiction by looking at the theatre legislation between 1879 and 1947.

The ambiguity of the theatre institution as “pus sub auspicele directe ale Statului” (dependent on the State; my translation) (*Lege pentru organizarea și administrarea teatrelor din România 1877: 2313*) stems from the laws themselves not saying *what* “theatre” was within the boundaries of the Romanian state as political entity and legislator until 1947. The juridical perspective helps us clarify this issue. The key questions are *what kind of good* was the “theatre”, *where* did it belong within the Romanian state and *how* did its status *change* throughout the 19th and until the middle of the 20th century? The answers imply our understanding of the evolution of the “property” concept at the time, based on two frameworks. The first one concerns the distinction between private and public law. In particular, the status of the National Theatre requires a focus on the tensions between commercial and administrative law. The second one concerns the distinction between the public domain and the private property, which implies the distinction between the public and private property of the State (Podaru 2011: 1–6, 8–10, 21–26).

The first issue at stake is whether “theatre” requires *private law* or *public law* tokens (ibid: 76, 91–94). Private law regulates the agreements between private entities, such as contracts. This is relevant when theatre is treated as a commercial area of the public life, governed by contracts, making it fit for private law – especially commercial law – regulations. Yet, while this might apply to private theatres, which clearly behave as commercial agents, it hardly applies to the National Theatre. Its status as state institution is different from a private commercial agent selling goods. Its products are not just *private* goods, and therefore the theatre is not just a simple legal person of private law. Therefore, *public law* provides better answers regarding the National Theatre, which is *dependent* on the State, invested with a *public scope* and providing public goods. The *administrative law* branch applies to the National Theatre best because it deals with state institutions, and the use of the inalienable,⁷ unseizable⁸ and imprescriptible⁹ *public* goods.¹⁰

7 “that cannot be alienated or transferred from its present ownership or relation” (inalienable, a., n.d.).

8 The impossibility to have a lien upon a public property, where lien is “a right to retain possession of property (whether land, goods or money) until a debt due in respect of it to the person detaining it is satisfied” (lien, n.2, n.d.).

9 “not subject to prescription; that cannot in any circumstances be legally taken away or abandoned” (imprescriptible, a., n.d.).

10 To be more specific, the public goods are those owned by the State and invested with a public scope, meaning that the good is meant either to be in public use or to provide a public service.

But public domain and private property, public and private goods, public and private property of the State were still inchoate concepts when Ibsen entered the Romanian theatre field. The clarification of these concepts unfolded precisely around the beginning of the 20th century, and underwent a constant refining until late in the 1920s. In fact, the international legislative systems had no concept for the ambiguous situation of the theatre institution, which belonged to the public domain, yet was selling commercial goods – the performances. Indeed, the State could also act as a legal person of private law, entering contracts and selling goods as any commercial agent. Yet this perspective was no longer acceptable after the emergence of the national state, when the State gained absolute legal prerogatives and became the unique owner of public property and public goods. Eventually, the discussions on theatre as a juridical object involved tensions precisely between its commercial, private law dimension and its administrative, public law dimension, affecting the Romanian Ibsen productions.

On the one hand, the theatre was governed more and more by public law regulations from the first half of the 19th century, considering that *state theatres* were treated as the *private* property of the State, as French law theoreticians such as Henry Berthélemy demonstrate^{11, 12}. This perspective upon the goods invested with a public cultural scope as the private property of either the State or the public administrative entities was valid until late into the interwar period.

On the other hand, the actual distinction between *public* and *private* property highlights the still strong belonging of the theatre to the civil law area. Throughout the 19th and 20th century, the concept of *property* was specific to this law area. This meant that citizens alone could be *owners*, and not the State, which was only administrator and manager.¹³ Consequently, when the State did appear as *owner*, it was treated as a legal person of private law. Hence, the *property of the State* could not be but the *private* property of the State, ruled by civil, not public laws – that is, commercial, not administrative laws. In this context, *private goods* such as the performances of the National Theatres were also the private property of the State.

The theatre laws issued before 1930 indicate the *de facto* status of the National Theatre as the private property of the State. This enhanced the ambiguous relationship of the State to the National Theatre because of the entanglement of elements of commercial

11 “Les communes sont propriétaires, à titre privé [...] de quelques théâtres, [...] en un mot, de tous les édifices achetés ou construits à leurs frais pour être affectés à des services publics d'intérêt municipal” (Berthélemy 1900 : 492).

12 However, only in a later edition of his work did Berthélemy make a distinction between the Comédie-Française, the Opera, the Odéon Theatre and the Comic Opera, which were the private property of the State and the other private theatres which were treated as mere commercial entities: “La liberté des théâtres existe en France depuis le décret du 6 janvier 1864. Toute personne peut ouvrir et exploiter un théâtre, sous réserve de faire une déclaration à l'administration et de se conformer aux mesures de police imposées par l'autorité dans l'intérêt de la sécurité publique. [...] L'État est propriétaire de Comédie-Française, de l'Opéra, l'Opéra-Comique” (Berthélemy 1913 : 786).

13 “Sur les voies publiques et les cours d'eau navigables, l'État, les départements et les communes n'exercent pas de droits; ils s'acquittent d'une fonction; leur tâche est d'aménager et d'entretenir ces portions de territoire destinées à l'usage des tous” (Berthélemy 1900 : 503).

and administrative law. That theatre was a public good is evident as the State offered the National Theatres a location and a subsidy, and nominated the managers, controlling the institution and the products or services it provided for public use. On the other hand, the actual management combined commercial and administrative law approaches. In 1877, when the State granted the Dramatic Society the right by law to use the building of the National Theatre for performances, this type of administrative delegation was entitled “concession” (Alterescu 1971: 13–14). In the Romanian historians’ view, the term entailed that the public body nominated public or private agents to administrate the public institutions providing a public service. However, I argue that “concession” was not the right term to apply to this juridical situation, but *régie*.¹⁴ What is the difference? In the case of concession, the rights are delegated by *contract* (contrat, n.d.; contract, n.1, n.d.), whereas in the case of *régie*, they are delegated by *law*. The “concession” points at commercial law principles and at the State’s status as private owner of the theatre because of the contractual nature of the delegation. But the real signification of “concession” following the 1877 law was that of *régie* delegated by law, thus favouring a public law approach and highlighting the State as administrator of the public domain. Since the State disposed of National Theatre by law, “concession” is wrongly used, disguising the ambiguous relationship between the State and the National Theatre as a terminological travesty. This public-private law ambiguity is also supported by the use of the “society” system of the Comédie-Française. Terms such as “société”, “sociétaire” and “gage” (société, n.d.; sociétaire, n.d.; gage, n.d.) are borrowed from commercial law and highlight the commercial aspect of the National Theatre. The consequence of this unclear juridical status was that the State often behaved in a discretionary manner. Either as a private owner focusing on commercial purposes, or as administrator interested in the public good, the State modelled the repertory of the National Theatre through laws, according to its immediate interests.

Finally, its status in-between private law, ruled by profitability, and public law governed by continuity,¹⁵ equality¹⁶ and adaptation,¹⁷ transformed the National Theatre into an unstable and vulnerable area (Podaru 2011: 101–106). This ambiguity continuously changed, creating either advantageous or disadvantageous contexts for Ibsen’s presence on the Romanian stage. His status as an innovative foreign playwright, the acceptance or the rejection of his plays, and his later approach as a modern classic were shaped

14 “Régie: Mode de gestion d’un service public. (On distingue la *régie directe*, assurée exclusivement par des agents nommés par l’autorité [État, Région, département, commune] et appointés par elle, et la *régie intéressée*, assurée par une personne physique ou morale n’en supportant pas les risques mais intéressée au résultat de l’exploitation.)” (régie, n.d.). There are two types of *régie*, which differ with respect to the revenues’ holder: 1. Direct *régie* (*régie directe*), when the revenues belong to the State or the local administrative entities, or 2. Interested *régie* (*régie intéressée*) when the revenues are shared between the public administration and the members of the private entity. The State delegating by law the Dramatic Society to exert the right of staging performances, followed by the sharing of the revenues described a case of *régie intéressée*.

15 The public administration and the managers it delegates must provide a public service or ensure the public use of an object in a continuous manner, without interruptions and in spite of financial losses.

16 All users are equal, hence discrimination is forbidden.

17 The provider of the public service must adapt it to the needs of the users.

from afar by this mobile legal framework and by the constantly shifting conceptual understanding of the theatre as State property.

The five Romanian theatre laws issued in 1877, 1910, 1926, 1930 and 1937 prove how nationalist, political, commercial and aesthetic principles were entangled in the elaboration of the repertory. They also point at the constant reconfiguration of the financial, administrative and legal structures and highlight the changing contexts in the Romanian theatre history that modelled the repertory and Ibsen's assimilation. To understand the complexity of these structures, I analyse them separately. First, however, I will look at the financial framework, as this informs the more complex discussion around the legislation and the management frameworks.

3.2.2 Theatre and state finances

To assess the influence of the finances upon the repertory and upon Ibsen, we must look at the economic history of the State-subsidised theatre institutions. The political and financial state crises, which led to a fluctuating subsidy, constantly threatened the National Theatres with their dissolution. This situation affected the repertory and questioned Ibsen's permanency on the Romanian stage between 1894 and 1947 on a commercialist basis.

What was a subsidy? Its best definition is that of "money or sum of money granted by the state or a public body to help keep down the price of a commodity or service, or to support something held to be in the public interest" (subsidy, n.3, n.d.). In a theatre context, it was the State's financial support for permanent troupes organising regular performances. The local public body of cities such as Bucharest, Iași and Craiova supported the activity of the permanent theatre troupes both before and after the foundation of theatre buildings. However, the first official note on the National Theatre as a subsidised institution appeared in the 1877 theatre law (*Lege pentru organizarea și administrarea teatrelor din România 1877: 2314*). Yet the subsidy was only granted to the National Theatre of Bucharest. The situation changed in 1910 when the new law subsidised the theatres of Iași and Craiova too, as they had officially become National Theatres (*Lege pentru organizarea și administrarea teatrelor din România 1910: 11802*). In fact, only the National Theatres received a state subsidy. The only exception was The Bulandra Theatre Company, which was partially subsidised between 1925 and 1930 based on a convention with the Ministry of Arts (*Lege pentru organizarea și administrarea teatrelor Naționale și controlul spectacolelor din România: 3918; Massoff 1976: 26*).

The National Theatres received a full subsidy, which was their main financial support before 1930. Yet, it was often so low that the National Theatres regularly experienced economic problems, as the subsidy could not cover all the expenses. The subsidy was also frequently reduced when the State experienced financial crises. In 1935, the extent of the cut in the subsidy led to the closure of the three National Theatres of Craiova, Chișinău, Cernăuți (Massoff 1978: 173). The law issued in 1930 made the financial situation worse because the revenues from performances, not the subsidy, were considered as the main resource. As Ioan Massoff indicates, "teatrele în general erau lăsate mai mult în grija Ministerului Finanțelor" (the theatres were mostly in care of the Ministry of Finances; my translation) (*ibid: 194*). This entailed a higher charge for the National Theatres, which

were considered more as providers of revenue than institutions with an aesthetic, educational mission. The 1937 law preserved this context:

Dacă Ministerul Artelor dirija cultura în mod platonice, cel al Finanțelor guverna cu adevărat (căci dacă, într-o perioadă, Ministerul de Finanțe întorcea Ministerului Artelor o sumă neînsemnată din taxele pe spectacole, se ajunsese ca aceasta de-abia să ajungă pentru plata funcționarilor departamentului.) (If the Ministry of Arts was platonically managing the culture [sector], the Finances were governing it in practice. Thus, if some time ago, the Ministry of Finances returned to the Ministry of Arts a modest sum from the performance taxes, now this sum was barely enough to pay the department's public servants; my translation.) (ibid: 269–270)

The higher and higher taxes on performances became a burden for the National Theatres in the aftermath of the 1929 financial crisis.

The tensions between commercialism and aesthetics at the financial level caused by such a changing context point at Ibsen's vulnerable position in the repertory. The State's full support until 1930 encouraged masterpieces from the canonical foreign repertory as well as the national content and this favoured Ibsen's presence, especially between 1910 and 1930. The National Theatres not only staged Ibsen most in this period, but also experienced the most profitable Ibsen productions, namely *The Wild Duck* (1920) and *A Doll's House* (1921).

However, after 1930, this advantage faded as lower subsidy forced the theatres to turn to more profitable plays and Ibsen was staged less often. Although the National Theatres had to “servească ca școli pentru formarea gustului public și pentru încurajarea artei dramatice române” (serve as schools for shaping the public taste and for encouraging the Romanian dramatic art; my translation) (Lege pentru organizarea și administrarea teatrelor Naționale și controlul spectacolelor din România 1926: 3912), financial pressures forced them to put profitability before aesthetics.

Thus, the financial history of the National Theatre mingled public and private interests until 1947, and the number of Ibsen productions increased and decreased according to the financial situation and the profitability of his plays.

3.2.3 The National Theatre's management

The regular changes in the administration of the Romanian National Theatres added further instability and vulnerability to the weak financial framework of the National Theatres. The artists and the repertory were sensitive to these changes as the administrative fractures and the institutional decentralisation hindered the coagulation of a Romanian Ibsen tradition.

Firstly, the administration of the National Theatres of Romania was decentralised. The theatres had not always been under the State's administration. Between the Smaller Union of 1859 and the theatre law of 1910 which officially made the State the administrator of the three national theatres of Iași, Bucharest and Craiova, local public bodies were highly involved in the management of the local theatre life. For instance, in cities that had a permanent theatre building and ensemble, the mayor or his delegates supervised

the theatre activity (Burada 1975: 438, 460–461, 465, 474, 483, 497–499, 510, 550, 558; Firan 1978: 54–56). The National Theatre of Bucharest was placed under the protection of the State by law in 1877. As for the theatres of Iași and Craiova, the local public body further managed them until 1910, when the new law transferred them to the State's administration (*Lege pentru organizarea și administrarea teatrelor din România 1910*: 11802).

Secondly, the fluctuating management of the National Theatres was subject to the constant changes in the ministry controlling their activity. The 1877 and 1910 laws made the Ministry of Cults and Public Instruction the administrator of the National Theatre(s). However, in the new theatre law of 1926, the Ministry of Arts became the administrator of the National Theatres. The 1930 theatre law further moved the National Theatres to the administrative control of the Ministry for Work, Health and Social Protection. Finally, the law of 1937 sent the National Theatres back once again to the Ministry of Cults and Arts. Education, work, social protection and arts were all keywords applied to the theatre culture, but, it was aesthetics that ultimately defined the activity in the eyes of the Romanian public administration (*Lege pentru organizarea și administrarea teatrelor din România 1877*: 2313; *Lege pentru organizarea și administrarea teatrelor din România 1910*: 11803; *Lege pentru organizarea și administrarea teatrelor Naționale și controlul spectacolelor din România 1926*: 3912; *Lege pentru organizarea pe baze autonome a teatrelor naționale și operelor române 1930*: 5242; *Lege pentru organizarea Teatrelor Naționale, Operelor Române și a Spectacolelor 1937*: 2709).

Thirdly, the political changes led to managerial changes within the National Theatre. Few of the managers were acquainted with the practice of theatre: some were public servants who accidentally ended up as directors of a National Theatre,¹⁸ others were more concerned with theory than artistic practice.¹⁹ It was the regular changes of government that destabilised the theatre management most profoundly as a new manager was appointed every time the government fell. Of the 46 directors of the National Theatre in Bucharest (TNB I.L. Caragiale, n.d.), 29 worked there between 1894 and 1947. The situation was similar in Iași, Craiova and Cluj-Napoca. Between 1894 and 1947, the National Theatre of Iași had 26 directors, the National Theatre of Craiova had 22, whereas the National Theatre of Cluj-Napoca had 11 directors between 1919 and 1947 (*Teatrul National Cluj-Napoca*, n.d.).

Finally, the changes to the administrative structures created a constant crisis in the theatres until 1947 with three ministries directing the policy and the quick succession of theatre managers. Such a lack of continuity was not a favourable context for the development of a stable repertory. The overall fragmentation and lack of continuity inevitably impacted on Ibsen's assimilation into the Romanian repertory, yet the statistics demonstrate that his plays were a constant presence on the national stage.

18 Such examples are C.A. Rosetti, Grigore Bengescu, Constantin Cornescu, Grigore C. Cantacuzino, Constantin I. Stăncescu, Petre Grădișteanu, Scarlat Ghica or Ștefan Sihleanu.

19 One such example is the Romanian writer Camil Petrescu, who gave a critical perspective on the main concepts in the theatre practice of the time (1937).

3.2.3.1 Theatre administration and repertory

While the laws regulated the general framework of the repertory, they did not decide upon the particular plays that were to be performed on the National Theatres' stage, this responsibility was left with the theatres' administrative body. Depending on the stipulations in each theatre law, the managers of the national theatres collaborated with administrative committees of three to nine members. They were mainly appointed by either the ruling Prince, the Ministries in charge of administering the theatres, and the local public body (Lege pentru organizarea și administrarea teatrelor din România 1877: 2313; Lege pentru organizarea și administrarea teatrelor din România 1910: 11802; Lege pentru organizarea și administrarea teatrelor Naționale și controlul spectacolelor din România 1926: 3913; Lege pentru organizarea pe baze autonome a teatrelor naționale și operelor române 1930: 5243; Lege pentru organizarea Teatrelor Naționale, Operelor Române și a Spectacolelor 1937: 2710). What does this say about the balance of power in the administrative process of deciding the plays that were included in the repertory for each season?

Three types of agents participated in the management of the Romanian National Theatres and shaped the repertory according to their status within the administration. These agents were (1) State representatives, (2) men of letters, and (3) actors. The balance of their influences changed in response to every new theatre law that was implemented and the importance given to commercialist, protectionist or aesthetic considerations. Ibsen's position in the repertory shifted according to the position of these agents within the National Theatre's administration.

The first category of agents exerting their power upon the management of the National Theatres were the actors. Until 1910, their contribution was tied to the *sociétaires'* transfer of their entire repertoire to the National Theatre, but they had no legal right beyond this intervention. In this respect, the 1910 law granted the actors this right through their participation in both the administrative and the lecture committees, which also led to a qualitative improvement of the repertory (Lege pentru organizarea și administrarea teatrelor din România 1910: 11802–11803). However, the repertoire transfer favoured Ibsen because the actors had freely chosen to stage his plays even if their motives were an arbitrary mix of commercialism, protectionism and aesthetics. The actors were driven by financial needs, by their ambitions as stars and by the wish to contribute to the nation-building process alike. Ibsen remained in the repertory due to their efforts, although he never had more than a peripheral position.

The second category of agents influencing the repertory at the administrative level were the men of letters. Their dominance was strongest between 1910 and 1930, when the legislation not only gave the lecture committees²⁰ the highest power to decide upon the

20 "Comitetul de lectură al Teatrului național din București se compune din cinci persoane și anume: un reprezentant al Academiei Române, secția literară sau istorică recomandat de dânsa, un reprezentant al facultății de litere din București, recomandat de dânsa; un reprezentant al autorilor dramatici în vîieță, cari au avut cel puțin patru acte sau două piese reprezentate pe scena Teatrului național din București, numit de ministru, după o listă de trei, aleși de autorii dramatici; un om de litere cu o reputație bine stabilită, numit de ministrul instrucțiunii și al cultelor; un reprezentant al artiștilor societari, deosebit de acela care va figura în consiliul de administrație, numit de ministru după o listă de trei, aleși de artiștii societari, fie dintre ei, fie și în afară de numărul lor.

repertory, but also stated that its members should be renowned cultural personalities: teachers, actors, writers and critics (*Lege pentru organizarea și administrarea teatrelor din România 1910: 11802–11803*; *Lege pentru organizarea și administrarea teatrelor Naționale și controlul spectacolelor din România 1926: 3913*). It also stipulated the manager and the lecture committee's responsibility to supervise and check the translations of foreign plays (*Lege pentru organizarea și administrarea teatrelor din România: 11804*; *Lege pentru organizarea și administrarea teatrelor Naționale și controlul spectacolelor din România: 3914*). These facts suggest an interest in the aesthetic value of the repertory. The administrative council and the lecture committee worked separately, making the mix of aesthetic and protectionist interests visible, and separating them out from the managerial sector. The benefit of a lecture committee of literary specialists was evident when analysing the repertory choices particularly with regard to national plays and canonical foreign masterpieces such as Ibsen's plays. Thus, the administrative format of 1910 favoured the approval of Ibsen's plays; he was a canonical foreign author known to the Romanian men of letters. The law of 1926 preserved the power of the men of letters by adding further responsibilities to the lecture committee,²¹ which involved analysing the national repertory of the theatre, and assessing new plays seeking approval for staging. These changes remained favourable to Ibsen as the administrative structure imposed by the laws of 1910 and 1926 continued to privilege nationalist and aesthetic factors.

Thirdly, State representatives also influenced the repertory at the administrative level. They held a dominant position despite a lack of theatrical expertise, which suggests an on-going commercialist policy. This was already clear in the theatre law of 1877, when the State could delegate anyone to participate in the administration of the theatre,

La Iași comitetul de lectură, se va compune dintr'un reprezentant al Academiei Române, secția literară sau istorică, cu domiciliul în Iași, numit de ministrul instrucției; dintr'un reprezentant al facultății de litere, recomandat de dânsa; dintr'un om de litere cu o reputație bine stabilită, numit de ministrul instrucției, și dintr'un reprezentant al artiștilor societari, ales de aceștia, fie dintre ei, fie afară de numărul lor; la Craiova din doi membrii, numiți de ministrul instrucției publice, din cari unul profesor secundar, și dintr'un reprezentant al artiștilor societari, ales de aceștia, fie dintre ei, afară de numărul lor" (*Lege pentru organizarea și administrarea teatrelor din România 1910: 11802–11803*).

- 21 "Comitetul de lectură al Teatrului Național din București se compune din 7 persoane și anume: un reprezentant al Ministerului Artelor; un reprezentant al Academiei Române, recomandat de aceasta dintre membrii secțiilor literare sau istorice; un reprezentant al facultății de litere recomandat de aceasta; un reprezentant al artiștilor societari, ales de aceștia, fie dintre ei, fie afară de numărul lor, de pe o listă de 3 societari clasa I sau directori de scenă clasa I și numit de ministru și 3 reprezentanți ai Societății autorilor dramatici români, de pe o listă de 6, aleși de aceasta și numiți de ministru.

La toate celelalte Teatre Naționale comitetul de lectură se va compune din: directorul teatrului; un membru al Academiei Române, secția literară sau istorică, cu domiciliul în localitate; un reprezentant al facultății de litere, recomandat de aceasta, un reprezentant al artiștilor societari, de pe o listă de 3 aleși de aceștia și numit de ministru și un reprezentant al Ministerului Artelor, numit dintre scriitorii cu o reputație bine stabilită. În orașele în cari nu există Universitate, ori nu domiciliază un membru al Academiei, comitetul de lectură se va completa cu persoane având îndeletniciri literare sau artistice, alese de preferință din corpul didactic local și numite de Ministrul Artelor" (*Lege pentru organizarea și administrarea teatrelor Naționale și controlul spectacolelor din România 1926: 3913*).

regardless of their theatre knowledge. Most of the State representatives considered the National Theatre either as a business with potential to generate profit, or as a public service to provide revenue for the State. The 1877 law did not dictate the composition of the committees and left space for men of letters, but the law issued in 1930 was more prescriptive: the management was to be composed of a unique administrative council of 11 members including the manager, the administrator, representatives of the Government, actors and cultural personalities.²² The lecture committee no longer worked independently on repertory; the members of the administrative council shared this responsibility between 1910 and 1930. While the laws of 1910 and 1926 differentiated administrative from artistic duties, the law of 1930 merged them. This increased the power of the State representatives: the mayor and the representatives of the Ministry of Finances and Ministry of Work, Health and Social Protection gained the right to decide upon the repertory. The presence of the Ministry of Work, Health and Social Protection expressed the growing control of the State, but the inclusion of the Ministry of Finances in the administrative council demonstrated the State's expectations that the theatre would provide revenue. This administrative structure implemented a return to a strong commercial repertory policy. The only way for the theatre to gain more money was to focus on more commercial plays. Given that Ibsen had rarely been financially profitable in the past, these legal changes did little to promote his plays, and there was a numerical decrease in their performances after 1930.

The theatre law of 1937 maintained the powerful position of the State representatives at the administrative level. It changed the name of the administrative council to the steering committee, reducing also the number of members from eleven to eight.²³ The repertory was approved in the same way, yet the exclusion of the government representative

22 "Prin derogare dela legea pentru comercializarea întreprinderilor și avuțiilor publice, consiliul de administrație al fiecărei regii autonome se compune din: a) Directorul regiei; b) Administratorul, numai atunci când sunt în discuție chestiuni de ordin administrativ; e) Un delegat al ministrului de finanțe, desemnat de către ministrul de resort, dintre funcționarii superiori în activitate ai aceluia departament; d) Un delegat al Ministerului Muncii, Sănătății și Ocrotirilor Sociale, care va fi un jurist; e) Primarul municipiului respectiv sau un consilier municipal delegat al său; f) Un autor dramatic, desemnat prin alegere de Societatea Autorilor Dramatici Români; g) Un critic dramatic, desemnat prin alegere de Asociația Criticilor Dramatici și Muzicali; h) Doi reprezentanți ai personalului artistic, desemnat prin alegere de acel personal; i) O personalitate culturală, aleasă de preferință dintre foștii directori ai teatrelor naționale; j) Un reprezentant al Academiei Române, desemnat de acea instituție, dintre membrii secțiunilor literare sau istorice, cari au domiciliul în localitate" (Lege pentru organizarea pe baze autonome a teatrelor naționale și operelor române 1930: 5243).

23 "Comitetul de direcție se compune din: a) Directorul teatrului, ca președinte; b) Administratorul teatrului, numai atunci când se discută chestiuni administrative și financiare; e) Primarul municipiului sau un delegat al său, care nu va putea fi decât un ajutor de primar; d) Un profesor de universitate cu preocupări literare sau o personalitate culturală cu o recunoscută reputație literară sau teatrală desemnat de ministrul cultelor și artelor; e) Un jurist care, pentru Teatrul Național din București, va fi un avocat din Contenciosul Ministerului Cultelor și Artelor; f) Doi actori definitiv, unul desemnat prin alegere, de personalul artistic permanent al teatrului, iar celălalt desemnat de ministrul cultelor și artelor; g) Un critic teatral desemnat de ministrul cultelor și artelor, dintre membrii Asociației generale a criticilor dramatici și muzicali din România" (Lege pentru organizarea Teatrelor Naționale, Operelor Române și a Spectacolelor 1937: 2710).

from the committee diminished the commercial imperative and gave more power to the men of letters, though they never regained the same decision-making power as before 1930. The administrative structure established through the law of 1937 provided the most balanced repertory in terms of nationalist, aesthetic and commercial objectives. The decreased power of the State representatives favoured Ibsen, though the number of productions of his plays hardly increased between 1937 and 1947.

To conclude, actors, men of letters, and State representatives were both drivers of change and conflicting forces in the building of the Romanian national repertory, and, by implication, Ibsen's permanency on the Romanian stage.

3.2.4 Legislation and repertory

In what follows, I investigate the consequences of the entangled legislation upon the foreign repertory prior to 1947. The coexistence, tensions, and mixture of commercialist, protectionist and aesthetic aims in the theatre laws moulded this repertory and created the unstable framework for Ibsen's establishment on the Romanian stage. To interrogate the dynamics of these factors, I will analyse them separately. Where does Ibsen lose and where does he gain in these stories?

3.2.4.1 Commercialism

In some European contexts, Ibsen was viewed as a successful commercial playwright, as is demonstrated by the foreign touring productions visiting Romania. However, in the commercial context of the Romanian National Theatres, Ibsen's plays were seldom associated with high revenues. The picture is further complicated as there were definite financial advantages in presenting foreign plays in the early period as they were not subject to theatre royalties. Yet as this period was characterised by an overriding demand for high box-office returns and a low state subsidy, Ibsen still did not manage to flourish in the Romanian repertory.

To understand the balance between the State's expectations of revenue from the National Theatre and the commercial realities of running a theatre we need to examine the strong commercialist stipulations in the theatre laws issued in 1877, 1930 and 1930. Each law reflected different contexts, which impacted on the repertory in different ways.

The first theatre law issued on April 6, 1877 only included general remarks and restrictions concerning the choice of plays,²⁴ and it only applied to the repertory of the National Theatre of Bucharest. Legal "censorship" was only applied to moral and aesthetic principles. The Dramatic Society freely chose the national or foreign plays that best fitted its interests: national, aesthetic or commercial. Hence, many plays were chosen based on their potential for profit, rather than on aesthetics and national ideals. From this perspective, the box-office imperatives implied within the 1877 law hardly encouraged the

24 "Art. 26. Nicî uă piesă nouă traducție sau originală nu va putea fi jucată fără, prealabilă autorisare a direcțiunei generale, cu avizul comitetului, fiind bine înțeles că acest control se va exercita numai din punctul de vedere al esteticeii și acesta numai pe scena teatrului național" (Lege pentru organizarea și administrarea teatrelor din România 1877: 2314).

staging of Ibsen, particularly considering the small revenues generated by *Rosmersholm* in 1895 and *Ghosts* in 1897.

In 1930, commercial considerations once again dominated the selection of plays, after a period of 20 years during which protectionist and aesthetic priorities had been paramount. On the one hand, the 1877 law encouraging commercialism through the absence of tough restrictions affected the still inchoate repertory of a young national theatre. By contrast, the commercialist aims of the 1930 affected a ready-formed repertory, where national dramaturgy and foreign masterpieces had a stronger foothold than in 1877. The commercial perspective of the 1930 law moulded the repertory differently. The control of the State, through the management of the theatre as a *régie*, did not result in greater investment, but in a demand for more revenue from the National Theatres. The subsidy became a secondary financial support, and the theatre's need to rely on its own revenues to put the institution on a commercialist path. In fact, the commercialist and the protectionist policies in the 1930 law controlled the repertory, while aesthetics were relegated to a minor importance. The 1930 law did not benefit Ibsen; he was seen as a foreign playwright whose plays only seldom provided box-office hits and other playwrights were considered more attractive.

Finally, the 1937 law preserved the commercial perspective of the 1930 law, while providing more of a balance with both protectionism and aesthetics concerns. In addition, some of the protectionist restrictions imposed in 1930 were removed, but these did not create an opportunity for an increase in Ibsen production. As his plays were already performed less after 1930, the law did not change the previous situation.

3.2.4.2 Protectionism

Commercialism was not the only force shaping both the repertory and Ibsen's position within it. The emergence of the Romanian national state and theatre in the middle of the 19th century was tied to the need for a national repertory. How did the State use the laws to create a truly Romanian repertory and balance external influences with internal growth? The protectionist measures adopted in the laws adopted in 1910 and 1926 addressed these questions. They created a supportive framework not only for the development of a national dramaturgy, but also for the selection of foreign plays. The content of the two laws differed very little, but the law of 1910 was a reply to the 1877 law and the problems of a commercial repertory dominated by poorly translated foreign plays, staged more for commercial than aesthetic and educational reasons. In contrast, the law of 1926 stabilised the achievements of the 1910 law. The influence of these laws on the programming of Ibsen's play was, once again, mixed. The international theatre canon, of which Ibsen was part, could not be ignored in the development of a national repertory, but if a dialogue was to be established with the home-grown theatre it required careful choice of the foreign plays and better translations. After a period of more than 30 years during which the vague law of 1877 governed the Romanian theatre, the law adopted on March 27/April 9, 1910²⁵ made drastic changes. The most evident concerned the establishment of a protectionist policy upon the National Theatres' repertory:

25 There are two versions of the date because at the time both Julian and Gregorian calendars were in use in Romania.

Creația autohtonă, peisajul producțiilor proprii, agenda dramaturgilor vremii, afișul teatral nu sînt numai chestiuni de exegeză istorico-literară, ci comportă și delimitări, observații, de ordin administrativ-organizatoric. Stăruința, pledoaria pentru a se scrie și a se juca piese originale cu prioritate nu țin numai de un deziderat valabil permanent, de o continuitate a spiritului de afirmare, ci și de un curent conjunctural, care ia forma unor dispoziții și prevederi legale, a unor articole și alineate de regulament. (The local creation, the landscape of the original productions, the agenda of the epoch's playwrights, the play-bill are not simply a matter of historical-literary exegesis, they involve delimitations and observations concerning the administrative and organising content. The perseverance, the consideration for the staging of original plays not only depends on a permanently valid desideratum and a continuously assertive spirit, but also on legal dispositions and stipulations, and of articles and paragraphs included in regulations; my translation.) (Alterescu 1971: 25–26)

More specifically, the 1910 law sought to improve the translations, to develop the Romanian dramaturgy, to increase the number of productions of national plays, and to diminish the number of poor foreign plays. How did it manage all these things?

Firstly, the foreign performances were forbidden on the National Theatres' stage with one exception: "reprezentățiunile [...] artiștilor străini de o reputație cu totul excepțională, dimpreună cu trupele lor, cari ar putea servi ca model artiștilor noștri dramatici" (the performances of the foreign actors with an absolutely exceptional reputation, together with their troupes, which could serve as a model for our dramatic artists; my translation) (Lege pentru organizarea și administrarea teatrelor din România 1910: 11804). This restriction put a barrier on the many foreign theatre ensembles touring Romania and implicitly on foreign plays.

Secondly, it regulated the number of performances on the National Theatre's stage:

Teatrele subvenționate sunt obligate să joace cel puțin odată pe săptămână o piesă originală românească. Ele vor trebui să reprezinte în decursul fiecărei stagiuni cel puțin două piese românești noi. Acestea vor fi admise la început numai provizoriu, iar la sfârșitul stagiunii comitetul de lectură va hotărî dacă vor face parte din repertoriul definitiv al Teatrului național. (The subsidised theatres must stage an original Romanian play at least once a week. They will have to stage at least two new Romanian plays each season. These will be only provisionally admitted at the beginning. At the end of the season, the Lecture Committee will decide whether they will become part of the permanent repertory of the National Theatre; my translation.) (ibid: 11804)

This paragraph highlights the nationalist perspective of the law that encouraged the regular stagings of national rather than foreign plays, regardless of their permanency in the repertory.

Thirdly, the regulation for the implementation of the law stated that: "Piese românești vor avea precădere asupra tutelor pieselor străine" (the Romanian plays will have priority over all foreign plays; my translation) (Aplicarea legii de organizare și administrare a teatrelor din România 1910: 7259). Thus, neither aesthetics, nor profitability of the plays mattered more than the development of a national dramaturgy.

Fourthly, the national dramaturgy was financially supported by the National Theatre. The institution granted “la fiecare doi ani câte trei premii pentru cele mai bune piese de teatru scrise în limba română” (three prizes for the best plays written in Romanian every two years; my translation) (*Lege pentru organizarea și administrarea teatrelor din România 1910: 11804*). Moreover, in case of a budget surplus, it granted “la fiecare cinci ani să se dea premii autorilor dramatici români ale căror opere vor fi produs mai mult sau vor fi avut o mai mare valoare artistică” (prizes every five years to those playwrights whose work produced more revenues or had a greater artistic value; my translation) (*ibid: 11807*).

It is clear that such a protectionist policy worked against Ibsen’s assimilation. Since foreign tours played a major role in introducing his plays on the Romanian stage, this restriction affected Ibsen through its blocking of foreign influences. The effect of the law must have been immediate; after 1910 the number of foreign companies touring productions of Ibsen to Romania decreased drastically.

The law issued on March 21, 1926 changed little of the 1910 law, but preserved the protectionist dimension. Foreign tours were not admitted on the National Theatre’s stage. The law eliminated though the 1910 tight restrictions regarding the number of stagings of national plays. Foreign plays were to be used to fill in the repertory, rather than as a first alternative, and not all foreign plays were admitted, only those written by famous classic or modern authors.

The domination of such a long-lasting protectionist hold over the repertory points to dangers of competition from foreign plays to the national dramaturgy. The former’s financial success and aesthetic quality were the main reasons for the tensions between the foreign and national product leading to the strict 1910 regulation. This law was an incentive for national dramatists and Romanian dramaturgy developed in the interwar period. One might expect that the protectionist theatre laws of 1910 and 1926 resulted in a sharp decrease in the number of foreign plays with an equivalent increase of Romanian plays in the repertory, but the statistics indicate this was not the case. While the number of Romanian plays certainly did increase, some foreign plays still retained their dominant position. One example was the unchanged prominence of French plays in the repertory of the National Theatre of Iași between 1909 and 1929, precisely when the most protectionist legislation was in force in Romania.

The last two laws issued on July 10, 1930 and March 20, 1937 were still marked by protectionism, but counterbalanced by the revival of commercialist measures. The law of 1930 allowed the consecrated plays of renowned foreign playwrights to remain in the repertory, yet “reprezentarea în fiecare stagiune, a cel puțin trei piese din repertoriul vechiu original, este obligatorie” (the staging of at least three plays from the original old repertory each season is mandatory; my translation) (*Lege pentru organizarea pe baze autonome a teatrelor naționale și operelor române 1930: 5250*). Additionally, the internal tours’ repertory “vor cuprinde cu precădere piese [...] originale din repertoriul teatrelor naționale” (should mostly include original plays from the repertory of the National Theatres; my translation) (*ibid: 5250*). The “equal proportions” (*Lege pentru organizarea și administrarea teatrelor Naționale și controlul spectacolelor din România 1926: 3915*) of original and foreign dramatic texts stipulated in the law of 1926 were no longer preserved,

as the law required that the repertory be dominated by national plays, thus creating fewer opportunities for staging Ibsen.

The law issued on March 20, 1937 maintained the protectionist and commercial characteristics of the 1930 law. It strengthened the former, highlighting its dominant force, by reintroducing the 1910 stipulation concerning foreign language productions with a stricter wording:

În mod cu totul excepțional se pot admite să joace în limbi străine trupe oficiale ale teatrelor străine de Stat sau subvenționate de Stat, de reputațiune consacrată și numai cu aprobarea ministrului cultelor și artelor. (Absolutely exceptionally, the official troupes of the theatres of the State or subsidised by the State can be admitted to perform in foreign languages, but only if they have an acknowledged reputation and only with the approval of the Minister of Cults and Arts; my translation.) (Lege pentru organizarea Teatrelor Naționale, Operelor Române și a Spectacolelor 1937: 2716)

3.2.4.3 Aesthetics

The protectionist policy of most Romanian theatre laws until 1947 targeted not only the development of a national repertory, but also the aesthetic dimension of the entire repertory. Ibsen directly benefited from this provision, particularly with the acknowledgment in Romania of his role as both an aesthetic innovator and as the author of modern classics. His impact as a canonical playwright increased once the Romanian theatre legislation explicitly empowered aesthetics as a major criterion for the establishment of the repertory. The entanglement in the decisions over repertory is visible here as aesthetics never achieved the same power as commercialism or protectionism, but never ceased to be a reference point.

The 1877 law had allowed actors to propose any play for staging, which encouraged them to participate in the renewal of the repertory with innovative or experimental productions. The lack of any severe restrictions worked in Ibsen's favour in 1877, encouraging the theatre agents to stage any play they considered valuable. The actors were attracted to some of Ibsen's characters because they allowed for the possibility of virtuoso performance. As we will see later, the actors were the major Ibsenites in Romania prior to 1947. In this respect, the vagueness of the 1877 law created a permeable framework that allowed Ibsen's plays to sometimes penetrate. Nevertheless, the improvement of the aesthetic quality of the repertory remained of secondary importance in contrast to the pronounced commercialist intentions of the law.

The laws of 1910 and 1926 demonstrate that the State aimed at improving the overall quality of plays by means of legislative control. The law of 1910 reveals its aesthetic aims in the focus on the quality of the translations of the foreign plays. In this respect, the translations of foreign plays were declined unless "conforme cu geniul limbii noastre" (in conformity with the spirit of our language; my translation) (Lege pentru organizarea și administrarea teatrelor din România 1910: 11804). This statement points to the linguistic inaccuracies in many translations of the foreign plays staged in Romania. These inaccuracies were mostly due to actors translating the plays; their lack of literary knowl-

edge was made worse by the use of indirect translations.²⁶ This law transferred the responsibility of translating foreign plays to acknowledged writers and translators with a literary background. They also enforced a stricter selection, enhancing the quality of the foreign repertory by choosing plays from the international theatre canon, instead of the melodramas, farces and vaudevilles popular at the time. Pompiliu Eliade, the manager of the National Theatre of Bucharest, who also drafted the law in 1908–1909 (Eliade 1909), was interested in staging dramatic masterpieces based on accurate literary translations. Thus, the stipulations concerning aesthetics favoured Ibsen, and his presence in the repertory remained stable, even slightly increasing after 1910. His recognition as the author of modern classics contributed to the inclusion of his masterpieces in the repertory of the National Theatre of Bucharest, as well as ensuring that his plays were adequately translated.

The aesthetic criterion never achieved the same influence over the repertory as the commercial and protectionist criteria, in spite of its permanency in the game. Paradoxically, it was constantly overcome by the other two perspectives, yet constantly undermined them. For example, in spite of the increasing number of Romanian plays performed after 1910, historians point to their poor quality. Frequently, “instituția este criticată pentru nepricepere în alegerea pieselor, pentru nefuncționarea unui criteriu calitativ ferm în selecționarea și promovarea lucrărilor românești” (the institution is criticised because of its inability to choose the plays and to apply functional, firm qualitative criteria in the selection and promotion of the Romanian dramatic works; my translation) (Alterescu 1971: 34). The statistics indicate a stable preference for foreign plays regardless of their origin, genre and aesthetic quality. Thus, the legal protectionism led more to a quantitative than qualitative progress, and only a few of the national productions had a long life on the Romanian stage and could compete with the most influential foreign plays:

Forța unui repertoriu constă în dramaturgia originală – dar numai în aceea valoroasă – și în marile piese ale marelui repertoriu; în stagiunea 1919–1920, de exemplu, se bucură de un memorabil succes *Rața sălbatică*, una dintre cele mai grele piese din repertoriul ibsenian, în timp ce douăsprezece piese originale, acceptate după necunoscute criterii, nu obțin confirmarea spectatorilor. (The force of a repertory lies in the national dramaturgy – but only the valuable one – and in the great plays of the great repertory; for instance, in the 1919–1920 theatre season, *The Wild Duck*, one of the most difficult Ibsen plays, witnessed a memorable success, whereas twelve original plays, admitted [in the repertory] based on unknown criteria, did not achieve the spectators' confirmation; my translation.) (Alterescu 1971: 34)

26 That is, Ibsen's plays were usually not translated directly from Norwegian, but from a secondary language, such as German. Besides, a translation was not only a way of promoting the repertory the actors preferred, but also a pretext for more financial gains, as the translators were paid separately for their work. A repertory dominated by foreign plays meant minimal expenses and more revenues for the actors, as the theatres hardly paid any royalties to the foreign author. Beside the French authors, who eventually demanded that the Romanian state pay royalties, other foreign authors' rights were hardly considered.

Restricting the number of the foreign plays did not mean that they were abolished from the repertory, since no protectionist policy could regulate the revenues of a performance or the quality of a play. In the 33 years that were free of clear repertory restrictions after the law of 1877 and the introduction of the 1910 protectionist law, the foreign repertory had established its position as more powerful financially and aesthetically than the newly emerging national repertory.

The law of 1926 echoed the same weakness in the implementation of aesthetic considerations, which were still subordinate to nationalist criterion. For instance, the law allowed foreign plays to be performed “in equal proportions”²⁷ with national plays during the National Theatres’ domestic tours. Although it preserved the protectionist dimension introduced in 1910, it also acknowledged the role of the canonical foreign plays in the establishment of a repertory. Hence, the National Theatres implicitly gained freedom to perform more foreign plays than in the previous 16 years. This was also a consequence of the increased number of Romanian plays and stagings in the National Theatres introduced by the 1910 law. Nationalism dominated this law, but the support it offered to foreign masterpieces demonstrates that aesthetic principles also mattered on the Romanian stage.

As for Ibsen, the law of 1926 activated the same aesthetic and nationalist factors as the previous law. As was the case in 1910, his assimilation was no longer promoted through foreign tours, but the preference for canonical, acknowledged foreign playwrights continued and privileged the staging of Ibsen in Romania for a further four years, until the new law of 1930. The period between 1910 and 1930 marks Ibsen’s consecration on the Romanian stage with the greatest number of performances of his plays, despite the implementation of a protectionist repertory policy. Ibsen’s classicisation on the Romanian stage proves that the law’s aesthetic aims, resulting in the promotion of dramatic foreign masterpieces, achieved its goals.

Finally, the entanglement of commercial, national and aesthetic principles in the Romanian theatre laws affected not only the general development of the National Theatres’ repertory until 1947, but also Ibsen’s assimilation. As commercialist policies privileged revenues, Ibsen was only considered if his plays were financially profitable. The laws dominated by protectionism generally restricted the staging of foreign plays which inevitably worked against Ibsen. Thirdly, the aesthetic perspective favoured the most prestigious dramatic masterpieces and playwrights and here Ibsen was clearly privileged. The mix of these aims emerged differently in each law, exposing Ibsen’s position in the repertory to contradictory factors. These factors were themselves constantly shifting in their assessment of financial potential, origin, and aesthetic quality of plays. Despite all these changes Ibsen still maintained a constant background presence in the repertory, but this presence was subject to numerous fractures, which hindered a lasting coagulation of a dominant Romanian Ibsen tradition.

27 “vor cuprinde neapărat piese originale din repertoriul Teatrelor Naționale, în proporții egale cu cele străine” (Lege pentru organizarea și administrarea teatrelor Naționale și controlul spectacolelor din România 1926: 3915).

3.2.5 Conclusions

To sum up, the stability and the low power of coagulation that characterise the paradoxical position of Ibsen in the repertory were dictated by the regularity of the institutional fractures in the Romanian theatre life until 1947. This broken financial, administrative and legislative framework caused incessantly fluctuations between commercialist, protectionist and aesthetic views. These three elements were the main factors that underpinned a struggle for control of the repertory that prevented the coagulation into a unitary tradition. There was no unified and purist perspective governing the establishment of the national repertory, it changed with each law. This continuous readjustment of the institutional frameworks inevitably impacted on the growth of the Romanian Ibsen tradition.

Fluctuation and fragmentation lie at the heart of the institutional development of the Romanian theatre life until 1947. Firstly, the unstable financial framework pushed the theatre agents towards a commercial rather than an aesthetically justified repertory. Secondly, the decentralisation of the administrative framework increased the tensions between the State representatives, the men of letters, and the actors who were vying for control over the repertory. These tensions did not result in a simple, if problematic, coexistence of commercialism, protectionism and aesthetics, but rather in a series of irregular combinations. The agents of the State generally privileged commercial interests with national or aesthetic interests only given subsidiary importance; but the men of letters privileged national and aesthetic interests above everything else. Meanwhile, the actors followed an unstable path, mingling commercial, national and aesthetic interests alike. To sum up, when looking at the financial, administrative and legislative frameworks together, the commercial aspect emerges as the strongest factor despite the importance of the nationalist perspective. Aesthetics appears as the weakest, even peripheral factor, yet it is constantly in the background. Usually this aesthetic aspect involved the assessment of a play with regard to the accepted European literary and theatre canon, and it is with this regard that it is relevant to Ibsen's paradoxical position in the Romanian theatre. The stability of the aesthetic factor in the evolution of the Romanian repertory, despite its secondary status, ensured Ibsen presence on the national stage. In other words, despite the contradictory financial, protectionist and aesthetic forces at work in the Romanian national repertory, Ibsen had a remarkably stable, even if minor involvement in the repertory. At no point did his plays surge in popularity or drop completely out of fashion. Instead, they informed a Romanian Ibsen tradition marked by constant fragmentation, fluctuation and fluidity.

Table 1: Repertory statistics National Theatre of Cluj, 8 out of 29 theatre seasons

Origin of the play	1923-1924	1924-1925	1925-1926	1927-1928	1934-1935	1936-1937	1939-1940	1940-1941
American	-	-	-	-	-	-	1	-
Austrian	-	-	-	-	1	-	-	-
Czech	-	-	-	-	-	-	1	-
English	4	2	2	1	3	6	3	2
French	6	9	15	11	7	8	9	4
German	1	4	3	1	2	3	4	2
Greek	-	1	-	1	-	1	-	-
Hungarian	-	-	1	-	1	-	-	-
Italian	1	1	1	2	-	-	7	1
Norwegian	2	2	1	2	1	1	1	1
Romanian	8	8	7	12	12	11	7	9
Russian	-	1	1	2	-	1	-	-
Spanish	-	-	-	-	-	2	-	-

Table 2: Repertory statistics National Theatre of Craiova, 3 out of 47 theatre seasons

Origin of the play	1907-1908	1914-1915	1915-1916	1926-1927
Czech	-	-	-	1
English	2	-	1	2
French	15	4	4	5
German	1	-	3	1
Greek	-	-	1	-
Hungarian	-	-	1	-
Italian	3	1	-	-
Norwegian	1	1	1	1
Romanian	8	5	7	14
Russian	-	-	1	-
Yiddish	-	-	1	1

Table 3: Private theatre companies repertory statistics

Origin of the play	1915–1916 Mărioara Voiculescu- Bulandra	1920- 1921	1921- 1922	1922–1923 Mărioara Voiculescu	1924–1925 Mărioara Voiculescu	1926- 1927	1943- 1944
English	-	1	1	-	-	-	-
French	8	9	2	1	1	13	4
German	-	1	2	1	2	1	-
Hungarian	-	-	1	-	-	3	-
Italian	2	-	-	-	-	1	1
Norwegian	1	1	1	1	1	1	1
Romanian	-	5	3	-	-	-	3
Russian	1	-	-	-	-	1	-
Swedish		-	-	-	-	1	-

Part Four

4.1 Romanian Ibsenites

4.1.1 Introduction

The coexistence of multiple Ibsen traditions displayed by the foreign tours on the Romanian stage up until 1947 is the starting point of this part. The polyphony witnessed in the contact with the foreign Ibsen productions was not, however, a mere collage. We can identify at least two main patterns relevant to our further analysis of Ibsen in Romania. The first concerns the dominant role of the actor in the Romanian Ibsen tradition in the pre- and interwar periods. The second tells us about the capacity of the Romanian theatre culture to carry on the divergent foreign traditions in the national Ibsen production.

In this part of the thesis, I explore these two aspects by focusing on the Romanian actors' and directors' roles in the national Ibsen production. I argue that the star actors were the main agents responsible for the dissemination of Ibsen's plays on the Romanian stage until 1947. Moreover, their renditions account for a complex mix of various acting genres that the foreign companies previously introduced as interpretive tools for Ibsen's plays.

The Romanian actors incorporated these genres to enhance their virtuoso approaches to the performance of Ibsen's characters. Therefore, they mixed techniques brought in from genres associated with different national theatre cultures, yet they had no pure acting style recipe. Each one of the most influential Romanian Ibsen actors assimilated these genres in a unique manner. Based on the foreign Ibsen tours, they included Romanticism, Italian *verismo*, naturalism, realism and German Expressionism.

Our understanding of the mix of genres in the Romanian Ibsen production depends on the meaning of these terms. Although their intertwining is inevitable because of both the similarities and the differences that connect them, a brief definition of their major features is necessary in order to move more easily through this entangled landscape. However, as the terms are slippery, as will become clear in their usage by the actors that are the subject of this part, I provide some generalised definitions here. More nuanced explanations of these terms will be unpacked in the analysis of the Romanian Ibsen key contributors and of the mix of genres in their contribution.

Firstly, the romantic acting tradition was characterised by the use of declamation, broad gestures and a static bodily posture, which were nevertheless common to the classic acting tradition too. However, in contrast to both the classic and the other acting traditions, Romanticism's focus was the beautiful, idealistic display of powerful passions in its French, German, Italian and English variants alike. If classicism sought the representation of ideal beauty on stage and an emotionally controlled composure, Romanticism sought beauty in the representation of conflicting passions and ideals, marked by a strong emotional discharge, as Camil Petrescu suggests: "Romantismul a înlocuit formalismul calofil cu formalismul antitetic." (Romanticism replaced the beautiful formalism with the antithetic formalism; my translation.) (1937: 52) He also confirms that "teatrul romantic [...] avea să împingă declamația și acțiunea la paroxism, să părăsească orice contact cu realitatea" (the Romantic theatre [...] would push declamation and action to paroxyst limits, would abandon any contact with the reality; my translation) (ibid: 55).

Italian *verismo* preserved the powerfully emotional renditions. However, the name itself, which highlights a particular interest in "truth" (*vero*) and "truthfulness" (*verismo*), indicates it as a version of realism. Its specificity lies in the strong, even exacerbated focus on the human body's pathology, heredity and physiology. The intention of the *verismo*'s actor was to move the audience by giving the most loyal bodily illustration of the human passions:

Așa-zisul *verism italian* este grija de a reda pe scenă, în cele mai neînsemnate amănunte, chiar procesele vitale și adesea tarele patologice ale personajilor. (The so-called *Italian verismo* is the care taken to represent on stage the most insignificant details, even the vital processes and often the pathological deficiencies; my translation). (ibid: 63)

Italian *verismo* (realism) was often confused with or approached as a species of naturalism. They are, however, two different genres. They both strive for "truthfulness" and "naturalness", but the perspective upon their embodiment on stage differs. Naturalism's understanding of the "natural" as consecrated by the French and German theatre practitioners had little to do with the Italian actors' excessive pathological renditions. Heredity mattered in both genres, yet the naturalist actors were interested in how the human being was conditioned by its environment not only physiologically, but also intellectually. Otherwise, naturalism focused on the representation of the world on stage as a copy of the world offstage, with its many "truths", instead of one ideal "Truth". Typically, this entailed the use of everyday speech, gestures, postures, costumes, and a stage design bringing the epoch's environment on stage, marking

devotamentul [...] către adevărul amănuntelor, onestitatea și modestia temelor alese, necesitatea sprijinirii în soliditatea realului, opuse grandiosului de carton și impostură, monumentalului de pânză și minciunii declamatoare. (the devotion to the truth of the details, the sincerity and modesty of the chosen topics, the need to find its support in the solidity of reality, opposed to the grandiosity of the cardboard and the imposture, to the monumentality of the canvas and the declamatory lie; my translation) (ibid: 69).

A thorny, slippery term of this overview is “realism”. The concept is tightly connected to naturalism, but variations such as poetical or stylized realism prove its versatility. In Ibsen’s words, realism entailed that “the effect of the play depends to a large degree on making the audience believe that they are sitting and listening and watching something that is happening out there in real life itself” (Helland and Holledge 2019: 93). However, the many nuances that were employed to represent reality on stage in order to create this belief in the audience’s mind points to realism as a slippery concept. Its numerous understandings and embodiments depended sometimes entirely on each theatre practitioner’s perspective.

Finally, German Expressionism heightened the theatricalisation process and moved it further from any mimetic representation of the environment:

Această căutare a esenței, prin dematerializarea și devitalizarea concretului, prin deumanizarea individualului și formularea plastică a tipicului, e de fapt o stilizare, și, în mod firesc, teatrul nou [expresionist] a fost caracterizat ca folosind o scenă stilizatoare (Stilbühne) ca opusă vechii scene iluzioniste (Illusionsbühne), care își dădea toate silințele să dea iluzia realității. (This searching for the essence through the dematerialisation and devitalisation of the concrete, through the dehumanisation of the individuality and the plastic formulation of types is, in fact, a stylisation. And, naturally, the new [expressionist] theatre was characterised by its use of a stylising stage (Stilbühne), opposed to the old illusionary stage (Illusionsbühne), which strived to give the sensation of reality; my translation) (Petrescu 1937: 121)

The most specific expressionist characteristics were the focus on strong emotions and on the representation of archetypes, essentialised patterns or ideals both in the acting and in the stage design. The latter was of special interest for the expressionist theatre practitioners, who focused intensely on the technical environment of the productions, especially on the visual tools. The lighting, the colours of the background, the opulence or the stylising of the stage design are some of their tools, which also attest the connection with the epoch’s avant-garde.

The most important thing is that all these genres coexisted as interpretative approaches and did not solidify into a single Romanian tradition. In fact, they are hardly independent traditions working against each other, but rather connected throughout time.

The notion of *histoire croisée* becomes a useful theoretical framework here, as it helps us work through the interweaving of the multiple theatre traditions coexisting in Romanian Ibsen productions before 1947. It is thus a central tool to analyse Ibsen’s position and impact within a fluid background in which the actors are the main agents of cultural transmission.

4.1.1.1 Whom?

My approach to the Romanian contributors’ effort to promote Ibsen on the Romanian stage is based on case studies. It takes 12 key contributors and provides an overview of their impact and of the major patterns they generated in the Romanian Ibsen produc-

tions. How do we find out who the main contributors responsible for Ibsen's dissemination on the Romanian stage were?

First, I interrogated the IbsenStage dataset¹ for patterns of activity regarding actors and directors in the Contributors field. Then, I organised the material into tables and graphs for actors and directors separately. I further split the dataset into three subsets, gathering separately the leading role actors, the secondary role actors and the directors. The most relevant subsets at this preliminary stage are the ones concerning the leading role actors and the directors.

The preliminary statistical results indicate that 277 Romanian actors performed in the 110 Romanian Ibsen stagings (Figure 29)², compared to the number of 25 directors registered in only 61 events (Figure 32). Most of these contributors performed and staged Ibsen occasionally, often just once in their career. This part deals with those contributors who rank above a certain number of events. A subsidiary list of actors in secondary roles provides supporting information highlighting the dominant role of the star actors, while pointing to a slowly developing ensemble tradition.

The statistics on leading role actors indicate 12 actors with a quantitatively more consistent presence in minimum four and maximum 15 events as protagonists (Figure 30).³ Their contribution and the major patterns they generated in the Romanian Ibsen production is at the heart of this part of the thesis. Only six actors had a strong presence in secondary roles in minimum five events and maximum nine events. In addition, 16 actors performed secondary roles in four events (Figure 31). Compared to the statistics on the leading roles, this indicates the dominant power of the stars and the lesser, yet growing impact of the ensembles. Finally, a last look at the actors cast in both leading and secondary roles confirms the power of the star actors. More specifically, actors in secondary roles seldom performed leading roles, whereas the star actors in leading roles also have a stronger quantitative position, even in secondary roles.

The director statistics confirm the power of the star actors once again. Only one director out of 25 emerges as statistically relevant until 1947: Paul Gusty (13 events). His statistical importance, confirmed by historiographic resources, makes his contribution in this part as important as that of the actors. The second and third most relevant directors on the list, Ștefan Braborescu (9 events) and Stanca Alecsandrescu (5 events) were also trained and performed as star actors. As for the remaining 22 directors on the list, they are all registered with less than five events, which makes their contribution less quantitatively significant. However, we must remember that the "director" function was split at least until 1907 in the Romanian theatre. Whereas the stage director was the leading role actor, today's "director" was, at the time, the stage manager. Paul Gusty is one such example, slowly switching from the stage manager to the position of stage director. Although we cannot account for this split through statistics alone, we still see that star actors and directors shared the responsibility for the staging. The statistics also indicate a tension

1 A detailed analysis of the IbsenStage data interrogation can be found as a technical appendix at the end of the thesis.

2 The chart includes only the actors who performed in at least four events.

3 Given the lack of material on one of the actors in this statistics, Nicu Dimitriu, I only focus on the contribution of the other 11 of the actors who performed leading roles in Ibsen's plays.

between them, given that almost half of directors were star actors. More specifically, 26 events were directed by star actors and 35 events by actual directors (Figure 33). The low number of 61 events in the director statistics out of 110 events in Romanian confirms the star actor's power in the Romanian Ibsen production until 1947.

Finally, the 12 most important contributors in the statistics whose activity I investigate here are State Dragomir, Aglae Pruteanu, Agatha Bârsescu, Aristide Demetriade, Petre Sturdza, Ion Manolescu, Mărioara Voiculescu, Agepsina Macri-Eftimiu, Nicolae Soreanu, Aurel Athanasescu, George Ciprian and Paul Gusty.

4.1.1.2 The Romanian theatre before Ibsen

Before examining the contribution of these actors, we must consider the Romanian theatre landscape before Ibsen was performed for the first time in 1894. The three aspects of interest are as follows: the actors' dominant position in the early Romanian theatre, the main genres embedded in their performances, and their actor training. This overview will also highlight Ibsen's impact upon the evolution of the Romanian theatre and the mechanisms by which he was assimilated into this theatre culture.

4.1.1.2.1 Why do actors dominate?

The Romanian actors' powerful position was a reflection of Romanian theatre life until 1947. As a young theatre culture, it had emerged out of the efforts of amateur actors. Early actor-managers such as Costache Caragiale, Matei Millo and Mihail Pascaly held together the decentralised framework of the theatre activity in Moldavia, Wallachia and Transylvania before the establishment not only of the national theatres but also of the national state. The lack of institutional support encouraged them to embark upon an independent, mainly itinerant activity, defining them as star actors and ensemble managers. Their tours created temporary moments of contact, ensuring the dissemination of Romanian-speaking productions across these regions.

The national theatres' foundation in the middle of the 19th century in Iași (1848), Craiova (1850) and Bucharest (1852) did not provide strong institutional support. The short seasons, which left the actors without a secure income for almost half a year, forced them to tour the country for a living. Thus, they preserved their status as managers and stars. Moreover, the theatre law of 1877, copying the French model, consecrated an actor-based system through the foundation of the Dramatic Society, which the regulations supported as late as 1930, although it lost its practical significance much earlier.

Finally, the "benefit" system established by law strengthened the star actors' position by granting them influence upon the repertory. A "benefit" was a performance granted to the members of the Dramatic Society, which generated additional income to compensate for the lack of any official revenue during the rehearsals and summer season.⁴ The actors were almost entirely free to choose the play, organise the performance, and ben-

4 The way of organising the benefit performances was regulated through the *Implementation regulation* of the theatre law issued in 1877, in the paragraphs 63–73 (*Regulament pentru organizarea și administrarea teatrelor și cafenelelor-concerte din România* 1889: 46–49).

efit from its revenues.⁵ Yet the institution monopolised the actor's work by law after the performance, when its stagecraft and the play's translation became the theatre's property.⁶ In practice, many actors considered these performances humiliating because of the principally commercial aim,⁷ although they were also the perfect occasion to introduce new plays in the repertory and to experiment. Ibsen was introduced on the Romanian stage mainly through "benefit" performances before 1900: *An Enemy of the People* starring C. Ionescu in Iași in 1894, *Rosmersholm* starring Aristizza Romanescu in 1895 and *Ghosts* starring Constantin Nottara in Bucharest in 1897.⁸

All these factors favoured an actor-dominated industry in Romania well into the 20th century. Although this was also the period of the great actor-managers in Europe, they were backed by strong European theatre institutions, unlike their Romanian counterparts. While the influence of star actors waned due to changes in the industrial organi-

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- 5 "Art.63. Artistul său artista care are beneficiu prin contractul său, este obligat, fără excepție, a prezenta directorului scenei piesa ce 'și-a ales cu o lună înainte de data însemnată pe contract pentru beneficiul lui [...]. Art.66. Alegerea pieselor de beneficiu se va face de directorul scenei d'impreună cu beneficiarul." (Art.63.The actor or the actress who was granted a benefit performance by contract is obliged without exception to present the play (s)he chose to the stage director one month before the date established by contract for his benefit performance [...]. Art.66. The plays for the benefit performances will be chosen by the stage director together with the respective actor; my translation) (Regulament pentru organizarea și administrarea teatrelor și cafenelelor-concerte din România 1889: 46).
- 6 "Art.67. [...] Cheltuielile făcute pentru decoruri, costume, rechizite se vor plăti pe din două și lucrurile ce s'ar fi făcut la beneficiu [...] vor rămânea, fără excepție, ale teatrului. [...] Art. 71. Tote piesele ce se vor juca în beneficiul D-lor artiști și D-nelor artiste, fără excepție, vor rămânea proprietate a administrației teatrului și la complectarea ei dispoziție, d'impreună cu muzica acelor piese." (Art.67. [...] The expenses for stage design, costumes, props will be divided in two, and all the objects resulting from the work with the benefit performances [...] will become the theatre's property without exception. [...] Art. 71. All the plays and the music for the benefit performances granted to our dear actors and actresses will remain, without exception, the property of the theatre's administration and entirely at its disposal; my translation) (Regulament pentru organizarea și administrarea teatrelor și cafenelelor-concerte din România 1889: 48).
- 7 Aristizza Romanescu is only one of the actors who mentioned the "benefit" performance as "o parte umilitoare a carierei mele" (a humiliating part of my career; my translation) (1960: 126) and as "împerecherea asta de cuvinte jignitoare, prozaică, negustorească" (this pairing of words that is so offensive, prosaic and mercantile; my translation) (126) in her memoirs. She even gives an example from one of the epoch's newspapers, *Dreptatea*, who defines more clearly the scope of these performances: "directia teatrului, din pornire caritabilă, ca un ajutor, ca să nu zicem altfel, cedează artistei venitul unei reprezentații" (as a form for charity and help, the theatre's managers give away the income of one performance to the artist ; my translation) (126).
- 8 The benefit system was abolished in 1905 by Alexandru Davila, even before the new theatre law of 1910 would eliminate it officially: "N-a mai îngăduit, de la începutul stagiunii 1905–1906, reprezentațiile de 'beneficiu', care constituiseră zeci de ani o adevărată plagă a teatrului românesc, prilejuind însășiarea unor spectacole ocazionale în care domnea superficialitatea, dând o culoare pronunțat comercialistă artei dramatice și contribuind la înjosirea actorului, la umilirea lui." (Already from the beginning of the 1905–1906 season, he no longer admitted the 'benefit' performances, which had been a real plague of the Romanian theatre for decades. These performances allowed the basting of occasional, superficial performances which impressed a strongly commercialist shade on the dramatic art and contributed to the actor's abasement and humiliation; my translation) (Vasilii 1965: 107–108).

sation within the established European theatre cultures, particularly with regard to the director-dominated organisation of theatre production, the star actors in the Romanian theatre remained the real *chef d'emploi*.

4.1.1.2.2 Early acting approaches before Ibsen

What did the Romanian actors bring to their Ibsen productions that did not derive or borrowed from the foreign Ibsen touring productions in the 19th century? The two genres that were already present in Romanian theatre culture were Classicism and Romanticism; they were marked by the declamation technique used in both dramas and comedies. Matei Millo (Alterescu 1971: 281–286), the most influential comedy actor at the time, employed a classical declamatory acting style. Mihail Pascaly (ibid: 286–291), the most influential drama actor, also employed a romantic declamatory acting style that persisted in Romanian theatre practice until late into the interwar period. While dramas were associated with romantic acting, the interpretation in comedies moved from classicism to realism under the influence of I. L. Caragiale and Paul Gusty. Other acting traditions associated with the popular or amateur theatre movements were underdeveloped at this time.

4.1.1.2.3 Actor training traditions

Comedy and drama created the development framework in the Romanian theatre through the shaping of the actor training in the middle of the 19th century. Two recognisable traditions emerged: the drama school and the comedy school. The key difference between them was the dominance in the drama school of romantic acting built around the star performer, in contrast to an ensemble, realism-oriented practice in the comedy school.

The key terms “drama school” and “comedy school” not only governed the organisation of the Romanian theatre life. They were two interconnected, unofficial hubs that shaped the National Theatres of Iași and Bucharest’s activity until late into the interwar period.⁹ In practice, the drama and comedy ensembles embodied the two “schools”, but the “ensemble” notion here does not imply a group of actors associated with a specific play, time frame or an industrial approach. Its meaning is tied to the genre of plays performed by a group of actors throughout generations. Thus, the “schools” evoke more tradition and continuity than a training profile. They reveal a mechanism of vertical transmission based on the connection between older and younger actors within the two schools.

The emergence of these schools is rooted in the establishment of the National Theatres of Iași and Bucharest and was institutionalised through the work of Mihail Pascaly, the head of the drama school, and Matei Millo, the head of the comedy school.

The division between the drama and comedy schools was based on the French *emploi* system and on the Italian system of *i ruoli*, and was encouraged by the implementation regulation of the 1877 theatre law exposing the *emplois* list. What did this system

9 Romanian actors and historians alike refer to them as “schools” (Alterescu 1971: 352, 274–286, 286–296; Alterescu 1973: 328–337, 348–357 358–369, 377–383, 384–390).

entail? On the one hand, the actors were assigned a specific role by contract in 1. Dramas; 2. Comedies; 3. Both dramas and comedies. There were five *emplois* in both dramas and comedies, three *emplois* in dramas and three *emplois* in comedies.¹⁰ They covered both feminine and masculine character types, age-based roles and roles defined by positive or negative moral qualities. The *emplois* encompassed leading roles, usually performed by the members of the Dramatic Society (*societari*), rather than secondary or minor roles. The very attribute of the role as the “first”¹¹ suggests the power of the stars in the epoch’s system and their ownership of specific role types.

The actor training at conservatoires contributed to the emergence and preservation of these hubs. Apparently, there was no division between Drama/Comedy, judging by the name of the courses at the Conservatoire in Iași and Bucharest, entitled “Diction and stage art” and/or “Declamation”.¹² Whether the actual training of future actors reflected the Drama/Comedy division depended entirely on their teachers. It was the experiences of the teachers while working as actors at the national theatres, together with their teaching autonomy, that shaped their eclectic approaches and resulted in the absence of any acting manuals.¹³ Eventually, most teachers focused on the drama or comedy *emploi* that fitted and enhanced the individual qualities of students. Only in exceptional circumstances did the teachers encourage students to study both drama *and* comedy roles. By the end of their Conservatoire training, the students were prepared for those comedy or drama roles that suited their aptitudes best. This institutionalised teaching method led to the permanency of the drama and comedy schools until late in the interwar period.

It was the comedy school that had the greatest impact in defining the specificity of the Romanian theatre tradition before Ibsen. Two playwrights, Vasile Alecsandri (1821–1890) and especially I. L. Caragiale (1852–1912) contributed to the powerful status of the comedy school in the Romanian theatre. Their comedies are milestones in the national dramaturgy, also highlighting important moments in the evolution of the Romanian prac-

10 “caracterele principale strict necesare și cari sunt cele următoare: **Pentru dramă și comedie.** 1. Rol întâi de tînăr. 2. Rol întâi de bărbat. 3. Rol întâi de comic marcant. 4. Rol întâi de tînăr. 5. Rol întâi de ingenuitate. **Pentru dramă.** 1. Rol întâi de bărbat matur. 2. Rol întâi de intrigant. 3. Rol întâi de mamă. **Pentru comedie.** 1. Rol întâi de comic tînăr. 2. Rol întâi de cochetă și subretă. 3. Rol întâi de duenă” (Regulament pentru organizarea și administrarea teatrelor și cafenelelor-concerte din România 1889: 22).

11 The *first* young man role, the *first* man role, the *first* comic role, the *first* young lady role, the *first* mother role, the *first* mature man role, the *first* antagonist role, the *first* coquette and maid role, the *first* nursemaid role etc.

12 “Declamation” Class (National Theatre of Bucharest Collection, Folder 17/1907: 63, 70); “Dramatic Art” (Collection Academia de Muzică și Artă Dramatică “George Enescu”, Folder 3/1910: 105; Collection Academia de Muzică și Artă Dramatică “George Enescu” Folder 5/1910: 148); “Declamation” Class (Collection Academia de Muzică și Artă Dramatică “George Enescu”, Folder 9/1905: 14; Collection Academia de Muzică și Artă Dramatică “George Enescu”, Folder 10/1906: 258; Collection Academia de Muzică și Artă Dramatică “George Enescu”, Folder 6/1915: 33); “Diction and stage art Class” (Collection Academia de Muzică și Artă Dramatică “George Enescu”, Folder 6/1915: 32,79); “Mimics and declamation Class” (ibid: 103).

13 Exceptionally, actors such as Aristizza Romanescu (1906), Lucia Sturdza-Bulandra (1912) or State Dragomir (1902) wrote down their lectures or presented a teaching plan summarising their teaching method.

tice of acting. The best incarnation of what Alecsandri described as his Classicism's comic characters¹⁴ was Matei Millo, the founder of the Romanian comedy school. Both were central agents at the National Theatre of Iași and were responsible for its renowned comedy school in the second half of the 19th century. Millo also performed in Bucharest where he was influential in the comedy school of the National Theatre. Yet I. L. Caragiale, the most influential playwright in Romanian literature, represented the major turning point both in the Romanian dramaturgy and in the evolution from romantic acting and actor-based performance to realist acting and ensemble-based productions in the comedy school of the National Theatre of Bucharest. Whereas Alecsandri and Millo oriented the comedy school of Iași in-between the classical and the romantic acting genres, Caragiale forced a more groundbreaking reform. As manager of the National Theatre of Bucharest (1888–1889), he shaped a revolutionary comedy ensemble.

The changes imposed through his comedies had such an impact that Romanian theatre history refers to them as “the Caragiale acting tradition”, in Camil Petrescu's words (Massoff 1969: 163–164). *O scrisoare pierdută* [*The Lost Letter*],¹⁵ *O noapte furtunoasă* [*Stormy Night*], *D'ale Carnavalului* [*Only During a Carnival*] and *Conu Leonida față cu reacțiunea* [*Mr. Leonida Faces the Reaction*] created specific types of comic characters, and thus fostered a specific acting style breaking with the epoch's tradition. The plays required the use of everyday speech infused with both satire and melodramatic accents, rejected the star actor's privileged position, and demanded a perfectly coagulated ensemble. Thus, Caragiale marked the strongest change in the Romanian theatre in the second half of the 19th century by pushing the comedy school to reach its full potential, the uniqueness of which he cultivated and highlighted.

To sum up, the domination of the star actors, the use of declamation and the ensembles' split in drama and comedy schools characterise the Romanian theatre before Ibsen. Ibsen contributed to a gradual change of these characteristics in the Romanian theatre, nourishing new approaches to both the acting and the organising of a theatre production. How shall we approach this contribution in the barely emerging Romanian theatre?

4.1.1.3 Connections: Maps, graphs and networks

Visual tools such as networks, graphs and maps are the most suitable starting point for an analysis of the connections between Romanian Ibsen contributors within both the Ibsen landscape and the wider Romanian theatre landscape. A complex background shapes both these landscapes, marked by an interweaving foregrounded movement. I will use

14 One example is Coana Chirița [Madam Chirița] in plays such as *Chirița in Iași* or *Chirița in the Province*.

15 If we look closer at the temporal frame, I.L.Caragiale was Ibsen's contemporary. His most renowned play, a comedy entitled *The Lost Letter* (1884), was often compared to *An Enemy of the People* (1883) because of the gathering scene in Act IV, and because of the references to a politically and morally corrupt world. Otherwise, the plots have nothing in common – that is, the stories and the writing styles are completely different. Moreover, at the time Caragiale wrote the play, Ibsen was unknown in Romania. Therefore, no Ibsenian influence can be invoked in his case.

time, space and place, together with the concept of *histoire croisée*, to identify and isolate the most relevant frames of this mobile, fluid, constantly changing background.

4.1.1.3.1 Temporal frame

Firstly, the temporal frame creates one durational axis, from 1894 to 1947 (Figure 34). The 12 Ibsen contributors I analyse move across it. A graph that individually applies the temporal frame to each actor, allowing the temporal axes to meet, reveals numerous points of contact between the 12 contributors. The overlappings increase and decrease gradually between 1907 and 1937 with a period of maximised interactivity between 1911 and 1932, and an almost complete overlapping between 1922 and 1928. These moments of contact suggest the coexistence of traditions in a multi-faceted Romanian Ibsen production.

4.1.1.3.2 Spatial frame

Secondly, the spatial frame consists of the venues of the various Ibsen productions. Some productions are tied to only one location, whereas others travelled to different places and are thus linked by the participating artists. IbsenStage shows that between 1894 and 1947, the Ibsen contributors performed most in Bucharest, Iași and Cluj (Figure 25), confirming the central role of these cities in the Romanian theatre life. On the other hand, the geographical paths of dissemination across Romania through internal tours (Alterescu 1971: 56–57) indicate the power of the star actors. For instance, the activity of some of our 12 contributors – Aristide Demetriade, Ion Manolescu, Petre Sturdza, Agatha Bârescu – reveal the dynamic geographical trajectories of their touring repertoire.

4.1.1.3.3 Institutional frame

Thirdly, the institutional frame delineates the actual places where the 12 contributors performed and staged Ibsen. This frame includes the main institutions – theatres and companies – as fixed spatial points with high intensities and maximised interactivity between artists. At the core of the institutional frame are the national theatres and the private theatre companies. IbsenStage indicates that most actors were tied to both national theatres and private companies, whereas few of the actors I analyse performed Ibsen at national theatres only, and none of them at a private theatre company only. They either moved from one theatre to another or worked simultaneously at several. These exchange dynamics applied to the entire Romanian theatre landscape before 1947, generating constant institutional interactivity between the state theatres of Bucharest, Iași, Cluj and Craiova, and the private theatres. This also ensured a common development background, despite the institutional polarisation and decentralisation of the four National Theatres in Iași, Craiova and Cluj. Nevertheless, most actors worked at the theatre institutions of Bucharest, transforming the city into a strong theatre network. This institutional framework also governed the actor training and the drama and comedy schools: actor training in the Conservatoires could only be pursued in Bucharest and Iași. Moreover, the division between the drama and the comedy schools was specific to the National Theatres of Iași and Bucharest. I will now look at the theatre institutions where the 12 most important Ibsen contributors performed.

The National Theatres of Bucharest, Iași, Cluj and Craiova The Romanian Ibsen contributors' activity in the 1894–1947 period reveals that the Romanian theatre life was ruled by “*imobilism funciar al modelului unic de instituție teatrală*” (the model of the theatre institution's uniqueness and fundamental immobility; my translation) (Runcan 2003: 80). This model was realised in the National Theatres of Bucharest, Iași, Cluj-Napoca and Craiova: these theatres were also the leading producers of Romanian Ibsen. They cultivated the image of an omnipotent National Theatre as a powerful and seductive symbol, enacting security, tradition, prestige and quality. The most acclaimed actors of the country performed at these venues in what was considered the most valuable national and foreign repertory. Actors symbolically owned the institution and maintained a functional network between its theatres.

Of the 12 Ibsen key contributors I analyse, 10¹⁶ were tied to the National Theatre of Bucharest, either permanently or temporarily, revealing its dominance over other theatres within the institution.¹⁷ Numerous actors and directors, including our key contributors either started their career there or came from other cities to achieve recognition on “*prima scenă a țării*” (the country's first stage; my translation) (*ibid.*: 22). IbsenStage confirms the dominance of the National Theatre of Bucharest, as these 10 key contributors were involved in 29 Ibsen events, regularly staged from 1895 until 1947 (Figure 35), and covering 11 of the 14 Ibsen plays staged in Romanian (Figure 36).

The Ibsen contributors working at the National Theatre in Iași were no less valuable than those associated with the National Theatre in Bucharest. C. Ionescu was the first Romanian actor to produce Ibsen with a localised version of *An Enemy of the People* entitled *Doctorul Sălceanu* [*Dr. Sălceanu*] in 1894. Additionally, two of the 12 key contributors, Aglae Pruteanu and State Dragomir, performed Ibsen here exclusively during their acting careers. The venue was visited by other Ibsen key contributors such as Mărioara Voiculescu, Petre Sturdza or Ion Manolescu on tour or for special occasions.¹⁸ Agatha Bârsescu's performances of Ibsen were primarily given at the National Theatre of Iași, though she also performed his plays in Bucharest and abroad. To summarise, the Ibsen contributors associated with the National Theatre of Iași performed in 25 events (Figure 35), 21 of which were staged in Iași, one in Sibiu,¹⁹ one in Botoșani, one in Bârlad and one in Bălți, the last three as touring productions. Although the number of Ibsen events and plays staged is smaller than that of the National Theatre in Bucharest, the actors' contribution confirmed the regional monopoly of the National Theatre in Iași on Moldavian theatre life (Figure 37).

16 Agatha Bârsescu, Aristide Demetriade, Petre Sturdza, Ion Manolescu, Mărioara Voiculescu, Agepsina Macri-Eftimiu, Nicolae Soreanu, Aurel Athanasescu, George Ciprian and Paul Gusty.

17 Here I consider the National Theatre institution as a group of venues in contrast to most nations, such as Norway or England, which have a National Theatre located in one main venue. In Romania, the concept of a National Theatre is thus made up of a group of city-based theatres that make up the ‘institution’.

18 One of them is the *Ghosts* production starring Ion Manolescu as Oswald in 1916, during World War One, when most of the ensemble of the National Theatre of Bucharest moved to Iași, performing with the actors there in a single, common theatre season.

19 During the National Theatre employees' refuge in Sibiu during World War Two.

Despite the small number of 11 events associated with the National Theatre of Craiova, this theatre has a special status in the Romanian Ibsen production, primarily because the theatre's ensemble performed with Petre Sturdza in a controversial tour of *An Enemy of the People* to several cities across Romania in 1907–1908. The National Theatre of Craiova was marked by a constant interchange of actors and directors with the National Theatres of Bucharest and Iași. Agatha Bârsescu, Petre Sturdza, Maria Filotti or Victor Bumbęști who had been involved in Ibsen productions at the National Theatres of Bucharest and Iași, collaborated with the National Theatre of Craiova.

A significant encounter of the Romanian Ibsen contributors with the Transylvanian audience took place only after the National Theatre of Cluj was officially founded in 1919. They were involved in a smaller number of events compared to Bucharest and Iași, but Ibsen's reception in Cluj only started during the 1921–1922 theatre season with the presentation of a touring production of *Ghosts* staged by *Compania Bulandra* [*Bulandra Company*] and starring Ion Manolescu. Similar to the National Theatre of Craiova, the National Theatre of Cluj benefitted from the visits of actors and directors involved in Ibsen stagings such as Ion Manolescu, Petre Sturdza, Ștefan Braborescu and Victor Bumbęști from the National Theatres of Bucharest and Iași. IbsenStage holds records of 13 Ibsen productions for the National Theatre of Cluj (Figure 35), but from a total of seven different plays, which makes it the third most important Romanian theatre institution for the dissemination of his works (Figure 38).

The private theatres IbsenStage holds records on contributors from 7 private theatres and companies that were located in Bucharest²⁰ and performed Ibsen up until 1947. Yet, only the actors working at *Compania Bulandra* [*Bulandra Company*] and *Compania Mărioara Voiculescu* [*Mărioara Voiculescu Company*] continued to make a significant contribution to the staging of Ibsen's plays during the war and the interwar period. Mărioara Voiculescu's *Peer Gynt* and Ion Manolescu's *Ghosts* were particularly important, as will become clear later.

4.1.1.4 Final remarks

This part of the thesis will discuss the contribution of the 12 most important key contributors. The fluidity of the temporal, spatial and institutional frames, and the variety of both the contexts and the intercrossings these contexts generate in the Ibsen contribution of the Romanian artists, has made it necessary to divide this part into two sections.

In Section One I focus on groups of artists tied to three production hubs. Firstly, I analyse Aglae Pruteanu and State Dragomir's contribution at the National Theatre of Iași. Secondly, I look at the activity of Ion Manolescu and Mărioara Voiculescu at the private theatre institutions. Thirdly, I discuss the contribution of Paul Gusty, Agepsina Macri-Eftimiu, George Ciprian, Aurel Athanasescu and Nicolae Soreanu at the National Theatre of Bucharest. These hubs created particular mixes of genres and styles, both in star-based and ensemble-based Ibsen production. Eventually, these acting techniques became not only house styles, but also trademarks of these hubs in the Romanian Ibsen production.

20 No other Romanian city had private theatre companies at the time.

In Section Two, the perspective shifts from producing companies to particular Ibsen plays and characters. That is, we move from production hubs to an approach that considers characters created by Ibsen as sites that can be examined to identify intercrossing theatrical influences. For this purpose, Section Two will analyse the same key contributors in light of the Ibsen characters they performed most frequently, and account for the diversity of the Romanian Ibsen production through their unique acting interpretative recipes.

4.2 Section One. Production Hubs

4.2.1 National Theatre of Iași Hub: State Dragomir, Aglae Pruteanu and Napoleone Borelli

4.2.1.1 Introduction

The first pattern characterising the early Romanian Ibsen production is related to the emergence of a psychological realism hub at the National Theatre of Iași at the turn of the 20th century. The two key contributors who represent it are State Dragomir and Aglae Pruteanu. In the following, I investigate their contribution separately because of their different ways of participating to the emergence of a Romanian Ibsen tradition. Yet, we must keep in mind that they are linked by a long-lasting stage companionship not just in Ibsen productions, but in most stagings at the National Theatre of Iași. The most important connection between them is given by the renewal of the acting approach of the time, paving the way towards psychological realism, although their acting style never became a purist version of this genre. Instead, the mix of acting techniques they employed attests to a gradual displacement of Romanticism with realism. Finally, this change was supported by a strong scientific background in which the epoch's newest research in experimental psychology played a major role.

4.2.1.2 State Dragomir: an Ibsen teacher

The following section investigates the contribution of State Dragomir to the dissemination of Ibsen's plays on the stage of National Theatre of Iași at the turn of the 20th century. I argue that his effort to promote Ibsen influenced the modernisation of the theatre life in Iași in terms of repertory and acting technique.²¹ Quantitatively, he was one of the 12

21 Few resources trace the activity of State Dragomir, and Romanian theatre historians hardly mention him in their accounts. Nevertheless, he was an influential actor and stage director at the National Theatre of Iași. Small pieces of archive material, memoirs and press releases recognise his contributions at the National Theatre of Iași at the turn of the 20th century. His name appears constantly in the archival material of the National Theatre of Iași and of the "George Enescu" Music and Dramatic Art Academy dating from the end of the 19th century and to the beginning of the 20th century. These materials document that he participated in the most important stagings of the time in Iași, while he also taught the "Dramatic Art" class. The archive material also suggests a constant interest in promoting Ibsen plays both on stage and among his students.

actors who participated in leading roles in more than four events, according to Ibsen-Stage.

My analysis considers State Dragomir from the perspective of the dominant role played by star actors in the Romanian Ibsen tradition until 1947 at the level of both staging and acting. Firstly, his contribution as star actor and teacher marked the emergence of Ibsen on the Romanian stage between 1895 and 1915. Secondly, his interest in Ibsen's dissemination was part of the effort to modernise the practice of acting at the National Theatre of Iași. Thirdly, his complex perspective upon the science of acting reveals an entanglement of Romantic, naturalist and realist elements, ultimately developing into and leading to psychological realism. What proves that State Dragomir's endeavours were essential for Ibsen's dissemination? How did Ibsen and State Dragomir's constant interest in Ibsen help him change the acting practices of the time? Finally, what did these changes entail and reveal?

To begin with, State Dragomir was among the earliest most enthusiast promoters of Ibsen on the Romanian stage. Dragomir's first Ibsen staging, *An Enemy of the People*, took place on April 7, 1895, soon after the first Romanian Ibsen in 1894 in Iași of the same play initiated by C. I. Ionescu, a colleague of Dragomir at the National Theatre. Dragomir's staging also took place a few months before Aristizza Romanescu and Constantin I. Notara's first Ibsen performance in Bucharest, *Rosmersholm*, on December 9, 1895. Moreover, State Dragomir included Ibsen in the theatre's repertory and staged his plays until at least 1910. By contrast, his counterparts Aristizza Romanescu and Constantin Notara performed Ibsen to the audience in Bucharest later, less extensively, and exclusively for their "benefit stagings" before 1900. In addition, by the time Ibsen really emerged in Bucharest due to the work of Petre Sturdza and Aristide Demetriade around 1910, State Dragomir and Aglae Pruteanu had already established Ibsen at the National Theatre of Iași. Finally, State Dragomir taught Ibsen regularly at the Conservatoire of Iași until at least 1915.

State Dragomir's lasting contribution to the dissemination of Ibsen in Romania was part of his attempt to modernise the repertory at the National Theatre of Iași. To achieve this renewal, he focused on four Ibsen plays as an actor and teacher: *An Enemy of the People*, *Ghosts*, *Pillars of Society* and *A Doll's House*. Aglae Pruteanu considered that his initiative was pioneering not just for Iași, but for the entire country:

Dragomir, veșnic neobosit cercetător, în curent cu tot ce era mai bun în literatura dramatică de pretutindeni, nu se oprea numai la repertorul nostru [...] și s-a gândit să îmbogățească repertorul nostru și cu piesele acestui mare renovator al literaturii dramatice, care este Ibsen. După câte știu, mi se pare că cel dintâi, care a adus pe Ibsen pe scena teatrului, a fost *Dragomir*. Ibsen s'a jucat pentru prima oară în țară, – pe scena teatrului Național din Iași, cu "Dușmanul Poporului" prin anii 1893. (*Dragomir*, who was an eternally tireless researcher, knew what was best in the dramatic literature from all over. He did not confine himself to our repertory [...] and also thought of enriching our repertory with the plays of Ibsen, this great renovator of dramatic literature. As far as I know, *Dragomir* was the first one to bring Ibsen onto the theatre stage. *An Enemy of the People* was the first of Ibsen's plays ever to be performed in the country on the stage of the National Theatre of Iași around 1893; my translation.) (Pruteanu 1922: 168)

State Dragomir's knowledge of Ibsen and modern drama is also revealed in the fact that the plays he chose to promote on the stage of Iași, *A Doll's House*, *Ghosts* and *An Enemy of the People*, were not arbitrarily selected. The actor must have been aware of their European success and of their potential to ignite the modernisation of the Romanian theatre. He also insisted on promoting Ibsen on stage continuously, from the performance of *An Enemy of the People* in 1895 until his last registered performance of *Ghosts* in 1910.²² This change was subject to conflicts, as the older actors attempted to get Ibsen and other modern playwrights out of the repertory. According to Ioan Massoff, he stood against members of the Dramatic Society who attempted to exclude plays such as *Ghosts* and *Pillars of Society* from the repertory:

Un conflict pe față a izbucnit când, continuându-se deplorabila tradiție de a alcătui repertoriul după propunerile câtorva societari [...], aceștia au 'respins' *Strigoii* și *Stâlpii societății* de Ibsen, *Un faliment* de B.Bjørnson, *Evreul polonez* de Erckmann-Chatrian, *Lăpușneanu* de Iuliu Roșca, piese propuse pentru reprezentare de grupul stagiilor nemulțumiți de configurația repertoriului. State Dragomir, adresându-se Comitetului teatral, a protestat vehement împotriva 'excluderii' autorilor citați. (In the context of the deplorable tradition that permitted a part of members of the Dramatic Society to decide the repertory according to their own proposals, an open conflict arose when they 'rejected' *Ghosts* and *Pillars of Society* by Ibsen, *The Bankrupt* by B. Bjørnson, *The Polish Jew* by Erckmann-Chatrian, *Lăpușneanu* by Iuliu Roșca. These plays were proposed by the group of junior actors, who were dissatisfied with the configuration of the repertory. State Dragomir addressed the issue in front of the Theatre Committee and vehemently protested against the exclusion of the aforementioned playwrights; my translation.) (Massoff 1978: 548)

The introduction of Ibsen's plays in the repertory of the National Theatre of Iași activated the younger generation's aim to modernise the local theatre life. In this sense, Aglae Pruteanu insisted on the role of State Dragomir in the development of the theatre tradition in Iași:

Datorită acestui curent sănătos de regenerare intelectuală, care își făcea apariția în teatrul nostru din Iași – ași putea zice pentru întâia oară, – ne-am consolidat ca teatru modern, cu aspirații artistice, pentru o literatură dramatică, demnă de un teatru național, ca instituție culturală, pentru și în slujba acestui scop. Și dacă teatrul din Iași și-a continuat stagiunile sale, fără întreruperi, cu succes și progresând mereu, până în timpul de față, se datorește colaborării pricepute și entuziaste a lui *Dragomir*. Scena teatrului din Iași, datorită lui se ilustra prin alegerea

22 The traces left by these performances are few, though they seem to have reached a large number, not only in the case of *A Doll's House*, but also in the case of *An Enemy of the People* and *Ghosts*. Yet, no further information is mentioned by either the actors involved in these productions, or in other archival resources. However, there are reasons enough to consider that State Dragomir's contribution as a promoter of Ibsen exceeds the information gathered so far. All the resources available suggest that State Dragomir can be considered the strongest agent of modernisation in the theatre life of Iași at the turn of the century.

repertoriului, în care figurau cele mai bune piese din marele repertor clasic și modern. Noi eram cei din urmă, cari jucam tot ce apărea nou, înaintea celor din București chiar. (Thanks to this healthy stream of intellectual regeneration that began to appear in our theatre of Iași – for the first time, I dare say – we managed to strengthen our status as a modern theatre. We had artistic aspirations with respect to the dramatic literature suitable for a National Theatre as a cultural institution. And if the theatre of Iași has continued to develop its activity ceaselessly and successfully each season until now, this is due to *Dragomir's* enthusiastic and skilled contribution. Thanks to him, the stage in Iași was influential because of its repertory, which included the best plays of the classic and modern repertory. We were the first to perform everything that was new, even before our colleagues from Bucharest; my translation.) (Pruteanu 1922: 77–78)

Aglae Pruteanu also indicated that at the time his attempts were considered too demanding. From this perspective, she criticised the theatre environment and insisted on the efforts of State Dragomir to renew the theatrical standards in a context highly resistant to improvement:

Fără el – ‘nebulul’ – așa îi ziceau actorii, – și așa sunt considerați de multe ori cei ce iau cu mult înaintea mediului înconjurător, – nu am fi reușit să ne menținem și nici să atragem atențiunea continuă a unui public restrâns și veșnic acelaș, asupra unui grup de artiști cari, cu tot talentul lor, aveau toată greutatea să lupte cu efectul indiferenței și a lipsei de gust pentru teatru.” (Without him, the ‘madman’ – this is what the actors would call him, and this is what many of those who are far ahead of their environments are called –, we would not have managed to keep ourselves afloat and continuously attract a small audience, which was permanently the same. [We were] a group of artists who felt the burden of fighting the consequences of the indifference and lack of taste for the theatre, no matter how talented [we were]; my translation.) (ibid: 78–79)

He was not the only actor to fight the taste of the audience and adopt an elitist approach in the selection of the plays he staged. Actors such as Aristizza Romanescu, Petre Sturdza or Mărioara Voiculescu, belonging to different generations, also mentioned the challenges of proposing and staging demanding plays unlikely to provide substantial financial gains. From this perspective, Ibsen was not among the most profitable playwrights. Therefore, State Dragomir’s initiatives to stage Ibsen were met with scepticism. The lack of a strong Romanian theatre tradition and the lack of knowledge of Ibsen did not favour his promotion on the Romanian stage at this time. Yet State Dragomir took the risk, performing in three Ibsen plays throughout his career, a period when Ibsen was yet unknown, and easily rejected.

Dragomir’s Ibsen initiatives were strongly supported by one of the most renowned actresses of the time at National Theatre of Iași and his stage companion: Aglae Pruteanu. His collaboration with Aglae Pruteanu enriched the local theatre life, and all his Ibsen productions included her as the leading actress. Aglae Pruteanu gives the most comprehensive portrait of State Dragomir as actor and director in her memoirs. Her approach combines the emotional recollections of a friend with remarks on his contribution to the

modernisation of the National Theatre of Iași. According to the actress, he was not only an admirable actor and stage partner, but also an excellent teacher, a strict director and a beloved friend:

Numele lui *Dragomir*, care e în strânsă legătură cu toată colaborarea mea și a altora pentru progresul teatrului. Pe el îl voiu întâlni neconținut în cursul carierei mele ca pe cel mai desăvârșit și cel mai prețios partener și coleg. (*Dragomir's* name is closely tied to the way others and I collaborated for the progress of the theatre alike. I have always considered him an exquisite and the most precious partner and colleague of my entire career; my translation) (ibid: 75).

Nicolae Barbu emphasises the special relationship between the two actors, which might have involved not only a professional, but also a sentimental sympathy:

Este vorba de vechea prietenie, bazată pe o profundă unitate de vederi artistice dintre Aglae Pruteanu și State Dragomir. Fără îndoială, perfectă înțelegere profesională, stima și stimulentele artistice reciproc între cei doi parteneri, nu erau lipsite de un adânc ecou afectiv. Elementul hotărâtor în această legătură era însă prețuirea față de calitățile omului și ale intelectualului Dragomir. Artista nu-și putea imagina viața ei creatoare fără înțelegerea și fără suportul moral pe care-l constituia unica și marea ei prietenie. (It is all about the old friendship between Aglae Pruteanu and State Dragomir, which was based on a profound unity of artistic perspectives. Undoubtedly, their perfect professional compatibility, the mutual esteem and artistic incentive between the two partners were not devoid of a deep emotional echo. The decisive element of their bond was the appreciation for the qualities of Dragomir as a man and as an intellectual, too. The artist could not imagine her creative life without the sympathy and moral support of this one man, whose friendship she considered unique and great; my translation.) (Barbu 1965: 109)

The two actors' destinies were so entangled that they remained inseparable stage partners until the very end of their careers. Their mutual attachment was also believed to be so strong that it prevented Aglae Pruteanu from leaving the National Theatre of Iași in the pursuit of a career in Bucharest and greater recognition:

Mai toți cei care i-au cunoscut de-aproape pe Aglae Pruteanu și pe State Dragomir [...] ne-au vorbit de legătura dintre ei ca de un impediment în evoluția lor și, în ceea ce o privește pe Aglae Pruteanu, un impediment în ocuparea locului pe care-l merita în mișcarea teatrală bucureșteană. (Almost all those who knew Aglae Pruteanu and State Dragomir [...] told us about their relationship as a hindrance to their evolution. This concerned Aglae Pruteanu especially, as she could not attain to the place of honour she deserved in the theatre movement of Bucharest; my translation.) (ibid: 109)

No matter the reason, their choice to stay in Iași was surprising at a time when Bucharest attracted the most talented artists and exerted a strong influence upon Romanian theatre. Together with Agatha Bârsescu, who accepted the proposal of the National Theatre

to perform and teach in Iași in the interwar period, State Dragomir and Aglae Pruteanu were the local theatre's most influential names.

The most important aspect connecting Aglae Pruteanu and State Dragomir is their participation in the Romanian premiere of *A Doll's House* in 1901. State Dragomir was the most enthusiastic promoter of the first Romanian production of *A Doll's House* in 1901, whereas Aglae Pruteanu was the first Romanian Nora. In this context, Dragomir was not only Aglae Pruteanu's partner in the role of Torvald, but also the one who proposed the play to be staged. More specifically, he encouraged the translator, Barbu Marian, to send the manuscript of the 1895 translation to the theatre's Reading Committee. Dragomir advocated the approval of the manuscript and the staging of the play:

În 1901 d-nul Marian, traducătorul piesei "Nora", după îndemnul lui *Dragomir*, fiindcă a urmat o corespondență între ei, a prezentat piesa comitetului teatrului nostru [...]. (In 1901, Mr. Marian, the translator of *A Doll's House*, proposed the play to our theatre's committee. He was encouraged to do so by *Dragomir*, according to their subsequent correspondence; my translation.) (Pruteanu 1922: 168)

Moreover, the production of *A Doll's House* was also part of an apparently successful tour, according to the actress (Figure 39).

State Dragomir was an influential Ibsen promoter not only on stage as actor at the National Theatre of Iași, but also off-stage, as teacher at the Conservatory of Music and Dramatic Arts in Iași. In this context, he had a remarkable pedagogical contribution:

Cum însă teatrul prepondera mai presus de orice, nu a trecut mult și a rămas cu ce i-a fost drag: Teatrul și Conservatorul, unde era un eminent profesor. (But since theatre was above everything, it was not long until he was left with what was dearest to him: the Theatre and the Conservatory, where he was an eminent teacher; my translation.) (Pruteanu 1922: 186–187)

The archives of the institution reveal that as a teacher, State Dragomir set Ibsen's plays and the students chose Ibsen-related topics for their final examinations. Ibsen was on the curriculum of State Dragomir's declamation class at the Conservatoire in Iași between 1909 and 1915; he also appears as a recurrent exam topic for the students of all years since 1909. For example, during the 1909–1910 academic year, Miss Procopovici, a second-year student, included Ibsen's biography and Nora's role among the topics she prepared for examination (Collection Academia de Muzică și Artă Dramatică "George Enescu", Folder 5/1909: 148). Gh. Dimitriu and Gh. Slavnicul, two other graduating students, both made a similar choice regarding Ibsen's biography, while Gh. Dimitriu's preferences for the examination were Ibsen's *Ghosts*, *An Enemy of the People* and *Pillars of Society* (ibid: 148). In the next academic year, 1910–1911, the situation was the same. Miss Procopovici, already a third-year student, kept Ibsen's biography and *A Doll's House* (Collection Academia de Muzică și Artă Dramatică "George Enescu", Folder 3/1910: 108) in her exam repertoire, while Popescu L., another third-year student, chose *An Enemy of the People* alongside the playwright's biography (ibid: 108). The same happened in the academic year 1912–1913, when the fourth-year students Ștefan Constantinescu and Elena Dorotei both chose Ib-

sen's biography as exam topic, whereas the latter also chose Nora as the role to perform at her exam (Collection Academia de Muzică și Artă Dramatică "George Enescu", Folder 4/1912: 133). The Ibsen tradition in the curriculum was preserved in the academic year 1913–1914, when the fourth-year student Constantin Dimitriu chose Ibsen's biography as exam topic (Collection Academia de Muzică și Artă Dramatică "George Enescu", Folder 6/1913: 91). Finally, the third-year student Bruno Braeschi, a future interpreter of Oswald, also showed his interest in Ibsen's biography as exam topic in the academic year 1914–1915, as student of State Dragomir (Collection Academia de Muzică și Artă Dramatică "George Enescu", Folder 5/1914: 128). But State Dragomir did not only propose Ibsen roles to the most experienced students, but also included them in the curriculum from as early as their first years. In the 1910–1911 academic year, Manoliu D. and Pavlov I., both first year students, chose *An Enemy of the People* and *A Doll's House* respectively among their exam topics (Collection Academia de Muzică și Artă Dramatică "George Enescu", Folder 3/1910: 105).

A Doll's House, *Ghosts*, *Pillars of Society* and *An Enemy of the People* were all part of the curriculum and the students chose roles from these plays to prepare for their exams. State Dragomir was not only interested in teaching his students acting skills, but also in enriching their theatre knowledge. His lessons on how to perform Ibsen in 1909–1910 were accompanied by lectures on universal theatre history and on the biographies of the most important playwrights.²³ State Dragomir aimed at the advancement of a realist theatre tradition. Besides Ibsen, he included classic and contemporary Romanian and foreign plays, seeking to provide the students with a complex acting profile instead of focusing on the role typology supported by the *emploi* system. At a time when *Ghosts*, *A Doll's House*, *An Enemy of the People* and *Pillars of Society* had only occasionally been performed on the Romanian stage in Iași and Bucharest, they were all part of the university curriculum. Eventually, State Dragomir demonstrates through his stage and pedagogic achievements a strong commitment to these plays at a very early stage in the Romanian Ibsen production. Additionally, his literary, philosophical and historical background contributed to this realist approach to theatre and performance, and made him an excellent theatre theoretician and practitioner.

Ibsen's privileged place in Dragomir's repertoire as actor and teacher indicates that the playwright influenced the actor. How? By implicitly forcing a transition from Romanticism as the dominant style of acting of the time to psychological realism. This transition is also signalled by Ibsen's unique, modern presence in a repertory that included Shakespeare's *Hamlet*, the tragedies of Aeschylus and Sophocles, the romantic dramas of Schiller and Hugo, the classic comedies of Moliere, or the Romanian classic and romantic repertory including Alecsandri, Eminescu or Coșbuc.²⁴

23 "Odată cu expunerea orală a subiectului, elevul va fi îndatorat a ști biografia autorului respectiv." (Once the subject [of the play] was presented orally, the student would be obliged to know the respective playwright's biography; my translation) (Dragomir 1902: 5).

24 For an overview of the repertory, see Collection Academia de Muzică și Artă Dramatică "George Enescu", Folder 5/1909: 148; Collection Academia de Muzică și Artă Dramatică "George Enescu", Folder 3/1910: 105; Collection Academia de Muzică și Artă Dramatică "George Enescu", Folder 4/1912: 133; Collection Academia de Muzică și Artă Dramatică "George Enescu", Folder 6/1913: 91; Collection Academia de Muzică și Artă Dramatică "George Enescu", Folder 5/1914: 128.

But what would the transition from Romanticism to psychological realism of Dragomir entail, and what was so new about it? Briefly, State Dragomir not only combined romantic, naturalist and realist elements in his acting, but also insisted on an active use of psychology and philosophy. This is visible both in the industrial aspect of the theatre productions and in the acting. His teaching plan at the Conservatoire of Iași, published in 1902, is one of the most valuable resources revealing this mix of acting techniques:

Până în anul al II-lea și până la această parte a psihologiei să se evite învățarea pe dinafară, fiind-că trebuie să se dea elevilor un mijloc sigur de a putea reține ceea ce învață. Ne vine greu s-o mărturisim, însă lucrul e așa, sînt foarte mulți actori și încă în teatrele noastre subvenționate, cari au jucat și joacă în multe piese fără să știe *subiectul piesei* din care pricină nici odată nu pot intra în *ansamblu*. (One should avoid the memorisation [of the text] until the second year and until this part of [the] Psychology [discipline is taught], because one should teach the students a reliable strategy to be able to remember what they learn. It is difficult for us to make such a confession, but the truth is that there are very many actors even in our subsidised theatre who have been performing in many plays without knowing the *subject of the play*, hence they could never participate in the *ensemble*; my translation.) (Dragomir 1902: 8)

In addition, he insisted upon text-based productions in which each actor should know the entire play. In this context, the transition to realism entailed a focus on understanding the action of the play, its social context and its influence on characterisation. He also considered that the director should supervise both the technical aspects and the actors' work, instead of being a stage manager alone. In this respect, he criticised the negative consequences of the epoch's practices:

Aceasta e pricina pentru care nu știu rolurile și nici nu vor putea să le știe vreodată cât timp vor fi străini de lumea în care se învârtesc. Acest obicei e contractat sau de pe băncile Conservatorului sau dacă n-a făcut conservatorul, în teatru, unde regizorul, adeseori se ocupă de *tot* iar nici de cum de fiecare actor în parte. (This is the reason why they do not know the roles and they will never know them as long as they are estranged from the world they live in. They develop this habit already in the Conservatoire or, if they did not pursue their training in the Conservatoire, then they develop it in the theatre, where the director often supervises *the whole*, but under no circumstance each actor separately; my translation.) (ibid: 9)

As a director, he also insisted on the attention that one should pay to the specific message or interpretative direction required by every text:

În fiecare piesă pe care va pune-o în scenă, neapărat va trebui să i se înfățișeze o nouă problemă: de ordin istoric, filozofic, psihologic, social, politic și ș.a.m.d. Numai cu un asemenea director de scenă, actorii unui teatru național sunt siguri că nu se vor abate din drumul adevărului și că nu vor comite greșeli, dând o falsă interpretare a lucrurilor, pe cari poate nu le cunosc în tot întregul lor. Cu *Dragomir* nu se puteau întâmpla asemenea neajunsuri și aici era calitatea lui cea mare, care nicio-

dată nu s'a știut a i se recunoaște în deajuns. (Every play he would stage should embody a new problem, either historically, philosophically, psychologically, socially, politically etc. Only with such a stage director could the actors of a national theatre be sure that they would not leave the path of truth and would not make mistakes by giving a misleading interpretation of those things they might not understand completely. There was no chance of such shortcomings with *Dragomir*. And this greatest quality he had was never acknowledged enough; my translation.) (Pruteanu 1922: 185)

Finally, the fact that he relied upon a translation done by a specialist for the staging of *A Doll's House* instead of translating the play himself, as was the practice of most star actors, suggests his tendency towards a realist rather than romantic approach.

However, there were still traces of the romantic actor-based system in his view. In the absence of a director, he considered that the star actor performing the leading role should supervise the ensemble and the technical aspects of the staging. As a teacher, he let graduating students act as the stage director:

În anul al IV-lea elevul va analiza și va compune sub privegherea profesorului un rol dintr-o piesă ce și-o va alege singur. Va distribui rolurile secundare camarazilor săi precum și celor din anul al III-lea. El va face toate explicațiunile necesare precum și punerea în scenă. (In the fourth year, the student will analyse and compose a role from a play he will choose himself, under the teacher's supervision. Then he will cast his friends and colleagues from the third year in secondary roles. He will give the necessary explanations and be in charge of the stage direction; my translation.) (Dragomir 1902: 15)

Dragomir himself was both actor and stage director at the theatre of Iași. From this perspective, he did the same as his forerunners and fellow colleagues such as Grigore Manolescu, Constantin I. Nottara and Petre Sturdza, who had also assumed a double, and even a triple role as actors, directors and translators of the plays they were staging.

In terms of acting, the contradictions emerging in the entanglement of Romanticism, realism and Italian *verismo*, based on philosophy, natural sciences and psychology, also attest to a period of transition. From this perspective, by introducing Ibsen to the Romanian audience State Dragomir also promoted an aesthetic turn not only in the repertory, but also in the acting technique. Together with Aglae Pruteanu and Petre Sturdza, he represents that branch of Romanian theatre characterised by an emphasis on the psychological and philosophical approach.²⁵ Petre Sturdza, the most influential Ibsen con-

25 "Alături de reprezentanții școlii de comedie, o altă categorie de actori care debutează pe scena românească în ultimul deceniu al veacului trecut și imediat după această dată, își va înscrie creația pe linia aceleiași realism psihologic [...]. [...] Petre Liciu și Petre Sturdza, State Dragomir și Aglae Pruteanu, fără a deveni imitatorii unor modele, se vor mărturisii adepții unei metode de creație, fideli unui climat de preocupări artistice și intelectuale, ai unui climat de idei care va influența decisiv evoluția artei interpretative în perspectiva noului veac. [...] Acum, la sfârșitul secolului orientarea veristă și programul școlii naturaliste reclamă în sprijinul teatrului, și în primul rând al artei actorului, toate progresele înregistrate la această dată în științele sociale și în cercetările de psihologie." (Beside the representatives of the comedy school, another category

tributor in Romania, also started his career in Iași and only later moved to the National Theatre of Bucharest. This highlights the contribution of the theatre of Iași in the early Romanian Ibsen production.

By taking one step further from the Romantic, actor-based tradition consecrated by Grigore Manolescu,²⁶ State Dragomir aimed to renew a local theatre culture that was dominated by declamation, easy and clichéd plays, and an audience insufficiently educated in the theatre. Yet romantic elements were still present in Dragomir's acting perspective, as he saw an actor's talent as a "gift" tied to an innate capacity to identify with the role:

Cine are darul de a trăi viața altuia și a o manifesta prin propria lui personalitate încât acesta din urmă să pară că nu mai există, acela se zice că are talent dramatic. Darul acesta de a imita oameni nu-i de ajuns pentru ca cineva să poată fi artist dramatic; această dispozițiune naturală însă trebuie ajutată [...]. (Whoever has the gift of living and enacting another's life through one's own personality so that the latter seems no longer to exist, that person is said to have dramatic talent. This gift to imitate people is not enough, though, to be a dramatic artist; this natural inclination must be helped [to develop further]; my translation) (ibid: 2)

He also considered the use of the philosophical romantic concept of "free will" (ibid: 14) in the practice of acting. Finally, the historians describing his renditions confirm his romantic background, focused on elegance and beauty of posture and voice:

Dispunea de eleganță în rostire, atitudini de impresionantă noblețe, în piesele romantice avea caracteristicul tumult, dând revărsărilor de energie dramatică valoare artistică, înălțându-și ca pe niște monumente tiradele. (He had an elegant speech, impressively noble attitudes, and in the Romantic plays he displayed the specific tumult, and he was giving artistic value to the outbursts of dramatic energy through his monumentally recited tirades; my translation.) (Brădățeanu 1979: 169)

Nevertheless, his reference to Shakespeare's advice for actors from *Hamlet* indicates the rejection of declamation in favour of everyday speech, as well as the rejection of the Romantic excessive gestures and movements in favour of "natural" – that is, realist – ones:

Și niciodată nu va uita a aminti elevilor săi cea mai bună lecție ce s-a dat vreodată actorilor de către Shakespeare [...]: "Te rog să zici cuvintele aceste așa cum ți le-am

of actors, who debuted on the Romanian stage in the last decade of the last century and immediately after, would evolve towards the same psychological realism [...]. [...] Without ever becoming the imitators of certain models, Petre Liciu and Petre Sturdza, State Dragomir and Aglae Pruteanu would confess their aim to develop a creation method. They would also be loyal to a climate supporting artistic and intellectual pursuits, as well as ideas that would decisively influence the evolution of the interpretative art at the turn of the new century. Now, at the end of the century, the *verismo* tendency and the programme of the naturalist school requires that the theatre life and especially the art of the actor is supported by all progress happening in the recent social sciences and psychology research; my translation) (Alterescu 1971: 373).

26 Grigore Manolescu was Aristizza Romanescu's partner on stage until 1892.

spus eu, cu-n ton natural și ușor de înțeles. Dar dacă ai de gând să le declami cu emfază, cum fac mulți actori, atunci o să-mi pară rău că n-am scris cuvintele acestea pentru gura vre-unui strigător public.” Aceasta pentru dicțiune. Întrucât privește mișcarea și gestul, ascultați-l: “Nu da astfel cu mânele în toate părțile fără niciun motiv. Toate mișcărilor să fie cumpătate [...]. Inteligența să-ți servească de conducător. Proportionează acțiunea cu cuvântarea și cuvântarea cu acțiunea, fiind atent să nu ieși din natural, pentru că cine se-ndepărtează de la această regulă se îndepărtează de la scopul unei reprezentațiuni dramatice, scop care de la sorgintea lui și până azi a fost de-a înfățișa naturei o oglindă deschisă, a arăta virtuței adevăratele ei foloase, ridicolului o imagine exactă, și fie-cărui secol forma, culoarea și urmele ce lasă.” (And one should never forget to remind the students of the best lesson ever given to the actors by Shakespeare: “Speak the speech, I pray you, as I pronounced it to you, trippingly on the tongue; but if you mouth it, as many of your players do, I had as lief the town-crier spoke my lines” (Shakespeare and Edwards 2003: 3.2.1-3). This concerns the diction. As far as the movement and gestures are concerned, listen to him: “Nor do not saw the air too much with your hand [...]. [...] you must acquire and beget a temperance that may give it smoothness [...]. [...] Let your own discretion be your tutor. Suit the action to the word, the word to the action, with this special observance, that you o’erstep not the modesty of nature. For anything so o’erdone is from the purpose of playing, whose end both at the first and now, was and is, to hold as ’twere the mirror up to nature; to show virtue her own feature, scorn her own image, and the very age and body of the time his form and pressure (ibid: 3.2.3-20)” (my translation). (Dragomir 1902: 14)

To understand the changes that the actor made upon the acting system of the time more clearly, we must first consider State Dragomir’s artistic profile, marked by a multi-layered perspective relying on an inter-crossing of romantic-realist-naturalist elements, supported by a strong philosophical, psychological and natural sciences background, including physics, chemistry and biology. Critics, fellow actors and historians alike also remembered the actor’s philosophical, psychological and scientific acting, in Ibsen plays such as *Ghosts* included:

Rolul a fost bine studiat de d-l Dragomir și în actul al II-lea, scena disperării de a nu mai putea gândi nici munci, a fost emoționantă. (The role was well analysed by Mr. Dragomir and the second act’s scene of the desperation of being unable either to think or to work was touching; my translation) (Viorela 1910: 37); Rolul lui Oswald, l-a interpretat cu competența lui din punct de vedere artistic și științific. (He interpreted Oswald’s role, making use of all his artistic and scientific skills; my translation.) (Pruteanu 1922: 171)

What did this mean for Dragomir’s activity?

Firstly, the actor was renowned for his interest in philosophy, since he was not only “un eminent student în litere și filozofie” (an eminent student of [the Faculty of] Letters and Philosophy; my translation) (ibid: 74), but also a teacher of philosophy, history and dramatic art:

A fost un timp când l-am văzut pe *Dragomir* desfășurând o mare activitate în mai multe direcțiuni. Era profesor de istorie și filozofie la Liceul Național, profesor la Institutele Unite, profesor la Conservator și artist la teatrul național. (There was a time when I saw *Dragomir* greatly involved in several different things. He was a teacher of History and Philosophy at the National High School, teacher at the United Institutes, teacher at the Conservatory and artist at the National Theatre; my translation.) (ibid: 186)

Nicolae Barbu even defines Dragomir as “actorul-profesor de filozofie” (the actor teaching philosophy; my translation) (Barbu 1965: 65), which explains the interest in abstract, analytical plays such as Ibsen’s. Eventually, the philosophical approach favoured a change in his work as actor, director and teacher; he stated that psychology was essential for the acting career:

Cu greu se va încerca în a interpreta un rol din repertoriul Shakespearian sau Ibsenian dacă nu va avea cunoștințe de psihologie. De altfel această din urmă știință este cea arma cea mai puternică a artistului dramatic. De ea trebuie să se servească în analiza caracterelor și stărilor sufletești, iar de istorie în evocarea unui personaj istoric. (One would hardly try to interpret a role from Shakespeare or Ibsen’s repertory without psychological knowledge. Besides, this latter science is the most powerful weapon of the dramatic artists. It therefore must serve the analysis of the characters and of the states of mind, whereas history [must serve] to represent a historic character; my translation.) (Dragomir 1902: 3)

But what kind of psychology? Ion Găvănescul’s handbook (1890),²⁷ which Dragomir recommended to his students, was an example of rational, speculative psychology. This psychology genre was inspired by the romantic German idealism of Immanuel Kant and by the English empiricism of John Locke. By the time Dragomir had begun to perform Ibsen between 1893 and 1895, Eduard Gruber had founded the first laboratory of experimental psychology in Iași (Bejat 1972: 153–182). Gruber’s initiative made Romania one of the first 10 countries in the world to have such a laboratory (ibid: 153). Wilhelm Wundt, who

27 The book was one of the most popular manuals of psychology at the time, enjoying “un succes didactic foarte mare” (a great pedagogical success; my translation) (Herseni 1980: 187). It was re-edited approximately 20 times and its content changed constantly. However, the most radical change to its content seems to be that of 1901, as Găvănescul himself mentioned. I also chose to refer to this manual because it is closest temporally to the moment when State Dragomir wrote the Programme for the Declamation class in 1902. Yet we must keep in mind that Găvănescul does not display an experimental psychology perspective. He is rather tied to the British empiricism of John Locke, George Berkely and David Hume, which also preserved, in turn, elements taken from German idealism. Hence, apriorism and deism represent important philosophical concepts in Găvănescul’s perspective upon psychology. He even wrote a doctoral thesis about John Locke. Finally, he was interested in the concept of natural theology, which did not deny the existence of God, yet considered the material experience as a fundamental background. The manual of psychology mirrors this dualist perspective, marked by apriorism and agnosticism. Nevertheless, once the findings of experimental psychology are more vividly employed in the scientific life, the author himself changes his manual accordingly to the new research in the field (Bejat 1972: 48–49).

founded the first laboratory of experimental psychology in the world in Leipzig in 1879, had inspired Gruber (ibid: 21). The relationship between the two researchers was close, as Wundt, the father of experimental psychology,²⁸ had supervised Gruber's doctoral thesis about the luminosity of colours.²⁹

Gruber's view was different to that of Găvănescul, but they both taught psychology at the Faculty of Letters and Philosophy (ibid: 45) despite their contradictory perspectives. Dragomir was probably aware of the differences between speculative and experimental psychology,³⁰ which entailed the transition from a transcendental thinking, relying on theological/deist principles to a thinking based on experience. This implied the passage from a dualist perspective upon the human being divided between body and soul, to a monist perspective of the human being a unitary organism constantly evolving.

The knowledge of physics, biology, chemistry and physiognomy that Dragomir introduced to the science of acting reflected the tensions between rationalism and empiricism and highlighted his view that "interpretarea poate și trebuie să aibă caracter științific" (interpretation can and must have a scientific nature; my translation) (Brădățeanu 1979: 170). How did these sciences fit into his mixed romantic-realist-naturalist perspective? In his teaching programme, Dragomir relied on German, Italian, French and English scientists alike: "Cu această ocaziune profesorul va arăta teoriile lui Ioh. Muller, Ch. Bell, Darwin; Oken, Harles, Baumgaertner, Gratiolet, Mantegazza, Piderit³¹, Lange, Engel³² (mimica pentru actori)." (On this occasion, the teacher will present the theories

28 "Adevăratul creator al psihologiei experimentale, care militase pentru desprinderea psihologiei de filosofie, ajunge de multe ori (mai ales în lucrările sale cu caracter filozofic), la formularea unor concluzii idealiste, care contrazic în mare măsură faptele acumulate și chiar unele dintre ideile promovate în lucrările de psihologie." (The real founder of experimental psychology, who fought for the separation of psychology from philosophy, often draws idealist conclusions (especially in his philosophical works), contradicting to a great extent the facts and even some of the ideas promoted in psychology studies; my translation) (Bejat 1972: 23).

29 Its German title was *Experimentelle Untersuchungen über die Helligkeit der Farben* (Bejat 1972: 162).

30 "Psihologia empirică, propunându-și să studieze faptele suferitești *observabile*, să le descrie și să le clasifice, constituie un pas înainte în cunoașterea vieții psihice, față de psihologia "rațională", speculativă, care se ocupă de ceea ce este *inaccesibil observației*, de problemele metafizice ale originii și naturii sufletului, ale raportului dintre suflet și corp." (By aiming to study, describe and classify the observable states of mind, empirical psychology constitutes a step forward with respect to the knowledge of the psychic life, in contrast to the 'rational', speculative, psychology, which drew on what was inaccessible by means of observation, on metaphysics issues related to the origin of the nature and of the soul, and of the relationship between body and soul; my translation) (Bejat 1972: 50).

31 Karl Wilhelm Piderit (1815–1875) was a German classical philologist and educator. His interest in editing in Cicero's works indicates his connection with the Latin rhetoric art, which implied the use of the antic declamation principles such as eloquence and beauty of speech, voice, face and body posture (See Cicero 1867).

32 Johann Jakob Engel (1774–1802) is mostly renowned for his book *Ideen zu einer Mimik* (1785). He was part of the German Enlightenment movement and was interested in the relationship between gestures, perception and dialogue, and hinted at the future use of physiognomy and evolutionary theory in the practice of acting. However, he must have applied his knowledge to the classical and romantic acting genres. Sara Fortuna (2003: 95–12) highlights some of Engel's most important ideas and findings. He established perception as the fundamental perspective to study the bodily expression by analysing how perception conveys meaning. He investigated

of Ioh. Muller, Ch. Bell, Darwin; Oken, Harles, Baumgaertner, Gratiolet, Mantegazza, Piderit, Lange, Engel³³ (mimicry for actors); my translation.) (Dragomir 1902: 13) The central debate that all these scientists engaged with concerned the transition from an idealist, agnostic to an empiricist, experimental way of approaching the world and the human being, including references to physiognomy and evolutionism. On the one hand, Johann Heinrich Jakob Müller³⁴ or Charles Bell³⁵ and Lorenz Oken's³⁶ visions were rooted in Kant's idealist, dualist perspective. On the other, Charles Darwin,³⁷ Louis-Pierre Gra-

the issue of expressive gesture and made a classification of gestures and passions. He also anticipates some ideas of Darwin, as he considered that we could find all the actions fundamental to evolution within the axes of approach and distancing. More specifically, each action connected as a propulsive element to an emotion (flight-fear, aggression-rage, sexual impulse, hunger). He also considered that gestures are independent of perception. However, they are dependent on thoughts and therefore connected to imagination. In this sense, gestures refer to the thoughts that accompany the perception, not to the perception itself. Finally, Engel differentiates between the spontaneous actor and the reflective actor. He considered that reflective acting should be preferred over spontaneous acting in which the actor fully identifies himself with the character he is performing. Therefore, he encouraged the actor to reflect upon what happens when certain gestures express certain emotions and separate gesture from meaning. See also Coulombeau (2006).

- 33 The complete names of some of these scientists and philosophers are Johann Heinrich Jakob Müller, Charles Bell, Charles Darwin, Lorenz Oken, Louis-Pierre Gratiolet, Paolo Mantegazza, Karl Wilhelm Piderit, Carl Georg Lange, Johann Jakob Engel.
- 34 A German physicist (1809–1875) whose main research interests were optics, galvanism, magnetism (See Müller 1849; Müller and Von Liebig 1836). He also supported the dualist perspective of “natural philosophy”.
- 35 Charles Bell (1774–1842) was a Scottish surgeon, anatomist, physiologist, neurologist, artist, and philosophical theologian. He supported natural theology and rejected the *a priori* reasoning of the German idealism, and tried to prove the existence of God through empiricist facts such as the physiology of the human body. From this perspective, his work focused on experience, experiments, and empiricist arguments in the research of the muscles of the face and of the nerves. Bell also studied emotional expression and was influenced by the perspective of Darwin upon emotions. In this sense, although Darwin rejected the theological argument, he agreed with Bell that the muscles of respiration played a role in the expression of emotion (Aminoff 2017; Hughes and Gardner-Thorpe 2022).
- 36 Lorenz Oken (1779–1851) was a German naturalist, botanist, biologist and ornithologist who conducted research in the fields of natural history and medicine. He was one leading figure of the natural philosophy movement in Germany and applied the philosophical principles of Kant to physical science. His work and philosophical view was preceded by that of Gottlieb Fichte and Friedrich Schelling. He was also in contact with Goethe, who invited him to hold lectures at University of Jena in 1807 on his natural history findings. One of the specific aspects of his work was that he employed deductive illustrations of the main concepts, an approach which was typical to the transcendental school (Gamberotto 2017: 329–340).
- 37 Darwin (1809–1882) represented a turning point already anticipated by other researchers in the transition from the *a priori*, Kantian reasoning to the empiricist perspective upon the human body. On the one hand, the philosophy inspired by Kant considered the human body from a dualist body-soul perspective, which implied that the human body possessed all the categories it needed *a priori*. On the other hand, Darwin highlighted a new kind of thinking upon the human body, based on experience instead of inborn qualities. He considered the human body from a monist, unitary perspective, which implied that the body is a whole evolving in time and adapting itself to the changes of its environment. Consequently, there is no conflict between

tiolet,³⁸ Paolo Mantegazza³⁹ and Carl Georg Lange⁴⁰ moved forward to a radical empiricist, monist perspective highlighting determinism, heredity and the physiological basis of human existence.

This entanglement of perspectives in Dragomir's acting reveals his unique approach born of the meeting of these conflicting traditions. No other Romanian Ibsen contributor employed such a complex science-based combination of acting techniques in performing Ibsen on the Romanian stage. Dragomir was an actor teaching not only philosophy, in Nicolae Barbu's words, but also psychology and natural sciences in his acting lessons, from which Ibsen was not exempted. The purpose must have been to achieve an accurate rendition of any role: "Elevul nu va neglija nimic din cele ce sunt necesare explicației pentru a se putea interpreta just textul și personagiile autorului." (The student will not neglect any explanation needed to interpret the text and the author's characters justly; my translation.) (Dragomir 1902: 16) Therefore, I assume that this paradoxical entanglement of traditions was not supposed to be used as such in the interpretation of every role, but adapted to the requirements of every play.

To sum up, Dragomir's acting perspective suggests a move from the romantic tradition, based on the talent of the inspired actor, to psychological realism. Ibsen's plays supported this change because of their multi-faceted characters and because of the retrospective dramaturgical technique in his plays. In the 20 years of staging and teaching Ibsen, Dragomir must have experienced and solved many acting challenges by appealing to new concepts and scientific findings in philosophy, psychology and the natural sciences:

body and soul, as the two represent interdependent dimensions of the same organism. Finally, Darwin's perspective points at heredity, determinism, agnosticism and the reflex arc concept. See Darwin (1872); Shepherd-Barr (2015).

- 38 Louis-Pierre Gratiolet (1815–1865) was a French anatomist and zoologist conducting research in the fields of neuranatomy, physiognomy and physical anthropology. His book *De la physiologie et des mouvements d'expression* (1865) belongs to the same research area as Johann Kaspar Lavater and Cesare Lombroso's. The particularity of physiognomy is that it discusses the psychological profile of the human being based on its physical traits, especially those of the face.
- 39 Paolo Mantegazza (1831–1910) was an Italian neurologist, physiologist and anthropologist. He rejected the Darwinist theory of sexual selection. His was a philosophical view upon nature based on metaphysics, which indicates him as an idealist philosopher supporting the dualist instead of the monist perspective. Nevertheless, he accepted the idea of transmission, heredity, natural selection and competition for life. He was part of the Italian positivism movement, marked by an optimistic evolutionism and biologic pessimism. His greatest concern was with the essential difference between the human being and animals (Mantegazza, Paolo, n.d.; Landucci 1977).
- 40 Carl Georg Lange (1834–1900) was a Danish physician working mainly in the neurology, psychiatry and psychology fields. His main book contribution is *On Emotions: A Psycho-Physiological Study* in which he highlights the empiricist idea that all emotions are developed as or can be reduced to physiological reactions to stimuli. He is known especially for the James-Lange theory, which considers that the physiological reaction generates the emotion. That is, the first thing that happens is the physiological stimulus, then the emotion is experienced as a consequence of the respective physiological stimulus that generated that specific emotion. The chain follows as such: 1. Emotion stimulus – 2. Physiological response pattern – 3. Affective experience (Oxford Reference, n.d.; Lange and James 1922).

Interpretarea preconizată, practică și propagată de State Dragomir, tindea să aibă caracter științific, actorul, totodată profesor de istorie și filozofie, om cu o bogată cultură, cu serioase cunoștințe și pătrundere psihologică, folosea toate aceste calități în descrierea, înțelegerea și adâncirea textelor, în conceperea și redarea personajelor. Creațiile sale erau rodul gândirii, al stabilirii trăsăturilor specifice și integrării în ființa personajului, interesându-l cu deosebire psihologiile bogate și profunde, fiind atras de investigație, tentat de revelarea către spectator, prin integralitate, a ceea ce îndeobște scapă lecturii obișnuite. (The interpretation that State Dragomir expected [to deliver], practised and promoted tended to have a scientific nature. The actor, who was also history and philosophy teacher, was richly cultivated, had a serious psychological knowledge and depth, using all these qualities to decipher, to understand and to analyse the texts in-depth in order to create and to enact the characters. His creations were the fruit of his mind, of his establishing the specific traits of the character and of his identification with it. He was mostly interested in [the characters with] rich and profound psychologies, was attracted to investigate, and was tempted by the aim to reveal in its entirety to the spectator everything that escapes a common reading; my translation.) (Brădățeanu 1979: 168)

Finally, the evolution towards psychological realism stemming from the mix of Romanticism, naturalism and realism in the acting of State Dragomir was a consequence of the contact with and influence of Ibsen plays. In addition, the interdisciplinary profile of State Dragomir evokes the image of the actor as intellectual. In Ion Vartic's words, he was

actor cerebral, intelectualist, animator al avangardei teatrale ieșene și, în consecință, unul dintre popularizatorii ce mai fervenți ai dramaturgiei ibseniene la noi (a cerebral actor, an intellectual, the leader of the theatre avant-garde of Iași, and one of the most fervent promoters of Ibsen's dramaturgy in our country; my translation) (Vartic 1995: 148)

Ultimately, the assimilation of Ibsen into the repertoire of State Dragomir ensured a significant step in the modernisation of Romanian acting and the dissemination of Ibsen across Romania at the turn of the 20th century.

4.2.1.3 Aglae Pruteanu: Nora who never left

The psychological training hub developed at the National Theatre of Iași is not confined to the example of State Dragomir. His stage partner, the star actress Aglae Pruteanu, accompanied and enriched his perspectives: "Ea este actrița care a făcut trecerea de la spiritul științific, documentar, la adevărul interior, psihologic și poetic." (She is the actress who marked the transition from the scientific, documentary spirit to the interior, psychological and poetic truth; my translation.) (Alterescu 1971: 387) In the next section, I investigate her contribution to Ibsen's emergence on the Romanian stage, in light of the five events in which she performed between 1901 and 1909. Of these events, three are associated with *A Doll's House* and although the time span in which she performed Ibsen is shorter than Dragomir's, her contribution is likewise significant because of the quality of her acting.

Pruteanu was the first Romanian Nora. She was not only the most memorable actress of her generation, but also a successful Nora among the actresses who interpreted this role during the early reception period of Ibsen in the Romanian theatre. For instance, while Aristizza Romanescu stated her hesitation to act the role of Nora in *A Doll's House*, Aglae Pruteanu welcomed the opportunity to play Ibsen's protagonist and remembered the performance as a success that was received well by the audience. As it was the first Romanian interpretation of Nora,⁴¹ her rendition was a milestone in Romanian Ibsen production. Her success as an Ibsen protagonist was not confined to *A Doll's House*, as her renditions in *Hedda Gabler* and *An Enemy of the People* were also successful.⁴² Ibsen's characters were unique within her mostly romantic roles; she successfully interpreted in plays by Al. Dumas, V. Sardou, A. D'Ennery, Molière. G. Ohnet and V. Alecsandri:

Principalele mari succese: "Hamlet", "Crimă și pedeapsă", "Romeo și Julieta", "Narcis", "Hoții", "Othello", "Luiza Müller", "Ruy-Blas", "Nora", "Tosca" – în care am avut un eclatant succes [...]. (*Hamlet, Crime and Punishment, Romeo and Juliet, Narcis, The Thieves, Othello, Luiza Müller, Ruy-Blas, Nora, Tosca* [were] my main achievements; my translation.) (Pruteanu 1922: 140)

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- 41 Gabrielle Rejane performed Nora in 1897 in Bucharest and was perceived as controversial. Yet Aglae Pruteanu did not attend these performances, as she was living in Iași. Agnes Sorma also performed in Bucharest, in 1901, the same year as Aglae Pruteanu performed Nora. But Sorma's performance took place after Aglae Pruteanu's performance, and, given the location, Aglae Pruteanu had definitely not attended this one either. So, no direct influence of the German or of the French actresses can be acknowledged in the Romanian actress's style.
- 42 The private life of Aglae Pruteanu also reveals her common traits with Ibsen's feminine protagonists, which must have contributed to a special empathy in understanding the psychology of the characters. Although the actress gave little information about her private life, Nicolae Barbu indicates that she had a failed marriage with Dimitrie Pruteanu, an actor at the National Theatre of Iași. The account of Nicolae Barbu reveals a story akin to Nora or even to Hedda Gabler: "Ruptura cu soțul ei, Dimitrie Pruteanu, îi agravează zbuciumul sufletească. [...] Idealurile artistice ale soțului erau, în orice caz, subordonate existenței liniștite pe care căuta s-o asigura căminului. [...] Aglae însă simțea că se sufocă în această atmosferă căldică – marile ei avânturi, arderea lăuntrică, elanul dăruirii în creație fiind incompatibile cu separarea netă (și desigur mai comodă) a vieții personale de viața artistică. Mai târziu a deschis și acțiune de divorț și și-a reluat chiar numele de Theodoru, timp de câteva stagiuni. Însă Dimitrie Pruteanu nu a consimțit la despărțirea legală, fie din orgoliu, fie din speranța nemărturisită a unei eventuale concilierii." (The break-up with her husband, Dimitrie Pruteanu, aggravated her inner torment. [...] Her husband's artistic ideals were subordinate to the peaceful existence he sought at home. [...] Yet Aglae felt that the lukewarm atmosphere suffocated her. The great ideals, her inner fire and her enthusiasm to give everything in her [artistic] creation were incompatible with the separation between the private and the artistic life. Later on, she filed for divorce and even resumed using her surname Theodoru for a few seasons. But Dimitrie Pruteanu did not give his consent to the legal separation, due either to his vanity or unconfessed hope of a conciliation; my translation.) (Barbu 1965: 64) The rejection of a mediocre life certainly stemmed from her strong need for a meaningful intellectual and artistic life. Both the self-worth and inner fulfilment she was searching for made her resemble Nora, while in Hedda Gabler the actress must have found a similar aesthetic ideal of beauty. Thus, the actress' approach to the two roles was successful in light of the special connection she managed to bridge between the characters and her own private life.

According to the actress, the staging of *A Doll's House* generated controversy that was revealed in both the resistance to, and enthusiasm for, the play amongst the Romanian audience. The initiative of the translator Barbu Marian, who submitted the play to the "Reading Committee", and the active support of State Dragomir attest to the interest in promoting the play. Aglae Pruteanu refers to the correspondence between Dragomir and Barbu Marian that led to the proposal for the staging. The enthusiasm for Ibsen is further acknowledged due to the "valoarea piesei și a traducerii" (value of the play and of the translation; my translation) (ibid: 168) and to "profunda deosebire de concepție a teatrului lui Ibsen" (the profound difference of perspective provided by Ibsen's theatre; my translation) (ibid: 169). Ibsen was an innovator associated with "nou gen de piese care se deosebea fundamental de toate celelalte" (a new category of plays, completely different from all the other; my translation) (ibid: 169), which made him worthy of being included in the repertory. Aglae Pruteanu considered herself proud to participate in this pioneering activity:

Pentru noi satisfacția era îndoită și pentru succesul nostru personal și pentru mândria care ne revenea că noi am fost primii interpreți ai lui Ibsen în țară. Succesul acesta m'a încurajat și am mai jucat în a doua stagiune "Hedda Gabler" cu același succes și am reluat "Dușmanul poporului". (Our satisfaction was double both because of our success and because of the pride to be the first interpreters of Ibsen in the country. The success was encouraging and I performed *Hedda Gabler* successfully in the second season. We also re-staged *An Enemy of the People*; my translation.) (ibid: 171)

The success was, however, short-lived, highlighting the contradictions related to Ibsen's presence on the Romanian stage at the beginning of the 20th century. The actress noticed this scepticism, alongside the hesitation, opposition and mistrust expressed in the context of *A Doll's House* staging:

Dar până să fie jucată, au urmat oarecari ezitări; nimeni nu credea că Ibsen va prinde la noi; mai ales dintre artiști erau mulți cari se opuneau și priveau cu neîncredere încercarea lui Dragomir. (But before the play was even staged, a lot of hesitation arose; no one believed Ibsen capable of captivating our audience. There were many, especially among the actors, who resisted and regarded with scepticism *Dragomir's* attempt; my translation.) (ibid: 168)

The resistance to Ibsen was first evident among the actors themselves, who claimed Ibsen would have no impact on the audience. Moreover, she noticed that although the spectators enjoyed the performance of *A Doll's House*, they still manifested superficiality towards theatre performances:

Păcat numai că toată munca aceasta uriașă, a unei pleiade de buni artiști, nu a fost sortită [...] pentru timpul prezent, pentru publicul acesta bun de acum, setos de spectacole, dornic să vadă și să învețe. – Publicul de atunci era tocmai dimpotrivă, pretențios și indiferent. (It is a shame that the tremendous efforts made by an entire group of illustrious actors were not meant [...] for the present day, for the brave

audience of these times, who thirst for performances, wanting to learn. – But, on the contrary, the audience of our time was pretentious and indifferent; my translation.) (ibid: 171)

Thus, Aglae Pruteanu confirms that the staging of Ibsen was an elitist choice rather than supported by the mass audience or by fellow actors. It is even questionable how much of the following reaction she described reveals a meditation upon Nora's leaving or the spectators expecting Nora's return:

Și pașii Norei care se pierd în depărtare, răspândind în urma ei o tristețe nemărginită. Am simțit impresia aceasta și printre spectatori, prin negrăbirea de a se ridica din staluri." (And Nora's steps, fading afar, spread around her a boundless sadness. I felt this impression among spectators too, as they did not rush to leave their seats; my translation.) (ibid: 170)

Nevertheless, the actress insists on the success of *Nora*, referring to both the performances in Iași and the touring ones:

Nora a plăcut și s'a jucat de multe ori. Apoi am făcut și un turneu cu ea, de asemenea reușit [...]. Am fost prin multe orașe și a plăcut mult pretutindeni, făcând și afaceri bune materiale. (The audience enjoyed *Nora* and we performed it many times. Then we organised a tour with it, which was also successful. [...] We toured many cities and the audience enjoyed it everywhere, and we also obtained financial benefits because of it; my translation.) (ibid: 170–171)

Aglae Pruteanu's memoirs support the image of a sensitive actress with huge intellectual abilities. The attraction towards Ibsen and towards the role of Nora is a reflection of her star actress profile, as well as of her interest in roles demanding psychological depth. In this sense, the actress highlights that the role required sharp intelligence, a deep psychological understanding, and a sensitive psyche. But what did this psychological depth and understanding mean more precisely in the case of Aglae Pruteanu?

The actress's acting perspective answers our question, given that her Ibsen contribution was most relevant at this level. Together with State Dragomir, Aglae Pruteanu marked the transition from Romanticism to psychological realism associated with Ibsen's emergence on the Romanian stage, indicated by the mix of elements in her acting approach.

What did this transition involve in the case of Aglae Pruteanu? Primarily, it entailed the shift from a Romantic perspective of the actor as an "inspired" artist to a more scientific approach to the role:

Totul depinde de puterea de creație a artistei, de imaginație, de simțire, de expresivitate, pentru a reda armonia într-un tot ideal de frumusețe și de duioșie, dar și de adevăr științific care să corespundă cu tipul real. (Everything depends on the actress's creative power, on her imagination, feeling and expressiveness in rendering the harmony as an ideal unity not only of beauty and sweetness, but also of scientific truth corresponding to the reality of the character type; my translation.) (ibid: 106)

From this perspective, the actress mixed realist and romantic concepts in her acting.

A brief look at her general profile accounts for this combination. Introspection, identification, soul, nerves, sincerity, hypersensitivity, emotion, self-control, balance and intellect, and a delicate physical appearance and voice are the main keywords used to describe Aglae Pruteanu:

Superioritatea Aglaei Pruteanu provine și din farmecul pe care îl exercita asupra contemporanilor, și din atracțiozitatea feminină, și din combustiiile dramatice, și din suavitatea vocii, dar în primul rând din faptul că jocul său de scenă este rezultatul unui proces conștient de creație care urmărește realizarea unor simboluri de participare adresate conștiinței publicului. (Aglae Pruteanu's superiority stems from her charm and from the feminine attraction she exerted upon the audience of her epoch, as well as from the dramatic combustions, and the suavity of her voice. But above all was the fact that her acting style was a conscious creative process pursuing the fulfilment of several collective symbols intended for the consciousness of the audience; my translation.) (Alterescu 1971: 384)

Mihai Vasiliu confirms this view of the actress as one who possessed a

mare sensibilitate, capacitatea de aprofundare psihologică a rolurilor, simțul măsurii, grația și plasticitatea atitudinilor, dicția clară și timbrul glasului [...], convingerile sale despre valoarea artei realiste, făurită cu intensă participare intelectuală (great sensitivity and the capacity for a deep psychological approach to the roles, a sense for balance, grace and plasticity in her attitude, a clear diction and timbre of the voice, [...] [and] her own perspective of the realist art, built through an intense intellectual engagement; my translation) (Vasiliu 1995: 169).

Above all else, the actress was renowned for her hypersensitivity:

Ea a fost mai mult decât o sensibilă. A fost o hipersensibilă, o hiperestezică chiar, care-și substituia sensibilitatea propriei 'duioșiei sufletelor poetice' pe care le-a jucat. (She was more than a sensitive [actress]. She was a hypersensitive, even hyperaesthetic [actress], who substituted her own sensitivity to the 'sweetness of the poetic souls' she interpreted; my translation.) (Alterescu 1971: 385)

All these qualities and depictions of her acting point to a blend of romantic and realist techniques in which psychology was a background element: "Aglae Pruteanu optează pentru o interpretare psihologică. Citește filosofie, studii de psihologie și psihopatologie [...]." (Aglae Pruteanu chooses a psychological interpretation. She reads philosophy, psychological studies and psychopathology [...]; my translation.) (Alterescu 1971: 385) She did not clearly differentiate between the romantic and the realist acting techniques, but mixed them both when she explained her approach. In this respect, she considered realist truthfulness and sincerity, as well as the romantic inspiration of the gifted actor, in a more or less conscious attempt to reconcile two paradoxical techniques:

Rolurile pe care le interpretam [...] erau produsul propriei mele gândiri; veșnic în căutarea adevărului și a cunoașterii sufletului meu și al altora. Posedam acest dar de observație, de care mintea mea era veșnic preocupată [...]. Să cercetez cu nesațiu adâncul sufletului omenesc, oricum și oricând, era îndeletnicirea mea principală, era studiul meu involuntar de fiecare moment. – utilizat însă cu voință, armonizând totul, creând caracterele atunci când aveam nevoie, în arta mea. (The roles I was interpreting [...] were the product of my own reflection; I was always in search of the truth and knowledge of my soul and of others' souls too. I possessed this gift of observation, which constantly preoccupied my mind [...]. To insatiably investigate the depths of the human soul everywhere and at all times was my main concern, my involuntary study activity of each moment – and I willingly used it, in trying to harmonise everything, and creating the characters when I needed it in my art; my translation.) (Pruteanu 1922: 90–91)

Regardless of the lack of conceptual clarity, Simion Alterescu highlights that “cel mai plener se recunosc calitățile actriței în drama cu teză, în drama psihologică” (the qualities of the actress are plentifully recognisable in the thesis drama, namely in the psychological drama; my translation) (Alterescu 1971: 386). Thus, whereas her profile indicates an actress inspired by the Romantic tradition, her affinity with the “thesis drama” – Ibsen included – indicate an actress equally inspired by realism. To understand her perspective, we must separate the details of this mix, and analyse how they activate the transition towards psychological realism.

On the one hand, many aspects of her profile indicate her as a romantic actress. Firstly, the notions of “soul” – “voiu substitui toată duișia sufletelor poetice pe care le-am jucat” (I will re-enact all the tenderness of the poetic souls I have interpreted; my translation) (Pruteanu 1922: 4); “inspiration” – “stăpânită de-o inspirație lăuntrică căreia nu mă puteam sustrage” (I was dominated by an interior inspiration that I could not escape; my translation) (ibid. 125); and “intuition” – “prin puterea intuiției, – și fără ea nici o înțelegere nu e cu putință, – intram dela prima dată în *coaja rolului*” (through the power of intuition – and no real understanding [of the role] is possible without it – I could assume the role from *scratch*; my translation) (ibid.: 125) – seem central to her approach. Then, the *emploi* system provided the framework for her career, at least at the beginning. She was a drama actress, performing especially *ingenuités* and *coquettes*. Moreover, the beauty of the interpretation was also a romantic preoccupation and informed her conviction about the importance of the beauty and posture of the body, as well as the quality of the voice and diction:

Trebuie să ai ceva din inocența și simplitatea sufletelor sincere pentru a putea reda ideia despre o asemenea ființă ideală. Pe lângă aceasta mai trebuie un fizic plăcut și corespunzător în totul cerințelor scenei [...]. Și apoi, vocea...prin care trebuie să exteriorizezi toate... (You must possess something of the innocence and the simplicity of honest souls in order to illustrate the idea behind such an ideal being. In addition, one needs a pleasant physical appearance, entirely adequate to the requirements of the stage. [...] And then, [one needs] the voice to enact all these...; my translation) (ibid: 105); Nu mi-e rușine să mă laud cu vocea mea excepțional de bine înzestrată cu toată gama simțirii omenești.” (I am not ashamed to praise my own

voice, which is exceptionally well endowed with the entire scale of human feelings; my translation.) (ibid: 140)

Pruteanu uses various concepts to point towards realist acting techniques that contradict the romantic approach. Firstly, the rational control of her interpretation goes beyond the typical romantic control of the posture and of the voice. She focused on a conscious understanding of the action, which left less room for intuitive inspiration. “Understanding” each role became the crux of her acting approach, which made the actress distance herself from the interpretation templates of the *emploi* system:

Firul gândirii urmărea ideia corect și ordonat, fără efortare și în chip natural și mai ales fără imitațiuni sau influențe străine. (The thread of my thought was following the idea correctly and orderly, effortlessly and naturally, and especially without any imitation or foreign influences; my translation) (ibid: 126); exprimând astfel, în interpretare, gândirea autorului; după ce a trecut-o prin propria sa gândire și apoi executând acțiunea: prin gest, mișcare, sentiment și vorbire (Thus, I was expressing the author’s thought in the interpretation, filtered through my own thinking and then executing the action through gesture, movement, feeling and speech; my translation) (ibid: 91); personajul era înțeles foarte bine de public, fiindcă era înțeles perfect de interpret (the audience understood the character very well because the interpreted had understood it perfectly; my translation.) (ibid: 95)

This aspect of her process reveals the idea that understanding the play involves understanding the motivation of the actions within the play. Why and how? The main proof is that the actress did not use any notes written beside her lines to mark how she would perform the role. Instead, she states that she focused on the way in which the action developed in the play and followed this line of thought, instead of memorising gestures, tones or facial expressions:

Niciodată nu mi-am însemnat în rol vre-o trecere, mișcare sau indicație a jocului meu, care întotdeauna era unitar, exact, în aceleași puncte neschimbate, bine înțipărite și pentru totdeauna neuitate, pentru că toate erau gândite, bine cumpănite și înregistrate în minte. (I have never written any passage, movement or other note concerning my acting beside the [lines of the role]. My acting was always unitary, precise, with the same unchanging nuances, well imprinted on the role and ever un-forgotten, because they had all been [filtered through my] thought, well balanced and registered in my mind; my translation.) (ibid: 126)

This contrasts with the classic approach of the majority of her fellow colleagues, educated in the Romantic tradition. They prepared the roles by noting beside their lines the gestures, facial expressions or vocal tones they intended to employ. All the star actors of her generation mentioned this practice of preparing roles with the help of these written notes.

Secondly, the influence of the comedy tradition facilitated by Costache (Costantin) Bălănescu and even by her teacher Mihail Galino – educated by Matei Millo, the founder of the Romanian comedy school, who privileged “vorbirea naturală și gestul măsurat” (the

natural speech and the balanced gesture; my translation) (ibid: 154) – brought Pruteanu closer to the realist and naturalist techniques, and to the use of everyday speech on stage instead of declamation. The presence of Napoleone Borelli, marked by the Italian *verismo* evolving towards realism, must have separated her even more from the romantic acting:

Contopirea atâtor însușiri o apropiau pe interpretă de trăirea autentică, reală, făcându-i pe spectatori să remarce diferența de stil față de jocul exterior, ‘teatral’ al multora dintre artiștii vremii. (The merging of so many characteristics drew her closer to the real, authentic experience [of the role], which made the spectators notice the difference of style in contrast to the exterior, ‘theatrical’ acting of many of the epoch’s artists; my translation.) (Barbu 1965: 172)

In this sense, the influence of the Romanian comedy school and the tempered Italian *verismo* of Borelli guided her towards the use of everyday speech on stage. Yet, she neither adopted the pathological, exaggerated gestures of *verismo*, nor fell into the naturalist trap of imitating real life on stage. Her collaboration with Borelli shows that Aglae Pruteanu was much more inclined towards a realist view. In this respect, the critic Nicolae Barbu states that this difference makes it impossible for the Romanian actress to be a facsimile of the Italian actresses:

Adâncind mecanismul psihologic al diverselor caractere înfățișate, artista ieșeană depășește acel verism psihologic care în teatru a fost ilustrat și justificat numai datorită forței artistice de transfigurare a unor mari personalități ca Adelaida Ristori și mai ales Eleonora Duse – aceasta din urmă contemporană cu Aglae Pruteanu. Tradiția realistă a școlii lui Millo s-a dovedit, în teatrul românesc, puternică, între altele și prin această împrejurare. În adevăr, nici Aristizza Romanescu și nici urmașa ei de care ne ocupăm, nu au fost atrase de naturalitatea în sine, lipsită de semnificație umană de un ordin mai general. (Through the deepening of the psychological mechanism of the numerous characters she interpreted, the actress from Iași goes beyond a psychological *verismo*. However, the success of *verismo* is basically justified because of the artistic transfigurative force of great personalities such as Adelaida Ristori and especially Eleonora Duse – the latter was a contemporary of Aglae Pruteanu. In the Romanian theatre, the realist tradition of Millo’s school proved its influence even in a context like this. Fair enough, neither Aristizza Romanescu, nor her successor whom we analyse, were attracted by a natural interpretation as such, lacking human meaning in a much more general sense; my translation.) (ibid: 154)

Thus, her acting approach marked a clear transitional movement from Romanticism to realism. It was also reflective of her training, which was a product of the different approaches used at the Conservatoires in Iași and Bucharest. In Bucharest, the teacher would *show* the students *how* to perform the role. In this respect, the female students were taught by the most prestigious actress of the time – Aristizza Romanescu – while the male students by the similarly prestigious actor Constantin Nottara. In Iași, instead of *showing*, the teachers let the student discover the best interpretation based on their artistic personality. Mihail Galino, the teacher of Aglae Pruteanu, was one such example:

Dela bunul și marele meu profesor, am învățat multe lucruri bune, fără să-mi fi impus vreodată felul lui de-a zice sau de-a fi ca artist, deși era un admirabil artist, un mare tragedian. Mă lăsa să spun și să joc rolul, în voia mea, dela început până la sfârșit, cu rare excepții numai, făcând din când în când câte o observație, dar fără să-mi corecteze intonațiile, impunându-mi-le pe ale lui. Atunci, nu știam de ce mă lăsa astfel și eram foarte îngrijată. Mai târziu, însă, am înțeles că înadins mă lăsa, să caut eu singură nota justă, fiind sigur că am s'o găsec. (I learned a lot of good things from my good and great teacher, who never imposed on me his way of reciting [the role] or his way of being as an artist, although he was a remarkable artist and a tremendous tragedian. He let me recite and perform the role at will, from the beginning to the end, only exceptionally making observations, but without correcting my intonations by imposing his [intonations] on me. At the time, I did not know why he was doing so and I was very worried. Later on, I understood that he was doing it on purpose, in order to let me find the right note on my own, as he was sure that I was going to find it; my translation.) (ibid: 17)

Although Galino taught Romantic techniques, he was also inspired by the Romanian comedy school of Matei Millo, and by the German tradition in Vienna (Barbu 1965: 16, 17).

Aglae Pruteanu “este actrița care a făcut trecerea de la spiritul științific documentar, la adevărul interior, psihologic și poetic” ([she] is the actress who marked the transition from the scientific, documentary spirit to the inner, psychological and poetical truth; my translation) (Alterescu 1971: 387). Although she performed together with and was influenced by actors trained into the Romantic tradition such as Aristizza Romanescu and Grigore Manolescu, her acting surpassed the boundaries of the romantic techniques. Her acting approach is situated between Romanticism and realism, a transition phase leading to psychological realism, and reinforced by numerous psychological and philosophical references. In Nicolae Barbu's words, in the case of Aglae Pruteanu “se poate vorbi de profesarea unei concepții și a unei arte profund realiste, un realism înțeles într-un chip evoluat, plin de subtilitate” (one can talk about the enactment of a profoundly realist art and perspective; it is a realism at a high-level conception, full of subtlety; my translation.) (Barbu 1965: 151)

Ibsen played an important role in her transition from Romanticism to realism. She was clearly aware of *A Doll's House's* novelty: “nou gen de piese care se deosebea fundamental de toate celelalte” (a new genre of plays which was fundamentally different from all the others; my translation) (Pruteanu 1922: 169). The director of Napoleone Borelli contributed to her interpretation, since “el demult studia piesa cu toată grija și strădania cuvenită acestui nou gen de piese care se deosebea fundamental de toate celelalte.” (he had studied the play long before with all the required care and the effort; my translation) (ibid: 168–169). He was the director of *A Doll's House* and worked closely with Aglae Pruteanu on her performance. It is probably that his approach to acting, situated between Romanticism and a tempered version of Italian *verismo*, influenced her approach to Nora. Moreover, his rehearsal room practice resembled the approach to Aglae Pruteanu's teacher, Galino.

Thirdly, as in the case of State Dragomir, philosophy and psychology were important tools for the actress. Memory, imagination, will and attention are the most important psychology concepts she mentioned. Memory and attention gave a rational and con-

trolled focus on the interpretation: “În concepția rolului, mai trebuia și memorizarea lui, pentru a fi stăpână pe cuvinte, cum eram stăpână pe acțiune” (In order to create the role, I also had to memorise it, in order to master the words in the same way I was mastering the action; my translation) (ibid: 127). More specifically, she did not use the romantic technique, which involved to “assemble” or “compose” a role only by putting together gestures, postures, facial expressions, vocal tonalities to express the different stages of the character’s evolution. She did not ignore the value of the individual gestures, yet they were surpassed by her use of a larger view. That is, she appealed to imagination to create a unique, unitary image of the character – an ideal model of its own – yet integrated in the landscape provided by the other characters of the play:

Fiecare cuvânt, fiecare situație, avea un ecou îndepărtat rășfrânt în mintea mea, având totodată imaginea ființei pe care trebuia să o interpretez și a celorlalte personaje, pe cari le vedeam în închipuirea mea, ca într-o oglindă. [...] Nu le venea a crede camarazilor, că nu cunoșteam nici rolul, nici piesa, ci eram la prima repetiție, citindu-mi numai rolul cu foarte multă atenție și urmărind piesa cu aceeași atenție. (Each word, each situation had a distant, faint echo in my mind, but I simultaneously had [in mind] the images of both the being that I had to interpret and that of the other characters, which I was in my imagination as in a mirror. [...] My companions could not believe their eyes that I knew neither the role nor the play, but I was only at the first rehearsal, just reading the role very attentively and following the play with the same attention; my translation.) (ibid: 126)

This contrasts with the Romantic actors’ manner of preparing their interpretation of the roles, usually studying and composing them with gestures to signify different experiences. This sense of separation of the experiences gained through the observation method appears subsidiary in the case of Aglae Pruteanu. She did use this technique, but subordinate it to the wider purpose of creating an ideal model of the character instead of breaking the role into separate and distinct pieces. Finally, the emergence of a new acting technique in the direction of psychological realism is visible in Aglae Pruteanu’s focus on understanding the action, and allowing this to precede the memorising of the text.

Similar to State Dragomir, she was also in touch with the new findings of experimental psychology. She integrated into the practice of acting the very subtly Darwin-inspired approach proposed by Théodule Ribot. It is true that she also believed in the importance of inspiration and talent, but considered this inborn ability beyond a simple “gift” and as part of a generational transmission enacted and fulfilled through a selection mechanism:

Și dacă artistul este înzestrat cu un adevărat talent, apoi presupunem că el este o selecțiune a câtorva generații, până a ajunge în stadiul acesta. Și atunci nu e de mirare că spiritul lui s-a rafinat în experiențe și pătrundere. (And if the artist is truly gifted, then we suppose that he is the result of a selection [unfolding over] several generations, until arriving to this point. Then, it is no wonder that the spirit was refined by experience and depth; my translation.) (ibid: 125)

Thus, Aglae Pruteanu considered that the abilities of the individual were more a matter of personal and cultural heredity than of mysteriously acquired talent.

If State Dragomir was associated with Ion Găvănescul and Eduard Gruber, Aglae Pruteanu was clearly influenced by Théodule Ribot's findings. She must also have discussed the psychological research topics of Nicolae Vaschide during her visit to the psychologist's family in Paris in 1900, as she mentions in her memoirs. Who was Nicolae (Nicolas) Vaschide? Briefly put, he was a Romanian experimental psychologist who conducted research in Paris together with Alfred Binet,⁴³ Armand Théodule Ribot,⁴⁴ Édouard Toulouse⁴⁵ and H. Pieron⁴⁶ until 1907, based on the same experimental psychology framework of Wilhelm Wundt. Vaschide also contributed to the elaboration of a technique of experimental psychology, published in 1911, four years after his death in 1907. Overall, his main research focused on sleep, dreams, hypnosis, delirium, psychopathology, psychophysiology etc. In this context, Aglae Pruteanu must have been exposed to Ribot's perspective upon the talent of the artists in her memoirs:

Căutând să-și explice această capacitate de intuire, care li se părea surprinzătoare chiar unor interpreți încercați în tainele meșteșugului, cum erau colegii ei, artista recurge la opiniile unor oameni de știință, și-l citează, între alții, pe Th. Ribot. Pornind de la numeroase cazuri concrete, psihologul francez ajungea la concluzia că intuiția artistică, elementul cel mai de seamă în definirea talentului, se formează [...] printr-o selecțiune a însușirilor specifice, de-a lungul câtorva generații. [...] străduința artistei de a se situa pe terenul solid al cauzalității științifice în definirea acelor însușiri pe care mulți preferau să le socotească misterioase, învăluite într-un nimb transcendent. Ea refuza deci interpretarea artei în spirit idealist, ceea ce aruncă o lumină și mai puternică asupra ponderei pe care o avea în structura sa artistică latura rațională, sprijinită ferm pe reflectarea obiectivă a realității. (When trying to explain this intuitive ability, which seemed surprising even to experienced interpreters such as her colleagues, the artist refers to the opinions of scientists such as Th. Ribot. Through the examination of numerous concrete cases, the French psychologist concludes that the artistic intuition, which is the most important element defining the talent, is developed through a selection of specific traits along several generations. [...] the artist made the effort to place herself on the solid ground of scientific causality when defining these characteristics, which most preferred to consider them mysterious and veiled by the transcendence nimbus. So she refused to interpret the art in an idealist manner, which highlights even more how important for her artistic personality was the rational side, firmly rooted in the objective reflection of reality; my translation) (Barbu 1965: 168)

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- 43 French researcher, the founder of the experimental psychology research in France. He was specialised in psychopathology. He visited Romania in 1895 and held 12 lectures on experimental psychology at the University of Bucharest (Bejat 1972: 182–197; Ralea and Botez 1958: 491–504).
- 44 French theoretician in the field of experimental psychology, interested in mental heredity, psychopathology (Bejat 1972: 63, 183, 202; Ralea and Botez 1958: 504–505).
- 45 French theoretician in the field of experimental psychology, interested in pathological psychology, who together with N. Vaschide developed a technical approach to experimental psychology, published in the book *Technique de psychologie expérimentale*, published in 1904 (Bejat 1972: 22, 200–201).
- 46 French psychologist and doctor who also collaborated with N. Vaschide and Ed. Toulouse on the elaboration of the book *Technique de psychologie expérimentale*, published in 1904. He also studied the psychology of sensations (physiological psychology) (Ralea and Botez 1958: 505–506).

Besides, Nicolae Barbu indicates that the actress borrowed books from the National Theatre's library written precisely by Th. Ribot, Ch. Darwin,⁴⁷ P. Mantegazza,⁴⁸ J. J. Weiss,⁴⁹ Schopenhauer, A. Mézières⁵⁰ or Coquelin-aîné.⁵¹ This list of authors⁵² also indicates the mix of romantic and realist techniques, pointing at the transition towards psychological realism in her acting. Eventually, we notice State Dragomir and Aglae Pruteanu's shared interest in Darwin and Mantegazza, highlighting their focus on a science-based acting, yet without completely abandoning the romantic norms, as the presence of Schopenhauer and Coquelin-aîné indicate.

Finally, the mix of all these influences tells us about the "ingredients" Aglae Pruteanu used in her Ibsen performances: Her combination of romantic techniques and realist techniques rooted in the use of experimental psychology suited Ibsen roles, particularly Nora. The understanding of the action in the play and interest in the truthfulness of rendition indicate a psychological realism approach, whereas the identification with the role and the hypersensitivity remain the romantic characteristics:

Cu mare admirație am ajuns să pătrund înțelesul subiectului și să urmez firul cugetării autorului. Atunci am văzut că pot urma desfășurarea acțiunii numai prin puterea gândirii și a sentimentelor lăuntrice, singurele conducătoare în forma de exteriorizare a personajului, care numai astfel poate capata o precizie a stărilor sufletești în interpretarea dificilului rol al Norei, precum și al tuturor pieselor lui Ibsen. Trecherile prin diferite faze le simțeam bine în sufletul meu [...]. (With great admiration, I managed to grasp the meaning of the play, to follow the thread of the author's thinking. Then I realised that I could follow the action only through the power of the inner thoughts and feelings, which dominate the character's way to express herself. This is the only way to gain a certain precision of the state of mind when interpreting the difficult role of Nora, as well as of other Ibsen protagonist. I could feel so well the passages through different phases in my soul [...]; my translation). (Pruteanu 1922: 170)

At the level of the theatre production, Aglae Pruteanu considered the importance of the entire ensemble and, implicitly, of the other colleagues' interpretation: "De la această înțelegere între interpreți depinde succesul. În privința aceasta, Dragomir era un neprețuit partener." (The success depends on the collaboration between actors. From this perspective, Dragomir was a priceless partner; my translation.) (ibid: 170) Thus, "cu asemenea interpreți piesa se juca destul de bine" (with such actors, the play was performed quite well; my translation) (ibid: 170). However, given the focus on the actors

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- 47 She read Darwin's book *The expression of emotions in man and animals* (Barbu 1965: 211).
 48 She read Paolo Mantegazza's book *La physionomie des sentiments* [*The physiognomy of the feelings*] (Barbu 1965: 211).
 49 She read Jean-Jacques Weiss's book *Le théâtre et les mœurs* (Barbu 1965: 211). Weiss also wrote a book on the Parisian theatres, *Les théâtres parisiens*, published in 1896.
 50 She read Alfred Mézières's book *Shakespeare, ses Œuvres et ses critiques* (Barbu 1965: 211).
 51 She read *L'art du comédien* by Coquelin-aîné, who was an influential French actor associated with the classical acting genre and renowned for his comedy performances (Barbu 1965: 211).
 52 According to Nicolae Barbu, these books had been bought by and included in the library of the National Theatre of Iași in September 1898 (Barbu 1965: 211).

in leading roles, even in *A Doll's House*, the approach remained romantic, that is, actor-based rather than ensemble-based. Finally, even her acting approach suggests that, despite her being a star actress, she considered the integration of her interpretation into the ensemble and did not refuse smaller roles, not even when they did not suit her:

Nu am neglijat niciodată un rol, ori în ce condițiuni l-aș fi jucat. Am avut aceiași grijă și atenție pentru un rol mic sau care nu-mi plăcea, ca și pentru unul mare și frumos. (I have never neglected a role, regardless of the context in which I was performing it. I was as careful with a smaller role or one that I did not like as with a great and beautiful role; my translation.) (ibid: 127)

The direct legacy of Aglae Pruteanu is, however, weaker than in the case of other Ibsen key contributors. She did not teach, in contrast to State Dragomir, and she did not have a degree because she started performing on the National Theatre's stage before finishing her studies. Therefore, her impact upon other generations of actors and the influence of her interpretation of Ibsen was low, in contrast to that of Dragomir. In this respect, her contribution to Ibsen's dissemination is relevant as an isolated, unique case study in the local dissemination of Ibsen.

4.2.1.4 Napoleone Borelli: Ibsen in-between Romanticism and naturalism in Iași

Napoleone Borelli modelled Aglae Pruteanu and State Dragomir's approaches to Ibsen at the turn of the century. The plays of the Norwegian playwright were part of the new repertory policy applied by Borelli through his introduction to the Romanian audience of

o paletă mult mai bogată a stărilor, impulsurilor și îngrădirilor sufletești aduse pe scenă, atât de autorii nordici, cât și de francezi, italieni și chiar de români (a richer spectrum of the states of mind, impulses and spiritual coercions that both Nordic, French, Italian and even Romanian playwrights had previously brought to the stage; my translation.) (ibid: 114)

Borelli was the first manager of the National Theatre in Iași (1896–1903) (*Enciclopedia dello spettacolo*: 2: Bas-Cap 1954: 828) after the reconstruction and re-opening of the theatre and the director of the first Romanian production of *A Doll's House* in 1901. His background in the Italian theatre tradition and the more general connections between the Romanian and the Italian culture, with their common Latin heritage, made Borelli a suitable candidate for the position of manager of the theatre and the more unusual role of its stage director. Borelli enhanced the skills of the Romanian actors by adapting his acting and staging perspectives to the local practice of acting. As Nicolae Barbu states, Borelli focused on “perfecționarea artiștilor ieșeni” (perfecting the artists of Iași; my translation) (Barbu 1965: 112) and influenced a generation of actors⁵³ responsible for the early promotion of Ibsen on the Romanian stage. Aglae Pruteanu mentioned that he

53 Aglae Pruteanu, Petre Sturdza, State Dragomir, Ion Morțun, Natalia Profir, Verona Cuzinski (Almăjanu) were the most important Romanian actors and Ibsen contributors who collaborated with Borelli.

shaped her approach to Nora when she performed the role for the first time on the Romanian stage in 1901 under his supervision.

Borelli used Ibsen's plays to renew the repertory and to model the Romanian actors' acting, but how did he do this? We know that he performed in *Ghosts* with Alfredo de Sanctis, who brought a *verismo* interpretation of Ibsen to Romania. It is likely that when Borelli came to Romania in 1907, he adopted the same approach. But how inspired by *verismo* was Borelli's Ibsen before 1903, when he entered de Sanctis's ensemble? This question is provoked by the fact that Napoleone Borelli's first and decisive contact with the theatre in Iași was as part of Ernesto Rossi's ensemble in 1895, which suggests his connection with the romantic acting genre. Borelli's experience before his encounter with Alfredo de Sanctis, gained through his participation in Ernesto Rossi's and Giacinta Pezzana's ensembles until 1895, and, finally his contribution as director at the National Theatre of Iași between 1896 and 1903, reveals a complex entanglement of Romanticism and *verismo*.

The tight timeframe of Borelli's activity indicates that his Ibsen perspective was only vaguely inspired by *verismo* before he worked with Alfredo de Sanctis. Instead, his Ibsen recipe was inspired by his participation in Ernesto Rossi's and Giacinta Pezzana's ensembles. This indicates that although he was aware of the *verismo* rendition of Ibsen, his proposal for the actors of Iași differed from Zacconi's extreme acting. Nicolae Barbu confirms Borelli's distant attitude towards *verismo*, and suggests that he promoted another acting perspective:

Ceea ce s-a numit verismul fiziologic, detaliind până la ultimile reacții suferința, exacerbarea violenței, chinurile morții – nu intra în vederile lui Borelli, care nu a încercat niciodată această coardă. (The so-called physiological *verismo*, which showed the details of the suffering, the exacerbated violence and the torments of death, were not part of Borelli's perspective. He had, in fact, never emphasised this style; my translation.) (Barbu 1977: 115–116)

Ioan Massoff confirms this, indicating that Borelli “fără să fie prea robit stilului de interpretare veristă (naturalistă) a marilor actori italieni” (was not enslaved by the *verismo* (naturalist) acting of the great Italian actors too much; my translation) (1978: 562).

With Rossi as the leader of the ensemble with which Borelli arrived in Romania, I argue that the latter was more inclined to romantic rather than *verismo* acting. At the same time, I agree that his experience as part of Pezzana's ensemble ensured him a smooth transition and integration in the *verismo*-based ensemble of Alfredo de Sanctis in 1907. Furthermore, Borelli is more often connected to the romantic Rossi than to the *verismo*-inspired Pezzana. In addition, neither Giacinta Pezzana nor Giovanni Emanuel, who both introduced the *verismo* acting in Italy, were performing in the pathologic, extreme manner of Zacconi. But in order to understand Borelli's view between Romanticism and *verismo*, as well as its consequences upon the staging of Ibsen in Romania at the National Theatre of Iași, we must briefly look at Ernesto Rossi's position in the Italian theatre and at the specificity of his Romantic acting.

Firstly, Ernesto Rossi belonged to the “canonical generation of the *grande attore*, represented by the classic trio Ristori-Rossi-Salvini, all born in the 1820s” (Puppa 2006:

232) and was considered a Romantic actor (Enciclopedia dello spettacolo: 8: Peri-Sio 1961: 1227). Roberto Alonge supports Paolo Puppa's view by adding that "il *grande attore* italiano è in realtà una *santissima trinità*" (the Italian *grande attore* is, in fact, a *Holy Trinity*; my translation) (Alonge 1988: 23). For instance, Rossi, as a Romantic actor, "non conobbe confine, abbandonandosi completamente a ogni parte" (knew no boundaries and abandoned himself to any role; my translation) (Enciclopedia dello spettacolo: 8: Peri-Sio 1961: 1227). Through a complete identification with the role, the Romantic actors aimed at an absolute transfiguration of their artistic personality in an ideal representation of the character on stage, rather than the particular, individual realities of the *verismo* actors:

Il linguaggio del 'grande attore' da almeno mezzo secolo era stato utilizzato per dare una immagine unitaria di sentimenti e passioni, in personaggi aristocratici o popolari, mitici o storici (quasi mai borghesi), incarnazioni tutte di un 'vero' ideale o moltiplicato: le 'donne mondiali' della Ristori, i giganti buoni di Salvini, gl'innamorati passionali di Ernesto Rossi. Alla successiva generazione la drammaturgia verista chiese di passare da un 'vero' ideale a tanti 'veri' particolari. (The language of the '*grande attore*' had been used for almost half a century to create a unitary image of feelings and passions in both aristocratic or popular, mythical or historical (almost never bourgeois) characters which were all embodiments of an ideal or multiplied 'truth': the 'global ladies' of Ristori, the kind giants of Salvini, the passionate lovers of Ernesto Rossi. The *verismo* dramaturgy required the next generation to switch from an ideal 'truth' to so many individual 'truths'; my translation.) (D'Amico 1990: 36)

In this respect, Rossi belonged to that generation of Italian actors who privileged the character, rejecting the primacy of the text. Moreover, the acting followed strict rules, in which the beauty and the balance of the performance were essential:

Sia nella Ristori che in Rossi e Salvini il rapporto con il personaggio, la sua costruzione calibratissima, sono assolutamente centrali. [...] Ma rapporto con il personaggio e non con il testo: con Amleto e non con *Amleto*. (Either for Ristori or for Rossi and Salvini, the relationship with the character and its most calibrated construction are absolutely central. [...] But this applies to the relationship with the character, and not with the text: with Hamlet, and not with *Hamlet*; my translation.) (Alonge 1988: 25)

Based on his experience as an actor in Rossi's ensemble, it seems logical that Borelli brought the Italians' romantic acting to Iași, while focusing on "eliberare din declamatorism și de concentrare a mijloacelor de expresie" (the liberation from declamation and the compression of the acting means; my translation) (Alterescu 1971: 313). Consequently, the first Romanian production of *A Doll's House* in 1901 must have been dominated by a romantic approach, while also making use of *verismo* principles due to Borelli's influence. On the one hand, the romantic perspective is revealed in the prominence of the character, the beauty and the passion tied together in a balanced corporeal rendition in which the musicality of the voice played an essential role, which Borelli applied while working with the ensemble. On the other hand, the use of *verismo* elements emerges, according

to Nicolae Barbu, in the director's focus on "grija armoniei, prin înlăturarea retoricii și a incantației în sine, prin adâncirea psihologică a personajelor" (harmony, the removal of rhetoric and incantation in itself, and in the deeply psychological analysis of the characters; my translation.) (1977: 117) Whereas Barbu does not clarify either the notion of "psychological analysis" or the function of a "director" in Borelli's practice, it is nevertheless clear that no pathological exacerbations revealing the anomalies of the body and of the psyche and pointing at a *verismo* interpretation seem part of the artistic credo he conveyed to the Romanian actors. Borelli's initiative to change the repertory by bringing *verismo* plays in the repertory also required the actors to abandon declamation. In this respect, if he adopted elements from the Italian *verismo* acting, they must have been tempered and subtly included in his acting perspective. Borelli's position in-between Romanticism and *verismo* suggests that the staging of *A Doll's House* of 1901 was also situated somewhere between these traditions.

Given Borelli's influence, we can assume that Aglae Pruteanu adopted a Romantic-to-*verismo* acting in her interpretation of Nora. Nevertheless, she seems to have been more a Romantic heroine than a Romanian, *verismo*-inspired version of Duse. The romantic influence starts already at the training level, as Borelli was working on the individual creativity of the artist to highlight their emotional impulses. This could have been a version of the romantic tradition that removed the universal code of passion present in the declamation technique by replacing it with the individual expression of passion. This contrast between universality and individuality ensured the subtle transition from Romanticism to *verismo* without removing the illusion of reality on stage. Thus, whereas Romanticism was concerned with the representation of an ideal, universal Truth, *verismo* as a species of realism revealed the multiple individual "truths", yet in a synthetic, essentialised form, cleared out of unnecessary details. Finally, Aglae Pruteanu confirms Borelli's romantic perspective inspired by Rossi who regarded the actor's talent as innate. This idea is elaborated in the differentiation that Rossi, Borelli and Pruteanu herself made between "actor" and "artist":

Rossi [...] arriva a distinguere fra *attore* e *artista*: il primo rappresenta la medietà dei lavoratori del palcoscenico; il secondo ne è il prodotto più raffinato e sublimato, una sorta di attore-genio [...]. Ma la pietra di paragone, il terreno su cui si decide lo scarto gerarchico fra l'uno e l'altro, è proprio questa capacità di scomparire perfettamente nel personaggio[...]. C'è anzi in Rossi la malcelata convinzione che si tratti di una qualità innata, quasi il segno di una elezione divina, che non si può 'acquistare mediante lo studio'. (Rossi [...] makes the distinction between *actor* and *artist*: the first one represents the mediocrity among the ones working on stage; the second one represents the most refined and sublimed product, a kind of actor-genius [...]. But the point of comparison, the area in which the hierarchical difference between the one and the other is decided, is precisely this capacity to perfectly disappear in the character [...]. Rossi also has the unconcealed conviction that this is an innate quality, even the sign of being a chosen of the divine. And that this was impossible to achieve through studying; my translation.) (Alonge 1988: 27)

This perspective confirms their powerful sense of belonging to the romantic tradition, illustrating the actor as the incarnation of an ideal image of the absolute artist, simultane-

ously possessed by and possessing beauty and passion in the rendition of the characters embodied on stage.

In this regard, it is not a coincidence that precisely the actors Borelli worked with most – Petre Sturdza, State Dragomir and Aglae Pruteanu – played an essential role in the early reception of Ibsen in Romania. They both promoted his plays on several tours in the country and contributed to the establishment of Ibsen in the Romanian theatres' repertory, asserting the dominant role of the actor in the Romanian reception of Ibsen, remembering up to a certain point the Italian *grande attore/mattatore* tradition. Borelli must be acknowledged as one of those Ibsen contributors who ensured not only his dissemination on the Italian stage, but also his emergence on the Romanian stage.

4.2.2 Private Companies Hub. Ion Manolescu and Mărioara Voiculescu

4.2.2.1 Introduction

Another pattern in the early Romanian Ibsen productions is related to the activity of actors in the private theatre environment. Ion Manolescu and Mărioara Voiculescu are the two most influential Ibsen contributors active in this context. Institutionally, these two actors ensured the Bulandra Company's dominance among the 10 private theatre companies that staged Ibsen. Their activities reveal how the private theatre companies in Bucharest enriched the Romanian Ibsen production until 1947, despite the dominance of the national theatres.

But what is the story of the Romanian private theatre environment, and what was the actors' status within them? In the first half of the 19th century, the Romanian private theatre market was associated with the cheap entertainment provided in cafés, restaurants, hotels, circuses or peasant fairs before the establishment of the national theatres. Even after this shift in theatre culture, the private theatre environment provided a living for actors in the off-season when they were not performing at the national theatres. In addition, the actors participated in private initiatives during the regular theatre season, given that the National Theatre was only scheduling performances for half of the week until 1910.⁵⁴ The actors divided their remaining time between rehearsals and tours to neighbouring towns, either as guest actors or as managers of a small troupe. These private initiatives provided them with additional revenue as well as disseminated theatre productions according to their preference across the country.

No real institutionalisation of the private theatre market took place before the beginning of the 20th century. The actors continued to work at the National Theatre institutions during the season and participate in the private theatre environment in the off-season. Once the audience grew, the private theatre market needed a clearer institutional framework, which was eventually acknowledged legally in 1910.

If the model of a National Theatre as the ruling theatre institution of the country suggested stability and confinement, the private theatre company suggested instability

54 "Această societate va dispune pentru reprezentațiunile de trei serî cel pucîn pe fie-care săptămână în tot cursul anului." (This society is granted the right to organise evening performances at least three evenings per week for the entire year; my translation) (Lege pentru organizarea și administrarea teatrelor din România 1877: 2314).

and freedom. Yet, Mîruna Runcan suggests that the contradiction between private and state theatres was illusory:

Modelului [...] marelui teatru de repertoriu, companiile particulare ale vremii nu-i opun, propriu-zis, un alt model. În spectrul destul de larg al teatrelor particulare (mai toate fiind în capitală, pe perioade mai lungi sau mai scurte), modelul Naționalului se reflectă ca-ntr-o oglindă concavă, care lățește sau subțiază contururile inițiale. [...] compania privată s-a născut schismatic, ca variantă 'pe cont propriu' de a face 'teatru mare', teatru de rang...național. [...]Tradiția aceasta depune involuntar mărturie asupra tipului de schismă care stă la baza aparentei opoziții între Teatrul Național și companiile particulare, între instituția de stat și cea privată. (In fact, the private companies of the period do not propose a model contrary to the one of the 'theatre with a repertory'. The very broad spectrum of the private theatres – which existed mostly in the capital city for longer or shorter periods of time – reflected the model of the National Theatre as a concave mirror does, only growing thicker or thinner with respect to the initial shape. The private company was schismatically born as a version to make 'great theatre' or theatre at a...national level 'on their own'. [...] This tradition involuntarily testifies to the schism that the apparent opposition between the National Theatre and the private companies is based on; my translation.) (Runcan 2003: 29)

The governing characteristics of the private companies enhanced their resemblance to the National Theatre (ibid: 21–35). One of them was the dominant position of the star actors, who assumed the role of both directors and mentors, such as Mărioara Voiculescu, Ion Manolescu, Lucia Sturdza-Bulandra⁵⁵ or Tony Bulandra.⁵⁶ These actors worked both in the state and private theatres as their Ibsen productions demonstrate. The private companies attempted to stabilise their repertory by staging both aesthetically qualitative and commercial plays, but they faced the same struggles as the National Theatres, despite

55 Lucia Sturdza-Bulandra started her acting career at the National Theatre of Bucharest in 1898, but she had not previously taken acting classes. It was only after she started to perform that she participated in Aristizza Romanescu's courses and assumed Agatha Bârescu and Constantin Nottara as her models, which indicates a Romantic background. Later in her career, she was also influenced by Italian actors such as Eleonora Duse and Ermete Novelli, who employed the *verismo* genre in their acting. The encounter with Alexandru Davila marked not only her transition towards naturalism, but also the beginning of her career in the private theatre environment, first at the Davila Company, then at the Bulandra Company, whose manager, as well as being her husband, was Tony Bulandra. See Sturdza-Bulandra (1956); Alterescu (1973: 412–414).

56 Tony Bulandra followed the same institutional career path as Lucia Sturdza-Bulandra, working first at the National Theatre of Bucharest, then at the Davila Company and, finally, at the Bulandra Company. However, in contrast to his wife, he had solid acting training based on the Romantic acting principles, as student of Constantin Nottara. He was also influenced by the Italian actors using the *verismo* genre and by André Antoine, and his encounter with Alexandru Davila and Paul Gusti eventually led to his definitive turn towards a realist acting style, marked by sobriety, sincerity, elegance and subtlety. Together with Lucia Sturdza-Bulandra, he strengthened the private theatre environment and transformed the Bulandra Company into a pillar of the Romanian theatre history. See Sturdza-Bulandra (1961); Alterescu (1973: 414–415).

their apparent independence from legal constraints. They desired the same prestige as the state theatres as a repository of the National Theatre tradition:

Modelul repertorial al Naționalului, un model încă relativ performativ, din inerție la noi [...], are în interbelic o anumită forță lăuntrică profund conservatoare; termenul conservator trebuie înțeles aici în dubla sa accepțiune: de păstrător de valori general admise și recunoscute de către societate, și de limitativ, obstrucționând noul, diferitul. (The model of the National Theatre's repertory, which was still relatively functional, had a profoundly conservative effect on us in the interwar period, for inertial reasons; the significance of conservative must be understood as having a double meaning here: both in the sense of preserving generally accepted and acknowledged values, and as obstructing the new, the different directions in a limitative manner; my translation.) (ibid: 25)

Alexandru Davila ensured the unofficial breakthrough and institutionalisation of the private theatre environment before its legal recognition 1926 (*Lege pentru organizarea și administrarea teatrelor Naționale și controlul spectacolelor din România 1926: 3918–3919*). In 1909, when his period of management at the National Theatre of Bucharest ended, he founded the Davila Company, which changed the Romanian theatre landscape for good (Vasiliu 1965: 125–157; Massoff 1972: 273–276, 279–289; Alterescu 1971: 69–72). How? Briefly, the company took further the reforms that had been initiated by Davila at the National Theatre of Bucharest with the same group of actors. In other words, younger actors such as Mărioara Voiculescu, Ion Manolescu, Lucia Sturdza-Bulandra, Tony Bulandra decided to leave the National Theatre and develop their acting by organising productions under Davila's supervision. Two of them, Ion Manolescu and Mărioara Voiculescu, became Ibsen key contributors.

Yet the Davila Company did not contribute directly to the emergence of a private theatre company hub in the Romanian Ibsen production. He did not stage Ibsen, neither as manager of the National Theatre of Bucharest, nor as director of his own theatre company. Instead, he still paid tribute to the French boulevard repertory including Scribe, Sardou, Bataille or Bernstein. This might contradict his acting and industrial reforms that had been inspired by André Antoine: the substitution of the romantic declamatory speech with everyday speech, the focus on the ensemble instead of star actors, and finally, a stage design copying the epoch's environment. Davila sought to gradually shift his audience's behaviour and expectations. Instead of radically changing the repertory, he radically changed the actors' renditions of the same plays to which the audiences were accustomed. By changing the shape of the performance and promoting young actors performing in a different way to the previous generation, he sought to prepare the audience for a real change of repertory. When he mixed the French boulevard repertory with more demanding modern plays, he held on to his loyal audience that provided the financial means for his theatre, thus securing the staging of more demanding, even experimental plays.

Since the Davila Company lasted only one year, the mission of preserving its achievements was passed on to its most important actors. In this sense, Davila participated indirectly in the Romanian Ibsen production, through his disciples Mărioara Voiculescu,

Ion Manolescu, Lucia Sturdza-Bulandra, Tony Bulandra, Gheorghe Storin and Maria Giurgea. They established the most powerful private company of the time: it was an association of actors created in 1914, under the abbreviated name “Bulandra” (Sturdza-Bulandra 1956: 59–62; Massoff 1974: 88–93).⁵⁷ The two actors in the company who performed Ibsen the most were Ion Manolescu and Mărioara Voiculescu, but they did not work exclusively for Bulandra. Manolescu performed at the state theatre in the brief periods, whereas Mărioara Voiculescu founded her own company. In the latter part of their careers, they both left Bulandra and returned to the National Theatre of Bucharest. However, these two actors created a powerful private theatre environment, and their initiatives encouraged other actors to create companies, particularly in the context of the changing audiences of the interwar period.

Although Davila’s institutional model ignited the Romanian private theatre market at the beginning of the 20th century, his reforms were slow to be absorbed at the production level. Even though romantic declamation was used less often, the star actor approach still dominated on the stage during this epoch, as did the model of the star actor running his or her own company.⁵⁸ The Bulandra Company was no exception, despite its aim to provide ensemble-based productions. The status of Ion Manolescu at the Bulandra Company, and of Mărioara Voiculescu within her own company, supported the star’s dominance. The repertory also experienced slow, gradual changes, as the Bulandra Company preserved the same strategy as Davila. For instance, the repertory evolved from being dominated by modern, French boulevard plays to including more diverse plays from the Italian, German, English or Scandinavian repertory.

In this context, we must consider not only the impact of Ibsen upon the acting and staging in the Romanian private theatres, but also their impact upon Ibsen’s presence on the Romanian stage through the interpretative perspectives they applied to his plays. To assess this mutual impact, I will focus on Ion Manolescu and Mărioara Voiculescu, whose contribution within the private theatre environment is also statistically relevant. They collaborated together at the beginning of their career both at the National Theatre of Bucharest, and then at the Davila and Bulandra Company. However, their individual performances reflect different approaches. On the one hand, Ion Manolescu performed Ibsen most at the Bulandra Company as star actor in *Ghosts*, whereas Mărioara Voiculescu performed leading Ibsen roles at her own theatre company in *A Doll’s House* and *Peer Gynt*. Eventually, both actors were also involved in ensemble-based productions at the National

57 The company took the name of Tony Bulandra and his wife, Lucia Sturdza-Bulandra, but constantly amended its name, depending on the actors associated to the enterprise. These various names were: Bulanda Company, Mărioara Voiculescu-Bulandra Company, Bulandra-Manolescu-Storin Company, Bulandra-Maximilian-Storin Company, Bulandra-Maximilian-Storin-Iancovescu Company, Bulandra-Manolescu-Maximilian-Storin Company and Bulandra-Manolescu-Maximilian-Storin-Iancovescu Company (Massoff 1974: 88, 110, 190, 207, 257, 303, 349, 392, 439; Massoff 1976: 25, 93, 154, 211, 289; Massoff 1978: 29; Alterescu 1973: 412).

58 Such examples were the companies and private theatres founded by Maria Ventura (Teatrul Ventura), Maria Filotti (Teatrul din Sărindar), Mărioara Voiculescu (Compania Mărioara Voiculescu), Ion Manolescu (Asociația dramatică “Excelsior”), Elvira Popescu and Ion Iancovescu (Teatrul Mic). See Massoff (1974: 211–221, 439–450); Alterescu (1973: 407–453).

Theatre of Bucharest, with Ion Manolescu as Dr. Rank in *A Doll's House* and Mărioara Voiculescu as Mrs Alving in *Ghosts*.

4.2.2.2 Ion Manolescu and the Bulandra Company

In the following, I discuss the impact of Ion Manolescu's performances in *Ghosts* in the context of his activity at the Bulandra Company. IbsenStage indicates that he was the second most influential Ibsen contributor on the Romanian stage after Petre Sturdza: he was cast in 12 events, 11 of which took place in the period analysed (1914–1932), and one in 1954.⁵⁹ He performed in two Ibsen plays, namely *Ghosts* between 1914 and 1927, and *A Doll's House* between 1918 and 1932. In *Ghosts* he performed his most renowned role of Oswald, while in *A Doll's House* he played the secondary role of Dr. Rank. His contribution as both a star actor and as a secondary role actor reveals the tensions between the actor-based and the ensemble-based productions. In his case, the number of ensemble productions (4 events) and actor-based productions (7 events) is almost balanced compared to other Ibsen key actors. This tension between stars and ensembles also points to the tensions between the private and national theatres. Whereas Manolescu performed in *Ghosts* at the private theatre companies Bulandra and Excelsior, he performed in *A Doll's House* at the National Theatre of Bucharest. This indicates that the private theatre companies were grouped around the stars, while the National Theatre was more oriented towards ensemble productions during the interwar period. However, I analyse Manolescu here in light of his impact as an actor at a private theatre on Ibsen's dissemination.

His contribution is tightly connected with the role of the Bulandra Company in promoting a new repertory in which Ibsen was one of the most performed playwrights beside Strindberg, Tolstoy, Oscar Wilde, Pirandello, Shaw, and Maeterlinck. However, plays of the French repertory and of the Italian *verismo* repertory were often staged.⁶⁰

Given that the Bulandra company was born out of the Davila Company, one would expect that it predominantly staged ensemble-based productions displaying naturalist-realist acting and a modern repertory, but it preserved a strong connection with the old French *emploi* system, regularly starring its associates in roles that rarely changed their profiles and challenged their skills. The influence of the star actors of the National Theatre of Bucharest was still strong upon the young actors educated by Davila: Aristizza Romanescu and Constantin Nottara had been both the teachers and the stage partners of Davila's pupils. Mărioara Voiculescu, Tony Bulandra, Lucia Sturdza-Bulandra and Gheorghe Storin all made their debut by appearing with Agatha Bârsescu in her guest performance planned by Alexandru Davila (Berlogea 1972: 153–155). For Manolescu, Nottara was his teacher, and although he rejected the master's romantic technique, Manolescu preserved a tight connection with his star actor approach, which is visible in his production of *Ghosts*.

The critics insist that Manolescu was at the core of the *Ghosts* production, surrounded by the rest of the ensemble. Thus, even if Bulandra Company sought to enact Davila's en-

59 The production of 1954 is a Radio-theatre staging of *A Doll's House* at the National Radiophonic Theatre in Bucharest.

60 Lucia Sturdza-Bulandra gives a comprehensive overview of all the plays performed by the Bulandra Company between 1914 and 1937 (1956: 271–280).

semble reforms, the production of *Ghosts* with Manolescu as star actor in the role of Oswald suggests that it only partially succeeded. This is also proved by the performances of Manolescu with *Ghosts* in Iași and Cluj-Napoca, which demonstrate the actor's ownership of the role (Figure 40):

Autorul a încercat din *boală* să facă motiv de artă și încă de artă dramatică. Și se pare că a izbutit. În orice caz el a dat prilej multor actori virtuosi să-și vădească măestria lor și faptul iarăși e sigur că 'Strigoii' nu plac decât în funcție de virtuoși. D-nul *Manolescu* poate fi foarte sigur că e printre aceștia de oarece 'strigoii' d-sale place și-l face deci accesibil spectatorului. (The author tried to transform the *illness* into reason for art and, even more, dramatic art. And it seems that he succeeded. In any case, he offered the opportunity to prove their mastery to many virtuoso artists. Besides, it is a certain thing that *Ghosts* are not received well but depending on these virtuosos. Mr. Manolescu can be very sure that he is among them, because his 'ghost' is pleasant and accessible to the spectator; my translation.) (Sorbul 1922: 1)

The statistics indicate that the Bulandra Company and its associates were the most active promoters of Ibsen, other than the actors at the national theatres. As there is a lack of information concerning all their Ibsen performances, their role may have been even greater than is currently reflected in IbsenStage. The 1916 production of *Ghosts* starring Ion Manolescu as Oswald is said to have been staged for 11 years with the same cast. Further research is needed to confirm the dates and the contributors of the actual performances, but if this is the case, then Bulandra Company may have played a similar, if not a greater role in promoting Ibsen in Romania than the actors of the national theatres. Also, an enrichment of the dataset would strengthen the tensions between the state theatres and the private theatres as Ibsen promoters, by putting them on an equal footing. It could result in a considerable increase in the number of events for at least three other contributors – Tony Bulandra, George Ciprian and Lucia Sturdza-Bulandra, and potentially reveal how the Bulandra Company combined the star actor approach with the ensemble approach. This statistical increase would also generate a stronger network between the actors at the Bulandra Company. Nevertheless, the role of Manolescu would still be of higher importance than that of his colleagues at the Bulandra Company, and any increase in the number of events in IbsenStage would also statistically strengthen Manolescu's position in the landscape as compared to the other key contributors. In the context of a potential statistical increase in the number of events based on new findings, the only contributor withstanding the comparison with the achievements of the Bulandra Company would be Petre Sturdza, who was a temporary member of Bulandra and also performed Ibsen with the company.

When Manolescu performed Oswald, Ibsen's plays were no longer considered a pillar in the process of modernisation of the Romanian stage, but were perceived as classics ready for new interpretations. Ion Manolescu's major contribution to the dissemination of Ibsen in the private theatre environment was to establish Ibsen's *Ghosts* as a major play on the Romanian stage. It also brought to an end the development process regarding the acting of Oswald started by Constantin Nottara in 1896, when the first Romanian performance of *Ghosts* took place. Thus, the coexistence of various, divergent theatre traditions

in interpreting Ibsen, which I analyse later, is confirmed by the playwright's position in an eclectic repertory.

4.2.2.3 Mărioara Voiculescu: *Peer Gynt en travesti*

Mărioara Voiculescu reinforced the private theatres' role in Ibsen's dissemination. She established and managed her own private theatre company, which competed with the Ibsen productions of Bulandra Company and the National Theatre of Bucharest. Her experience with the Davila Company was the background to her initiatives as an actress-manager, and her diary presents an image of an energetic, tenacious and engaging actress-manager, showing generosity, integrity and loyalty.

According to IbsenStage, she participated in five events associated with three plays – *A Doll's House*, *Peer Gynt* and *Ghosts* – between 1922 and 1944⁶¹. Although less prominent statistically than her colleague and stage partner Ion Manolescu, Mărioara Voiculescu's career has similarities. They both worked at the National Theatre of Bucharest, the Davila Company and at the Bulandra Company in the interwar period. In contrast to Manolescu, Voiculescu preserved her status as a star, with only a subtle concession to the ensemble system at the end of her career.

She began performing at a very young age at the beginning of the 20th century in a period dominated by star actors both on and off-stage:

Este o perioadă de răsfăț a unor vedete, al unor "idoli": marii actori, cu extravagantele și capriciile lor, sînt în centrul vieții publice, sînt încă personajele care dictează în teatru, pe punctul de a ceda pasul regiei și încă nedispuțați de cinematograf. (It is a period when stars, "idols" are spoiled: the great actors, their extravagances and caprices are at the core of the public life. They are still the ones dictating the theatre life, bound to give up in the face of the [newly emergent] directing art, yet still undisputed by the cinematograph; my translation.) (Alterescu 1973: 407)

Mărioara Voiculescu fits perfectly into this context. Her diary and memoirs support the image of a temperamental personality in her private, social and professional life. The roles in her repertoire support this profile regardless of their theatrical genre. Throughout her career she performed Adrienne Lecouvreur, Marguerite Gauthier, Judith, and Messalina:

Judith [...] reprezenta pentru Mărioara Voiculescu un tip preferențial de eroină, în interpretarea cărei intra prioritatea acordată instinctelor, o voluptate a confesiunii, o trecere neașteptată de la ură la patimă, de la înverșunare la înfrângere. (Judith [...] was a heroine very much preferred by Mărioara Voiculescu, as the interpretation prioritised the instincts, the voluptuousness of confession, the unpredictable switch from hate to ardour, from fierceness to defeat; my translation.) (Alterescu 1973: 410)

The *Peer Gynt* staging also framed Mărioara Voiculescu as a "monstre sacré", since "interpretarea d-nei Mărioara Voiculescu a susținut spectacolul" (the interpretation of Mrs

61 Four events register her as actress and one event as director.

Mărioara Voiculescu supported the performance; my translation) (P.Ş. 1924: 1)⁶² and “numai în d-sa se rezumă întreaga piesă” (the entire play can be reduced to her presence; my translation) (Froda 1924: 2). In this sense, the industrial organisation within her company remained star-based.

In terms of acting, Mărioara Voiculescu was as influenced by Davila's reforms as Ion Manolescu, moving from Romanticism to naturalism. The fact that Aristizza Romanescu was her teacher at the Conservatoire and that her success on stage was partly due to her remarkable physical posture – “înaltă, expresivă în mișcări, cu mușchii feței foarte mobili, elegantă, personal până la exces” (tall, with expressive movements, with very mobile muscles of the face, elegant and with an almost excessively personal style ; my translation) (Alterescu 1973: 408) – and to her voice – “caldă, emoționantă, care n-ar avea nevoie de ‘tremolurile declamației’” (warm, emotional, in no need of “declamation tremolos”; my translation) (ibid: 408), betray her romantic background. Yet her acting style changed from declamation to everyday speech under the influence of Davila and Paul Gusty. Finally, romantic, naturalist and realist aspects were recycled and enhanced when she embraced expressionist techniques in her productions. Voiculescu introduced Expressionism to the Romanian stage with plays such as *Salome* by Oscar Wilde, or *Lulu* by Frank Wedekind (Alterescu 1973: 409–410).

Her interest in Ibsen began with *A Doll's House* and *Peer Gynt* in the 1920s. She toured with *A Doll's House* in Iași in 1922 (Figure 41). A gap of nearly 20 years separates these productions from her successful performances in *Ghosts* at the National Theatre of Bucharest during World War Two. Voiculescu refers to her Ibsen performances in the volume *Journal. Memorii [Diary. Memoirs]*; her account is frustratingly devoid of details, but the theatre reviews tell us that her Ibsen roles were “dintre marile sale creații” (among her great creations; my translation) (Vasiliu 1995: 185).

Her Ibsen contribution to the private theatre environment was significant as she staged the first Romanian *Peer Gynt* and performed the leading role *en travesti* in 1924–1925. She used her own theatre company as an experimental environment to stage the play on Christmas Eve of 1924: “Unanim s'a recunoscut impresionantul curaj al teatrului 'Mărioara Voiculescu' de a reprezenta Peer Gynt.” (The impressive courage of 'Mărioara Voiculescu' Theatre in staging *Peer Gynt* was unanimously acknowledged; my translation) (P.Ş. 1924: 1). She chose to perform a half prose-half versed translation by Emanuel Cerbu (Fagure 1924: 3). The *Peer Gynt* production was designed to promote Voiculescu as a theatre manager, reinforce her position as a leading actress, and define her repertoire policy of producing new approaches to staging and aesthetically significant plays. The critics affirmed that the *Peer Gynt* performance satisfied all three objectives:

62 “Întreaga gamă a temperamentului său a fost utilizată. Nu era o simplă suprapunere de suflete, era o îngemănare. *Peer Gynt* a luat contur de viață, a trăit în înțelegere, în sensibilitatea noastră. Moartea mamei Aas – de o pildă – s'a strecurat în gândurile noastre ca o înduioșare cu rouă de lacrimi. Cuvintele picurau în liniștea atentă a sălii care părea un pocal ce primește o licoare rară. Imaginația interpretării d-nei Mărioara Voiculescu a ținut cumpăna dreaptă eroului plâsmuit de Henrik Ibsen” (P.Ş. 1924: 1).

Dacă *Peer Gynt* e totuși posibil să fie reprezentat pe scena de cinematograf dela Cercul Militar, aceasta se datorește numai și numai d-nei Voiculescu. În adevăr, această extraordinară artistă a concentrat asupra ei, privirile și atențiile încordate ale tuturor. Cadrul era de prisos, putea fi oricum. *Peer* al d-nei Voiculescu, domina realmente totul. (If it was possible for *Peer Gynt* to be performed on the cinema stage at the Military Circle, we owe this only and only to Mrs Voiculescu. Indeed, this extraordinary actress attracted everyone's intense attention. The framework was unnecessary, it could have been in any way. Mrs Voiculescu's *Peer* really dominated everything; my translation.) (Munte 1924: 1)

Even reviewers who were critical of the performance agreed that Mărioara Voiculescu's initiative would be remembered as an important reference point in Romanian theatre history: "Cu toate aceste lipsuri și scăderi reprezentarea lui *Peer Gynt* rămâne o dată în istoria teatrului românesc." (Despite all these shortcoming and drawbacks, the staging of *Peer Gynt* will remain a date [of major importance] in Romanian theatre history; my translation.) (P.Ș. 1924: 1)

Mărioara Voiculescu's expressionist approach to Ibsen was unique among that of her younger and older colleagues at the level of both acting and staging.

In terms of acting, her interpretation of *Peer Gynt* was marked by temperamental outbursts, emotional displays, passionate interpretations, richness of vocal and bodily expression, and sensuality, all of which revealed her romantic background:

De mult n'am mai văzut o atât de formidabilă explozie de energie, ca la d-na Voiculescu în seara premierei. 5 acte lungi, interminabile, jucate cu vervă drăcească, interpretate cu inteligentă stilizare, biruite cu napoleonice virtuți. Sglobiu, trist, visător, îngândurat, avântat, desamăgit, orgolios și îndoindu-se de sine, *Peer* al d-nei Voiculescu a trecut prin sbuciumul unei vieți întregi de erou. (It is a long time since I have seen such a formidable explosion of energy as the one Mrs Voiculescu showed in the evening of the premiere. She performed in five long, interminable acts with a devilish verve and intelligent stylisation, and, thus, she overcame them with Napoleonic virtues. Mrs Voiculescu's *Peer* was lively, sad, daydreaming, thoughtful, enthusiast, disappointed, vainglorious and doubtful, thus passing through the torment of an entire life of a hero; my translation.) (Munte 1924: 1)

Nevertheless, the actress employed a naturalist/realist everyday speech instead of declamation, seeking the synthetic representation of human archetypes and essences in her performances. Her interpretation of *Peer Gynt* followed expressionist interpretation principles by highlighting archetypes and symbols, while building a bridge between romantic and expressionist acting, as the critics suggest:

Temperamentul dramatic al interpretei lui Bataille și Bernstein a făcut pe Mărioara Voiculescu să străbată victorioasă fazele tragicei povești a omului căutător de himere, și rolului studiat cu adâncă pricepere psihologică, i-a dat prilejul să se înalțe până la o mare creație. Ceea ce am admirat mai mult în jocul d-nei Voiculescu, pe lângă discreta nuanțare a momentelor, care puteau aluneca spre melodramă, este silința ce și-a dat să joace pe *Gynt* cât mai omenește posibil,

apropiindu-l cât mult de mentalitatea comună a spectatorilor. (The dramatic temperament of Bataille and Bernstein's interpreter made Mărioara Voiculescu go victoriously through the stages of the tragic story of the human being in search of chimeras. And this role, which was analysed with a deep psychological understanding, gave her the opportunity to raise herself to a great creation. But there is one thing I admired even more in the performance of Mrs Voiculescu, beside the discreet and nuanced moments that could slip into melodrama. This thing is the endeavour of performing Gynt as humanly as possible, bringing him as closely as possible to the spectators' common mentality; my translation.) (De Herz 1925: 1)

It is also evident that her approach was tempered by the naturalist-realist influences in her career, which distilled and essentialised the romantic background in the use of everyday speech, simple gestures and flexible movements instead of declamation, broad gestures and rigid poses. Essentially, the actress tailored her romantic, naturalist and realist skills to the expressionist fashion. Her interpretation of Peer Gynt was reminiscent of both the old French boulevard repertory and the newer influences from Wilde and Wedekind. This mixture of acting styles generated not only positive, but also negative remarks for her *Peer Gynt*. Scarlat Froda criticised the interpretation for its romantic acting elements, such as expansive gestures, excessive temperament, pathetic voice and passionate approach. He criticised the actress's lack of identification with Peer Gynt and the lack of depth in revealing the human essence of the character, deeming her incapacity to understand it:

S'a căznit să-și biruie insuficiențele de înțelegere ale textului și lipsa mijloacelor de expresie, cu răcnete, tăvăleli pe dușumele, fandări cu mâinile și cu picioarele. Dar nu mergea. Oricât de omenesc ar fi Peer Gynt, nici o clipă nu am simțit în privirea d-nei Voiculescu ecoul unui suflet chinuit de idealul absolut, nici un moment, modulația vocii d-sale nu s'a insinuat ca o flăcără inspirată printre noi, niciodată nu ne-a transmis fiorul acela al artei adevărate, al talentului mare și biruitor. (She endeavoured to overcome her insufficient understanding of the text and her lack of expressive means by yelling, rolling on the floor, lunging with the hands and with the legs. But it did not work. No matter how human Peer Gynt would have been, I did not once feel the echo of a soul tormented by an absolute ideal in the eyes of Mrs Voiculescu. The modulations of her voice did not infuse us as a flame. She has never conveyed either the thrill of real art or of the great and victorious talent to us; my translation.) (Froda 1924: 2)

The interpretation *en travesti* was also a controversial side of her expressionist approach, pointing at the "festive play" approach to the production. Her disguise as Peer Gynt nourished the expressionist idea of theatre as both illusion and celebration of life. Both praised and criticised, her option was yet most special element of the staging, and highlighted her star actress skills and her versatility, according to Eman. Cerbu:

D-na Mărioara Voiculescu a trecut biruitoare peste ficțiunea travestiului și a isbit să încarneze plastic și convingător pe Peer Gynt în cele trei faze ale vieții sale: cu o comunicativă sburdălnicie de băiat, în pubertate; cu o masculinitate dură și viguroasă,

în epoca maturității; și cu o oboseală prețioasă în vârsta bătrâneții. (Mrs Mărioara Voiculescu surpassed the fiction of *travesti* victoriously. She managed to embody Peer Gynt suggestively and convincingly during all the three stages of his life: with a boyish, communicative playfulness during the puberty; with a rough and vigorous masculinity during maturity; and with an affected weariness during old age; my translation.) (Cerbu 1925: 36)

Emil D. Fagure supports Cerbu's opinion:

D-na Voiculescu, care în travestitul său are lucruri minunate pentru caracterizarea și înțelegerea figurei lui Peer Gynt – amestec admirabil de naivitate, ambiție, revoltă, farsă și idealism – a făcut totul spre a risipi oboseala acestei retorici și a izbutit în bună parte, cu toată lungimea covârșitoare a rolului. (Mrs Voiculescu possesses wonderful abilities to characterise and understand the image of Peer Gynt in her interpretation *en travesti* – namely, an admirable mix of naivety, ambition, revolt, farce and idealism. Thus, she did everything to make the tiredness of this rhetoric vanish. And she succeeded despite the overwhelming length of the role; my translation.) (Fagure 1924: 3)

The criticism was likewise powerful, dismissing the *travesti* interpretation as an artificial, colourful caricature, failing to give a realist representation of the illusion of life. Eventually, the *travesti* was seen as an obvious reason for the production's failure:

O înscenare interesantă, dar care s'a redus mai mult la o apariție costumată, plină de pitoresc. Fiindcă nu putem lua în serios încercările d-sale. [...] Am avut în schimb impresia unei cazne repetate, a unei munci contrafăcute [...]. Rolurile în *travesti* sunt încercări periculoase. Mai ales când e vorba de Peer Gynt. Lipsea iluzia. (It was an interesting *mise-en-scène*, yet rather reduced to a costumed, picturesque appearance, as we cannot seriously take into consideration her attempts. [...] Instead, we had the impression of a repeated endeavour, of a counterfeited work [...]. The roles *en travesti* are dangerous attempts, especially when Peer Gynt is concerned. The illusion was missing; my translation.) (Froda 1924: 2)

At the staging level, the expressionist approach to *Peer Gynt* closely followed the German model of Reinhardt and the later consecration of the play on the German stage discussed in detail by Jens-Morten Hanssen (2019: 197–227). This is most evident in the painter and scenographer Traian Cornescu's stage design, which created the impression of a mega-production, enhanced by its length of almost six hours. Together with the director Mime Mizu, he staged *Peer Gynt* on the small stage of the newly launched theatre of Mărioara Voiculescu located at Cercul Militar in Bucharest, which was considered inappropriate given the ample spatial requirements for the play: "o scenă cu desăvârșire inadptabilă pieselor cari cer o desfășurare a numeroaselor tablouri" (a stage completely inadaptable to those plays that require an ample unfolding of numerous scenes; my translation) (De Herz 1925: 1). Yet Traian Cornescu's rich expressionist stage design reduced some of the spatial inconvenience and emphasised the role of the props in creating the atmosphere of the play:

D. Traian Cornescu a dat decorurilor acea îngânarea dintre real și fantast; maniera expresionistă întrebuințată i-a înlesnit cu prisosință să dea cadrul necesar poemului. [...] Pictura de teatru a d-lui Traian Cornescu poate înlesni printr'o strălucită tovarășie cele mai îndrăznețe înfăptuiri. Scena prea mică a fost cu dibăcie iluzoriu amplificată. (Mr. Traian Cornescu depicted the entanglement between reality and fantasy in the stage design; the expressionist manner he used helped him considerably to render the framework that the poem needed. Traian Cornescu's theatre painting can facilitate the most daring initiatives if brilliantly accompanied. The too small stage was skilfully amplified by means of illusion; my translation.) (P.Ș. 1924: 1),⁶³

In this respect, the staging had all the characteristics of a "festive play", with a rich, colourful, opulent stage design, and the orchestra performing Edvard Grieg's *Peer Gynt* added to this atmosphere. The director Mime-Mizu also contributed to the expressionist perspective of the staging, as he "a făcut cele mai fantastice scamatorii, pentru a realiza pe mica scenă a teatrului, mișcările de ansamblu necesare desfășurării feericului poem" (did the most fantastic tricks in order to provide the little stage of the theatre with the necessary dynamic the poem needed; my translation.) (Munte 1924: 1). Overall, the production highlighted the increasing importance of the director and of the stage designer in the interwar period.

The focus on the symbols in the play, the "îngânarea dintre real și fantast" (intertwining of reality and fantasy; my translation) (P.Ș. 1924: 1), the "maniera expresionistă" (expressionist manner; my translation) (ibid: 1), and the "inteligentă stilizare" (intelligent stylisation; my translation) (Munte 1924: 1) of the acting of the staging indicate that the *Peer Gynt* production presented a different Ibsen to the Romanian audience, one inspired by Expressionism. It also strengthened Mărioara Voiculescu's privileged position on the Romanian stage. Yet the mixed critical response resulted in the production's short lifespan in Mărioara Voiculescu's repertoire and rendered it no more than an experimental Ibsen initiative on the Romanian stage. The press releases also indicate a small number of performances at the end of December 1924 and the beginning of January 1925. In the end, *Peer Gynt* was not performed again on the Romanian stage until 1957.

Through *Peer Gynt*, Voiculescu introduced expressionist staging and acting to Romanian theatre, but unlike Wilde and Wedekind, whose plays had not been performed on the Romanian stage, Ibsen was not new. In this respect, Mărioara Voiculescu's initiative confirmed Ibsen's status as a modern classic, just as Manolescu's performances had

63 Further examples: "D. Cornescu ne-a încântat uneori cu decoruri care întrec tot ce s'a făcut până acum la noi" (Mr. Cornescu provided us with an enchanting stage design that surpasses everything ever done here; my translation) (De Herz 1925: 1); "D. Cornescu a făcut picturi minunate, a căutat să ne amăgiască, furându-ne ochiul în unghiuri de suprafață, dar Moara de pânză și carton tremura la respirația noastră, podețul din parcul dela Haegstadt se înfunda în nasul suflerului, iar vaporul ne ispăia să-l pipăim, pentru a ne convinge că e o jucărie din pânză, carton și 2-3 scândurele" (Mr. Cornescu made beautiful paintings, sought to delude us and capture our imagination by means of new surface angles. But the mill made of cloth and cardboard was swiveling as we were breathing, the little bridge from the Haegstadt park was sinking so near to the prompter's nose, the boat was too tempting not to be touched to check if it was a toy made of cloth, cardboard and 2-3 small planks; my translation.) (Munte 1924: 1).

done. This is echoed by the actress's touring performance as Nora in Iași in 1922. Staging *Peer Gynt* introduced a new theatrical approach using a canonical playwright. The key question here is whether Ibsen influenced Mărioara Voiculescu's acting in *Peer Gynt*. I do not consider that it did. The roots of her expressionist acting lay more in her contact with Wilde and Wedekind than in her contact with Ibsen. Instead, we witness an expressionist appropriation of Ibsen enhanced by the display of the star actress as the main character. Finally, a further discussion of her interpretative style will be developed within the site of the Mrs Alving character.

4.2.3 National Theatre of Bucharest Hub

Although the Romanian Ibsen theatre tradition was dominated by star actors during this early reception period, the ensemble-based productions were not absent. The stagings at the National Theatre of Bucharest prove that the Romanian theatre witnessed the coexistence of actor-based and ensemble-based Ibsen productions. In fact, this institution emerges as one of the hubs in the early Romanian Ibsen tradition, its most important aspect being the collaboration of a group of contributors: Paul Gusty, Agepsina Macri-Eftimiu, George Ciprian, Nicolae Soreanu and Aurel Athansescu. They do not merely perform Ibsen at the same institution; they also participate in the same productions. All these contributors belonged to the National Theatre of Bucharest's network, generating a powerful institutional core with a considerable impact in the Romanian Ibsen production. Statistically, Agepsina Macri as a star actress had the greatest impact, while Paul Gusty was the most influential director in the Romanian Ibsen production. On both a network and a statistical level, the coexistence of the actor-based and the ensemble-based approach at the National Theatre of Bucharest, consecrates the institution as a most important core in the Romanian Ibsen production.

This coexistence was marked by tensions that arose in the transition process from an actor-based to an ensemble-based theatre. Ibsen informed this process, as the ensemble-based approach to his plays shaped the acting and the actor training. In a theatre environment marked by the *emploi system*, an ensemble-based Ibsen production brought together actors cast in both drama and comedy, making them cross the borders of their own genres. In addition, it challenged the actors to switch between drama and comedy in the same role. The key contributors cast in Ibsen productions at the National Theatre of Bucharest experienced all these challenges. Therefore, their encounter with Ibsen resulted in productions marked by interweavings at all levels, eventually leading to his establishment on the national stage.

4.2.3.1 Paul Gusty

The role of the director Paul Gusty is central to any discussion of the emergence of an ensemble-based Ibsen tradition on the Romanian stage. His contribution immediately appears as the most important in the statistics. He directed almost all Ibsen plays staged at the National Theatre of Bucharest. He is registered as director for 13 IbsenStage events, representing eight plays: *Pillars of Society* (1911), *An Enemy of the People* (1912, 1937), *John Gabriel Borkman* (1919), *The Wild Duck* (1920), *A Doll's House* (1921), *Rosmersholm* (1923), *Hedda Gabler* (1923), and *League of Youth* (1932). This is also the greatest number of Ibsen events

associated with any Romanian director to date. In this context, I argue that Gusty was responsible for the successful ensemble-based Ibsen productions in the interwar period. But what characterised his activity and impact upon the Romanian Ibsen production?

On the one hand, Paul Gusty's activity must be considered from the perspective of both the vertical and generational as well as horizontal and prestige mechanisms of cultural transmission. His realist perspective upon the directing art was the result of his equally direct and indirect contact with both Romanian and foreign theatre practitioners. In the Romanian theatre field, this contact was shaped according to a generational axis. This axis indicates Gusty as the witness of almost the entire Romanian national theatre history in the period from the establishment of the National Theatre of Bucharest until communism. The horizontal and prestige axis concerns the foreign – especially French and German – influences that marked Gusty's activity as director. Gusty's contribution in the Romanian Ibsen field must also be addressed from the perspective of the actors' dominant position. Gusty's discrete position as both stage manager and stage director, his contribution to the establishment of the Romanian comedy school and of the ensemble tradition, and his participation in the actors' training were dependent on the primacy of the actor in the Romanian theatre prior to 1947. The overall analysis of Gusty's impact reveals a new facet of the interweaving movements that characterised the early Romanian Ibsen production, casting light upon the National Theatre of Bucharest as an essential hub.

4.2.3.1.1 Gusty, a realist director

The main characteristic of Gusty's profile as director at the National Theatre of Bucharest is that he cultivated realist stagings and promoted realist acting. In the interwar period, this realist perspective became such a tradition trademark that it ended up being considered not just conservative, but also a sign of "academism":

Teatrul Național a fost acuzat nu de puține ori că s-a păstrat vreme îndelungată în academism, în confortul unui convenționalism temperat, în spiritul tradiționalismului care nu depășea exactitatea, copierea fidelă a naturii și nu numai în interpretare, dar și în regie și scenografie. Ceea ce la începutul veacului însemnase ieșire din empiric și patetism, din retoric și din grandilocvență (vezi arta actorilor dicționişti Grigore Manolescu, Aristizza Romanescu, Aristide Demetriade ș.a.) sau arta interpreților psihologi (Aglae Pruteanu, Petre Sturza), intră acum sub optica școlii moderne de interpretare. (The National Theatre was often accused of preserving an academic perspective for a long time, remaining in the comfort zone of a tempered conventionalism that did not go beyond precision, the loyal imitation of nature not only in terms of acting, but also of staging and scenography. If the interpretative art of actors such as Grigore Manolescu, Aristizza Romanescu or Aristide Demetriade, who focused on diction, or the interpretative art of the actors-psychologists, such as Aglae Pruteanu and Petre Studza, reflected the wish to abandon empiricism, pathos and grandiloquence at the beginning of the century, the new interpretation followed the path of the modern interpretative school; my translation.) (Alterescu 1973: 328–329)

Gusty rejected new staging formulas, such as the expressionist approach that younger directors tried to introduce onto the stage of the National Theatre. But what were the roots of his realist, so-called conservative, but influential perspective?

The great impact of Paul Gusty undoubtedly stemmed from his literally life-long experience at the National Theatre of Bucharest, where he worked between 1882 and 1944, from the age of 23 until he was 85 years old. He started by writing the actors' roles by hand in 1882, worked as a prompter, and became stage manager in 1885. His position as a stage manager eventually changed into that of stage director, a position he held until the end of his career in 1944 (Bumbești 1964: 59–61, 74–77, 90–91). Yet he received this title officially only in 1907, at the initiative of Alexandru Davila. This short biography indicates that Paul Gusty experienced the entire process concerning the gradual change of the director's role in the theatre. In fact, at the time Gusty started working at the National Theatre of Bucharest, the stage manager was not even mentioned on the playbill. The stage director was either the actor performing the leading role or the most experienced actor in the theatre, as in the case of Constantin Nottara. However, at the end of Gusty's career, the director was already acknowledged as a key element not just in Romanian theatre, but also in Romanian Ibsen productions. He was considered "neîntrecut în stabilirea atmosferei necesare dramei ibseniane" (unsurpassable in creating the atmosphere necessary in Ibsen's drama; my translation) (De Herz 1928: 3).

Gusty witnessed the entire passage from one generation of actors to another, from the institutional foundation of the National Theatre until the establishment of the Communist regime. He handwrote roles and was prompter in Mihail Pascaly's troupe, (Bumbești 1964: 56–58) and as stage manager supervised productions with actors such as Matei Millo in the second half of the 19th century (ibid: 63–64). On the other hand, he exerted his influence upon young actors such as Ion Manolescu and Mărioara Voiculescu (ibid: 89), as well as young directors such as Victor Bumbești (ibid: 105–113) and even Soare Z. Soare (ibid: 144), who achieved artistic maturity in the interwar period.

Paul Gusty was a disciple of Alexandre Gatinéau, the very first stage manager of the National Theatre of Bucharest (ibid: 60). He benefitted from collaborating with the romantic star actors Mihail Pascaly and Grigore Manolescu, who were also stage directors (ibid: 123–128). From these two actors, he learned how to work with the cast. He collaborated with I. L. Caragiale (ibid: 66–69) in the theatre season 1888–1889, after staging the very premiere of his most famous play, *The Lost Letter*, in 1884 (ibid: 65, 192–198). The main consequence of his collaboration with Caragiale was the establishment of the Romanian comedy school: "Gusty crescuse o mare școală de comici – 'cea mai bună trupă de comedie europeană, nota Camil Petrescu.'" (Gusty had educated a great school of comic [actors] – "the best European ensemble of comedy" (Petrescu 1962: 309), as Camil Petrescu remarked; my translation) (Bumbești 1964: 13–14). In the long run, Gusty became the director of the comedy productions at the National Theatre of Bucharest. By contrast, the position of stage director for the drama productions at the National Theatre of Bucharest belonged to Constantin Nottara, who also collaborated closely with Gusty, but in this case the latter was just the stage manager. Gusty had no influence upon the dramatic actors until Nottara temporarily left the institution due to his conflict with Alexandru Davila. However, he was renowned for his influence upon the comedy school actors, who abandoned romantic acting and adopted realist acting much earlier than the drama school

actors guided by Nottara. Once Davila empowered Gusty to work with the drama ensemble too, actors such as Ion Manolescu and Mărioara Voiculescu experienced a more radical switch to realist acting. In this respect, the collaboration between Davila and Gusty between 1905 and 1908 fulfilled the long transition to realism in the Romanian theatre, which had started with Caragiale in 1888.

The axis of generational transmission was visible in Gusty's influence upon the generation of directors of the interwar period. In this context, he was considered a conservative director. He supervised the other directors working at the National Theatre of Bucharest, who also staged Ibsen occasionally. Directors such as Soare Z. Soare, Victor Bumbăști, Victor Enescu, and Victor Ion Popa either started their career as disciples of Gusty or benefitted from his guidance at the National Theatre of Bucharest. All the directors experimented with theatrical innovations early in their careers, but eventually (re)turned to Gusty's realist staging manner:

Există în general o tendință de unificare a stilurilor, de integrare în matca largă și încăpătoare a realismului a tuturor formulelor înnoitoare. (There is a general tendency towards the merging of the styles, towards the integration of all the renewing formulas in the larger, comprehensive shape of realism; my translation.) (Alterescu 1973: 274).

Even Soare Z. Soare, whose expressionist approach was his clear trademark, adopted a more tempered approach over time. In this respect, all directors who staged Ibsen either followed Gusty's realist model or shaped their new perspectives based on the realist traditional approach of their older master:

Naționalul beneficiază, așadar, în acești ani de bogata experiență și energia lui Paul Gusty, model activ, învățător al celor vârstnici sau tineri, element ponderator, 'bătrânul'. (Thus, the National Theatre benefits from Paul Gusty's rich experience and energy during these years. 'The old man' was an active model, a master for both the older and the younger, as well as a balancing force; my translation.) (Brădățeanu 1982: 10)

The horizontal axis of cultural transmission reveals Gusty's connections with the foreign theatre environment both before and after 1900, which made him aware of the directing art's evolution internationally. Gusty was a promoter of the German model inspired by Otto Brahm (Bumbăști 1964: 102, 137–140). His background was of German inspiration due to his German family and attendance at German-speaking school. Later on, his knowledge enabled him to translate German plays and localise them for the Romanian audience, thus introducing the German repertory to the national stage. He travelled frequently to Munich and Berlin and was in contact with the new approaches in the German theatre, ranging from Brahm to Reinhardt and Karlheinz Martin (*ibid.*: 141–144). His contact with the German theatre gave him a preference for realist, ensemble-based productions, particularly the realist productions of Brahm, rather than the stylised realist/expressionist productions of Reinhardt (*ibid.*: 10, 141–144), or the purely expressionist/avant-gardist ones of Karlheinz Martin (Manolescu 1962: 200). In terms of acting, he rejected the romantic, declamatory acting despite its being common among actors:

Eu vedeam bine încotro merg lucrurile [...]. Din momentul în care autorii au început să scrie drame din viața de toate zilele, declamația, gestul larg și atitudinea statuară nu mai aveau ce căuta pe scenă. La noi însă toate acestea vin mai încet și ajung mai târziu. Pe scenele noastre se juca încă drama realistă în stilul tragediei. [...] Romanticismul era școala agreată de oficialitate. (I saw clearly where everything was heading. [...] Ever since the moment when playwrights started to write dramas inspired by everyday life, there was no longer space for declamation, broad gesture and grandiose postures on stage. But all of these things come slower and arrive to us later. Realist drama was performed in the tragedy style on our stages. [...] Romanticism was the officially agreed [acting] school; my translation.) (ibid: 202)

Instead, he supported realist acting based on the use of everyday speech:

Mă mai răzbunam când aveam de pus în scenă câte o comedie...Acolo nu mai era loc de declamații și atitudini 'mărețe'. Și apoi Caragiale deschisese drumul încât puteam invoca oricând marea lui autoritate. Când a venit Davila cu metodele lui, am fost cel mai bucuros. Cu prestigiul lui, el putea realiza ceea ce eu nu izbutisem decât într-o măsură redusă. (I could sometimes take revenge when staging comedy...There was no longer place for declamation and 'sumptuous' attitudes. And then Caragiale had opened up this way and I could invoke his great authority at any time. When Davila applied his methods, I was happiest. Because of his prestige, he could manage to do everything I only had managed to a reduced extent; my translation.) (ibid: 203)

Finally, he was one of the few theatre practitioners of the time who knew German (Bumbești 1964: 54–55, 96), in contrast to the majority who mastered French. Finally, Davila⁶⁴ strengthened the realist approach of Gusty by adding the influence of the German naturalist-realist model inspired by Otto Brahm to the influence of the French naturalist-realist model of André Antoine (ibid: 131–141).

At the level of Ibsen production, Gusty's success as a director is tied to the period when he staged Ibsen at the National Theatre of Bucharest, starting with *Pillars of Society* in 1911 (ibid: 81). All the Ibsen productions directed by Gusty took place in the period when he was already officially employed as the stage director and he played a major role in the establishment of Ibsen in the repertory of the National Theatre of Bucharest in the interwar period. Over a period of more than 60 years, Gusty witnessed all the transitions in the Romanian interpretation of Ibsen, from Romanticism to *verismo*, naturalism, realism and Expressionism. However, the Ibsen version that Gusty established on the country's preeminent stage mixed realism and Romanticism at the industrial and acting levels alike. But why did not he manage to present an entirely realist Ibsen at the National Theatre of Bucharest?

64 Moreover, Davila and Gusty had both attended the same German-speaking school as children. However, whereas Gusty preserved his inclination towards the German model, Davila became more attached to the French one.

4.2.3.1.2 The primacy of the actor in Gusty's approach

The answer lies in Gusty's focus on the actor. Regardless of the rising status of the director at the beginning of the 20th century, Gusty preferred to concentrate on the actor's work, instead of focusing on how the director's contribution might mark the production:

Deși era foarte conștient de însemnătatea misiunii sale de regizor, Paul Gusty a susținut întotdeauna *primatul actorului* față de regizor, punând valoarea spectacolului în jocul acestuia, și tocmai de aceea îi cerea să fie *convins* de ceea ce face, să-și trăiască rolul după propria lui înțelegere, simțind și gândind el însuși viața pe care o exprimă. (Although he was conscious of the significance of his job as director, Paul Gusty has always supported the *actor's primacy* in contrast to that of the director. He sought to promote the idea that the quality of the performance stemmed from the actor's interpretation. Therefore, he asked the actor to be convinced of what he was doing, to live his role based on his own understanding, to feel and think himself the life he enacted [on stage]; my translation.) (ibid: 101)

His perspective was rooted in his experience as a stage manager and prompter; these experiences backstage, where he witnessed the domination of the romantic star actors, taught him that the central element of a production was the actor, not the director. The newer theatrical approaches, with which he was familiar, tended to ignore the actor and privilege the stage design and the technical innovations. His failure to impose a radical change on the Romanian theatre tradition from an actor-based to an ensemble-based system was also due to the minor and largely technical role of the director at the time Gusty started his activity at the National Theatre; but not even his official recognition as director led to a radical change.

His belief in the primacy of actors rather than directors partly explains the slow change in the dominant position of actors in the Romanian theatre. It also points to the growing tensions between actor-based and the ensemble-based production techniques. Gusty supported the latter, as he declared himself:

Problema regizorului constă în însumarea tuturor forțelor izolate, atât ale actorilor cât și ale întregului aparat scenic, într-un organism viu. (The director's concern consists of the gathering of all the isolated forces, of both the actors and the entire technical apparatus, into a living body; my translation.) (ibid: 151)

To add more, he also privileged text-based approaches:

Un regizor cu adevărat conștiincios va respecta întotdeauna textul unui autor consacrat și nu-și va permite fără motive binecuvântate să-l ciuntească cu foarfeca sau cu creionul albastru. (A director who is really scrupulous will always respect the text of a consecrated playwright and will not let himself cut it with the scissors or with the blue pencil without blessed reasons; my translation) (ibid: 153)

Yet he did not have the same influence upon drama as comedy actors. The ensemble-based drama productions evolved slowly, and Ibsen stagings preserved a focus on the star actor and were reminiscent of romantic acting. Yet, contact with Gusty in the early

careers of the most important Romanian star actors shaped future Ibsen interpretations and ensured a realist tendency. Gusty's working method was built upon Brahm's technique of working with the actors:

Ce socotim noi că a învățat Paul Gusty de la Otto Brahm? (Sau poate că n-a găsit în metoda acestuia decât o răsfrângere a propriilor sale înclinări.) Mai întâi felul de a lucra cu actorii. [...] Oferind actorilor, de la începutul repetițiilor, o analiză pătrunzătoare a înțelesului piesei și o caracterizare lămurită a personajelor, lăsându-i apoi să se descurce singuri o bucată de vreme, notându-și observațiile și intervenind ulterior cu îndrumările cuvenite, Paul Gusty proceda, *nu întocmai* ca Otto Brahm care lăsa interpreților o libertate cvasi-totală de a-i urma sfaturile – dar după o concepție foarte asemănătoare, întemeiată pe ideea că actorul, nefiind o marionetă cu sfori, ci un om în carne și oase, trebuie să fie el însuși *convins* de justetea jocului său. A doua trăsătură comună ni se pare a fi fost respectul pentru cuvântul rostit în teatru. Nici Paul Gusty n-a dat decorului mai mult decât merită cadrul scenic, menit să creeze ambianța potrivită acțiunii. [...] Paul Gusty s-a bizuit în teatru mai întâi pe jocul actorilor. (What do we consider that Paul Gusty learned from Otto Brahm? (Or he probably just found in his method a mirroring of his own inclinations.) Firstly, it concerns his manner of working with the actors. [...] Already at the beginning of the rehearsals, he offered them a deep analysis of the play's meaning and a clear description of the characters. Then he left them on their own for a while, writing down his observations, and only afterwards stepping in with his proper guidance. Thus, Paul Gusty did not proceed exactly as Otto Brahm, who let the interpreters almost completely free with respect to his advice, but followed a similar approach, based on the idea that the actor is not a marionette with strings, but a human being made of flesh and bones, who must be convinced in himself of the accuracy of his acting. The second common trait seems to us the respect towards the spoken word in theatre. Paul Gusty did not give more [importance] to the stage design either, as its role was only to create an adequate atmosphere for the play. [...] First and foremost, Paul Gusty counted on the actors' way of performing; my translation.) (ibid: 140)

He used realist technique in the training of the actor, dismissing the romantic declamation and employing everyday speech on stage, while cultivating a thorough relationship with the text and a deep understanding of the content of the script:

Paul Gusty se înfățișa *de la cea dintâi repetiție* cu textul îndelung studiat și cu mișcarea scenică bine precizată, ca o imagine fotografică pusă la punct, limpede și fixată definitiv. [...] Paul Gusty dădea toate deslușirile privitoare la personalitatea autorului, la ideile lui, la tema și tendințele piesei, la mediul social și epoca în care se petrece acțiunea, oferind interpreților, ca punct de plecare [...] o analiză completă și adâncă a operei dramatice [...]. (Paul Gusty used to come already at the first rehearsal with the text analysed for a long time and with a very precise perspective upon the stage movements, like a polished, clear and definitively established photography. [...] Paul Gusty was giving all the explanations concerning the playwright's personality, his ideas and the main directions of the play, its social environment and the epoch of the action, offering a complete and deep analysis of the dramatic work as a starting point for the interpreters; my translation.) (ibid: 99–100)

In this respect, Gusty focused on the interaction between the members of the ensemble as he honed their previously acquired skills and their potential for new techniques:

6. În ce privește metoda mea personală, las pe actor la primele repetiții să-și dea drumul, adică îngădui să joace rolul așa cum îl interpretează el, fără intervenția mea. Urmand astfel, caut să descopăr posibilități pe care să le pot folosi pentru punerea mea în scenă. 7. Aceste posibilități sunt uneori așa de puternice, încât pot influența însași ideea fundamentală a înscenării mele. (6.As far as my personal method is concerned, at the first rehearsals I let the actor express himself, that is I allow him to perform the role as he pleases, without my intervention. Then, I seek to discover those potential [directions] that I can use in my staging. 7.These potential [directions] are so strong at times that they can even influence the fundamental idea of my staging; my translation.) (ibid: 151)

Although this approach led to a slower assimilation of the ensemble system, it provided a solid training for the actors, who acknowledged that they owed their acting development not only to their Conservatoire teachers, but also to Gusty.

His contribution to a Romanian interpretation of Ibsen is subtle, yet extremely powerful: by seeking to evolve an ensemble-based system out of an actor-based system, he altered the actors' way of thinking and working. His productions of *A Doll's House*, *Hedda Gabler*, *John Gabriel Borkman* and *The Lady from the Sea* are somewhere in-between actor-based and ensemble-based performance. They were marked by the strong presence of a star actor, yet surrounded by an ensemble that was gradually gaining more power. Whereas the actor-based approach is rooted in the wish/initiative of a specific actor to stage a play in order to display his/her qualities, the ensemble-based approach – which is Gusty's contribution – lies in the director's choice to cast the best actors in secondary roles. These characteristics are confirmed by many Ibsen stagings at the National Theatre of Bucharest such as *Pillars of Society* (1911), *An Enemy of the People* (1912, 1937), *The Wild Duck* (1920), and *League of Youth* (1932). Some of the participants in these productions were also comic actors, despite the fact that Ibsen's Romanian productions were dominated by drama actors. Gusty understood the importance of the comic element in Ibsen and its potential impact on his audience.

Gusty remained a backstage and largely unacknowledged figure, yet his discrete influence was decisive in the introduction and establishment of Ibsen. It contributed to the emergence and establishment of ensemble-based Ibsen productions on the Romanian stage, without entirely stealing the power away from the star actor in leading roles; and it provided the Romanian audience with realist Ibsen stagings, marked by the German influence of Otto Brahm and the French influence of Antoine, while still reminiscent of the romantic acting tradition.

4.2.3.1.3 Which productions?

Of the productions directed by Gusty, two were particularly successful – the 1920 premiere of *The Wild Duck* and the 1921 premiere of *A Doll's House*. The latter even generated

public debate.⁶⁵ The productions were staged many times, across multiple seasons, with roughly the same actors; this led to the establishment of Ibsen as part of the permanent repertory of the National Theatre of Bucharest. I will analyse the impact of Ibsen upon the Romanian theatre until 1947 through these two ensemble-based productions.

The key questions here concern the specificity of these performances and the mix of divergent elements of these productions that ensured their long presence in the repertory, even though the critical reception was not always positive:

Pluralitatea generațiilor, amestecul de moduri de interpretare, tipologia mai variată ca oricând a actorilor, componența eteroclită a trupelor fac ca distribuțiile să nu fie omogene, ca în același spectacol să întâlnim stiluri și concepții de joc felurite, actori care nu se pot adapta repertoriului modern. (The plurality of the generations, the interpretative mix, the actor typology more varied than ever, and the multifarious structure of the ensembles led to heterogeneous casts. [These factors] also caused the encounter with manifold styles and acting perspectives, as well as with actors unable to adapt to the modern repertory in the same performance; my translation.) (Alterescu 1973: 332)

This intercrossing is evident at three levels: at the industrial level, at the training level and at the acting level.

4.2.3.2 Mix of star approach and ensemble approach

At the industrial level, the ensembles were no longer relying on minor actors to play secondary roles, but were casting major actors. This ensured the quality of the performances and minimised the display of the star actor's skills. This is not to say that the star actor was unimportant. Agepsina Macri-Eftimiu's presence in the role of Nora in eight *A Doll's House* IbsenStage events between 1921 and 1932 at the National Theatre of Bucharest provides evidence for this:

Nora (Casa de păpuși) [...] ispitește, de câteva decenii, marile tragediane, fiind unul din rolurile de căpetenie feminine [...] căci prezintă o serie de fețe, una mai interesantă decât cealaltă și dă prilej actriței să-și desfășoare, în toată amploarea, sensibilitatea și virtuozitatea dramatică. (For decades, *Nora (A Doll's House)* has been a temptation for the great tragedians, as one of the major feminine roles [...], because it presents a series of facets, one more interesting than the other, and offers the opportunity to the actress to unfold all her sensitivity and dramatic virtuosity to the greatest extent; my translation.) (INT. 1929: 3)

65 The production of *A Doll's House* staged in 1921 stimulated great interest among the Romanian spectators as it applied to their own lives. The debate launched by the newspaper *Rampa*, was entitled "Ce ați face în situația Norei Helmer" (What would you do if you were in the situation of Nora Helmer?; my translation), and it unfolded over a period of almost three weeks between October 21 – November 9, 1921. See "Pentru cititoarele noastre. Ce ați face în situația Norei Helmer" 1921: 4; "Ce ați face în situația Norei. Primele răspunsuri" 1921: 4; "Ce ați face în situația Norei. Noile răspunsuri primite" 1921a: 4; "Ce ați face în situația Norei. Noile răspunsuri primite" 1921b: 4; "Ce ați face în situația Norei. Ultimele răspunsuri primite" 1921: 2.

She is the Romanian actress most associated with the role, in spite of the great number of actresses who performed Nora. She also performed the roles of Hedvig in a successful production of *The Wild Duck* in 1920, and Rebecca West in *Rosmersholm* in 1923. From this perspective, the 12 IbsenStage events starring Agepsina Macri-Eftimiu show that her contribution was characterised by stability and continuity. The contrast is especially evident when we compare her contribution as Nora with that of the many actresses who only occasionally performed this role on the Romanian stage.

Macri-Eftimiu's contribution cannot be separated from the ensemble, which included similarly renowned actors. She performed together with George Ciprian, Aristide Demetriade, Ion Manolescu and Nicolae Soreanu both in *A Doll's House* and in *The Wild Duck*. This makes her into a node in the visualisation of the central network of artists, particularly as her colleagues performed both leading and secondary roles in Ibsen plays. They performed both as stars and ensemble players. Aristide Demetriade and Ion Manolescu were renowned for their Ibsen contributions as star actors in the role of Osvold, but these two actors are also known for their renditions in the secondary role of Dr. Rank in *A Doll's House*. Aristide Demetriade also performed Judge Brack in *Hedda Gabler* (1923), and Johan Tønnesen in *Pillars of Society*. The profile of actors such as George Ciprian, Nicolae Soreanu and Aurel Athanasescu is similar to that of Demetriade and Manolescu. In fact, George Ciprian and Nicolae Soreanu were both at the core of the production of *The Wild Duck*, in the roles of Gregers Werle and Hjalmar Ekdal. This explains the equal number of four events in which they appear in leading roles. As for their participation in secondary roles, George Ciprian participated in seven events, as Krogstad in *A Doll's House* (1921, 1929, 1941), as the Troll King in *Peer Gynt* (1924), as Kroll in *Rosmersholm* (1923) and as Jacob Engstrand in *Ghosts* (1916). By contrast, Nicolae Soreanu appears in only three events as secondary character, namely as Jørgen Tesman in *Hedda Gabler* (1923), as Rørlund in *Pillars of Society* (1911) and as Daniel Hejre in *The League of Youth* (1932). Finally, Aurel Athanasescu performed mostly as Torvald in *A Doll's House*. However, he is also registered in secondary roles, as the stranger in *The Lady from the Sea* (1928), as Hilmar Tønnesen in *Pillars of Society* (1911) and as Captain Horster in *An Enemy of the People* (1937). The contributions of all these actors reveal a statistical balance in both leading and secondary roles; they had star status, but equally were part of the emergence of an ensemble-based system.

The ensemble-based productions also involved star actors who only performed secondary roles, but made a statistically consistent contribution to Ibsen productions. Within the list of 238 actors performing in secondary roles, Victor Antonescu, Ana Luca, Ion Crețu, Ion Morțun and Ion Livescu performed in at least five Ibsen events each. The presence of these actors indicates the slow coagulation of ensemble-based Ibsen Romanian production at the National Theatre of Bucharest. The only exception in the list is Ion Crețu, whose presence is tied to Petre Sturdza's tour with *An Enemy of the People* organised in 1907–1908. Otherwise, the contributions of Victor Antonescu, Ana Luca, Ion Morțun and Ion Livescu are tied to those of Agepsina Macri-Eftimiu, George Ciprian, Nicolae Soreanu and Aurel Athanasescu. Together, these actors highlight the role of the National Theatre in the emergence of an ensemble-based Ibsen tradition.

4.2.3.3 Mix of drama and comedy training

The eight actors mentioned above were experienced in performing drama or comedy according to their designated role type within the *emploi* system. The collaboration between actors with different training and profiles is a significant aspect of these Romanian Ibsen ensemble-based productions. This intertwining is important because Ibsen's plays were traditionally associated with the drama schools to which most of the Ibsen actors belonged. Even in the list of eight actors performing either leading or secondary roles, the drama actors have a stronger position than the comedy actors. They assume the leading roles more frequently and are more statistically present, as is the case with Agepsina Macri-Eftimiu and George Ciprian. Surprisingly, the drama actors performing Ibsen leading roles were more often criticised for inappropriate performances, regardless of the acting genres they employed. For instance, Aurel Athanasescu was strongly criticised for his performance as Torvald:

D.A. Athanasescu în Torvald și D-sa afară de rol, pentru motivul că a fost deasupra rolului. D-sa n'a fost suficient de imbecil în această interpretare: ne-a redat un Torvald inteligent și viguros, către care merge toată simpatia noastră, în timp ce eroul lui Ibsen este o mediocritate egoistă și respingătoare. (Mr. Athanasescu as Torvald was outside the role because he was beyond it. He was not imbecile enough in this interpretation: he rendered an intelligent and vigorous Torvald, who gains all our sympathy, whereas Ibsen's hero displays a selfish and abhorrent mediocrity; my translation.) (N.P. 1921: 15)

Interpretarea pe care d.Athanasescu a dat-o lui Helmar a fost anti-artistică și a distonat complet cu întreg ansamblul. D-sa a fost rău distribuit în acest rol. (Mr. Athanasescu's interpretation was non-artistic and was completely out of tune with respect to the entire ensemble. He was badly cast in this role; my translation.) (Bobeș 1929: 2)

D. Athanasescu joacă pe soțul mărginit și măsurat cu expansiuni dâmbovițene, ritmul general al interpretării e cam meridional: ghețurile fiordurilor sufletești se topesc și mai lent, ca cele naturale de pe culmile nordice. (Mr. Athanasescu performs the narrow-minded and reserved husband by providing an expansive interpretation, typical for the people living on Dâmbovița's⁶⁶ river bank, and generally impressing a rather southern rhythm to the performance: the ice of the soul's fjords melts even slower, just as the natural fjords on the northern peaks; my translation.) (Fagure 1929: 3)

There are only two actors belonging to the comedy school in the list of the eight key contributors, namely Nicolae Soreanu and Ion Morțun. However, the presence of these comedy school actors in the Romanian Ibsen stagings heightened the comedic elements in the plays. Morțun performed in *The Wild Duck* and in *John Gabriel Borkman*, while Soreanu performed in *The Wild Duck*, *Pillars of Society*, *Hedda Gabler* and *The League of Youth*. Other influential Romanian actors belonging to the comedy school, although less relevant in

66 A geographical reference indicating the southern, that is passionate and intense temperament of the people living in Bucharest, where Dâmbovița is the river dividing the city in two.

the field of Ibsen production, such as Ion Iancu Petrescu⁶⁷ and Cazimir Belcot,⁶⁸ performed comedy roles in *Ghosts*, *Rosmersholm*, *An Enemy of the People* and *Pillars of Society*. All these actors managed to reveal the subsidiary comedy element in Ibsen's plays, despite the dominant drama approach.

The comedy element appealed to audiences, although the critical reception indicates flaws in the approach of the comic actors. The case of *The Wild Duck's* reception is especially relevant here. The Romanian premiere of the play in 1920 is one of the Ibsen productions with the greatest impact in the Romanian theatre prior to 1947; it enjoyed tremendous critical reception and financial success. The mix of the drama and comedy acting schools, and the different generations of actors in the cast, makes the *The Wild Duck* production of utmost relevance. Nicolae Soreanu and George Ciprian, the actors playing Hjalmar and Gregers, brought together drama and comedy within the performance. This meeting of two renowned actors with different profiles highlighted the comedy in Ibsen's play through their complementary renditions. The critics noticed it too, even when the comedy approach in Soreanu's rendition was criticised:

D. N.Soreanu ne-a surprins neplăcut. A denaturat personagiul ce i s-a încredințat, Hialmar Ekdal e un suficient, un încrezut în sine, o licheluță care se complace în viața comodă, așa cum este ea, fără să-și puie vreo întrebare. Un asemenea tip, când apele i se turbură, și minciuna vieții sale e ruptă, așa încât adevărul crud îi apare în față, devine amar, acru, rău. D.Soreanu a făcut din Hialmar o paiată, un manechin pe arcuri: Sare în dreapta, în stânga, întinde mâinile sus, își trage mustățile în jos, dă din umeri. Iar când i se arată adevărul, când i se spune că trăește în mocirlă, atunci devine nervos, epileptic. Nu acesta e veritabilul Hialmar. (Mr. Soreanu surprised us unpleasantly. He deformed the character he was cast in. Hialmar Ekdal is self-sufficient, arrogant, a toady who is complacent with the comfortable life just the way it is, without ever asking himself one single question. When such a man experiences turbid situations, when the lie of his life is unveiled in front of him, he becomes bitter, sour and mean. Mr. Soreanu transformed Hialmar into a harlequin, a mannequin: He jumps to the right and to the left, he stretches his arms up, he pulls his moustache down, he shrugs. And when you show him the truth, when you tell him that he is living in the mud, he becomes angry, epileptic. This is not the real Hialmar; my translation.) (Munte 1928: 1)

Barbu Fundoianu praise for the contribution of Ion Morțun as Old Ekdal in *The Wild Duck* production of 1920 reveals the strong impact of the comedy actors, even when cast in secondary roles: "Și ași mai vrea să spun, dragostea pe care o am pentru arta modestului interpret al lui Ibsen care e Morțun." (And I would also like to express my love for the art of the modest Ibsen interpreter Morțun; my translation.) (Fundoianu 1920: 1)

67 A Romanian comedy actor belonging to the generation of Constantin Nottara, Aristizza Romanescu and Grigore Manolescu. He was renowned for his innate acting talent; he lacked any formal actor training, in contrast to most of his colleagues. See Alterescu (1971: 347–349).

68 A Romanian comedy actor whose technique moved between *verismo* and Expressionism; he admired Ermete Novelli and Max Reinhardt. He was also inspired by the performing techniques of the actors in silent movies. The collaboration with Petre Sturdza in *An Enemy of the People* resulted in Sturdza's analysis of Belcot's performance as Aslaksen. See Alterescu (1971: 380–384).

The contribution of Paul Gusty in this mixed assemblage of the ensemble-based Ibsen production is highly relevant and was also acknowledged by the critics:

O unanimitate desăvârșită a existat însă asupra faptului că marele om de teatru Paul Gusty a reușit să realizeze o armonie minunată a totalității, a atmosferei de ansamblu a acestei piese, care mai presus de orice, este una în care Ibsen pune în conflict caractere și personalități diferite. (We unanimously agreed that the great theatre practitioner Paul Gusty managed to convey the wonderful harmony of the whole, the ensemble atmosphere of this play, which is, after all, a play in which Ibsen insists on the conflict between characters and personalities completely different [from each other]; my translation). (S.L. 1923: 3)

Gusty, as the director of these plays starting in 1911, was responsible for casting the most influential comedy actors in Ibsen's plays. After all, he was not only the promoter of an ensemble-based approach, but also the acknowledged stage director of the comedy productions at the National Theatre of Bucharest. The comedy actors he chose for productions such as *Pillars of Society*, *An Enemy of the People* and *The Wild Duck* were instrumental in establishing Ibsen's place in the at the National Theatre of Bucharest.

4.2.3.4 Mix of acting genres

The ensemble-based Ibsen productions at the National Theatre of Bucharest created a context for encounters between actors from different generations and with different acting backgrounds ranging from Romanticism to realism.

The star actress and the drama actors were more tied to the romantic than the realist acting norms. In this respect, Agepsina Macri-Eftimiu, the interpreter of Nora, Hedvig and Rebecca, provided a rendition of the three characters marked by a mix of romantic and realist techniques. She was renowned for her traditional acting style honed on the Romanticism-inspired repertory. However, drama actors such as George Ciprian, Aurel Athanasescu, Ana Luca, Victor Antonescu and Ion Livescu had at least partially adopted realist acting, mostly under the influence of Alexandru Davila. Yet the romantic background of their actor training was still powerful in their realist acting. Agepsina Macri-Eftimiu did not benefit from Davila's influence as her background in acting was rooted in the romantic tradition since her training took place in Paris (Carandino 1973: 28–30). This led to a mix of romantic and realist acting in the staging of *A Doll's House*: her focus on theatrical affect, the beauty of her appearance, conveying emotion through noble, controlled gestures and by the musicality of the voice, point at a romantic background. Yet, the sobriety, subtlety and simplicity of her appearance at the end of the play indicates a subtle turn to a realist technique.

The comedy actors embraced realist acting due to the influence of Paul Gusty and his constant supervision of the acting. Nicolae Soreanu and Ion Morțun participated not only in *The Wild Duck*, but also in *A Doll's House*, *Pillars of Society*, *An Enemy of the People* or *Hedda Gabler*, and thus reinforced the realist interpretation. Even the comic actors belonging to older generations, such as Ion Iancu Petrescu and Cazimir Belcot, switched more easily from a classic/romantic approach to the realist approach indicated by Gusty.

Their adoption of the Ibsen roles and the overall positive critical reception highlighted the successful combination of comedy and realism in the Romanian Ibsen production.

4.2.4 Conclusions Production Hubs

The three production hubs I analysed reveal different stages in the development of the Romanian Ibsen production across both time and space, revealing numerous intercrossings at both the acting and staging levels.

Firstly, the legacy of Ibsen on the psychological realism school at the National Theatre of Iași is attributable to State Dragomir, Aglae Pruteanu and Napoleone Borelli. Henrik Ibsen's plays were part of these contributors' initiative to modernise the local stage, revealing the National Theatre of Iași as strong an institution as the National Theatre of Bucharest at the turn of the 20th century. Their greatest achievement is visible in the displacement of romantic acting towards an acting modelled on psychological realism and based on sciences such as psychology and physiology, with the production of Ibsen's plays being instrumental in this change. At the turn of the 20th century this was probably the most significant reform in the Romanian practice of acting after the one imposed by I. L. Caragiale, and ahead of the one enacted by Alexandru Davila. However, because of the reduced geographical spread of their Ibsen performances in Moldavia alone, the influence of these contributors was high at a local level, yet low at a national level. In addition, all of these contributors only worked at the National Theatre of the Iași of all Romanian theatre institutions. Besides, the gradual changes introduced by State Dragomir and Aglae Pruteanu were not echoed in the activity of the next generation of Ibsen key contributors led by Agatha Bârsescu. Consequently, their acting reforms had no further impact, although Ibsen remained a unique presence in the romantic and national repertory performed in Iași until late in the 1930s. Finally, this production "hub" disintegrated once Napoleone Borelli, State Dragomir and Aglae Pruteanu ceased their activity at the National Theatre of Iași. This proves that while the National Theatre of Bucharest and the Bulandra Theatre Company enjoyed the greatest renown in Romanian theatre history, the National Theatre of Iași was arguably a much more significant institution than previously acknowledged.

Secondly, the private companies' initiatives highlight the classicisation of Henrik Ibsen in the Romanian theatre and the impact of the expressionist movement on the Romanian stage. Moreover, the Ibsen activity associated with the Bulandra Company, as the most powerful private theatre institution until the middle of the 20th century, deserves further investigation. Ibsen's position in the repertoire of both Bulandra and Mărioara Voiculescu, together with a variety of plays ranging from the French boulevard to Expressionism, proves that his plays were no longer seen as an innovation. However, they could be re-interpreted through the newest acting perspectives and stage devices. In other words, the classicisation of Henrik Ibsen offered the private companies the opportunity to explore new acting and staging perspectives in the interwar period.

Thirdly, the Ibsen productions of the National Theatre of Bucharest hub reveal three aspects. It highlighted the increasing power of the director Paul Gusti to ignite an ensemble-based approach and diminish the power of the actor-based approach. Then, it pointed to the stage impact of the comedy element in drama productions. Finally, it re-

vealed the mix of acting styles across the drama and comedy genres, bringing together actors with different backgrounds and from different generations in the same productions. The two most popular productions reveal the development of these aspects in time, as *The Wild Duck* was performed in 1922 and 1928, whereas *A Doll's House* was performed in 1923, 1929, 1930 and 1932 with few changes to the interpreters of the secondary roles. Their presence on the stage of the National Theatre of Bucharest reaffirmed Ibsen's establishment on the Romanian stage. However, the transition towards the Ibsen ensemble-based productions was slow and they only represent a small part of the overall number of events on the Romanian stage. Finally, the ensemble productions still preserved elements specific to star actor productions, highlighting once again the actor's dominant power in early Romanian Ibsen.

4.3 Section Two. Character sites

4.3.1 Introduction

If the arrangement of research findings in the previous section focused on producing organisations as places where the mixing of theatre aesthetics occurred, in this section I investigate in detail the transmission of interpretative approaches as located within particular plays – in other words, in fictional places. The focus of this section is character as a theatrical site, and my analysis concerns the key contributors whose activity within Romanian Ibsen production revolved around specific roles. This will involve returning to some familiar names as the initial IbsenStage selection of key contributors applies not only to Section One, but also to Section Two.

The first step in identifying the characters that attracted most the Romanian key contributors was to select the most performed Ibsen plays on the national stage, namely *Ghosts*, *A Doll's House* and *An Enemy of the People*. The next step looked at the contributors associated with the leading roles in these works. Finally, the statistical results pointed to three roles – Dr. Stockmann, Oswald, Mrs Alving – and at five actors who interpreted them: Petre Sturdza, Aristide Demetriade, Ion Manolescu, Agatha Bârsescu, and Mărioara Voiculescu. Their contributions in productions of *Ghosts* and *An Enemy of the People* either signify generational transmission or marks the actors' ownership of particular Ibsen roles. The contribution of Agepsina Macri-Efitmiu, the actress who was quantitatively the most influential Nora, cannot be discussed without considering the role of the National Theatre of Bucharest in the emergence of an ensemble tradition. In her case, the play/character hub is interweaved with the National Theatre of Bucharest, and she belongs to the network of actors tied to the Romanian ensemble tradition. For this reason, I considered it appropriate to analyse her contribution within the earlier discussion of the role of the National Theatre of Bucharest in the Romanian Ibsen production.

This section is divided into three parts, analysing: 1. The generational, vertical transmission thread enacted by Aristide Demetriade and Ion Manolescu as Oswald; 2. The prestige, horizontal transmission thread enacted by Agatha Bârsescu and Mărioara Voiculescu as Mrs Alving in *Ghosts*, and 3. The contribution of Petre Sturdza as Dr.

Stockmann in *An Enemy of the People*. I consider the impact of Ibsen upon these actors' development in terms of acting and staging, and I look at the mix of acting genres and techniques in their interpretations. Finally, I analyse how they contributed towards Ibsen's dissemination through tours and guest performances.

4.3.2 The Romanian Osvald thread. Constantin I. Nottara, Aristide Demetriade and Ion Manolescu

The second part of this section addresses the Romanian *Ghosts* tradition from the perspective of the two actors who achieved recognition for their interpretation as Osvald: Aristide Demetriade and Ion Manolescu. Yet, in order to understand their contributions both as actors in general and as Ibsen promoters, we must first consider their debt to Constantin Nottara. He was not only their teacher,⁶⁹ but also the first Romanian actor to interpret Osvald in 1897. They shared his Romantic approach, both in acting and staging, but this influence faded into the background because of the new elements they integrated into their Ibsen performances. However, Nottara's central position in the Romanian actor training until late in the 1920s and his pioneering role in introducing *Ghosts* on the Romanian stage places these three actors in a generational axis of cultural transmission. They are connected by their common training at the Conservatoire in Bucharest, and through the National Theatre of Bucharest. The influences assimilated by these actors were gathered in the same *spatial* location over a long period of time, and this hub had the longest and highest coagulation power in the Romanian Ibsen tradition. It does not mean that this coagulation entailed the same recipe of performing Ibsen throughout generations. In *time*, the various influences were assimilated differently and did not melt into a unique Romanian Ibsen tradition of performing Osvald in *Ghosts*. Eventually, the contributions of Aristide Demetriade and Ion Manolescu enable us to visualise a temporal and spatial overlapping of different recipes and ingredients for performing Osvald. Thus, the inter-war period witnessed the coexistence and the communication between various tradition of performing Osvald in *Ghosts* in Bucharest, which also spread across the country by means of touring and guest performances of Aristide Demetriade and Ion Manolescu respectively. But how did these three actors interpret Osvald, and how is the mix in their Ibsen interpretation interrelated, yet unique?

4.3.2.1 Constantin I. Nottara

Although his presence is not relevant statistically,⁷⁰ Nottara is the starting point of a thread of Osvald interpreters in the Romanian Ibsen tradition fulfilled by Aristide Demetriade and Ion Manolescu. His⁷¹ contribution to the introduction of Ibsen to Romanian

69 For instance, the 1907 exam schedule for students of dramatic arts included a production of *Rosmersholm*, prepared by the students taking the declamation course of Nottara (National Theatre of Bucharest Collection, Folder 17/1907: 63).

70 He is registered with only three events in IbsenStage.

71 The actor did not mention any of these Ibsen productions in his memoirs. Instead, his presence in *Ghosts* and *Pillars of Society* is recovered through other sources. For instance, the collection "The National Theatre of Bucharest" at the State Archives, and the aforementioned historians Ioan Massoff, Ovidiu Drimba and Ion Vartic account for the presence of Nottara in these pro-

theatre is tied to that of Aristizza Romanescu, the most important drama actress at the National Theatre of Bucharest in the last quarter of the 19th century. They both followed the generation of the Romanian theatre's founders, Mihail Pascaly and Matei Millo, and were Petre Vellescu's students at the Conservatoire. His stage partnership with Aristizza Romanescu made Nottara one of the early Romanian interpreters of Ibsen in the two first Ibsen stagings performed in Bucharest, namely *Rosmersholm* in 1895, and *Ghosts* in 1896. Our inquiry concerns the latter.

In terms of acting, Nottara belonged to the Romantic drama school founded by Mihail Pascaly. Nottara was considered "expresia dramatismului masculin" (the expression of the masculine dramatic character; my translation) (Alterescu 1971: 328), and was renowned for his repertoire of romantic plays, especially historical dramas.⁷² In this respect, his acting style was based on romantic techniques beautifully and eloquently executed:

Actorul este preocupat de redarea complexă și cât mai în detaliu a personalității pe care o întruchipează, fără însă a pierde din vedere efectul glasului melodios, al gestului plastic. (The actor is interested in a complex and detailed rendition of the personality he is embodying, yet without losing sight of the musical voice and of the plastic gesture's effect; my translation.) (Berlogea 2000: 11)

However, Simion Alterescu insists on Nottara's realistic turn towards the end of his career, emphasising his ambivalent position, in-between the Romantic and realist acting tradition:

Nottara pornește de la datele interpretului de factură romantic (a fost multă vreme sclavul sentimentului, a cultivat, dincolo de controlul rațional, vocea și gestică și a fost preocupat în cea mai mare măsură de emoție), pentru ca, sub înrâurirea noilor concepții de teatru și a repertoriului jucat, să evolueze spre o artă realistă. (Nottara begins as a Romantic interpreter (he was the slave of the feelings for a long time, he cultivated the use of voice and gestures beyond a rational control and was mostly interested in delivering emotions). But under the influence of the new theatre and repertory perspectives, he developed a realist art; my translation.) (Alterescu 1971: 328)

He is known as the one actor of the old generation who best managed to adapt his acting to realism. Therefore, Simion Alterescu considers that

valoarea artei lui Nottara constă tocmai în transformarea ei în timp, în adaptarea mijloacelor scenice la noul repertoriu și la noua sensibilitate artistică a spectatorului" (the value of Nottara's art consists precisely in its transformation throughout time, in its accommodation to the new repertory; my translation) (ibid: 328).

ductions. See Collection "The National Theatre of Bucharest", Folder 40/1896: 14; Massoff (1969: 386); Drîmba (1997: 113); Vartic (1995: 168).

72 Brădățeanu (1966: 225–236) gives a comprehensive overview of the roles performed by Constantin Nottara.

Nottara's realism is, however, of Italian inspiration – that is, Italian *verismo* – which implies a less radical change than we might be tempted to assume. In fact,

Nottara se păstrase însă de-a lungul vremii la noblețea gestului larg, aulic, la dicția sonoră și învăluitoare a Comediei Franceze, pe care o filtra prin arta de efecte răscolitoare a veriștilor italieni. (Throughout time, Nottara preserved the nobility of the broad, majestic gestures, the resonant and alluring diction of the *Comédie-Française*, which he had filtered through the Italian *verismo* artists' focus on overwhelming effects; my translation.) (Bumbești 1964: 13)

The influence of the actor-based Italian theatre system of the time explains why only his acting was affected, whereas his position as star actor remained untouched. Also, besides performing the leading masculine role in *Rosmersholm* and *Ghosts*, Nottara was also the stage director of the latter,⁷³ confirming the dominance of the stars at the industrial level of production.

One aspect that probably influenced Nottara's participation in Ibsen productions and made him approach roles such as Rosmer or Oswald was that these roles provided the context for a connection between Romantic and realist acting. The Romantic approach valued his strong artistic temperament together with a certain solemnity of the voice and gestures, and the ability to lucidly control the delivery of emotions.⁷⁴

How was the “realist” part in Nottara's acting connected to his romantic background? The answer to the connection between Romanticism and *verismo* lies in the latter's focus on the pathological rendition of the characters, which made it possible for Nottara to switch between the two genres. In other words, the interpreter of the Romantic drama protagonists found a connection between his background actor training and the pathological renditions of Italian *verismo*. The role of Oswald was particularly suitable to bridge the transition from Romanticism to *verismo*. And, as the success of the Italian actors proved it, *verismo* allowed Nottara to employ the Romantic rendition of passions and the control over voice and gestures, while also striving for truthfulness:

73 In fact, Nottara was the stage director [“director de scenă”] for all the productions of the National Theatre of Bucharest in a period when the function of stage director had not been established yet.

74 “dacă nu e absolut nevoie de o întreagă frumusețe a formelor, apoi actorul trebuie să aibă un corp care să întrunească diferite condițiuni de ansamblu potrivite la transformarea fizicului personajului ce interpretează, ținând socoteala întotdeauna de propriul lui temperament, înlăturând orice defect fizic sau de organism, care afară din teatru nu se observă, dar care pe scenă devine o cauză fatală de nesucces. Printre însușirile de căpetenie ale actorului, precum gest, expresie, atitudine, vine în primul rând vocea, care prin ajutorul întregilor vibrațiuni și printr-o continuă varietate de tonuri produce acele izbucniri ale sufletului, când omul e cuprins de o frământare provenită dintr-o anumită patimă, și cu cât frământarea se desfășoară mai mult, cu atât vocea e supusă la o acțiune și mai puternică, așa că de la simplele accente nearticulate, trece la forma materială a cuvântării, însoțită fiind de gest, de atitudine și mai cu seamă de expresie fizionomică, cerință înaintemergătoare a manifestării că cutare accent sau cutare cuvânt este pornirea unei patimi. Coordonarea acestor însușiri este neapărat trebuincioasă, căci o mică abatere de la înlănțuirea lor strică tot efectul ce actorul și-a propus să producă” (Nottara 1960: 85).

Acolo unde pasiunile sunt mai încordate, unde suferințele sunt mai pronunțate, unde viciile sunt mai aprige, actorul e obligat să le adâncească, să le scormonească și să le pătrundă cu spiritul său de observație ca, apoi, să dichisească tipurile ce le plăsmuiește, cu toate însușirile prinse din observațiunile adevăratelor realități, în vederea foloaselor ficțiunii reprezentative, devenită realitate la rândul ei, prin interpretarea cea justă ce dă actorul rolului său. (It is there where the passions are most tense, where the sufferings are strongest and where the vices are most ardent that the actor must seek to deepen, to stir up and to penetrate them with his sense of observation. Then, he must adorn the human profiles he is creating, with all the characteristics he captured during the observation of the true reality. Only then would it [his creation] be useful to the fiction of representation turned into reality, through the just interpretation the actor gave to his role; my translation.) (Nottara 1960: 87)

On the one hand, the similarity between the romantic and the *verismo* acting techniques concerned the controlled virtuosity displayed by the Italian actors in their excessive renditions. On the other hand, the main difference concerned Romanticism's interest in displaying beauty in the rendition of any human passion, in contrast to *verismo's* truthfulness. The main issue here is that this aim for truthfulness was rather indifferent to whether the final rendition displayed beauty or not. Consequently, striving for truth and sincerity often led to a display of evil, ugliness, misery, sickness, debauchery and, finally, pathology. The latter even became a key attribute of *verismo*, displacing the very beauty of passions the romantic actors focused on in their renditions. Finally, this shift changed the way these actors spoke on stage. The displacement of beautiful passions entailed a necessary displacement of the beautiful romantic speech, and its substitution with the asperities of everyday speech.

The role of Oswald in *Ghosts* fits all requirements of such a change from Romanticism to *verismo*. In this respect, it is no wonder that the Italian actors preferred this role and that the Romanian actors' preference for it was a consequence of this Italian influence. Actors and directors such as Ernesto Rossi, Tommaso Salvini, Ermete Novelli and Ermete Zacconi, who visited Romania several times, marked the transition from Romanticism to *verismo* not only in Italian theatre history, but also in the Romanian practice of acting, as the example of Nottara and other Romanian actors of the time indicates.⁷⁵ As we have al-

75 "Evoluția artistului spre realism n-a fost întâmplătoare și își află originea încă în anii de învățatură ai lui Nottara. Căci pe lângă înrâurirea lui Pascaly, tânărul actor s-a bucurat și de învățătura lui Ștefan Vellescu [...]. Nottara a fost, apoi, în același timp, un admirator pasionat al marelui Matei Millo, acela căruia teatrul nostru îi datorează în cea mai mare măsură existența unei puternice tradiții realiste. Trebuie avută în vedere, de asemenea, împrejurarea că Nottara n-a fost influențat numai de artiștii francezi reprezentați ai unei școli depășite, ci a cunoscut și apreciat interpretarea realistă a unor mari artiști dramatici străini, de talia lui Ermete Novelli, a Eleonorei Duse, a lui Ernesto Rossi sau chiar a lui Ferraudy." (The evolution of the artist towards realism was not coincidental and stems from Nottara's years of training. Beside Pascaly's influence, the young actor enjoyed the advice of Ștefan Vellescu [...]. Then, Nottara was also a passionate admirer of Matei Millo, to whom our theatre owes the existence of a powerful realist tradition. We must also consider that Nottara was not only influenced by the French artists representing an old-fashioned school, but also knew of and appreciated the

ready seen, in terms of interpretation of Ibsen, both Novelli and Zacconi were renowned for their *verismo*-based approach to *Ghosts*. Thus, Nottara's interest in Ibsen and his acting of Oswald were influenced by the actor's preference for the Italian acting perspective. The very proof of it is that he chose *Ghosts* for his "benefit" staging on March 1, 1897. Thus, he not only became the first Romanian actor to perform Oswald, but also settled the framework of a Romanian Ibsen tradition, the climax of which was reached by Aristide Demetriade and Ion Manolescu as renowned interpreters of Oswald. Eventually, the Romanian Oswald tradition developed Nottara's initially fluid mix of Romanticism and *verismo* by bringing in new influences, while abandoning the previous ones in the acting of Aristide Demetriade and Ion Manolescu.

4.3.2.2 Aristide Demetriade

On the generational transmission axis, starting with Constantin Nottara as Oswald, the first statistically relevant example is Aristide Demetriade. He appears in 9 events between 1908 and 1929, and ensured a wide dissemination of Ibsen plays in southeastern Romania, performing Ibsen on tour and in Bucharest. He performed not only in leading roles (5 events), but also in secondary roles (4 events) in Ibsen performances, which indicates a balanced Ibsen contribution. This proves that despite his being a star actor, he was also involved in ensemble-based productions. His presence both in leading roles such as Oswald and Rubek, and in secondary roles such as Ejler Løvborg, Dr. Rank and Johan Tønnesen, points to the tensions at stake in the transition from actor-based to ensemble-based productions.

Significantly, his Ibsen touring activity was entirely associated with *Ghosts*, confirming his preference for it both as performer of Oswald and director of the play. There are five *Ghosts* events in the database, but the actor himself and the historians indicate that there were more. By contrast, his activity as participant in an ensemble did not coagulate around any play. It was marked instead by diversity, with the actor performing as Dr. Rank in *A Doll's House*, as Johan Tønnesen in *Pillars of Society* and as Ejler Løvborg in *Hedda Gabler*.

Our next step is to clarify Aristide Demetriade's position in the Romanian Ibsen tradition developed at the National Theatre of Bucharest from 1895. To begin with he was part of the drama school in Bucharest at the beginning of the 20th century, although he was not the first to perform Ibsen there. Nevertheless, his contribution is far more statistically important than that of those responsible for introducing Ibsen plays, namely Aristizza Romanescu and Constantin I. Nottara, both of whom are registered with three events. Since Constantin Nottara was Demetriade's teacher, we must consider the former's influence on his performances as Oswald.

Nottara's experience with the transition from Romanticism to Italian *verismo* and the handing over of his great roles to Demetriade demonstrates their strong connection. The visits to Romania of Antoine, Zacconi and de Sanctis with *Ghosts* add a further dimension to the attraction Demetriade had for Oswald. How did he assimilate and combine

realist interpretation of some great foreign dramatic artists, such as Ermete Novelli, Eleonora Duse and even Ferraudy; my translation) (Nottara 1960:11).

the influence of Nottara, and the French and Italian actors, and what characterises his interpretation of Ibsen's role?

Demetriade belonged to an epoch of transition, and his acting accounts for a combination of techniques drawn from three different genres: Romanticism, naturalism and Expressionism. The timespan of his Ibsen performances proves that he witnessed many changes in the Romanian practice of acting of the time, ranging from Romanticism to *verismo*, realism, naturalism and Expressionism.

Demetriade is considered one of the last romantic actors in the Romanian theatre history and the influence of Nottara lies precisely in the romantic interpretation:

Demetriade încheie [...] ciclul actorilor de tragedie din școala nouă. Contemporanii îi apreciau prestața, distincția de efigie, ținuta fizică, lirismul straniu, suavitatea și languoarea; erau impresionați de muzicalitatea versului, de naturalețea declamării, de căldura comunicativă, de jocul poetic și de nostalgică participare în interpretarea eroilor din dramele romantice în versuri. (Demetriade is situated at the end [...] of a generation of tragedy actors of the new school. The contemporary audience appreciated his stateliness, his distinction, his physical posture, his strange lyricism, his suavity and wistfulness; they were impressed by the musicality of his verse, by the naturalness of his declamation, by his communicative warmth, by his poetic acting and by his nostalgic enacting in the interpretation of the heroes in the romantic dramas in verse; my translation.) (Alterescu 1971: 349)

In fact, most descriptions of Demetriade highlight the musicality and warmth of his voice, his ability to speak verse, his diction, elegance, and noble posture, as well as the beauty of his slender body and harmonic gestures. The qualities of his voice are praised: musicality, warmth, harmony, combined with a Latin, specifically southern intensity, and passion. Emotion and beauty marked his renditions, and he was most admired for the interpretation of versified roles, although all these matchless traits “îi lipsea în proza teatrului modern” (seemed absent in the modern theatre's prose; my translation) (ibid: 349). Virtuosity and self-control are also characteristics of Aristide Demetriade's romantic acting. The romantic background of Aristide Demetriade also emerges in his technique for preparing roles: he used written notes to remember gestures, postures and vocal inflexions. This was a technique used by his teacher Constantin Nottara, as well as other Romanian romantic actors, such as Aristizza Romanescu and Grigore Manolescu. Another signpost of his romantic background lies in his complete identification with a role, unfiltered through psychological understanding. The threat of being dominated by the role is often mentioned by the romantic actors. However, Demetriade references the double identity of the actor, which allowed for the controlling of a stage identity. Psychological reasoning is not taken further, and the romantic characteristics remain dominant in the actor's profile. Finally, Demetriade's repertoire confirms his status as romantic actor in the Romanian theatre.⁷⁶

76 He was renowned for the interpretation of roles such as Ovidiu, Vlaicu, Răzvan, Zefir, Ruy-Blas, Hamlet, Oswald, Armand Duval, Don Quijote, Ștefăniță, Făt-Frumos, Zmeul, Tipătescu, Dante, Saul, David, Romeo (Brădățeanu 1979: 184).

On the other hand, the actor was not inclined towards the Italian *verismo* assumed by his teacher. Although intensity, explosion, and eventually truthfulness and simplicity marked Demetriade's acting, he did not assume the pathological display of human decadence of the Italian actors, but rather moved directly from Romanticism to naturalism. In this respect, the intensity of his acting reveals "o concepție italiană și totuși fără ea" (an Italian role conception that is nevertheless non-Italian; my translation) (Bumbești 1957: 99), pointing instead to a naturalist acting approach. One proof of his naturalist perspective is given in an interview connected to one of his *Ghosts* performances. Here he insists on a naturalist interpretation of the play, inspired by Antoine, and considers the *ghosts* as the ideas of the past that haunt the characters:

– Și credeți că piesa 'Strigoii' a fost înțeleasă de toți?
 – Desigur că nu, dar e suficient ca zece la sută să priceapă și fiți încredințat că a doua zi și cei nedumeriți – care se așteptau să vadă strigoii...eșind din trape – erau lămurii că strigoii de care era vorba, sunt toate credințele, prejudecățile, patimile sufletești și trupești ale părinților și strămoșilor noștri, care se redeșteaptă și trăesc în noi.

(– And do you think that the play *Ghosts* was understood by everyone?

– Of course not, but it is enough for ten per cent to understand and you can be sure that, the next day, even the puzzled ones – who expected to see the ghosts coming out from the manholes – will have understood that the ghosts at stake here were our beliefs, prejudices, as well as the spiritual and corporeal sins of our parents and ancestors, which awaken and live within us; my translation.) (R.P. 1920: 1)

The naturalist influence in his acting is attributable to his presence at the National Theatre of Bucharest during Alexandru Davila's reforms, which were inspired by Antoine. When Davila rejected the acting approach of Constantin Nottara, based on Romanticism and *verismo*, resulting in the actor's departure from the National Theatre, Demetriade remained at the institution and benefitted from Davila's support. Demetriade took over Nottara's roles and his acting was shaped according to Davila's expectations:

Anul 1907 înseamnă începutul marilor interpretări ale lui Aristide Demetriade. Seria lor fusese deschisă de Vlaicu-Vodă, care se numără printre cele mai valoroase creații ale sale. Și în acest rol Aristide Demetriade înlocuiește pe C.Nottara, care tocmai părăsise temporar Teatrul Național, în urma unui regretabil conflict cu Al.Davila. Astfel, fără să vrea, Aristide Demetriade trece în fruntea strălucitei echipe de actori ai primei noastre scene, purtând pe umerii săi răspunderea mai tuturor marilor roluri din repertoriul clasic și modern. (The year 1907 represents the beginning of Aristide Demetriade's greatest interpretations. This series had opened with *Vlaicu-Vodă*, which is among his most valuable creations. Aristide Demetriade replaced Constantin Nottara in this role too, as the latter had temporarily left the National Theatre, after a regrettable conflict with Al. Davila. Thus, although he did not desire it, Aristide Demetriade became the head of the brilliant ensemble of actors of our premier stage, and bore the responsibility of almost all the greatest roles of the classic and modern repertory; my translation.) (Bumbești 1957: 11)

We can see here Davila's clear rejection of both Romanticism's declamation and pose, and *verismo's* exaggerated pathological renditions. Although Demetriade preserved many of the romantic acting characteristics, he never switched to Italian *verismo*, but used everyday speech and a less rigid bodily posture. He followed Davila's naturalist path and changed his speech patterns, although he never reached the same subtlety in modern drama as he had in the versed plays. Yet the "natural" aspects of his declamation remain one of his most memorable characteristics. He always preserved a typically romantic focus on beauty and passion, together with a special care for the bodily expression and the musicality of the voice. Another signpost for this assumption of a naturalist inflection to his mainly romantic acting can be found in Alexandru Davila's appraisal of his performance as the protagonist in the famous historical drama *Vlaicu-Vodă*:

Al.Davila constata "o unitate armonioasă, simplă, între mișcare, expresie și starea sufletească, redată printr-o nesimțită trecere, uneori bruscă, de la o situație la alta contrară. Cât de impunător știe apoi să redea d.Demetriade stăpânirea de sine și cât de concentrat este jocul d-sale, de parcă uneori trecerea de la o ordine de gândire la alta se face printr-un fel de scoborâre progresivă a sufletului în adâncurile lui". (Al. Davila noticed the "harmonic, simple union between movement, expression and state of mind, which was rendered through a sometimes imperceptible, other times abrupt passage from one situation to its opposite. How impressive can Mr. Demetriade render self-control and how concentrated is his acting, as if the passage from one thought to another sometimes happens through a kind of progressive descent of the soul into its depths"; my translation.) (ibid: 109)

But this does not change the fact the Demetriade was mainly acknowledged as a romantic and not as a naturalist/realist actor.

Lastly, Victor Bumbești insists on the actor's interest in Alexander Moissi's acting technique of expressionist inspiration. Moissi was also a renowned interpreter of Osvald in *Ghosts*, collaborating with Max Reinhardt. Moissi became Demetriade's model towards the end of his career:

Moissi, pe care însuși Aristide Demetriade îl socotea mai aproape de adevăr, se distingea între toți înaintașii săi prin accentele de adâncă umanitate. Pe această linie a căutat să realizeze și Aristide Demetriade interpretarea sa, adăugând noi elemente sufletești, care i-au dat o valoare cu totul originală. (Moissi, whom Aristide Demetriade himself considered to be closer to the truth, was different from all his predecessors through his interpretative focus on deep humanity. Aristide Demetriade sought to develop his interpretation on this trajectory, by adding new spiritual elements, which made him totally original; my translation.) (ibid: 82)

For Demetriade, the expressionist approach worked as a bridge between the romantic and the naturalist techniques, and favoured the recycling of elements of these two genres in his interpretations. The focus on an essentialised acting technique synthesised the most ardent passions, and debates on the human being switched the performance not only from naturalism to Expressionism, but also from Romanticism to Expressionism. However, the Expressionism of Aristide Demetriade did not totally abandon Romanti-

cism. In this respect, he is similar to Mărioara Voiculescu and Agatha Bârsescu, who did not abandon the temperamental, southern or Latin framework they were renowned for:

În mișcări e impulsiv, tipul meridionalului. Cunoscătorilor marilor maeștri ai scenei germane să le servească drept punct de reper că vorba și atitudinea sunt mai asemănătoare cu acelea ale lui Moissi și Matkowski, decât cu ale interpreților autentici germani. În fiecare clipă se vede trecerea cuvântului rostit prin suflet, în toate fibrele corpului până în vârful degetelor: interpretare cu caracter specific românesc. Tot astfel preferința pentru gesturile vii și pentru atitudinile nesilite și impunătoare. [...] E o spontană revărsare a sufletului în afară. O explozie. Apoi o imediată înfrânare. (His movements reveal him as an impulsive, southern individual. His example is a reference for the experts of the German stage in the sense that his speech and attitude are more similar to those of Moissi and Matkowski than those of the authentically German interpreters. Every instant one can see how the spoken words come out right through the soul, going through the fibres of the entire body, from tip to toes: this is a specifically Romanian [Latin] interpretation. The same applies to the preference for the vivid gestures, and the unforced and impressive gestures. [...] This is a spontaneous bursting of the soul outwards. An explosion. Then immediately followed by refraining; my translation.) (ibid: 98–99)

Demetriade focused on the symbolist, expressive aspect of Expressionism, rather than on the realist, stylised one. In his case, Romanticism was his main bridge towards Expressionism.

Demetriade's interest in Osvald and his referring to Moissi as a model, made this Romanian actor take his romantic-based interpretation, infused with naturalist-realist elements, one step further to an expressionist-inspired approach in his later performances. It is probable that Demetriade also performed *Rubek* in what would be the first Romanian staging of *When We Dead Awaken* directed by Soare Z. Soare in 1924. This would further confirm the expressionist touch in the actor's profile (ibid: 158). The symbolist atmosphere of the play and the engagement of the acknowledged director Soare Z. Soare are the two clearest indicators of the expressionist approach not only in the leading masculine role, but also in the entire play.

Was Aristide Demetriade influenced by Ibsen's dramaturgy? As in the case of Dragomir, Pruteanu and Nottara, Ibsen had a special place in Demetriade's romantic repertoire. Yet, it is difficult to assess whether Ibsen influenced Demetriade's acting approach by turning it from a romantic-based acting to naturalism or to stylised realism/Expressionism. It seems that the actor was following his own trajectory between Romanticism and Expressionism, as well as favouring a naturalist touch to his acting. Performing Ibsen might have contributed to this process. The overlapping of the period when Demetriade started to perform Ibsen's *Ghosts* in 1908 with the period when Davila imposed his naturalist-realist reforms at the National Theatre in 1907 indicates that such an influence is possible, since the actor was also an open supporter of Antoine's views. Although Davila never staged Ibsen, Demetriade might have been aware of Antoine's early interest in and perspective upon *Ghosts*. Moreover, Aristide Demetriade was in charge of the National Theatre of Bucharest during the German occupation during the First World War (Massoff 1974: 134, 136, 141), when the German ensemble performed

Ibsen in Bucharest. Consequently, the ensemble's expressionist approach could also have added subtle expressionist/stylised realism nuances to his acting. Finally, echoes of Alexander Moissi's activity and his tour with *Ghosts* in 1921 might have refined his later acting of Osvald.

As far as Demetriade's Ibsen legacy is concerned, the actor's most important contribution was on stage, especially through his tours with *Ghosts* (Figure 42). The interview with the actor published in the newspaper *Rampa* indicates a positive reception to these touring performances, attended by numerous audiences. However, the actor indicates the lack of subsidy offered by the National Theatre of Bucharest for the tours. Thus, the only financial and moral support for these performances was, according to the actor, provided by the audience itself:

- Am avut subvenția publicului, care mi-a dat-o din belșug și cea mai desăvârșită mulțumire sufletească, când mi s'a cerut și am jucat, în unele orașe, de două ori cu săli archi pline pe Ibsen și mai ales "Strigoii".
- Cum? De două ori "Strigoii" într'un oraș de provincie?
- Ba la Ploești mi s'a cerut și a treia reprezentație!"
- Dar la București de ce nu ați jucat?
- Probabil că...interesul teatrului Național reclama aceasta.
(– I had the audience's full subsidy and the greatest spiritual content when, in some cities, I was asked to perform and I performed Ibsen, especially *Ghosts*, even twice, with a theatre hall full of people.
- How come? Is it possible to perform *Ghosts* twice in a provincial town?
- They even asked me for a third performance [of *Ghosts*] in Ploești.
- But why did not you perform it in Bucharest too?
- Probably because...the focus of the National Theatre is on other things; my translation.) (R.P.1920: 1)

In any case, these tours, organised at the initiative of the actor, ensured the dissemination of Ibsen and established Demetriade as a key contributor in the Romanian Ibsen production.

Finally, Aristide Demetriade did not teach at the Conservatoire, as the teacher at the time was Constantin Nottara, so his mixed approach did not reach newer generations. Yet his contribution to Ibsen's dissemination was fully acknowledged when he was nominated along with Liviu Rebreanu as the National Theatre's and implicitly Romania's delegate in Oslo on the occasion of Ibsen's centenary in 1928:⁷⁷

La începutul lunii martie 1928, Aristide Demetriade a fost însărcinat să reprezinte la Oslo, alături de Liviu Rebreanu, lumea din România la serbările centenarului nașterii lui Henrik Ibsen. Alegerea sa pentru această misiune era cu atât mai îndreptățită, cu cât el era unul din puținii noștri actori care au cinstit, iubit și au înțeles opera dramatică a genialului norvegian. (At the beginning of March 1928, Aristide Demetriade, together with Liviu Rebreanu, were delegated to represent Romania at the centennial celebration organised in Oslo on the occasion of Henrik Ibsen's birth. His

77 See Massoff (1976: 148–149); National Theatre of Bucharest Collection, Folder 33/1928.

being chosen for this mission was even more legitimate as he was one of our few actors who cherished, loved and understood the dramatic work of the Norwegian genius; my translation.) (Bumbești 1957: 161–162)

4.3.2.3 Ion Manolescu

Ion Manolescu took Aristide Demetriade's infusion of the romantic with naturalist and expressionist elements one step further. He also had a significant impact on the Romanian *Ghosts* tradition that goes as far back as the first performance starring Constantin Nottara in 1897. His performances as Oswald also highlight the role of the private theatre companies in the dissemination of Ibsen in Romania. Here, I analyse the legacy of Ion Manolescu's interpretation of Oswald as contrasted with those of Constantin Nottara and Aristide Demetriade. The Oswalds of Nottara, Demetriade and Manolescu are interconnected in a similar way their interpretations of Hamlet are (Matei-Chesnoiu 2006: 197), which indicates the gradual classicisation of Ibsen to a status similar to that of Shakespeare. These parallels point to the transformations and transitions taking place in the Romanian practice of acting until 1947.

Nottara proposed an interpretation shaped by a combination of Romanticism and *verismo*; Demetriade's interpretation revealed the connection between Romanticism and Expressionism; but which transition does Manolescu contribute to the line of Oswald interpretations? His approach was situated in-between naturalism, realism, and Expressionism, through an acting style often described as *stylised realism*, which became his trademark.

Manolescu saw a clear contrast between himself and Nottara and dismissed not only Romantic acting, but also Italian *verismo*. "Cu modestele mele resurse am rămas credincios principiilor interpretării realiste." (With my modest resources, I stayed loyal to the principles of the realist interpretation; my translation.) (Manolescu 1962: 136) Manolescu was strongly influenced by Alexandru Davila's naturalist reforms inspired by Antoine, as well as Paul Gusty's realist approach to acting and staging. His definition of truthfulness involved realism enriched by subtle expressionist stylisation, rather than the cruel and bare truth of *verismo* or naturalism:

Oswald din *Strigoii*, rol care solicita capacități specifice, creație care pune în valoare inedite posibilități actoricești, forță de concentrare și de superioară transfigurare, de distilare a energiilor spirituale dereglate ale eroului. (Oswald in *Ghosts*, a role that required specific abilities, a creation that cast light upon novel acting resources, the force of concentration and of superior transfiguration, of distillation of the hero's cranky spiritual energies.) (Brădățeanu 1982: 37)

He was renowned for his realist approach to the science of acting and for his ability to perform in modern realist dramas:

Eram încredințat că teatrul trebuie să se apropie cât mai mult de viață, oglindind-o just în aspectele ei cele mai diverse, cele mai caracteristice și înlăturând tot ce este poză, artificiu, declamație și exagerare. Această convingere a mea contraria întrucâtva punctul de vedere al maestrului Nottara. (I was convinced that the theatre must resemble life as much as possible and mirror it justly in its most diverse,

characteristics aspects, removing everything that is pose, artifice, declamation and exaggeration. This conviction of mine was somehow contrary to the viewpoint of the master Nottara; my translation.) (Manolescu 1962: 240)

He reproduced everyday speech according to realist aesthetics and rejected the naturalists' view that the spectator should witness on stage the same speech as in everyday life:

Teatrul realist cere, dimpotrivă, mai înainte de orice, veridicitate. [...] Aici intervine deosebirea dintre realism și naturalism. Nu tot ceea ce se petrece în viață poate deveni material de literatură, după cum nu tot ce se vorbește în fiecare zi poate deveni dialog teatral. [...] Dialog firesc nu înseamnă totuși acea vorbire plată, pe care o auzim adeseori la cafea (...). Nu înseamnă nici vorbire căutată, cu vădit iz literar [...] cum nu se aude niciodată în viața de toate zilele [...]. În mod firesc deci, în literatură și în teatru dialogul este rezumat, condensat. [...] Se impune, deci, o concentrare a dialogului. Dar, astfel concentrat, el trebuie să pară totuși firesc. (Beyond anything, realist theatre requires truthfulness. [...] Here is where the distinction between realism and naturalism emerges. Not everything that happened in real life can become literature, and not everything we talk about in everyday life can become theatrical dialogue. [...] A natural dialogue is not, though, that flat speech that we sometimes hear at the café [...]. It is not the deliberately literarily constructed speech either [...], because we never hear it in our daily life [...]. Thus, naturally, in both literature and theatre, the dialogue is summarised, condensed. [...]. Thus, we must seek to synthesise the dialogue. But, such a synthesised dialogue must nevertheless seem natural; my translation.) (ibid: 182)

In his view, realist speech should create the illusion of daily life without falling into the trap of banality: stage speech should aim at an essentialised expression of the human being's experience. This emphasis on essentialised speech points to Manolescu's connection with Moissi. More specifically, the stylised aspects in Manolescu's acting indicate expressionist influences, but he never performed in an expressionist manner, which he also dismissed: "nu aveam să învățăm exagerările expresionismului, care ne erau cunoscute, dar inacceptabile" (we would not learn Expressionism's exaggerations, which we knew of, but were unacceptable to us; my translation.) (ibid: 203) Instead, he incorporated expressionist influences within his acting style to create his stylised realism. Unlike Demetriade, who applied Expressionism to his romantic acting, Manolescu's Expressionism was rooted in the actor's realist background. For this reason, his stylised realism in *Ghosts* did not revolve around temperamental, essentialised renditions of strong passions. Manolescu's realist interpretation was introverted and sober rather than expansive, with the addition of symbolic, stylised nuances. The result was a synthetic interpretation, situated in-between realism and Expressionism.

Manolescu brought "pe scena Teatrului Național, întruchipând-o în eroii tragici din dramale lui Ibsen [...], arta stilizării" (the art of stylisation onto the stage of the National Theatre, embodied in the tragic characters from Ibsen's drama; my translation) (Alterescu 1973: 365). The keywords for his acting include stylisation, synthesis, essences, emotion, subtlety, introspection, lyricism and intellectualism. No doubt he was influenced by Alexander Moissi's tour in 1921, the expressionist acting assumed by Mărioara

Voiculescu, the expressionist approach of the director of *Ghosts*, Soare Z. Soare, and, finally, the expressionist plays in the repertory of the Bulandra Company. All these events affected both the state and private theatre environments. In addition, Manolescu was as influenced by Davila as Mărioara Voiculescu, but he did not share her enthusiasm for the expressionist stagings and was not a supporter of purely expressionist experiments. He considered the expressionist approach too artificial and his opinions about Karl Heinz Martin, who staged three plays in an expressionist manner at the Bulandra Company,⁷⁸ clearly indicate his disapproval. Instead, he supported Reinhardt's perspective, which involved a more balanced mix of realism and Expressionism. His performance as Oswald combined aspects of Antoine, Moissi and Reinhardt; the French and the German models were important to him, but realism was his dominant note.

The reception to Manolescu's Oswald points to his stylised realist acting. From this perspective, the keyword "symbol" best describes his Oswald performances:

D-nu Ion Manolescu, care încă dinainte de războiu atacase rolul fiului ruinat fiziceşte din drama lui Ibsen, revine acum cu el, aprofundat ca gradaţiune în progresul ruinei fizice, lărgit ca simbol a tot ce nu poate trăi pe imoralitate, minciună şi făţărnicie. Căci "drama de familie" a lui Ibsen, cu tot realismul ei în ce priveşte ereditatea patologică, îşi păstrează valoarea cu mult mai mult ca simbol al educaţiunii morale putrede a societăţii moderne decât ca "drama de familie" a unui fiu bolnav de pe urma depravării părintelui său. (Mr. Ion Manolescu, who already before the war had 'attacked' the role of the physically ruined son in Ibsen's drama, returns to it now. He deepened his interpretation of the gradual process of physical destruction, which is approached as a symbol of everything that cannot survive if it is based on immorality, lies and hypocrisy. The realism concerning the pathological heredity in Ibsen's "family drama" stays valid even more as a symbol of the putrid moral education of the modern society than as the "family drama" of a son who is sick because of his parent's debauchery; my translation.) (Fagure 1920: 3)

Emil D. Fagure describes the evolution of Ion Manolescu as Oswald as a transition from a simple naturalist-realist rendition focused on heredity to a rendition that nuanced the previous reading of the play in order to reach a more synthetic, essentialised interpretation. The critics agreed upon his rendition as totally realist: "O creaţie puternic impresionantă de un realism sguduitor, adânc cugetată, o adevărată capo d'operă de psihologie." (A strongly impressive creation, deeply analysed, a true psychological masterpiece; my translation.) (G.Hr 1916: 2) The synthetic aspect of Manolescu's approach is also detected by the critics: "Artistul care trăeşte în Ibsen nu vede numai un aspect tragic ci şi pe mai toate celelalte." (The artist who lives [the roles of] Ibsen does not only see the tragic aspect, but most of the other aspects too; my translation.) (Fagure 1920: 3) Thus, the critics indicate that Manolescu surpassed both the romantic and the Italian *verismo* approaches of Oswald, which highlighted either the tragedy of the leading male character, or the heredity issue in *Ghosts*. He took Nottara and Demetriade's interpretations of Oswald further

78 Karl Heinz Martin staged two plays by August Strindberg and one play by Osip Dimov. See Manolescu (1962: 198–203); Massoff (1974: 306–315); Cazaban (2012: 18–22).

by applying the filter of stylised realism inspired by the nuanced Expressionism visible in Moissi and Reinhardt's synthetic perspectives.

Finally, the teaching career of Manolescu at the Conservatoire in Bucharest also marked a moment of change from Romanticism/*verismo* to realism in the Romanian acting training. In fact, for a period of 20 years (1927–1947) Manolescu was the next teacher at the Conservatoire in Bucharest after Nottara. The actor himself explains the difference between them:

Conservatorul rămăsese întrucâtva în urma teatrului. În general, teatrul era dominat de curentul [...] realismului. La Conservator, pe ici pe colo, mai stăruiau reminiscențe ale școlii romantice, și, mai ales, un formalism [...]. Era firesc deci să năzuiesc a îndruma noile generații de actori pe calea realismului [...]. Programul de învățământ și metodele de lucru trebuiau să fie deci cu totul altele decât acelea ce se practicaseră multă vreme la Conservator și care se rezumau la: "zi ca mine" sau "fă cum fac eu", ceea ce ucide inițial și definitiv personalitatea studentului. (The Conservatoire had somehow remained behind the [evolution of] theatre [life]. Generally, the theatre was dominated by realism. At the Conservatoire, one could notice here and there the reminiscences of the romantic school and formalism [...]. Thus, it was natural that I dreamed of steering the new generations in the direction of realism [...]. Thus, the teaching syllabus and the methods had to be completely different from those that had been practised for so long at the Conservatoire. [Those methods] could be summarised like this: 'say it like me' or 'do it like I do it', which definitively kills the student's personality from the very beginning; my translation.) (Manolescu 1962: 234)

On the one hand, Nottara focused on romantic declamation and showed the students how a role should be performed. On the other, Manolescu rejected declamation and focused on practising the refinement of everyday speech. He also encouraged students to develop their own perspective of a role and work on its conceptualisation. This reminds us of Mihail Galino, Aglae Pruteanu's teacher, who did not interfere in the actress's training by *showing* her how to interpret the role. Yet we cannot clearly assess the importance of Ibsen in this context, because Manolescu does not mention playwrights when describing his teaching perspective. Despite this lack of information, the importance of Ibsen in Manolescu's career makes it highly likely that he included Ibsen in his teaching curriculum. In fact, the repertoire of Manolescu both at the National Theatre of Bucharest and at the Bulandra Company favoured a mixed realist-expressionist acting style starting with Bjørnson, Ibsen and the Italian *verismo* playwrights, and reaching the expressionist plays of Strindberg.

To conclude, Manolescu's Oswald was contextualised by Ibsen's gradual classicisation in the repertoire of the Romanian actors. This classicisation makes his contribution different from that of previous actors, for whom Ibsen was a unique, innovative presence in the repertory. In Manolescu we see reflected the activities of Aglae Pruteanu, State Dragomir, Aristide Demetriade and Petre Sturdza, who ensured Ibsen's breakthrough both at the state and private Romanian theatre institutions, but with regard to his performances Ibsen had already become a modern classic.

4.3.3 The Mrs Alvings of the Romanian stage

The Romanian *Ghosts* tradition until 1947 was not confined to the hub generated by the actors who interpreted Oswald. Towards the end of the 1920s, when the interpretative thread of Oswald reached its peak, another emerged, placing Mrs Alving at the core of the Romanian *Ghosts* performances. Although the Mrs Alvings of the Romanian stage were generally overshadowed by the star actors interpreting Oswald, there were two actresses that counterbalanced the contribution of their male colleagues: Agatha Bârsescu and Mărioara Voiculescu. Whereas Nottara, Demetriade and Manolescu were connected by a generational thread cemented by their common actor training, the two actresses were connected by prestige rather than a common institution or training regime.⁷⁹ They shared a less visible network, tied to the German expressionist theatre environment through the directors Soare Z. Soare and Max Reinhardt. However, the influence of these directors does not emerge in the statistics; rather it operated at a subsidiary level in terms of acting and staging. In other words, Soare's and Reinhardt's expressionist-inspired approaches to *Ghosts* was disseminated by these two actresses. Consequently, instead of witnessing experimental, avant-gardist *Ghosts* productions, their productions signified a strong revival of the star actress model. They were recycling a romantic genre filtered through realist norms or through a re-configuration according to expressionist norms. How did this influence the Romanian Ibsen production and what does it say about the playwright's impact in the latter part of the interwar period?

4.3.3.1 Agatha Bârsescu: A polyglot Mrs Alving

Following the Mrs Alving thread chronologically, the first actress I will focus on is Agatha Bârsescu. A brief look at IbsenStage shows her standing out among all the other Romanian Ibsen contributors as an international star actress whose career and contribution to Ibsen extended over the European borders (Figure 43). There are 11 event records for her playing Ibsen between 1898 and 1928, with the majority of eight events taking place in Romania in 1900 and between 1925 and 1928. She performed mostly in the pre-war period, only continuing her activity to a minor degree in the interwar period. The events of 1900 were part of Agatha Bârsescu's tours in Germany and across Europe, which included not only Romanian cities, but also those in Italy, Hungary and the Ukraine. More specifically, the actress was most often linked institutionally with the German stage: She was a successful actress not only at Burgtheater of Vienna (1883–1890),⁸⁰ but also at Berlin Deutsches Theater, Hamburg Theater, Kaiserjubiläum Theater, and Raimund-Theater.

79 Their employment at the National Theatre of Bucharest took place in different periods and, furthermore, the actresses belong to different generations.

80 Agatha Bârsescu also represents one link with the Burgtheater to Ibsen productions on the Romanian stage. She was not only a Romanian actress renowned for her roles in tragedies, but also a treasured employee of the Burgtheater (Bârsescu 1934: 55–119). The Ibsen productions in German on the Romanian territory recall her presence in Botoșani, in two plays – *Hedda Gabler* and *Ghosts*, during a tour organised by Burgtheater in 1900. By that time, the city of Botoșani could not provide a proper theatre building and therefore the performances with Agatha Bârsescu were held in the Workers' Hall (Sala meseriașilor) (Teatrul Mihai Eminescu Botoșani, n.d.).

She was known for her successful career at Burgtheater, in addition to her guest performances as an independent actress at German- and English-speaking theatres in Europe and North America.^{81, 82} She is the only Romanian contributor who performed Ibsen in three languages: German, English and Romanian. She also performed in French and Italian, which ensured her access to major European theatre cultures.

In Romania, Agatha Bârsescu participated in productions of both the National Theatres of Bucharest and of Iași (Bârsescu 207–219). The six events between 1925 and 1928 were part of Agatha Bârsescu's later career, when she started to perform regularly in Romanian after the return from her second stay in the United States between 1914 and 1923. Since 1925 she was employed as actress at the National Theatre of Iași, and as teacher at the Dramatic Art Conservatory and her Romanian Ibsen contribution is connected to these institutions (ibid: 228–244). By contrast, in the *Ghosts* production of 1925, she was a guest actress at the National Theatre of Bucharest.

Her presence in Iași revived Ibsen on the local stage, since Aglae Pruteanu and State Dragomir were no longer performing or teaching his plays.⁸³ Agatha Bârsescu filled the gap left by these artists in regard to Ibsen's presence on stage in Iași and at an institutional level. Following State Dragomir, she became the new teacher of declamation at the Conservatoire in Iași in 1925. As a teacher, she maintained Ibsen in the repertory of both the Conservatoire and of the National Theatre of Iași. However, she replaced most of the plays in Dragomir's syllabus in accordance with her background and acting profile, and inevitably changed the approach to acting training. To understand her Ibsen contribution on the national stage we must consider Ibsen's place in her repertoire and the specificity of her interpretation of *Ghosts*. By analysing these aspects, we can assess Agatha Bârsescu's legacy, her influence upon the permanency of Ibsen in the Romanian repertory and upon the actors in Iași, and the influence of Ibsen's dramaturgy on her acting.

81 According to her memoirs, Agatha Bârsescu spend her youth in Vienna, studying and collaborating with Joseph Altmann, Joseph Hellmersberger, Joseph von Weiler, Bernhard Baumeister, Fritz Krastel, Adolf von Willbrand, Adolf von Sonnenthal, and August Förster. She was actress of Deutsches Theater of Berlin, Burgtheater of Vienna, Stadtstheater of Hamburg, Raimund-Theater of Vienna, Berliner Theater, the German Theatre of New York, the National Theatre of Bucharest and the National Theatre of Iași. At the same time, she participated either with her own ensemble or with local ensembles in performances organised in other cities such as Botoșani, Brașov, Bucharest, Cernăuți, Chișinău, Cluj, Craiova, Constanța, Iași (Romania), Odesa (Ukraine), Budapesta (Hungary), Graz, Brun, Innsbruck, Salzburg (Germany), Meran, Triest, Lipsca (Italy), Chicago, Cleveland, Detroit, New York, Ohio, Philadelphia, Saint-Louis, Washington (USA), London (Great Britain). As far as her American tour is concerned, the actress also mentions her occasional collaboration with Theatre Grand Street (New York) and Metropolitan Opera-House (Bârsescu 1934).

82 Agatha Bârsescu performed in America twice, first in 1906 and then between 1914 and 1923 (Bârsescu 1934: 161–165, 175–201).

83 Although Aglae Pruteanu continued to perform even after the end of World War One, the death of State Dragomir in 1920 affected not only their influence upon the local theatre, but also the presence of Ibsen in Iași.

Her standard repertoire⁸⁴ of great heroines in Greek and German plays attests to her romantic background of German inspiration. As Ibsen had become naturalised as a playwright in German, Agatha Bârsescu's performances in his plays is not remarkable. However, among the romantic plays in her repertoire, Ibsen's *Ghosts* and *Hedda Gabler* constituted a unique presence; in contrast, *The Vikings at Helgeland* fitted within the actress's typical repertoire. However, the most performed play in her repertoire was *Ghosts*: she performed Mrs Alving in Romanian, German and English in Romania, Europe and in North America, and she planned a performance in French: "Intenționez să mai fac un turneu la Paris pentru a juca în limba franceză rolul "Doamnei Alving" din *Strigoii* lui Ibsen." (I intend to organise one more tour to Paris in order to play the role of Mrs Alving from Ibsen's *Ghosts* in French; my translation.) (Bârsescu 1934: 259) Mrs Alving was the only Ibsen role she performed in Romanian.

What justified the actress's lasting interest in this role? Beside the fact that Mrs Alving was an appropriated role for older star actresses, I argue that her special interest in the play lies in her attempt to reconcile her romantic background with the exigencies of new approaches to the practice of acting.

Her first strategy was to approach *Ghosts* by taking her audience on "culmile celei mai pure tragedii" (the heights of the purest tragedy; my translation) (Froda 1925: 4), which provided auspicious grounds for the actress to employ her romantic acting skills. Her specialisation in interpreting tragic roles made it easy to perform not only Mrs Alving, but also Hedda Gabler and Hjørdis.

Agatha Bârsescu was responsible for the emergence of a new path in the Romanian *Ghosts* tradition, focused on Mrs Alving. Scarlat Froda noticed this change in perspective:

D-na Agatha Bârsescu, a prezentat piesa sub o nouă prismă: dragostea maternă, cea mai sublimă dintre dragoste, în fața suferințelor copilului ei și imposibilitatea în care se află de a-l putea ajuta moral și fizic. (Mrs Agatha Bârsescu presented the play from a new angle: the [perspective] of the maternal love – which is the most sublime of all loves – faced with the sufferings of her child and with the impossibility of helping him morally and physically; my translation.) (Froda 1925: 4)

This interpretation emphasised the traumatic, tragic experience of Mrs Alving instead of privileging the pathological rendition of Oswald's illness, which Ion Manolescu and Aristide Demetriade had highlighted, inspired by Ermete Zacconi and Alexander Moissi:

D-na Agatha Bârsescu a covârșit ansamblul cu amplexarea suferinței sale, făcând să apară în primul plan al piesei mama îndurerată, care a dat naștere unui copil nenorocit. Răsfățând copios amănunțele, a scos în evidență tragedia ei, nu a fiului. Ne-a regalat cu aceiaș dicțiune clară, armonioasă, cu aceleași gesturi expresive. (Mrs Agatha Bârsescu overwhelmed the ensemble with the amplitude of her suffering in having given birth to an unfortunate child. She highlighted her tragedy rather than the son's by an abundant enriching of the details [of the interpretation]. She

84 Berlogea (1972: 241–248) gives a comprehensive overview of the roles interpreted by Agatha Bârsescu.

was lavish towards us with the same clear, harmonious diction and with the same expressive gestures; my translation.) (Serghie 1926: 2)

Agatha Bârsescu's focus on Mrs Alving, was also a pretext for comparison with other foreign star actresses, such as Suzanne Després.⁸⁵ In this context, the actress became a symbol of the Romanian actors' ability to contribute to the enrichment of the international Ibsen tradition. Moreover, Agatha Bârsescu is considered more original and loyal to Ibsen's play than the French actress:

N'am avut însă niciodată până azi surpriza pe care mi-a procurat-o acest spectacol unic în care rolul d-nei Alving a fost ținut de d-na Agatha Bârsescu. Cu toate că la Paris Suzanne Després interpreta acelaș personaj, felul în care tragediana noastră a jucat rolul mamei din Strigoii, a întors toată piesa, schimbându-i complet centrul de gravitate și punând în primul plan, figura femeii. Și n'a fost interpretarea d-nei Agatha Bârsescu, în dauna piesei și pentru evidențierea calităților d-sale. Dimpotrivă. A adus prin jocul d-sale un punct de vedere în interpretarea literară a operii ibseniene. (Until today we have not experienced the surprise provided by this unique performance, with Mrs Agatha Bârsescu in the role of Mrs Alving. Although Suzanne Després interpreted the same character in Paris, the way our tragedian acted the mother's role in *Ghosts* reversed [the meaning of] the whole play, changed its centre of gravity and put the image of the woman in the foreground. And the interpretation of Mrs Agatha Bârsescu was not to the detriment of the play or in favour of her display of qualities. On the contrary, she provided the literary interpretation of Ibsen's work with a [new] perspective; my translation.) (Froda 1925: 4)

Finally, the focus on Mrs Alving rooted in the play's reading as a tragedy and in the star-based approach remained her trademark in the Romanian Ibsen production:

Constați aici influența genului tragediei asupra interpretării. Doamna Alving nu este—așa cum ne-o prezintă Agatha Bârsescu, numai văduva lui Alving și numai mama lui Oswald. (You can ascertain the influence of the tragedy genre upon the interpretation. Mrs Alving is not—and Agatha Bârsescu is right to present her this way—only the widow of Alving and not only the mother of Oswald; my translation.) (Wratislavius 1926: 4)

Agatha Bârsescu's second strategy to assimilate the new trends in the European practice of acting was by connecting Romanticism and Expressionism in her performances. Moreover, the very interpretation of the play as a tragedy helped to connect these genres. Another question then arises: what is the actual relationship between Romanticism, *Ghosts* and stylised realism/Expressionism in her acting?

First and foremost, the fact that she was renowned as a tragedian tied her to classic and romantic, rather than modern roles:

85 Yet, according to IbsenStage, the French actress did not perform Mrs Alving's role neither in Romania nor abroad.

Cu știința de a spune versurile, cu dicțiunea sa de o puritate perfectă, devine o interpretă ideală a eroinelor din dramaturgia clasică. Vocea bine timbrată, armonia și plastică mișcărilor, trăirea intensă îi dau profilul unei actrițe cu vocație de mare tragediană. [...] Pe Agatha Bârsescu Davila o caracterizează ca pe o actriță cu un fizic impunător, cu voce puternică și caldă, cu o dicțiune minunată, cu o știință impecabilă a scenei, dar care nu se poate apropia de repertoriul modern. (The knowledge in pronouncing the lyrics, the perfectly pure diction, made her an ideal interpreter of the classic dramaturgy's heroines. The clearly defined timbre of the voice, the harmony and the plasticity of the moves, the intense feelings, defined her as an actress whose profile revealed the vocation of a great tragedian. [...] Davila describes Agatha Bârsescu as an actress who had a grandiose physical appearance, a powerful and warm voice, a wonderful diction, impeccable stage knowledge, but who could not approach the modern repertory; my translation.) (Alterescu 1971: 347)

From this perspective, her background conformed to the French *emploi* system and the actress did not break with this tradition throughout her entire career. Moreover, the display of strong passions and emotions, the beauty of bodily gestures, posture and voice were the key aspects of her characterisations, Mrs Alving included: “D-na AGATHA BÂRSESCU (Elena) cu eleganță artistică în suflet și-n mișcări.” (Mrs AGATHA BÂRSESCU (Elena), with an artistic elegance both in her soul and in her movements; my translation.) (Ponetti 1926: 166)

She openly disliked naturalism due to its aim of bringing everyday speech and movements on stage, and favoured a stylised realism/Expressionism approach because it connected with her romantic acting perspective. However, her tours as a star actress, as guest actress or as employee of the various theatres across Europe encountered less and less understanding for the Romantic approach marked by beauty and passion. As a consequence, she experienced a growing discontent with the development of the dramatic art, which sacrificed beauty for “aparența cenușie a eroinelor din dramele naturaliste” (the grey appearance of the heroines in the naturalist dramas; my translation) (Berlogea 1972: 143). While she continued to preserve the romantic passion and gestures in her acting, she abandoned declamatory speech, gradually adopting the speech of the naturalist and realist actors:

Apoi, mai este nevoie de o rostire naturală, omenească, fără tonul declamator, făcând totdeauna deosebiri în ce privește tonalitatea, puterea și coloratura [...]. Eram evident într'un fel mișcată când mă aflam într'un rol de antichitate, și altfel, într'un rol modern. Dar... natural am jucat întotdeauna! (Then, one also needs a human, natural enunciation, without any declamatory tone, always paying attention to the tonality, power and coloration. [...] Obviously, I was differently moved in an antique or modern role. But...I have always performed naturally!; my translation) (Bârsescu 1934: 239–240)

In this sense, the constant presence of Mrs Alving's role in Agatha Bârsescu's repertoire reflects her positioning on the border between two genres – the romantic genre focused on clear diction and intense feelings, and the realist approach based on everyday speech and truthfulness:

Vor rămâne neuitate intensitatea, patetismul interior, accentul veridic, zbuiciumul cu care marea tragediană a trăit sfâșierse acestui suflet. [...] Câtă elocvență în privirea rătăcitoare, câtă vibrantă umanitate în vorbă și atitudine. (The intensity, the inner pathos, the truthfulness, the anxiety of the great tragedian in the display of the tearing apart of this soul will remain unforgettable. [...] There was so much eloquence in her wandering look, so much vibrant humanity in her words and attitude; my translation.) (D. 1926: 20)

Through her collaboration with Reinhardt in 1912 she found a perspective that reconciled her romantic perspective with newer approaches. Reinhardt's concept of "festive play" which entailed a display of beauty and passion, without declamation and rigid bodily postures, as well as his perspective upon the theatre as a means to re-present the reality as a theatrical illusion, suited Agatha Bârsescu's romantic views better. As her rendition of Mrs Alving demonstrates, the essentialised archetypes and stylised passions of Expressionism were only a re-shaping of the romantic ideals and archetypes: "Ea este mult mai mult: este oare-cum quintesența suferinței omenești și a resemnării în fața unei soarte implacabile." (She is much more than that: she is somehow the quintessence of human suffering and resignation in the face of an inexorable destiny; my translation.) (Wratislavius 1926: 4) Thus, Agatha Bârsescu's long career as a romantic star actress was only possible in light of the expressionist assimilation of the code of passion and beauty that had also ruled the romantic acting. Finally, her acceptance of Expressionism is demonstrated by her admiration for Alexander Moissi, the interpreter of Oswald in Reinhardt's staging of *Ghosts* in 1906, which broke with the naturalist conventions on the German stage. This is not to say that Agatha Bârsescu was an expressionist actress. Her approach remained principally romantic, infused with realist elements, which allowed her to adapt more easily to the expressionist framework.

How did this affect Agatha Bârsescu? I suggest that her encounter with Reinhardt in 1912 and his influence upon the American theatre life, where Agatha Bârsescu belonged between 1913 and 1923, cemented the combination of romantic and realist means in her acting. In this respect, Expressionism became a re-interpretation of Romanticism in Agatha's acting. And, whereas her performances of *Ghosts* and *Hedda Gabler* in 1900 must have displayed a romantic rather than realist or expressionist acting, in her performances in *Ghosts* after 1912, the romantic and the realist tendencies appear more balanced. Since Agatha Bârsescu's Ibsen initiatives overlapped a period of transition from Romanticism to Naturalism/Realism then to Expressionism in both the American and Romanian theatre, her mixed approach appears as a consequence of this dynamic landscape. Her 1917 performance of *Ghosts* with Thomas Mitchell is a clear example of the transition from romantic to realist acting in the actor's career. In her interview with the critic Stix, Agatha Bârsescu confirmed her interest in the role of Mrs Alving in light of her American experience, given that she had already performed it in German and English before performing it in Romanian:

D-sa va juca pentru prima oară în românește rolul d-nei Alwing, rol pe care l'a jucat în Statele Unite ale Americii în limba germană și engleză. (She will perform the

role of Mrs Alving for the first time in Romanian, a role she played in the United States of America both in German and English; my translation.) (Rep. 1925: 4);

În românește pentru prima oară. L'am mai jucat la New York, și cu ansambluri germane, și în englezește cu artistul Mitchell, în rolul Oswald. (I performed it in New York previously, both with German ensembles and with the artist Mitchell as Oswald; my translation.) (Stix 1925: 8)

Her invitation to perform in *Ghosts* with Moissi is even stronger proof of the bridge she created between Expressionism and Romanticism in her acting:

Se știe că d-na Bârsescu urma să joace acest rol anul trecut la Viena cu Alexandru Moissi în rolul lui Oswald, dar a fost împiedicată de un accident. (One knows that Mrs Bârsescu was supposed to perform this role with Alexandru Moissi as Oswald in Vienna last year, but she was hindered by an accident; my translation) (Rep. 1925: 4)

De altfel, numai accidentul de acum câteva luni m'a împiedicat să reiau rolul la Viena cu Moissi. (Otherwise, it is only the accident of a few months ago that stopped me from performing the role again with Moissi in Vienna; my translation.) (Stix 1925: 8)

One of the critics even imagined a fictional *Ghosts* performance by joining her Mrs Alving to Alexander Moissi's Oswald. Moissi's interpretation of *Ghosts* was renowned among Romanian spectators due to the actor's tour of 1921. The result was an idealised staging, highlighting Agatha Bârsescu's ties to the German expressionists:

Iar dacă spectatorul are darul de a putea sintetiza – pe lângă o asemenea doamnă Alving și pe Oswald al lui Moissi, el atunci își însușește unul din tablourile cele mai mărețe pe care e capabil să'l evoace opera lui Ibsen. O mai perfectă armonie nu ne puteau imagina. De o parte nucleul mare – profund tragic și pe de alta, sau mai bine zis alătura, al doilea nucleu – mai mic e drept, nucleul lirizmului, cu care Moissi impregnează pe Oswald. Lirizmul acesta temperează tragismul Bârsescăi. Și rezultă atunci – cum am spus mai sus, o armonizare ideală, o simfonie a durerii omenești. (And if the spectator has this power to synthesise [the image of] Moissi's Oswald beside the image of Mrs Alving, then he acquires one of the most splendid picture evoking Ibsen's work. We cannot imagine a more perfect harmony. On the one hand, there is the great core which is profoundly tragic, and on the other hand, or, better said, alongside this core there is a second core – smaller, indeed, which is the core of lyricism infused by Moissi in [the interpretation of] Oswald. This lyricism tempers Bârsescu's tragism. The result – as I have mentioned above – is an ideal harmonisation, a symphony of human pain; my translation.) (Wratislavius 1926: 4)

On the Romanian stage, her contribution marked the expressionist assimilation of Ibsen rooted in the "re-theatricalisation"⁸⁶ of the National Theatre in the interwar period. Here,

86 The Romanian historians use the "re-theatricalisation" concept in three different contexts. The first one concerned the naturalist-realist reforms of Alexandru Davila, and took the shape of

Reinhardt's model is assumed both by the actress and by Soare Z. Soare,⁸⁷ the director of the 1925 production of *Ghosts*, who invited the actress to perform the role of Mrs Alving in a guest performance:

Sunt încântată să joc din nou [...]. Și aceasta grație talentatului regisor Soare Z. Soare, care mi-a făcut plăcuta surpriză de a mă invita să joc rolul d-nei Alwing din *Strigoii*. (I am delighted to perform again. [...] And this is thanks to the talented director Soare Z. Soare, who surprised me deeply by inviting me to perform the part of Mrs Alwing in *Ghosts*; my translation.) (Stix 1925: 8)

Her Ibsen contribution between 1925 and 1928 was relevant not only in terms of acting, but also from the perspective of her teaching at the Conservatoire of Dramatic Art of Iași. Agatha Bârsescu employed a mainly romantic acting technique, in contrast to Dragomir and Pruteanu, who had marked the transition towards realism. Her position as a teacher reinforced her status as star actress with her romantic acting background infused with realist and expressionist elements. It also preserved Ibsen as a unique presence in the repertoire of the students. This indicates once again the influence of the playwright upon the actress, whose play must have influenced her turn from declamation to everyday speech.

Bârsescu's most significant contribution was tied to her acting on stage with her students at the National Theatre in Iași. Her broad theatrical experience made her a mentor in the rehearsal room and she constantly promoted her students on the stage. Her pedagogical influence is most relevant in relationship to actors interpreting Oswald. She performed with a number of Oswalds: George Vraca, Bruno Braeschi,⁸⁸ Carol Kron and

a reaction to Romantic acting and staging principles. The most evident elements associated with Davila's "re-theatricalisation" entailed the use of everyday speech and the focus on the ensemble. The second "re-theatricalisation" in the Romanian theatre emerged as a reaction to the conservatism of naturalist and realist norms employed on stage. Expressionism was one tendency in art that affected the actors, the directors and the stage designers' approach, and led to their seeking to highlight theatrical conventions in the minds of their audiences and encouraging them to see theatre as an artificial spectacle instead of a reflection of real life. This second "re-theatricalisation" moment is addressed here. The third "re-theatricalisation" is tied to the development of Romanian theatre life in the communist era and emerges as a reaction to the proletkult culture that had invaded the national stage between 1947 and 1956. See Alterescu (1971: 387–393); Alterescu (1973: 244–249); Runcan (2003: 306–31); Gheorghe (2009: 6–7).

87 Soare Z. Soare was a Romanian director renowned for the introduction in the national theatre of the expressionist directing approach focused on the stylisation of the stage design and on lighting effect. He travelled to Berlin and as Max Reinhardt and Karl Heinz Martin's disciple was influenced by these two German directors' approach. Soare was often criticised and even mocked at the beginning of his career because he neglected the actors' contribution and the content of the texts, while he privileged the formal aspects of the productions. Later on, he revised his perspective, acknowledging the still important position of the actor within the theatre production, without abandoning other expressionist elements. See Alterescu (1973: 261–262); Brădățeanu (1982: 67–72); Bumbăști (1964: 144); Cazaban (2012: 26–27).

88 For instance, Bruno Braeschi was one of State Dragomir's students and had studied precisely the role of Oswald with his teacher, according to the exam sheet. In this respect, the realist influence of

Petre Cotescu, two of whom were her students.⁸⁹ None of these actors played another Ibsen character, and they are not statistically significant as Oswald. Although the critics did not attend rehearsals, they did notice her influence upon the acting of her partners. Em. Serghie focused on her pedagogical role in the 1926 and 1928 productions, especially regarding the performance of Oswald: “Am avut impresia că anumite indicații ale d-nei Bârsescu au reușit să-i fie de folos [d-lui Braeski].” (I had the impression that certain suggestions of Mrs Bârsescu were useful to him [Mr. Braeski⁹⁰]; my translation.) (1926 : 2) Const. Cerbu reinforces Em. Serghie’s opinions : “rolurile celelalte au fost jucate de elevi ai Conservatorului, din clasa d-nei Agatha Bârsescu.” ([T]he other roles were interpreted by Conservatoire students, from the class of Mrs Agatha Bârsescu; my translation.) (Cerbu 1928: 5) Finally, the critic also indicated her positive response to a student’s initiative to stage *Ghosts*: “Inițiativa [...] a avut-o un tânăr și talentat absolvent al Conservatorului, avocatul Karol Cron.” (The initiative [...] belonged to a young and talented graduate student of the Conservatoire, namely the lawyer Karol Cron; my translation.) (ibid: 1928: 5) These remarks summarise her pedagogical contribution to strengthening the theatre life of Iași.

Yet, regardless of the changes in her acting, she remained a star actress her entire career – even when she attempted to shape homogeneous ensembles, she still focused on the ways in which the ensemble could enhance the star’s performance, rather than on the equal interaction between all actors. The pedagogical portrait of Agatha Bârsescu also reinforces her presence as star actress, either as a stage partner for older actors, or as a teacher performing with students. Wratislavius represents her as “umbra mare a glorioasei lor partenere” (the great shadow of [a] glorious partner; my translation) (Wratislavius 1926: 4) or as “umbra mare, care nu se putea evita, necum înlătura” (the great shadow which is neither avoidable nor escapable; my translation) (ibid: 4). Scarlat Froda does not dismiss the contribution of the other actors, although he considered the ensemble was not at the same level as the actress:

Și nici nu se poate spune că axa piesei putea fi schimbată fiindcă ceilalți parteneri ar fi fost slabi. Nu. D-sa l-a jucat astfel fiindcă așa l-a simțit și convenea mai bine

Dragomir was probably stronger than Agatha Bârsescu’s romantic influence (Collection Academia de Muzică și Artă Dramatică “George Enescu”, Folder 5/1914: 128).

89 In her memoirs, the actress quotes some excerpts of theatre reviews and articles. One them, published in the *Opinia* newspaper praises her activity as a teacher and mentions the interpretation of her student Petre Cotescu in the role of Oswald: “Cu privire la profesoratul meu, ziarul *Opinia* din Iași face următoarea mențiune: ‘La Conservatorul din Iași nu este o sinecură. Marea tragediană își exercită misiunea cu aceeași tragere de inimă și cu același entuziasm cu care a privit întotdeauna arta sa, singura ei preocupare în viață. După un singur an de profesorat, roadele catedrei încredințate Agatheii Bârsescu se și văd: două din elevele ei au fost angajate la Teatrul Național din Cernăuți. Un elev Petre Cotescu a jucat pe „Osvold” din „Strigoii” alături de marea sa profesoară.’” (Bârsescu 1934: 254). Yet the actress does not mention any detail concerning the date and the author of this piece of text. The review specifies that it was only a year since the actress had started teaching in Iași. As Agatha Bârsescu started teaching in Iași on January 1, 1925, the staging of *Ghosts* with Petre Cotescu as Oswald must have taken place either at the end of 1925 or (more likely) in 1926, but no later.

90 Bruno Braeschi/Braeski was the interpreter of Oswald in this production.

temperamentului d-sale. Dealtfel întregul ansamblu a fost bun și pe alocuri chiar strălucitor. (And one cannot even say that the play's axis could have been changed because the other [acting] partners acted poorly. No. She performed it [the role] like this because she felt it this way and because this was the most convenient manner in accordance with her temperament; my translation.) (Froda 1925: 4)

Froda insists on the balanced evolution of the whole ensemble, but also points to the actress's generosity in her collaboration with the actors. His remark is suggestive, as most renowned guest-artists were known for their tendency to monopolise performances and minimise the efforts of the rest of the ensemble in order to display their talent.

To conclude, Agatha Bârsescu's Ibsen interpretations have a strong German influence, originating in German Romantic and expressionist acting. Ibsen's *Ghosts* had an important role in cementing the actress's mix of romantic and realist acting via Reinhardt's expressionist approach to the production of the play. By focusing on Mrs Alving, she preserved the privileged status of the star actress, and the interpretation of the play as a tragedy contributed to this by putting the actress's skills on display. In Bucharest, her performance in *Ghosts* revealed her use of the expressionist mode as a way of preserving the passion and the beauty of romantic acting within a modern setting, while in Iași her *Ghosts* performances were part of her pedagogical training programme. Here Ibsen remained a modern presence among the romantic repertory, but in contrast to State Dragomir and Aglae Pruteanu, her focus was on romantic-expressionist rather than realist elements: the beauty, the passion, the archetype, and so on. Her performances ensured the vivid presence of Ibsen on stage in Iași and continued the initiatives of Dragomir and Pruteanu in the local dissemination of his plays.

4.3.3.2 Mărioara Voiculescu in *Ghosts*

The interpretation of Mrs Alving initiated by Agatha Bârsescu was developed further by Mărioara Voiculescu during the later stages of her career, when she performed Ibsen in the state theatre environment at the Studio of the National Theatre of Bucharest. She consolidated Ibsen's position in this repertory during the interwar period. The *Peer Gynt* experiment of 1924 remained an isolated event, but the three *Ghosts* stagings of 1943, 1944 and 1946⁹¹ starring Mărioara Voiculescu as Mrs Alving were different. The performances between September 1943 and September 1944 were extremely successful, reaching an incredible number of 83 performances. This transformed *Ghosts* into a box-office success, which supports Mărioara Voiculescu's observation that although The Studio was intended for experimental stagings, these performances were a strong source of additional revenue.

The accounts confirm the frequency of the performances and the financial success of the production in both the 1943–1944 and 1944–1945 seasons (National Theatre of Bucharest Collection, Folder 27/1944: 105, 106, 108, 109, 198, 202) (Table 4) as the box office

91 The performances took place at the Studio Hall in 1943–1944 and at the Theatre Comoedia in 1946, two secondary buildings used by the National Theatre of Bucharest both during World War Two and afterwards.

returns did not drop under 10,000 lei. The most successful performances generated at least 50,000 lei per evening.

Table 4: Revenues for production of *Ghosts* at the National Theatre of Bucharest in 1944

Date	Amount
April 2, 1944	65,559 lei ⁹²
April 4, 1944	12,450 (10,167 lei net amount, only for ticket sales)
April 6, 1944	14,010 (11,175 lei net amount, only for ticket sales)
April 25, 1944	50,210 lei
October 1, 1944	69,186 (55,034 lei net amount, only for ticket sales)

Mărioara Voiculescu also commented on the number of performances:

Suntem la al 40-lea spectacol cu casa închisă (We are at the 40th sold-out performance; my translation) (Voiculescu 2003: 118);

Diseară joc Strigoii pentru a 40-a oară cu casa închisă (I will perform in *Ghosts* for the 40th time tonight with tickets sold out; my translation) (ibid: 120);

Sunt la al 75-lea spectacol cu Strigoii (This is the 75th performance of *Ghosts* I am in; my translation) (ibid: 120);

Am jucat Strigoii pentru a 83-a oară (I performed in *Ghosts* for the 83rd time; my translation.) (ibid: 127)

Yet the success of *Ghosts* was accompanied by the criticism of the National Theatre of Bucharest's management. Despite the play's undeniable success, initial expectations were low:

Succes mare la care nu mă așteptam [...], dar asta nu ar însemna nimic dacă piesa ar fi fost o piesă modernă (It was a great, unexpected success [...], but this would not have meant anything had the play been a modern one; my translation) (ibid: 118)

Am fost aruncată la Studio anul acesta, cu piesa Strigoii, în credința fermă că piesa nu va avea succes—și uimirea lor, și dezolarea lor, e că piesa e un mare succes. (I was cast out to the Studio Hall this year, with the performance of *Ghosts*, in the strong belief that the play would be a failure. To their surprise and dismay, the play is a great success; my translation.) (ibid: 128)

Strigoii care au adus milioane și cinste teatrului. (*Ghosts*, which brought millions and honour to the theatre; my translation.) (ibid: 120)

92 Leu (pl. lei) is the Romanian currency.

The management's attitude to *Ghosts* suggests a mistrust of Ibsen as a commercial playwright and paradoxically suggests an almost deliberate insistence on the production's failure. Voiculescu is dismissive of a theatre of mere entertainment and considered that theatre institutions should assume responsibility for moulding their audience's tastes.

Ce este foarte important, e faptul că e o piesă de Ibsen, și încă o piesă așa de sumbră, a putut să aibă un success atât de mare, când azi lumea merge numai la piese unde intelectul nu are de rezolvat nici o problemă. Aceste spectacole răstoarnă deci părerea unor diriguitori de teatru care pretind că nu avem deloc public pentru spectacolele de înaltă ținută literară. Dă publicului teatru bun și jucat bine, și vinzi săli cu șapte-opt spectacole înainte. (It is very important that such a sombre Ibsen play could attain such a great success in these days when people only attend plays that do not ask the intellect to solve any problem. Performances [such as *Ghosts*] overturn the opinion of those theatre directors who pretend that we do not have an audience for serious, literary elitist performances at all. If you provide the audience with well executed theatre, then you will also sell out tickets even seven or eight performances in advance; my translation.) (ibid: 120)

Her opinions faithfully reflected not only the contemporary Romanian theatre environment, but also Ibsen's reception. Although his plays were not new to Romanian audiences in 1943, managers still perceived them as too intellectually demanding. In this context, the 83 *Ghosts* performances contradicted this prejudice and are a demonstration of the outstanding impact of Mărioara Voiculescu's contribution to the Romanian Ibsen production.

As Mrs Alving, Mărioara Voiculescu became Agatha Bârsescu's heir. Tudor Șoimaru acknowledges the connection between them:

De aceea, apariția d-nei Mărioara Voiculescu în rolul Elenei Alving era așteptată cu legitimă curiozitate, mai ales după ce strălucita Agatha Bârsescu ne dăduse acum câțiva ani o lecție de adevărată interpretare. (This is why the performance of Mrs Mărioara Voiculescu as Helene Alving was expected with a legitimate curiosity, especially after the real lesson in interpretation that the brilliant Agatha Bârsescu gave us some years ago; my translation.) (Șoimaru 1943: 11).

In this sense, Valeriu Mardare also approved of Mărioara Voiculescu's interpretation:

În "Strigoii", deși personajul central este Osvold-fiul, d-na Mărioara Voiculescu a isbutit, prin jocul său, să capteze atenția asupra nefericitei mame, care suferă pentru copii, se sbate, se frământă, îi trăește toata gama nenorocirii! Ce limpede despică d-sa intenția, nuanța, spiritul unei replici! Parcă ar bate cue în sufletul spectatorului! Nu poți să-i scapi... (Although Osvold the son is the protagonist in *Ghosts*, Mrs Mărioara Voiculescu managed through her play to focus our attention on the unfortunate mother who suffers and fights for her children, who experiences all the torment and misery! She analyses so clearly and detailed every intention, nuance and the spirit of her lines! It is as if she was hammering up the spectator's soul! You cannot escape her...; my translation.) (Mardare 1943: 6)

However, some critics still insisted on Oswald being a co-protagonist as important as Mrs Alving:

Perfecta unitate de compoziție care trebuie să existe între jocul Doamnei Alving și al lui Oswald. Ei bine, în momentele principale ale conflictelor lor [...] jocul doamnei Voiculescu formează un cuplu atât de unitar cu al d-lui Mihai Popescu, încât un joc devine complementar celui alt” (The perfect unity of composition that must exist between Mrs Alving and Oswald’s acting style. Oh well, in the main moments of their conflicts, Mrs Voiculescu’s acting creates such a unitary coupling with Mr. Mihai Popescu’s acting that they become complementary; my translation.) (Ștefănescu 1943: 2)

The critics expected the actress performing Mrs Alving to deliver a faultless interpretation to ensure the impact of the character, while Mrs Alving was seen as merely a *ghost* behind Oswald’s dominating presence.

At the acting and staging level, the aspects that characterised Mărioara Voiculescu’s *Peer Gynt* – namely her status as star actress and her acting inspired by Expressionism (Cazaban 2012: 16,17, 23, 24, 51,52) – applied equally to *Ghosts*. The production was ensemble-based, but she still dominated the production; she shared the stage with Mihai Popescu, the interpreter of Oswald, but the rest of the ensemble remained of minor importance. The expressionist influence was also evident in Popescu’s training and in the direction of Soare Z. Soare.

An analysis of Mărioara Voiculescu’s acting brings us back to a question of balance between Romanticism and Expressionism in the codification of passion and beauty that was crucial to the assessment of Agatha Bârsescu’s interpretation. Although Mărioara Voiculescu preserved and enriched this stylistic trajectory, nothing indicates a direct transmission of Mrs Alving’s interpretation through rehearsal room practice. Instead, Mărioara Voiculescu’s contact with Agatha Bârsescu can be viewed as a form of prestige transmission, as the two actresses performed together in a production organised by Alexandru Davila to launch a new generation of actors. His intention was to develop their skills by working with Bârsescu because she was such a renowned, experienced actress.

An additional thread connects the two actresses, as they both had a preference for displaying strong passions and emotions on stage that connected Romanticism and Expressionism in their acting. While Agatha Bârsescu was more tied to the romantic display of passions marked by declamation, without fully embracing expressionist acting, Mărioara Voiculescu did assume a more stylised and tempered approach. The major difference between the two actresses was the degree to which they incorporated the new influences into their acting. Whereas Agatha Bârsescu’s acting was shaped by the German romantic school and by Reinhardt’s Expressionism, Mărioara Voiculescu’s acting was influenced equally by Aristizza Romanescu’s French Romanticism, Davila’s naturalism, Paul Gusty’s German realism and Soare Z. Soare’s German Expressionism.

What did Mărioara Voiculescu’s performance in *Ghosts* look like? Both in her productions of *Peer Gynt* in 1924 and of *Ghosts* 1943/1944, her expressionist, temperamental acting, which was rooted in her romantic and realist actor training, was commented upon

by the critics. The reviews suggest that her performance in *Ghosts* marked a subtle change, characterised by the expressionist acting of the latter part of her career; the staging also probably included naturalist elements from her earlier theatrical experience with *Davila* and *Gusty*. Most of the critics praised Mărioara Voiculescu's temperamental, yet simpler approach to the role:

Doamna Alving a doamnei Voiculescu e un mare rol, jucat de o mare artistă. Și ce pildă de studiu și de analiză adâncită a personajului dă generațiilor mai tinere doamna Voiculescu, a cărei splendidă maturitate artistică știe să găsească mereu noi forme de expresie dramatică! [...] O făptură care urcă gama celei mai dureroase experiențe umane, se frământă în sine și-ți trimite până în creier și până în inimă vibrațiile cutremurului interior. Iar temperamentul neîntrecut al artistei unește toate celulele dramei cu un fior unic, întregindu-le organic într-o creație monumentală. (Mrs Voiculescu's Mrs Alving is a great role performed by a great artist. Mrs Voiculescu provides an example of deep study and analysis of the character to the younger generations. Her splendid artistic maturity manages to find new forms of dramatic expression! [...] [She is a] being who can express the most painful human experiences, she torments herself and conveys the vibrations of her inner convulsion to your mind and heart. And the artist's unsurpassable talent unites all the cells of the drama with a unique thrill, making them organically complete in a monumental creation; my translation.) (Ștefănescu 1943: 2)

Despite her lowered voice tonality and more introverted acting of realist inspiration, the actress's emotional outbursts revealed an essentially romantic-expressionist approach: "Mărioara Voiculescu, pe afix, era o garanție: – Nu se poate să n-o vedem! Plânge cu lacrimi adevărate." (Mărioara Voiculescu's name on the playbill was a guarantee: – We cannot afford not to see her! She cries with real tears!; my translation) (Mardare 1943: 6)

This same approach was also cause for some criticism as some of the critics remarked upon the inadequate impact of the performance, the abuse of passionate gestures, and a lack of control. As a correction to these flaws, some of the critics proposed a realist, more sober, simpler approach to Mrs Alving:

D-na Mărioara Voiculescu a adus rolului d-nei Alving serviciul autorității sale personale, dar nu și al celei mai bune înțelegeri. Pentru chinuita mamă a lui Oswald se cerea o interpretare de severă simplitate și de discreție a durerii. Nu au ce căuta aici nici exhibări de rampă, nici mai ales acele "bibliluri" dramatice cari fac atâta de bine unei piese de Bernstein. Și apoi, trântirea pe jos dela final este un gest cu totul potrivit și textului și intenției spirituale a piesei. D-na Alving nu cade pe covor, nu poate să cadă: ea rămâne stană de piatră, în durerea sacră a vegheii [...]. (Mrs Mărioara Voiculescu brought along her authority, yet not her best understanding in the interpretation of Mrs Alving. Oswald's tormented mother would have required a severely simple interpretation, infused with discretion in [the display] of pain. No stage exhibition, even less the dramatic "embroidery" so suitable to a Bernstein play [are fitting]. And then, the gesture of throwing herself on the ground is completely against the text and the spiritual intention of the play. Mrs Alving does not fall on the ground, she cannot fall: She stays there, like a rock, in the middle of the sacred pain of the vigil; my translation.) (Theodorescu 1943: 2)

Thus, it seems that in some eyes, her attempts resulted in acting that was either too introverted, or too temperamental:

Șoapta aleasă de d-na Voiculescu pentru replicile întregii piese are un element intențional de frână și nu a personagiului, ci a artistei, care pune o ceață voită pe frumoasele linii ale creației. Socotim că un ton obiciniuit, ca al celorlalți interpreți, domolit firește, menajând marile izbucniri finale, ar da un efect mai direct (The whisper that Mrs Voiculescu chose for the lines of the entire play are an element purposely breaking if not the artist, then surely the character. It willingly puts a mist over the beautiful line of the creation. Except for the great, final burst, we consider that a usual, still tonality, similar to that of the other actors, would create a much more direct effect; my translation.) (Sadoveanu 1943: 2)

Este păcat însă că spre sfârșitul piesii, d-na Voiculescu nu și-a mai stăpânit elanurile, revenind la ceiace făcuse pe vremuri marele său succes: o tumultuoasă izbucnire de vorbe și plânsete. (It is a pity that Mrs Voiculescu could not contain her pathos towards the end of the play, going back to what constituted her great success once: a tumultuous burst of words and cries.) (Șoimaru 1943: 11)

Mărioara Voiculescu's approach allowed for an excess of gestural, vocal and corporeal display; it was reminiscent of a romantic approach, but still attempted a tempered interpretation, inspired by realism's everyday speech inflected with an expressionist essentialism:

Jocul domniei-sale s'a simplificat din ce în ce, ajungând la redarea potențelor esențiale ale unui rol. Nimic nu mai e de prisos, ca și în piesa marelui constructor. Totul se înșiră în discreții cu rezonanțe profunde și în izbucniri cu atât mai emoționante. (Her acting grew more and more simplified so that she rendered only the essential potentialities of the role. There is nothing working as a surplus, just as in the great creator's play. Everything flows discreetly, with a profound resonance and an even more emotional burst; my translation.) (Ștefănescu 1943: 2)

This mix of romantic, naturalist and expressionist elements followed the thread initiated by Agatha Bârsescu.

To sum up, the contribution of Mărioara Voiculescu concludes the period of the star actors in the early Romanian Ibsen history prior to 1947. Her interpretation of Ibsen marked the end of the gradual evolution of Romanian acting from the romantic to the expressionist genre prior to the communist era. Finally, her Ibsen interpretations contain the same intercrossing of acting styles created by the back-and-forth movement between the different genres that were active in the Romanian theatre until 1947.

4.3.4 Petre Sturdza: The "subversive" Latin Dr. Stockmann of the Romanian stage

Petre Sturdza is by far the most influential contributor in the early Romanian Ibsen production, openly acknowledged as Romania's "actorul ibsenian prin excelență" (Ibsenite

par excellence; my translation) (Vartic 1995: 148). The lasting interest and the recognition he acquired as a promoter of Ibsen prove his most influential role in establishing and strengthening the playwright's position as a classic on the Romanian stage. IbsenStage confirms this fact through 19 events⁹³ across the country over a period of roughly 20 years (1907–1928).⁹⁴ The overview of the plays shows his preference for *An Enemy of the People*. The 13 events registering Sturdza as Dr. Stockmann indicate that he was the main contributor to this play in the overall landscape of the Romanian Ibsen production; his numerous performances in the role ensured *An Enemy of the People's* status as the third most performed play after *A Doll's House* and *Ghosts* until 1947. Sturdza also performed in four other Ibsen plays: *Pillars of Society*, *Ghosts*, *John Gabriel Borkman* and *The Lady from the Sea*.

IbsenStage also indicates that Petre Sturdza was the interpreter with the most extensive touring circuit (Figure 44), particularly with his production of *An Enemy of the People*, which he directed, translated, and promoted most often across the country. His performances as Dr. Stockmann at the National Theatre of Craiova in 1907–1908, the National Theatre of Bucharest, in guest performances at the Bulandra Company (1921) and at the National Theatres of Iași (1925, 1928), Cluj-Napoca (1927) and Cernăuți (1925), prove his dominance in this role.

The Romanian audience witnessed the first⁹⁵ performance of *An Enemy of the People* starring Petre Sturdza in the autumn of 1907, the same year his translation was published. The actor was employed at the National Theatre of Craiova and engaged its ensemble in the performance. According to him, the production was well received; it was performed on tour in Târgu-Jiu, Galați, Brăila and Bucharest from the end of 1907 to the beginning of 1908. Petre Sturdza's recognition as an Ibsen promoter started with this touring production in Craiova; it encountered enthusiasm, scepticism and rejection alike (Sturdza 1966: 228–229). Why?

93 He is registered as actor in 17 events and as translator in 3 events.

94 The event of 1956 took place after Sturdza's death, and registered him only as translator. Otherwise, his acting career as Ibsen interpreter developed between 1907 and 1928.

95 Petre Sturdza's first attempt to stage Ibsen's *An Enemy of the People* as part of his repertoire was intended for several tour performances he organised in provincial towns in 1906–1907. These stagings took place in the context of his leaving the National Theatre of Bucharest together with his wife because of Alexandru Davila's dictatorial modernisation measures. Petre Sturdza managed his own ensemble from January 1906 until the autumn of 1907, when he was employed at the National Theatre of Craiova as actor and stage director. In this period, Petre Sturdza first intended to stage *An Enemy of the People*, encouraged by Al. B. Leonescu, an impresario also known as “the Vampire”. His plans failed, yet the potential staging generated rumours among the audience of the small town of Constanța. In brief, Leonescu insisted on Petre Sturdza staging the play. The actor started to rehearse it, but stopped. However, “the Vampire” had not only announced the performance of the play in Constanța, Galați and Brăila, but also deliberately did not tell the audience that Sturdza had changed the production, generating confusion on the day of the performance. As all the tickets had been sold for the evening performance, this anecdote suggests that there was an audience for Ibsen's *An Enemy of the People*. Sturdza fulfilled multiple roles as a promoter of Ibsen and translator of a published version of the play included in the collection “Biblioteca pentru toți” (“A Library for Everyone”) (Sturdza 1966: 220–222).

Firstly, to perform Ibsen in Bucharest was to implicitly undermine the authority of the National Theatre of Bucharest. Sturdza had left the National Theatre of Bucharest and, by joining the ensemble of the National Theatre of Craiova, became part of the provincial and peripheral Romanian theatre environment. The tour he organised in 1907–1908 was Sturdza's rebel initiative to prove that the theatre ensembles in the provinces were as valuable as those of the capital city. As well as performing in Târgu-Jiu, Galați and Brăila, Sturdza proposed a tour to Bucharest, "ca o sfidare" (as a gesture of defiance; my translation) (ibid: 228). The repertory was also a challenge and the staging of Ibsen's *An Enemy of the People* was met with consternation and scepticism:

Actorii din Capitală, auzind că are să fie trupa din Craiova să joace la Bucharest și că printre alte piese anunțase și *Un dușman al poporului* de Ibsen – mi s-a spus că unii se închinau în piața teatrului zicând: – Să nu mor până nu voi vedea pe Petrarhe Sturdza cu craiovenii jucând pe Ibsen. M-au văzut și n-au mai zis nimic. Cei de bună credință n-au putut decât să aplaude. Înjghebasem o distribuție omogenă și care se nimerise și potrivită tipurilor din piesă. (I was told that the actors from the capital city were crossing themselves in the theatre's square upon hearing that the ensemble of Craiova was going to perform in Bucharest and that Ibsen's *An Enemy of the People* was among other plays they had promoted. Even more, they kept saying: 'May I not die before seeing Petrarhe Sturdza performing Ibsen with the actors from Craiova.' They saw me and made no more comments. Those of goodwill could not but applaud. I had organised a good cast, which was adapted and suited to the types [of characters] in the play; my translation.) (ibid: 229)

Although the ensemble hardly achieved any financial gain, performing a modern author such as Ibsen ensured its symbolic recognition:

Cu mare greutate reușii să înlătur teama și sfiala ce deșteptase în membrii comitetului temeritatea propunerii mele să-i hotărâsc să încerce această lovitură, care chiar dacă ar fi fost să rămâie materialmente neproductivă, eram încredințat că va ridica prestigiul artistic al vechii trupe craiovene, ștergând trista reputație la care ajunsese. (It was hard for me to dispel the fear and the shyness aroused in the members of the committee by the temerity of my proposal, and to convince them to accept this blow, which would have uplifted the prestige of the old ensemble from Craiova and wiped away its currently sad reputation, even if this attempt would lead to no material gains; my translation.) (ibid: 228)

Am încheiat seria spectacolelor de la Liric fără nicio pierdere materială, dar în schimb cu un imens câștig moral care ridică prestigiul artistic al trupei craiovene în Capitală. (I ended the series of performances at the Lyrical [Theatre] with no financial loss, but with an immense moral gain, which enhanced the artistic prestige of the ensemble from Craiova in the capital city; my translation.) (ibid: 229)

The content of the play enhanced the impact of the tour, since it was considered inappropriate by some of the audiences. The principal of the High School for Sciences in Brăila forbade pupils to attend *An Enemy of the People* because of its revolutionary, subversive content:

Îmi aduc aminte că directorul liceului real din Brăila, invitat de administratorul trupei să îndemne elevii să vie să asculte *Un dușman al poporului* de Ibsen, răspunse că nu numai că nu-î îndeamnă, dar chiar le-a interzis să asiste la reprezentarea acestei piese subversive și revoluționare. Sărmanul Ibsen, iată-l ajuns și subversiv! (I remember that when the impresario of the troupe invited the principal of the High School of Natural Sciences in Brăila to encourage the students to attend Ibsen's *An Enemy of the People*, he replied that he not only would not encourage them to do so, but even forbid them to assist in the performance of such a subversive and revolutionary play. Poor Ibsen, he who is now seen as a subversive!; my translation) (ibid: 229)

Challenging the authority of the National Theatre of Bucharest and taking *An Enemy of the People* on tour was the means by which Sturdza gained symbolic recognition both for himself and for the ensemble of Craiova. The subversive tour of 1907–1908 to Bucharest and the staging of *An Enemy of the People* on November 28, 1907 was Ibsen's first real breakthrough in Romania, and also Sturdza's first step to being acknowledged as the most influential Romanian Ibsen actor. His performances at the National Theatre of Bucharest⁹⁶ enhanced the impact of the tour. Sturdza's initiative was supported by the manager of the National Theatre's at the time, I. Bacalbașa.

Bacalbașa [...] cu dorința de marca direcția sa [...] prin introducerea în repertoriu, pe lângă cât mai multe lucrări originale, și a câtorva cap de opere străine. Astfel în partea întâi a stagiunii mi-a făcut plăcerea să monteze *Stâlpii societății* de H. Ibsen, tradusă de mine, încredințându-mi marele și dificilul rol al Consulului Bernyk, într-o distribuție care cuprindea forțele cele mai vii și mai evidente ale teatrului. (Bacalbașa [...] wished to mark the period of his management [...] not only by introducing as many original plays as possible in the repertory, but also some foreign masterpieces. Thus, I was delighted to stage *Pillars of Society* by H. Ibsen in the first part of the theatre season. I translated the play and was also entrusted [with the interpretation of] the great and difficult role of Consul Bernyk, together with a cast that included the most vivid and powerful actors of the theatre; my translation.) (ibid: 240)

Sturdza marked that “Ibsen a intrat oficial la Teatrul Național” (Ibsen was officially introduced at the National Theatre; my translation) (Massoff 1972: 364) of Bucharest with *Pillars of Society* in 1911, which was also the Romanian premiere of the play. Secondly, he interpreted the leading masculine roles in two Romanian Ibsen premieres: *John Gabriel Borkman* (1919) and *The Lady from the Sea* (1928). Thirdly, the performance of *An Enemy of the People* at the National Theatre of Bucharest was the first time when the staging included Act IV. Finally, in 1921, he performed in *An Enemy of the People* at the Bulandra Company in a run of approximately 20 days, enjoying a positive reception. Undoubtedly, Dr. Stockmann remained his favourite role throughout his entire career.

96 The actor returned to the National Theatre in 1908. This happened when Alexandru Davila left and Pompiliu Eliade became the new manager (Sturdza 1966: 230).

Although he performed in numerous romantic and modern plays of the French repertory,⁹⁷ Sturdza was acknowledged for introducing the modern Italian and Scandinavian plays to the Romanian stage, marking an important transition that affected both the acting and the staging techniques. The actor became renowned for being “un entuziast al operei ibseniene și fidelul interpret al repertoriului scandinav” (an enthusiast [promoter] of Ibsen’s work and the loyal interpreter of the Scandinavian repertory; my translation) (Alterescu 1971: 302).

In his version of Ibsen, particularly in the portrayal of Dr. Stockmann, Sturdza presented the Romanian audience with a blend of acting genres that marked the actor’s transition from Romanticism to realism, distilled through naturalism and Italian *verismo*.

Italian *verismo* exerted the strongest influence upon Sturdza, with Zacconi, Novelli and Duse as his main models. However, it would be incorrect to say that Sturdza was completely shaped by Italian *verismo*. His early career as actor in Iași points to his background as a romantic actor, as he assumed a realist interpretation inspired by Italian *verismo* only later in his career. He also assimilated German and French naturalist-realist influences through his contact with Paul Gusty and Alexandru Davila at the National Theatre of Bucharest. The assimilation of these influences was relevant at an acting and industrial level. Although Petre Sturdza was clearly an example of a star actor influenced by romantic and Italian *verismo* techniques, he was a supporter of ensemble-based productions and was attracted to realism and naturalism. For this reason, most of his productions were a mix of actor-based and ensemble-based approaches, revealing the same transitional intercrossings typical of other Ibsen key contributors.

To understand the connection between Romanticism, Italian *verismo*, French and German naturalism in the acting of Petre Sturdza, it is important to acknowledge that Sturdza came into contact with not one, but several different versions of romantic and naturalist interpretation. He was aware that French and German Romanticism, as well as naturalism, entailed different nuances, despite common genre designations. On the other hand, Sturdza’s conceptual clarity was not without flaws, and his memoirs reveal a confusing overlapping of naturalism and *verismo*:

Eram neliniștit de lupta ce se da între vechile principii adoptate la Paris, modul meu de-a declama de până atunci, de care nu mă putusem dezbara bine și noua manieră naturalistă, pe care, deși simțeam că se potrivea ca o mănăușe firii și temperamentului meu – încă nu eram complet stăpân și nu puteam, nu știam cum s-o folosesc în cursul interpretării. (I was anxious because of the conflict aroused within me between the old principles learned in Paris, which were enacted in the manner I declaimed until then, and which I still had not abandoned yet, and the new naturalist manner, which I still had not mastered, although I felt that it fitted my personality and my temperament like a glove. I could not, I did not, know how to use it in my interpretation; my translation.) (Sturdza 1966: 132–133)

Yet Sturdza used the term *verismo* more often than naturalism:

97 A comprehensive list of the roles interpreted by Petre Sturdza can be found in Sturdza (1966: 331–340).

În loc de strigăte și urlete mai mult sau mai puțin dramatice, asistaseră numai la desfășurarea unui proces sufletesc. Cu rolul acesta mi-am făcut intrarea în școala naturalului și a simplității, cu el m-am botezat actor modern și verist. (Instead of witnessing a more or less dramatic shouting and howling, they had witnessed the unfolding of a spiritual process. With this role, I had entered the school of naturalness and simplicity. With this role, I had baptised myself as a modern and *verismo* actor; my translation.) (ibid: 134)

Therefore, we must understand not only the interweaving of the various genres in Sturdza's acting, but also Ibsen's influence in generating and supporting this mix.

Declamation governed the young Romanian acting tradition when Petre Sturdza started his acting career:

Deocamdată însă, declamam și eu ca toți colegii de la dramă, până vedeam apărând pe buzele maestrului zâmbetul de satisfacție pe care i-l pândeam. (For the moment though, I declaimed just as my other colleagues in the drama class, until I saw a smile of satisfaction secretly lurking on the face of my master; my translation.) (ibid: 35)

His teacher, Mihail Galino, was a proponent of the romantic technique, while allowing students enough freedom to develop their own style. This romantic background to Sturdza's training is visible in his interpretation of Don Salluste in *Ruy Blas* through declamatory tonality.⁹⁸ He preserved traces of Romantic acting in his work until very late, as his Ibsen rendition in *John Gabriel Borkman* in 1919, which focused on gestures and vocal amplitude, suggests:

Capul d-sale de Herr-Professor convențional care-și mângâie mereu barba e de sigur departe de intențiile autorului. Apoi tonul profetic din partea finală depășește oarecum limitele naturalei. (His head of a conventional Herr-Professor who always caresses his beard is, of course, far from the author's intentions. Then the prophetic tonality in the final part goes somehow beyond the limits of naturalness; my translation.) (Filotti 1919: 68)

The focus on identification with a role also reveals a romantic nuance in his approach:

Interpretarea ce dam eu acestui rol căruia firea mea i se adaptează mai puternic decât oricărui altuia, așa că de câte ori îl joc ajung să mă identific complet personajului. (My interpretation of this role, to which my personality could adapt more than to any other role, made it so that I could completely identify myself with the character; my translation.) (Sturdza 1966: 283)

98 "Ma, amico mio, vous êtes plou dei artisti, ma veri dervischi urlanti! Avea dreptate bietul om, dar ce vreți, pe vremuri lozinca la teatru era: cine țipă mai tare, are mai mare talent." (But, my friend, you are more than artists, but real howling dervishes! The poor man was right, but, what could you expect more? At that time, the main slogan in the theatre was: the more one shouts, the greater the talent one has; my translation) (Sturdza 1966: 127).

As for the French romantic model, he considered it artificial and too technical, and thus unable to convey any emotion and passion. His view of the French theatre world reveals his rejection of the French romantic interpretation promoted by the actors and his teachers of the Comédie-Française. Yet Petre Sturdza does not downplay its influence upon his acting profile. From Got, Sylvain, Worms and Feraudy he learned the technical aspects of preparing a role in terms of controlling the gestures, the voice, the diction, as well as historical, social and clothing details of each interpretation. However, the keyword that most characterised Sturdza, and that he considered the French actors lacked most, was “emotion”. The terms “simple, natural and sincere” would haunt the actor throughout his career. These words would be always used in opposition to the romantic tradition that he considered artificial, unnatural, and in danger of automatising the interpretation due to the excessive control of the body. He also rejected the German model of romantic interpretation, which he considered very similar to the French. Sturdza preferred Gabrielle Réjane to the French actors of the Comédie-Française, the German actors at Burgtheater, or the British actors, because her romantic interpretation was much nearer the emotion, simplicity and naturalness that he sought on stage. It was her mix of romantic and realist techniques that rendered her style different and unique compared with the romantic interpretation of her colleagues at the Comédie-Française. The same applied to the Italian actor Ernesto Rossi, who became a model for Sturdza through their direct encounter and Borelli’s background as actor in Rossi’s ensemble (ibid: 45, 53, 54, 104, 105, 106, 107, 111):

La Comedia Franceză i-a văzut pe marii ei actori în roluri ale literaturii clasice, a admirat perfecțiunea tehnicii tradusă în dicțiune și gestică, dar n-a putut să treacă peste faptul că nu făceau să simtă, nu transmiteau emoție. Și aceasta nu numai în ceea ce privește dicțiunea sau gesturile, ci în general comportamentul scenic, perfect stăpânit, repetat cu o precizie care purta, purtând în ea pericolul automatizării. Dar prin arta franceză și slujitorii ei Sturdza a pătrus aspecte însemnate ale creației actoricești, a învățat cum se abordează și se studiază un rol, cum pot fi puse în valoare trăsăturile proprii fiecărui personaj. A învățat să gândească și să conceapă un caracter dramatic, să urmărească și să stăpânească efectele necesare [...]. A găsit evident și la Paris actori care l-au emoționat [...]. Ceea ce înseamnă “sufletul” într-un rol i-au arătat mai cu seamă italienii, începând cu Ernesto Rossi, trecând la Eleonora Duse, la Ermete Zacconi și la Novelli. Un alt italian a avut un rol însemnat în formarea artistului nostru, Napoleone Borelli, director de scenă vreme de cinci ani la Teatrul Național din Iași, care l-a ajutat direct să valorifice ceea ce strânsese prin studiu și călătorii. (At the *Comédie-Française* he saw all its great actors in the great roles of classic literature, he admired the technical perfection applied to their diction and gestures, but he could not ignore the fact that they could not convey feeling and emotion. This not only concerned diction and gestures, but also their general stage behaviour, perfectly controlled, and repeated with a precision which brought with it the danger of doing things by rote. But through the French art and its servants, Sturdza delved into significant aspects of the acting craft, learned how to approach and to study a role, how to bring the aspects of each character to light. He learned how to imagine and create a dramatic character, how to achieve and control the necessary effect [...]. In Paris he evidently also found actors who

conveyed emotion [...]. But only the Italians showed him what “soul” meant in [the interpretation of] a role, starting with Ernesto Rossi, then going further to Eleonora Duse, Ermete Zacconi and Novelli. Another Italian who played a significant role in the formation of our actor was Napoleone Borelli, who was stage director for five years at the National Theatre of Iași, and who helped him directly to bring what he had learned through his studies and travels to light; my translation.) (Brădățeanu 1979: 158)

The actor’s rejection of the French and German romantic model, which had received so much praise in the early Romanian acting tradition, and his aim for simplicity, emotion and sincerity, explain his attachment to Italian *verismo*. Petre Sturdza was inspired by Italian actors such as Ermete Zacconi, Ermete Novelli and Eleonora Duse. Ibsen’s special position in the careers of these three most influential Italian contributors was echoed in Sturdza’s repertoire. In Italian *verismo* he found the form for his interpretation of Ibsen roles.

Napoleone Borelli, who was the director of the National Theatre of Iași between 1896 and 1903, also reinforced Sturdza’s preference for Italian acting. Petre Sturdza himself mentioned Borelli’s contribution as essential to his development as actor:

Mărturisesc cinstit că Borelli a fost pentru mine un revelator. Revelatorul propriilor mele calități pe care nu știam încă să le valorific. Lui i-am rămas recunoscător toată viața pentru succesele obținute în cariera mea, căci le datoresc mai ales sfaturilor și îndemnurilor lui. (I confess honestly that Borelli was a revealing personality for me. He helped me realise qualities I did not know that I possessed. I will be grateful to him my entire life because I owe all the successes I obtained during my career to his advice and encouragement; my translation.) (Sturdza 1966: 126)

Yet, Borelli did not completely approve of the pathological Italian version of realism (*verismo*). Instead, he professed a tempered version of it. However, despite Borelli’s advising against romantic declamation and broad gestures, as well as against the pathological exaggerations of Italian *verismo*, the latter remained Sturdza’s most powerful models. His travels across Europe – to French, Italian and German theatres – and his meetings with Duse, Novelli and Zacconi, cemented the Italian influence on his career. Sturdza abandoned the Romantic acting style and turned to *verismo* in his interpretation of Ibsen’s characters. His early collaboration with Borelli was consolidated by the fact that Sturdza spoke Italian, and in 1895, when Borelli became director at the National Theatre of Iași, Sturdza became his special assistant. From this perspective, Petre Sturdza “va beneficia în cea mai largă măsură de sfaturile regizorului italian” (would benefit most from the advice of the Italian director; my translation) (Alterescu 1971: 313). Consequently, Borelli influenced Sturdza not only as actor, but also as stage director, a role he assumed in his Ibsen productions.⁹⁹

Early in his career in Iași, he collaborated with Aglae Pruteanu and State Dragomir. For this reason, Romanian historians consider the three actors as part of “psychological realism” school. Although Sturdza did not work through the concept of psychology

99 “atașat special pe lângă persoana d-lui Borelli” (Massoff 1978: 561).

when studying roles, it is likely that his colleagues' discussions about the importance of psychology and philosophy for the science of acting influenced his approach. As he does not refer to these influences in his memoirs, they either played a minor role in his acting perspective, or he considered them an inherent part of his realist acting, requiring no further conceptualisation. The only example he gives is reminiscent of Aglae Pruteanu's technique based on the imagination concept, which entailed the elaboration of an ideal model/shape of the character and followed its evolution in the context of the play:

Nu mai căutam să simt nimic decât rolul meu și întreaga lui structură. Și tortura asta ținea până în momentul când ajungeam, în fine, să-mi văd apărut înaintea ochilor personajul la care mă gândeam de atâta vreme, să-l văd ca și cum dintr-o dată s-ar fi desprins ca dintr-o ceață și mi-ar fi apărut în carne și oase încălțat, îmbrăcat, grimat, mișcându-se, vorbind, răsând sau plângând. Din clipa aceea era al meu. Nu îmi mai rămânea decât să intru în el, să mă identific cu el. [...] Iar când intram în scenă, chiar să fi vrut altfel nu mai puteam să fiu "eu", ci în mod automat, deveneam "el", tipul, caracterul, omul în fine, pe care îl descoperisem. Niciodată din clipa când am început a pătrunde miezul și temelii artei mele, niciodată n-am studiat mai dinainte vreun gest sau un joc de fizionomie. Din moment ce me intrasem în personajul meu, ele veneau de la sine fără să le mai caut. Apariției mele îi luam aspectul exterior, mersul, figura, îmbrăcămintea, gesturile, atitudinile și în schimb îi împrumutam emotivitatea, nervii și sufletul meu. Nu mă mai ocupam de el. Singur își vedea de drum îndeplinindu-și fără greș întreaga misiune din cursul acțiunii. Așa mi-am studiat toate rolurile din partea a doua a carierei mele. (I did not seek anything else but to feel my role and its entire structure. And this torture lasted until the moment I could see the character I had been thinking of for so long in front of my eyes. [It lasted] until I could see it as if it had emerged from a fog and appeared in front of me, made of flesh and bones, with shoes, clothes and make-up, moving, talking, laughing or crying. It was mine from that moment on. I only had to enter it, to identify with it. [...] And, when I was entering the stage, even if I wished to be otherwise, I could no longer be "myself", because I automatically became "him", the type, the character, the human being whom I had discovered. Ever since I penetrated through the core and the foundation of my art, I never studied any gesture of physiognomic acting beforehand. From the moment I entered my character, these [gestures] emerged by themselves without me trying to find them. My appearance adopted the external aspect, the walking, the face, the clothing, the gestures, the attitudes, and, in turn, I was lending my emotions, my nerves and my soul to it. I was no longer looking after it. He was following its own path, accomplishing flawlessly its entire mission during the action. This is how I studied all of my roles in the second half of my career; my translation.) (Sturdza 1966: 232)

He does not mention the use of additional written notes to establish gesture, facial or vocal expressions like Aglae Pruteanu, and his handwritten notebook with the translation of *Pillars of Society*, which seems to have been used as a manuscript for learning the role, does not include such notations. Despite Sturdza's early theatre education with Aglae Pruteanu and State Dragomir, he followed his own path once he left Iași. It is the naturalist-realist elements in Petre Sturdza's acting that most define his perspective. The everyday speech, the small, detailed gestures, the sober voice lacking romantic effects,

the partial abandonment of faithfully historical renditions in favour of highlighting the humanity of the characters, all point towards naturalist/realist approaches:

Mille îl distingea pe Sturdza ca pe 'singurul artist' care pe scenă vorbește firesc și emoționează prin naturalețe, declanșând prin aceste considerații destule orgolii. Aprecierile supărau cu atât mai mult cu cât în acea perioadă "jocul natural", verismul, reprezenta noul, pentru că și în teatrul nostru între nou și vechi lupta se ascuțea, vechile modalități îi țineau în cătușele lor pe încă destui, iar cele noi nu erau la îndemâna a foarte mulți. (Mille considered Sturdza as "the only artist" who talked naturally and conveyed emotion through naturalness, thus giving many conceited people reason to react. These appraisals upset them even more, as in that period "natural acting", *il verismo*, represented the new path. Besides, in our theatre, the fight between the old and the new [tendencies] was growing more intense as the old practices had still shackled enough people, whereas the new ones were inaccessible to many; my translation.) (Brădățeanu 1979: 159)

But these approaches have multiple sources. On the one hand, the influences of psychological realism are tied to the drama school of Iași. On the other hand, the French naturalist influence was attributable to his contact with Alexandru Davila. Additionally, the German naturalist-realist influence came from Paul Gusty, who was the director of the productions starring Petre Sturdza at the National Theatre of Bucharest. Eventually, the actor approved of and adopted the naturalist interpretation of Emanuel Reicher in the Romanian production of *John Gabriel Borkman* in 1919. Sturdza had seen the German actor in the role of John Gabriel Borkman:

În cursul verii aflând că la teatrul Lessing din Berlin va avea loc sub direcția lui H. Brahm un ciclu ibsenian compus din principalele douăsprezece piese ale titanului nordic, cu orice sacrificiu m-am repezit pentru 15 zile în capitala Germaniei. Am văzut: *Strigoii*, *Nora*, *Stâlpii societății*, *Un dușman al poporului*, *Constructorul Solness* și *John Gabriel Borkman*. Ansamblul trupei era desăvârșit. Protagonistii erau marii artiști germani Albert Bassermann, Emanuel Reicher, Else Rechmann și Irene Trisch. Tot ansamblul în complexul lui era de o omogenitate fără cusur. Jocul lor simplu, plin de sinceritate și de emotivitate discretă a nordicilor, mi-a dat o senzație de artă vie și puternică. (During the summer, I had found out that the Lessing Theatre in Berlin would present an Ibsen cycle to include the twelve main plays of the Nordic titan, directed by H. Brahm. Regardless of any sacrifice, I swiftly travelled to Germany's capital for 15 days. I attended *Ghosts*, *Nora*, *Pillars of Society*, *An Enemy of the People*, *The Master Builder* and *John Gabriel Borkman*. The ensemble was faultless. The protagonists were the great German artists Albert Bassermann, Emanuel Reicher, Else Rechmann and Irene Triesch. The entire ensemble had a flawless homogeneity. Their simple acting, full of the discrete sincerity and emotion of the Nordic people, created a strong sensation of art that is full of life and powerful; my translation.) (Sturdza 1966: 239)

A brief interrogation of the IbsenStage database confirms the naturalist profile of Reicher, who collaborated with Emil Lessing at Lessingtheater and performed John Gabriel Borkman in 10 events between 1908 and 1915. In addition, Sturdza not only witnessed the

naturalist performance of *John Gabriel Borkman*, but also attended an entire cycle of six plays, which helped familiarise him with the German naturalist version of Ibsen, under the direction of Brahm, starring Albert Bassermann, Emanuel Reicher, Else Rechmann and Irene Triech. Thus, Petre Sturdza's performance of John Gabriel Borkmann indicates that he considered the German model when preparing the role:

Cu cât drag, cu câtă sânguință am studiat acest rol pe care îl văzusem câțiva ani în urmă la Berlin, mai mult trăit decât jucat de marele artist Emanuel Reicher. (I had so dearly, so eagerly studied this role, which I had seen performed in Berlin several years ago, and which the great artist Emanuel Reicher was living rather than playing; my translation.) (ibid: 275)

Sturdza positively referred to the naturalist interpretation example of Agnes Sorma, strengthening his preference for the German naturalist acting model:

Simpatică, blondă, subțire, captiva prin dulceața și drăgălășenia ei. Amintea în joc de Eleonora Duse. Același procedeu, aceleași priviri, aceleași gesturi, în minus bineînțeles bogăție de mijloace a modelului. [...] În toate dovedea că e înzestrată și absolut stăpână pe arta ei. La noi a obținut un mare succes, dar mai mult artistic căci rețete mari n-a făcut. Societatea noastră nu s-a înghesuit ca de obicei s-o vadă, căci nu juca...în franțuzește. (She was nice, blonde, thin and captivating because of her sweetness and grace. Her acting resembled that of Eleonora Duse. The same method, the same glances, the same gestures, except for her model's richness of means [...]. She proved that she was gifted and completely in control of her art at all levels. She was successful here, yet more artistically than financially. Our people did not crowd as usual to see her, because she was not performing...in French; my translation.) (ibid: 205)

This combination of Romanticism, Italian *verismo*, naturalism and realism generated a passionate, emotional, temperamental interpretation of the Ibsen roles he performed. These characteristics led the critics to classify the interpretation of Sturdza as evidently Latin/southern, focusing on emotion and truthfulness simultaneously:

Dar Petre Sturdza, în admirabila sa creație a pus prea mult din temperamentul său de meridional. Ne-a dat atunci un Stockman latin, prea expansiv și cu prea multă impetuositate în toate manifestările sale. (But Petre Sturdza put too much of his southern temperament into his admirable creation. At the time, he gave us a Latin Stockmann, too expansive and impetuous in all his acts; my translation.) (Wratislavius 1928: 1)

The interpretation in *An Enemy of the People* is the best example of a "Latin" interpretation, attesting not only to the power of the Italian model, but also to the power of Ibsen in modelling Sturdza's realist acting perspective.

At the level of the theatre production, Petre Sturdza was a star actor. However, his approach did not deny the importance of a balanced ensemble. The staging of *Pillars of Society* in 1911 is one example:

Dimpreună cu tot restul numeroasei distribuții am reușit să realizăm un ansamblu care ne-a făcut cinste nouă, teatrului și marelui Ibsen, iar publicului o deosebită plăcere. Ermete Novelli care s-a nimerit să asiste la unul dintre spectacole, în afară de felicitările exprimate pe scenă tuturor artiștilor, între patru ochi, prietenește, mi-a mărturisit că interpretarea piesei i-a făcut o puternică impresie de omogenitate. (We managed to assemble an ensemble together with the rest of the numerous cast, which honoured us, the theatre and the great Ibsen, while delighting the audience. Ermete Novelli happened to attend one of the performances, and besides the congratulations he expressed on stage to all the artists, he confessed to me privately that the interpretation of the play left him with a strong impression of homogeneity; my translation.) (Sturdza 1966: 241)

On the one hand, the star actor was crucial in both the touring productions and the guest performances of the time in Romania¹⁰⁰. This status is confirmed by the fact that Sturdza also translated three of Ibsen's plays, *Un dușman al poporului* [*An Enemy of the People*] (Ibsen and Sturdza 1907) and *Strigoi* [*Ghosts*] (Ibsen and Sturdza, n.d.) and *Pillars of Society*. All three served as scripts for productions, and the first two were published as stand-alone books. He played the lead role of Consul Bernick in his translation of *Pillars of Society* and his handwritten notebook includes the detailed date and the hour of not only the first rehearsal – May 5, 1911, 05:36:14 – but also of the first reading of the play – May 3, 1911, 04:06:35, almost six months before the official opening night on October 21, 1911 (Ibsen and Sturdza 1911). Petre Sturdza did not simply translate the plays and use the translations as scripts, but followed the Italians in adjusting the play in accordance with the context of the staging. The most relevant example of this process is the omission of Act IV in the touring performances of *An Enemy of the People*:

Curând după aceasta s-a montat *Un dușman al poporului* de H.Ibsen, de astă dată jucată în completul ei și cu actul al IV-lea, al întrunirii, pe care îl omisesem la Craiova din lipsă de personal, (omisiune pe care de altfel o văzusem și la trupele italiene și care nu știrbește câtuși de puțin nici înțelesul, nici eficacitatea lucrării). (Soon after, we staged *An Enemy of the People* by H. Ibsen. But this time, we performed it entirely, including Act IV – that of the meeting – which I had omitted in Craiova because of the lack of personnel. Yet I had noticed this omission in the [performances of the] Italian ensembles, without demeaning either the meaning or the effectiveness of the work; my translation.) (ibid: 244)

To assess the importance of the ensemble in the productions starring Petre Sturdza, we must consider his contact with Alexandru Davila and Paul Gusty, and the actor's contact with the German theatre tradition. He was temporarily confronted with the naturalist-realist, ensemble-oriented reforms of Davila, although he was less inspired by this approach. The star actor approach of Sturdza inspired by *verismo* was opposed to the ensemble-based, naturalist-realist approach of Davila and the Germans. Their only common aspect was related to the acting, which entailed the use of everyday speech instead

100 However, he did not teach but in a private environment, hence the younger generations of actors did not benefit from his vast experience.

of declamation. His real engagements with the ensemble-based approach are tied to his Ibsen initiatives staged at the National Theatre of Bucharest under the supervision of Paul Gusty. *Pillars of Society* in 1911 and *An Enemy of the People* in 1912 with the integration of Act IV are two such examples. In these productions, Sturdza as star actor and Gusty as director create ensemble-based productions performed in a realist acting style without removing the power of the leading role. The critical reception also focused on Sturdza rather than on the other actors:

Dintre toți interpreții, numai trei par a fi simțit intențiile lui Ibsen, d-nii Petre Sturza, C. Radovici și C. Belcot. Chiar și aceștia au avut pe alocuri ezitări de caracterizare, clipe de îndoială și de oboseală, dar au găsit nota justă a rolului și au păstrat unicitatea în joc. Scenele în care erau numai dânzii, umpleau teatrul de viață, de artă adevărată. [...] Deci mai întâiu Doctorul Stockmann al d-lui Sturdza. E cald, e încrezător în triumful adevărului, e copilăros în naivitățile sale romantice, e sincer și convingător în izbucnirile sale entuziaste, e puternic și impresionant în clipele de revoltă și indignare, și e comunicativ mai ales în durere. E simpatic chiar și în clipele lui de vanitate trecătoare. Dar e obosit și plictisit la întrunirea din actul al patrulea. E atât de plictisit [...] încât actul acesta e o scădere simțitoare față de actele precedente. Și nu are tocmai prea multe nuanțe în vorbire. Pe urmă, scena VIII, în actul al treilea, când se reîntoarce la tipografie: prea umilit, prea e timid față de Hovstad, pe când, cred că dimpotrivă, ar trebui să fie încrezător și numai politicos. Umiliința și timiditatea ne face să credem că Stockmann ar fi auzit ce au pus la cale onorabili Hovstad, Thomsen și Primarul. Și apoi felul acesta de-a introduce scena face ca tot sfârșitul actului să piarză din elan și din temperament. Precum într-adevăr a și pierdut. [...] Oricum, d. Sturza este un Stockmann bun și adevărat. Ne pare bine că-l putem felicita cu toată admirația și mulțumirea ce datorim singurului nostru ibsenist pasionat. (Of all the interpreters, only three seem to have felt Ibsen's intentions, namely Mr. Petre Sturdza, C. Radovici and C. Belcot. But even they hesitated here and there in their characterisations, they had moments of doubt and fatigue, but they found the role's right note and preserved the uniqueness of their acting. The scenes in which it was only them performing filled the theatre with life, with real art. [...] Firstly, there was Mr. Sturdza's Dr. Stockmann. He is warm, he believes in the triumph of truth, he is childish in his romantic naivety, he is sincere and convincing in his enthusiast outbursts, he is powerful and impressive in his moments of revolt and indignation, and communicative especially when he conveys pain. He is nice even in his brief moments of vanity. But he is tired and bored in the meeting in Act Four. He is so bored [...] that this act is evidently less powerful than the previous acts. And he lacks nuances when he speaks. Then, in scene VIII in Act Three, when he returns to the typography, he is too humble, too shy towards Hovstad instead of being, by contrast, confident and only polite. The modesty and the timidity lead us to believe that Stockmann had heard what Hovstad, Thomsen and the Mayor were planning. And, so, this way of performing the scene reflects a loss of energy and temperament at the end of the act. And it did lose that. Nevertheless, Mr. Sturdza is a good and genuine Stockmann. We are happy to congratulate him with all the admiration and contentment owed to our only passionate Ibsenite; my translation.) (Rebreanu 1912: 2)

Petre Sturdza's return to his favourite Ibsen play, as it was performed with the National Theatre of Bucharest, entailed a special focus on the ensemble. It was the first time that a Romanian production of the play had included Act IV, which required integrating a large number of extras into the ensemble:

Mi-am bătut mult capul, mai ales cu afurisita de întrunire pomenită, unde în afară de actorii care își vedeau conștiincios de treabă mi se dăduseră la dispoziție câțiva elevi de Conservator care pentru a se pune în evidență făceau exces de zel, iar restul era compus din figuranță – cei mai mulți străini de teatru – aleși la întâmplare și aduși numai la cele câteva repetiții de scenă. (I have struggled a lot, especially when it comes to that damned, aforementioned meeting, in which, besides the actors who were dutifully doing their job, I had some Conservatoire students at my disposal, who, in order to highlight their skills, showed an excessive zeal. The rest [of the ensemble] included extras – most of whom knew nothing about theatre. They had been chosen arbitrarily and only attended the few stage rehearsals; my translation.) (Sturdza 1966: 245)

Yet, paradoxically, the critics considered the 1912 production less well organised than the incomplete one of 1907–1908. It was precisely the ensemble-focused staging of Act IV that detracted from the quality of the performance and attracted criticism:

“Un dușman al poporului” a fost mai cald și mai convins jucat acum vreo patru ani de d. Petre Sturdza, cu trupa Teatrului Național din Craiova, decât aseară la Teatrul Național din Bucharest. [...] E adevărat că atunci s'a suprimat actul întrunirii, din motive lesne de înțeles la o trupă în turneu. Era, însă, preferabil să se fi suprimat și aseară acest act decât să se fi dat dezlînat și monoton cum s'a dat. [...] Nu e de ajuns ca d. Sturza să pricëapă rolul capital și să lucreze cu străduință pentru ca succesul piesei să fie asigurat. Nicăierea ca în teatrul lui Ibsen nu se cere mai multă omogenitate, coeziune și rotunjire a ansamblului – și tocmai aceasta a lipsit spectacolului de-aseară. (*An Enemy of the People* was more warmly and convincingly performed about four years ago by Mr. Petre Sturdza with the ensemble of the National Theatre of Craiova than tonight at the National Theatre of Bucharest. [...] It is true that the act of the meeting was suppressed at the time, which is easily understandable for a touring ensemble. But it would have been preferable to suppress it tonight too rather than perform it in such a disorganised and monotonous manner. [...] It is not enough only for Mr. Sturdza to understand the leading role and to work eagerly in order to ensure the play's success. Nowhere else in Ibsen's theatre does one need more homogeneity, cohesion and an ensemble tied together – and this is precisely what tonight's performance lacked; my translation.) (Figure 1912: 1)

Nevertheless, this does not diminish the fact that Petre Sturdza's Ibsen initiatives combined the actor-based and the ensemble-based approach, gradually changing the Romanian theatre industry.

Finally, how did Ibsen influence Sturdza's acting? The actor is renowned for having promoted and disseminated the Italian *verismo* plays and the Scandinavian repertory, including both Ibsen and Bjørnson, across the country. In this respect, the Italian repertory and the Scandinavian plays accompanied the actor in the transition from Romanticism

to *verismo* and then to naturalism. The Italian interpretation and staging of Ibsen was his most powerful model, whereas the German model was secondary and acquired later in his career.

To conclude, the Italian influence is the strongest in the case of Petre Sturdza. His example confirms the power of the star actor in the promotion of Ibsen across Romania and in his establishment in the repertory of the National Theatre of Bucharest. In addition, the strong Italian influence indicates that passion and emotion emerge as Latin, southern traits in his acting as an Ibsen protagonist, especially as Dr. Stockmann. Ultimately, Petre Sturdza's interest in Ibsen contributed to the consecration of the playwright as a modern classic in the Romanian theatre. Sturdza was not only a cornerstone of his generation, but also the most powerful actor in the Romanian history of Ibsen, given that

în general piesele lui Ibsen au prins la noi în bună parte datorită lui Sturdza, interpret cum nu se poate mai potrivit pentru eroii săi, mai în măsura decât mulți alții să înțeleagă și să redea cazurile de conștiință ibseniene (generally, Ibsen's plays were popular for us because of Sturdza, a most adequate interpreter of his heroes, who was more apt than others to understand and render Ibsen's case studies in consciousness; my translation). (Brădățeanu 1979: 160)

Petre Sturdza as Dr. Stockmann is the very pillar of Henrik Ibsen's reception in the Romanian theatre.

4.3.5 Conclusions Character Sites

The analysis of the character sites has revealed that the aesthetic intercrossing applied equally to all the actors' interpretative work. Together, they further enriched the landscape of Ibsen production by providing unique combinations and approaches to Romanticism, naturalism, realism and Expressionism in their performances of *Ghosts* and *An Enemy of the People*.

The section on Oswald has highlighted Ibsen's gradual classicisation by means of the contribution of three actors belonging to three different generations all performing the same role, but applying different, interwoven perspectives enacted within a transitional process. Demetriade and Manolescu's contribution overlapped; however, Nottara, Demetriade and Manolescu belonged to the same spatial hub, deepening the generational connection at the level of their interpretation of Oswald. Their connection provides the most strongly coagulated network within a character site in the Romanian Ibsen production over a period of roughly 30 years. Finally, the contribution of these actors confirms, together with the contribution of the actresses in the next section, that *Ghosts* was the most influential play in early Romanian Ibsen production.

The Mrs Alving of Agatha Bârsescu and Mărioara Voiculescu created an adjacent line of *Ghosts* productions, coexisting with the thread of productions that focused on Oswald. *Ghosts* was part of a successful tradition in the Romanian theatre created by actors in both the female and the male leading roles. Prestigious Romanian actors such as Agatha Bârsescu, Constantin I. Nottara, Ion Manolescu and Aristide Demetriade, and foreign actors such as André Antoine, Alfredo de Sanctis, Alexander Moissi and Ermete Zacconi gained

recognition through performing *Ghosts* on the local stage. The two *Ghosts* perspectives coexisting on the Romanian stage oscillated between Oswald and Mrs Alving as the main character. Eventually, the perspective of Oswald as protagonist seemed more powerful. The foreign actors who visited Romania and performed Oswald must have influenced the overall emphasis on the male protagonist in the Romanian Ibsen tradition. The perspective focusing on Mrs Alving was not backed by any foreign performance in Romania. This perspective was introduced by Agatha Bârsescu as late as 1925, almost 30 years after the first Romanian performance with Constantin Nottara as Oswald. By this time, the powerful thread of Oswald interpreters was already consecrated through performances both numerous and regular. The late emergence of this second interpretative thread focusing on Mrs Alving, and the brief timespan covered by the nevertheless numerous performances, resulted in the weaker impact of Agatha Bârsescu and Mărioara Voiculescu. The generational links between the actors performing Oswald created a stronger network of transmission than the prestige transmission between the actresses performing Mrs Alving.

At the level of their interpretation, the diversity of these actors' interpretative approaches is some of the strongest evidence of the complex interweavings in the Romanian Ibsen production. On the one hand, the six actors I have investigated had not only the same romantic background due to their common training at the Conservatoire, but also drew their interpretation from the same genres: *verismo*, naturalism, realism and Expressionism. Here the notion of interweaving is subtle, involving isolating key aspects in the performance techniques employed by each actor to determine the hierarchy of elements within their interpretative mixes, thus pointing to differences between the actors' relationship to the same genres. For instance, Constantin Nottara's interpretation of Oswald combined Romanticism and *verismo* alike; he overcame his initial acting background, in contrast to his generational peers. Yet the similarities between Romanticism and *verismo* rendered his changes less revolutionary, and point to the dominance of the former in his acting. Aristide Demetriade was also primarily a romantic actor. Unlike Nottara, Demetriade's Oswald was a naturalist interpretation inspired by André Antoine with subtle expressionist influences from Alexander Moissi. The third most influential Romanian interpreter of Oswald, Ion Manolescu, had also been trained in romantic acting principles, but his interpretation completely abandoned them. Instead, he turned towards a realist interpretation of Oswald in which he integrated expressionist elements to such an extent that his acting style belonged to a stylised realism genre. Demetriade and Manolescu employed expressionist influences differently in their Oswald interpretations: the former focused on emotion and passion, the latter privileged essences and human archetypes. The main difference is that Demetriade exploited the relationship between Romanticism and Expressionism in his renditions, whereas Manolescu created a bridge between realism and Expressionism. Moreover, the expressionist influence was secondary to the main romantic approach of Demetriade, while Manolescu's stylised approach became a dominant characteristic of his interpretation of Oswald.

The same genres were interwoven in the acting approaches of Agatha Bârsescu and Mărioara Voiculescu. The former used the same combination of Romanticism, naturalism and Expressionism as Demetriade and also maintained Romanticism as her dominant mode with naturalism and Expressionism as minor influences. Mărioara

Voiculescu also built her acting technique by connecting Romanticism with Expressionism, but she favoured temperamental expressiveness and the passionate outbursts. In contrast to Agatha Bârsescu, but with similarities to Ion Manolescu, she made naturalism and realism fundamental in her renditions. Further, she was inspired by Expressionism, and together with Romanticism, it became a dominant feature of her performance technique. Yet the early integration of naturalism and realism in her interpretations mark a clear difference from Agatha Bârsescu, for whom these genres remained peripheral influences.

The contribution of Petre Sturdza is the only isolated case study in this section on character sites due to the actor's strong ownership of the Dr. Stockmann role. No other actor surpassed his ownership of this character, and there was no large network of artists to further a development of a Romanian Ibsen tradition based on *An Enemy of the People*. Sturdza assumed the Italian model in his acting and staging approach, yet the psychological realism school and French and German naturalism strongly marked his career. Thus, although Italian *verismo* was dominant in his interpretation, German realism and French naturalism were powerful influences, in spite of their subsidiary status in his acting. Petre Sturdza was the most significant of the Romanian Ibsen contributors; he covered broad temporal and spatial horizons, as well as a complex range of aesthetic approaches. He was the most famous Ibsenite not only of his epoch, but of the entire history of Romanian Ibsen production.

To conclude, the character sites reveal the extremely complex, yet subtle interweavings that marked the contribution of the Romanian Ibsenites, based on the different combination of elements drawn from Romanticism, naturalism, realism and Expressionism. Whereas one can still identify the components that enter each mix, this does not undermine their uniqueness and the creativity of the Romanian contributors in their application of these acting genres to the interpretation of Ibsen characters. Eventually, Ibsen's dramaturgy itself encouraged the emergence of these mixes, both during the period when the plays were the very symbol of theatrical innovation and when they had become modern classics.

4.3.6 Final remarks

What are the main cores in the Romanian Ibsen tradition?

The first is the psychological training core/hub represented by State Dragomir and Aglae Pruteanu. They engendered a change in the approach to acting because of their contact with experimental psychology. This change ultimately influenced the actor-training system by way of State Dragomir, who taught at the Conservatoire in Iași. His teaching triggered the transition away from Romanticism towards psychological realism. Moreover, it affected the *emploi* system by making the students perform any kind of role, regardless of their inclinations towards one specific character type. Ibsen's introduction to the curriculum by State Dragomir supported this change. Aglae Pruteanu also contributed to the transition from romantic to realist acting, influenced by Ibsen and by the new findings in the field of experimental psychology, just as State Dragomir was.

The second core coagulated around the Ibsen productions staged by the private companies of the Bulandra family and of Mărioara Voiculescu. This pattern encompasses the star actors who performed Ibsen at these companies, either achieving long-term recognition or providing experimental productions. The contribution of Ion Manolescu in *Ghosts* together with the ensemble of the Bulandra Company and the experimental staging of *Peer Gynt* organised by Mărioara Voiculescu at her private theatre company were the most representative moments. Finally, this pattern acknowledges the subsidiary influence of Alexandru Davila, who participated directly in the training of these two actors. His periods as manager of both the National Theatre of Bucharest (1905–1908, 1912–1914) and of the Davila Company (1909), where all these actors worked at a certain point during their careers, account for his influence upon them and, implicitly, upon the Romanian Ibsen production in the private theatres.

Finally, the third core is represented by the ensemble-based Ibsen productions at the National Theatre of Bucharest, successfully combining drama and comedy actors. In this case we see how the national actor training was reflected in the Romanian Ibsen production. For instance, most of the actors performing in the Romanian Ibsen productions were specialised in drama. However, actors belonging to the comedy school also made a considerable contribution, even competing with the drama actors. Finally, the dominant aspect here is Ibsen's plays being approached as dramas, whereas the specific, underlying element is the combination of drama and comedy in the productions. In addition, this pattern highlights the role of Paul Gusty in the emergence of the ensemble tradition in the Romanian Ibsen production, focusing on *The Wild Duck* production in 1920 and the production of *A Doll's House* premiered in 1921.

The fourth core revolves around those plays and characters performed most often, and is dominated by star actors. This pattern indicates Oswald and Mrs Alving in *Ghosts* and Dr. Stockmann in *An Enemy of the People* as the most influential role-oriented approaches. This pattern also reveals the widespread dissemination of Ibsen across the country by means of tours. For instance, Agatha Bârsescu as Mrs Alving, Aristide Deme-triade and Ion Manolescu in the role of Oswald, and Petre Sturdza as Dr. Stockmann were the actors who toured most with Ibsen until 1947, either as actor-managers or as guest performers.

To conclude, these cores highlight the dominant features and coalescing moments in the Romanian Ibsen production until 1947 in spite of its fluidity, fractures and decentralisation. Therefore, we must remember that they were not isolated, but interwove themselves in the individual Ibsen profiles of the Romanian key contributors.

Part Five: Conclusions

This thesis has analysed the main patterns of dissemination in the Romanian tradition of staging Henrik Ibsen's plays between 1879 and 1947, using the IbsenStage database as its starting point. For this purpose, I combined Digital Humanities tools, theatre historiography, science of acting and cultural history. More specifically, the notions of national state, national theatre and *histoire croisée* were overarching. These methodological tools helped to delimit the most important features of the national Ibsen tradition prior to 1947 within the Romanian cultural space at the crossroads of Europe, which favoured territorial fluidity and an influx of foreign influences.

Romania's unique geographical and political position was evident at the time that Henrik Ibsen emerged on the national stage, as I have shown in Part Two. The free circulation of different European traditions of staging Ibsen led to the presence of French, Italian, German, Hungarian and Yiddish tours in Romania and to a landscape marked by diversity in terms of theatrical practices. The Romanian theatre world encouraged their intercrossing, as well as favoured the dissemination of contrasting and conflicting influences across a territorially changing frame, to eventually incorporate them into the local theatre practice. However, the spatial and temporal intercrossing of divergent traditions in the landscape of the foreign Ibsen performances taking place in Romania was far from homogenous. This heterogeneity led to constructive tensions between the major French, Italian and German models, and the minor Hungarian and Yiddish models, in the early Romanian Ibsen reception.

The performances in French, Italian, German and Yiddish had the most powerful impact, although their number was significantly lower compared to the Hungarian ones. Yet, the Hungarian performances were only staged in Transylvania, hence their weak impact upon the Romanian theatre. In addition, the French, Italian, German and Yiddish performances took all place in Bucharest, and occasionally visited other major cities like Craiova or Iași too, hence their stronger influence on the Romanian theatre in contrast to the performances in Hungarian. The German productions were more numerous than the French or Italian, but like the Yiddish and Hungarian productions, their spatial distribution followed ethnic demographic patterns and had more impact upon a minority group than upon Romanian locals.

This rich landscape of foreign productions encompassed numerous acting approaches, such as French naturalism and symbolism; German romanticism, naturalism, realism and Expressionism; Italian *verismo* and realism; and Yiddish eclecticism. In addition, tensions between the star-system and ensemble-system became also visible, as French, Italian and Hungarian performances privileged the star-actors, whereas German and Yiddish performances gravitated around the ensembles. However, as the Romanian Ibsen tradition demonstrates, the star-based tradition was the stronger of the two system among the local theatre practitioners.

The fluid interweaving of these approaches attests to the condition of the Romanian theatre situated at the theatrical crossroads of Europe. The central question here has to do with the assimilation of the foreign elements into the production of Ibsen within a newly emerging local theatre culture. A comparison between the Yiddish and Romanian Ibsen production indicates how different these recipes are. While the Yiddish tradition was a “melting pot” marked by hybridisation where eclecticism is a consistent feature because of the ensemble-based practice, the Romanian tradition is characterised by the complex coexistence of different, even conflicting traditions. The Romanian star-actors ensured that the foreign elements could still be identified even when they were integrated into new interpretations. Moreover, the mix of influences present in the Yiddish performances was a consequence of the absence of national boundaries to encompass the Yiddish theatre culture, which enabled it to absorb foreign elements in its constant movement across the borders of other countries. As far as the Romanian theatre tradition is concerned, the foreign elements were used by practitioners to cultivate unique, individual approaches, while they also supported the development of the national theatre. Thus, the Yiddish theatre tradition was marked by hybridisation, whereas the Romanian tradition suspended this process, which made that the foreign elements were still detectable in the interpretative choices of the local Ibsen contributors. The arbitrariness hidden in the diversity of the Romanian Ibsen tradition led to unpredictable patterns, and revealed less consistency and unity. The decentralised, fluid and unstable national environment, and its constant fragmentation, resulted in a complex coexistence of multiple recipes of staging and performing Ibsen.

In order to explain the coexistence and the assimilation of the elements that the foreign Ibsen performances introduced into the Romanian theatre culture, I analysed the national institutional context in Part Three. The functioning of the financial, administrative and legislative structures established commercialism, nationalism and aesthetics as the main forces of constraint shaping Romanian Ibsen production. These factors modelled not only the number of performances and the programming of the plays, but in some circumstances also impacted the staging approaches. The repertory statistics, which demonstrated the major competition between French and Romanian plays, also revealed that while the numbers of Ibsen productions were never high, they were comparatively consistent. This paradoxical situation was rooted in the unstable, fragmented and decentralised frameworks relating to finance, management and legislation. The low subsidy, the frequent changes of ministries administrating the National Theatre, as well as the five laws issued between 1877 and 1937, created a fluctuating context that worked both in Ibsen's favour and against him. They allowed contradictory commercial, protectionist and aesthetic interests to shape Ibsen's presence in the national repertory. The

attitude that theatres should generate revenue both in the state and in the private environment was at odds with the wish to develop a national dramaturgy that included European cultural masterpieces. This contrast is evident in the implicit competition for power to control the choice of repertory between State representatives, men of letters, and actors. Finally, the reasons employed to include or exclude Ibsen constantly changed due to the unstable institutional framework. Despite this uncertainty, Ibsen maintained an incredibly stable peripheral position in the repertory, largely due to the aesthetic value of his plays.

In Part Four, I investigated the actual patterns of dissemination in the Romanian tradition by looking at the most important Ibsen contributors. The aim of this section was to find out how foreign influences mixed with the local to create a Romanian Ibsen. I employed Digital Humanities tools such as networks, graphs and maps to identify the main patterns in the Romanian Ibsen production by interrogating points of intensity in the dataset. As the background conditions necessary to analyse these patterns, I considered the fluidity, fragmentation and the fluctuation of the institutional frameworks, as well as the diversity of acting practices entering Romania through foreign performances. The patterns highlighted the activities of star actors who were key Romanian Ibsenites prior to 1947; they also showed that directors played only a subsidiary role. The star actors made use of the institutional instability of the theatre culture to secure the freedom to experiment with multiple performance techniques in their interpretations of Ibsen's characters. The aesthetic diversity arising from this unstable context produced three threads that could be said to have matured into a dominant pattern in the Romanian Ibsen production. They revolved around psychological realism, stylised realism/Expressionism, and comedy, and were associated with three key locations: the National Theatre of Iași, the private theatre companies, and the National Theatre of Bucharest. The activities of the artists in these institutions did not ultimately evolve into a single dominant tradition. They were mostly arbitrary, eclectic mixes of practices produced by an actor-based system, which privileged the development of unique, yet unrepeatable styles only weakly transmitted from one generation to the next. Although I discussed them separately, the three threads were inherently intertwined; they did not grow in isolation, as many of the Ibsen key contributors participated in more than one production hub; but neither did they mature, as the emerging combinations of acting and staging disintegrated very quickly. They represented only potential traditions, like satellites freely roaming in the fluid space of the Romanian theatre.

Chronologically, the first production hub encompassed State Dragomir and Aglae Pruteanu's transition towards psychological realism supported by the interpretation of Ibsen on the stage of the National Theatre of Iași. The contact with and the use of concepts of experimental psychology in their acting, the intercrossing of romantic and realist techniques, and the incorporation of Ibsen plays in the curriculum at the Dramatic Arts Conservatoire already at the beginning of the 20th century made them pioneers in the development of a new performance technique. This use of Ibsen's dramas points to his position as an innovator in the national repertoire. Dragomir and Aglae's contribution was short-lived and had a low impact due to institutional isolation within a restricted geographical area; this limited the dissemination of their Ibsen performances. Their con-

nection to other networks was weak; despite the uniqueness of their contribution, it did not stand the test of time.

The second production hub addressed the contribution of the key artists at the private theatre companies, with Ion Manolescu in *Ghosts* and Mărioara Voiculescu in *Peer Gynt* as the most powerful examples. Their cases contrasted to those of Aglae Pruteanu and State Dragomir, for whom Ibsen was an innovator. Instead, for Ion Manolescu and Mărioara Voiculescu Ibsen was already an acknowledged classical, canonical playwright. Their activity in the private theatre environment confirmed this transition, which is also reflected in their acting and staging approach. Mărioara Voiculescu's *Peer Gynt* reveals that Ibsen's status as canonical playwright encouraged aesthetic experimentation. Her *en travesti* performance, accompanied by a rich stage design, music and a temperamental acting style, highlighted an expressionist dimension inspired by Max Reinhardt. Ion Manolescu's *Osvald* pointed to the role of the private Bulandra Company and the influence of Alexandru Davila's realist acting and ensemble-based approach. Although the contribution of actors attached to the Romanian private companies appears less statistically significant in IbsenStage, the existence of underinvestigated data suggests that their impact was as powerful as that of their counterparts working at the National Theatres.

The third production hub focused on the contributors of the National Theatre of Bucharest. This hub revolved around four actors – Agepsina Macri-Eftimiu, George Ciprian, Aurel Athanasescu and Nicolae Soreanu – and brought to light the contribution of Paul Gusty, the only director who is statistically relevant in the dataset. Intercrossings of acting approaches and network density are most evident in this hub, given its central institutional role in the Romanian theatre, its location for the country's most important theatre practitioners and, implicitly, Ibsen contributors. The mix of star approach and ensemble-approach at the industrial level, the blend of romantic and realist acting genres, and, finally, the combining of drama and comedy actors, characterised the Ibsen productions staged at this theatre. The most particular elements, though, were the slow emergence of an ensemble system in drama productions, and the highlighting of comedy in Ibsen's plays by placing the comedy actors as much in the foreground as the drama actors. The supervision of Paul Gusty was crucial to these changes, reflecting his growing importance as his role transformed from stage manager to stage director. Gusty applied his experience with ensemble-based comedy productions to drama productions; he acknowledged the primacy of the actor and focused on improving the actors' interpretations and understanding of the plays, rather than imposing his own conceptualisations. The Ibsen productions at the National Theatre of Bucharest changed slowly as the actors shifted from a traditional, conservatively star-based, romantic approach; these changes were not due to radical staging and acting reforms. Finally, two of the theatre's productions – *A Doll's House* (1921) and *The Wild Duck* (1920) – were popular with audiences and achieved financial success. They were re-staged again in subsequent seasons and ensured Ibsen's establishment in the permanent repertory of the institution.

Since my analysis of the three production hubs did not produce evidence of a single interpretative approach to staging Ibsen on the Romanian stage, I continued the investigation by looking at actors' interpretations of specific Ibsen characters to examine whether there were traces of a dominant tradition. In this respect, the character site was

based on the statistics of the most performed Ibsen plays on the Romanian stage until 1947, namely *Ghosts*, *A Doll's House* and *An Enemy of the People*. The actors most relevant statistically in the performance of these plays took the roles of Oswald, Mrs Alving, Nora and Dr. Stockmann. The three threads I followed revealed Petre Sturdza's "ownership" of Dr. Stockmann; it considered the Osvalds of Aristide Demetriade and Ion Manolescu, and their connection with Constantin Nottara; and dealt with the relationship between the Mrs Alving of Agatha Bârsescu and Mărioara Voiculescu. These actors employed unique combinations of performance techniques to represent Ibsen's character, yet there was some aesthetic transmission between their representations, especially in the case of *Ghosts*.

The thread between the Oswald interpreters is characterised by a vertical, generational transmission, whereas the thread between the Mrs Alving interpreters is distinguished by a horizontal, prestige transmission. Neither generational nor prestige transmission limited diversity, even when the Ibsen performances by older and more prestigious actors were seen as seminal on the national stage. The freedom to arrive at an individualised character interpretation included the right to contradict powerful predecessors. This is the case of the Oswald interpreters. Although Aristide Demetriade and Ion Manolescu had a romantic background and were trained under Nottara's supervision, they did not consider it necessary to adapt their interpretation of Oswald to Nottara's perspective. Demetriade preferred a naturalist interpretation to Nottara's *verismo*. The differences were even more visible in the approach of Ion Manolescu, who resisted the in-between romanticism and *verismo* of Nottara, and even Demetriade's naturalism, to develop his realist interpretation. However, a strong spatial interconnection did link these actors as they all performed in Bucharest, and Aristide Demetriade and Ion Manolescu's productions partially overlapped temporally.

In the case of the Mrs Alving interpreters, the timespan between their performances was too distant to support any strong transmission, and there was no direct contact between them spatially or temporally. Although the elements Agatha Bârsescu and Mărioara Voiculescu employed in their interpretations were similar, these actresses' backgrounds differed so greatly that their use of these elements was totally different. The connection between them was weaker than that of the Oswald actors, and the degree of freedom to arrive at individualised performance solutions was higher.

The gradual change in Ibsen's status within the Romanian repertoire is particularly evident within the character sites. His position in the repertoire of Constantin Nottara, Aristide Demetriade, Agatha Bârsescu and Petre Sturdza was justified through dramaturgical innovation, whereas for Ion Manolescu and Mărioara Voiculescu, Ibsen was already consecrated as canonical and thus suitable for interpretative genre experimentation.

The connections between the key contributors through the production hubs and the character sites provided numerous examples of intercrossings. As these hubs were significant in the Ibsen-related activities of the contributors, they shaped the structure of my analysis. Ion Manolescu and Mărioara Voiculescu were active in the private theatre hub and the National Theatre of Bucharest. Petre Sturdza, whose Ibsen career was tied to Dr. Stockmann, participated in theatre productions at the National Theatre of Iași and of Bucharest, as well as the Bulandra Company. Agatha Bârsescu is similar to Sturdza;

she was most renowned Mrs Alving in the Romanian Ibsen world while associated with both the National Theatre of Iași and Bucharest. Aristide Demetriade belongs to the Osvald character site, while his strongest institutional ties were with the National Theatre of Bucharest.

In the analysis of both the production hubs and the character sites, the mix of genres was examined to highlight the unique interpretative strategies used in the performance of Ibsen's characters. Instead of following an interpretative discipline tied to a single genre, the actors juxtaposed influences and emphasised different aspects of the acting genres, thus creating different performance recipes even when they grounded their interpretation in the same genres. The actors' freedom to select and combine performance techniques was not limited by either horizontal or vertical transmission, nor was it curtailed by an ensemble-approach in which unity and genre consistency were applied by means of a director's authority. Even when a generational transmission thread was at stake, the actors did not recycle the genre approaches of the older actors. Instead, they crafted their own interpretations in order to differentiate themselves in a competitive landscape of stars. The side effect of this creative freedom was that the unique acting recipes that emerged in the production hubs and character sites quickly disintegrated. The broken, fluctuating frameworks of finance, administration and legislation and the weak generational and prestige ties were partly responsible, but the overall fluidity and the lack of coagulation were also a product of the dominance of the actor in the Romanian Ibsen production.

It is arguable that Romanian actors were probably more eclectic in their mixing of genres to interpret Ibsen than other European key contributors. Antoine, Lugué-Poë, Ermete Zacconi or Lindemann advocated particular approaches to performing Ibsen that emerged out of their strong French, Italian and German theatre cultures. By contrast, the Romanian actors played with a mix of foreign and local genres in different combinations without advocating a single approach. The only significant local Romanian elements in these approaches were the psychological realism school of Aglae Pruteanu and State Dragomir, and the mix of drama and comedy enhanced through the work of Paul Gusty.

When it came to the literal embodiment of Ibsen characters, the Romanian actors intertwined two layers of physical expression. The dominant layer focused on emotion, passion, temperament, and corporeal expressivity to move the audience; it is often defined as a Latin characteristic of the interrelationship between audience and performer. This Latin dimension was perceived as an intrinsic aspect of the Romanian theatre and not as a foreign influence; it functioned as a bridge that facilitated the assimilation of elements of heightened expressivity that existed within the French and Italian genres – especially *verismo*. The Ibsen key contributors for whom this layer was most evident were Petre Sturdza, Aglae Pruteanu, Mărioara Voiculescu, Agatha Bârsescu, Aristide Demetriade, Constantin Nottara and Agepsina Macri. The notion of “expressivity” appears as a keyword defining the Romanian actor's approach, Agatha Bârsescu is a prime example: “a cărei excepțională expresivitate scenică a dus în lume, departe, renumele actorului român” (her exceptional stage expressiveness consecrated the Romanian actor abroad; my translation) (Vasiliu 1995: 172). A second, subsidiary layer is characterised by simplicity, sobriety and pragmatism, most often seen as Germanic characteristics, and associ-

ated with naturalism and realism genres. The key contributors most associated with this layer were State Dragomir, Ion Manolescu and Paul Gusty, although the latter was the only direct and open promoter of the German model. With regard to German Expressionism as utilised by Mărioara Voiculescu, Agatha Bârsescu, Aristide Demetriade and Ion Manolescu, this genre was adapted to express the strong passions and emotions associated with the Latin temperament.

What do these patterns of dissemination in the Romanian Ibsen production tell us about his impact upon the national theatre? In other words, how did the foreign Ibsen performances, the institutional framework, and the Romanian key contributors' efforts to promote his works affect the development of the local theatre life? Firstly, the foreign Ibsen productions had a moderate impact overall on the multilingual Romanian audience; yet the actors were more influenced by French and Italian performances than German, Hungarian or Yiddish. Secondly, the tensions at the level of the financial, administrative and legislative frameworks between commercialist, protectionist and aesthetic aims were instrumental in securing Ibsen's minor, yet stable position in the repertory. Thirdly, the efforts of the actors to promote Ibsen reveal his influence upon their acting and staging perspectives.

The actors whose theatrical practice was most influenced by Ibsen were those for whom he was a unique, innovative presence in the repertory. In the case of State Dragomir and Aglae Pruteanu, Ibsen supported the transition from romanticism towards psychological realism and an acting practice that drew on experimental psychology, philosophy and natural sciences. Petre Sturdza's case illustrates Ibsen's influence on a transition from romanticism to Italian *verismo*, which was based on techniques similar to Pruteanu and Dragomir's, yet less conceptualised. Dragomir, Pruteanu and Sturdza's initiatives to stage Ibsen were all attempts to modernise the repertory and use his plays as a mechanism to renew Romanian theatre life at the turn of the 20th century. In the case of Aristide Demetriade, Ibsen's unique position in the repertory supported the transition from romantic to naturalist acting, as an intermediary phase between Nottara's approach located between romanticism and *verismo* and Manolescu's stylised realism. Ibsen's impact on Demetriade was probably moderate in comparison to his impact on Dragomir, Pruteanu and Sturdza. In the repertory of Agatha Bârsescu, Ibsen's special position marked a change of acting approach from romanticism to Expressionism; but given the actress's strong attachment to romanticism and her appropriation of Expressionism, Ibsen's impact on her must have been low or moderate. Ibsen shaped her acting on the surface rather than at a deeper level, and her contribution represented a return to an older tradition rather than a modernisation of the Romanian stage.

The acting of younger artists such as Ion Manolescu and Mărioara Voiculescu was less influenced by Ibsen. Ion Manolescu's repertoire included not only Ibsen, but also other modern playwrights. He excelled in the interpretation of modern drama; his first acknowledgeable success was in Bjørnstjerne Bjørnson's *The Bankrupt*, although Osvald was one of his major roles. Ibsen's plays certainly helped him refine his realist acting techniques, even if it did not shape them. Mărioara Voiculescu used Ibsen's *Peer Gynt* to create an expressionist theatre, while her production of *Ghosts* still employed her renowned temperamental approach, even if it was somewhat moderated.

Paul Gusty, the only director in the list, used Ibsen to support his already established perspectives on staging and directing. The plays offered him solid ground to slowly but surely build a realist, ensemble-based theatre and encourage realist acting in his drama productions. Gusty's major contribution to Ibsen's consecration on the Romanian stage was to further the reforms of I. L. Caragiale and Al. Davila from a position as practitioner rather than as manager.

The Romanian Ibsen production prior to 1947 enriched the European Ibsen tradition with a high degree of diversity expressed through theatre practitioners' freedom to create unique aesthetic interpretations. The numerous influences coming into the country enhanced rather than limited the creativity of the Romanian actors and transformed the Romanian theatre field into crossroads where the greatest European theatre cultures could interact. Hubs coagulated around new approaches to acting and staging, emerging quickly and just as quickly disappearing again. The psychological realism school, the expressionist experiments, and the mix of drama and comedy were all powerful threads and make it impossible to talk about a single trend in the Romanian Ibsen tradition. A stronger constraining force over the whole field of the Romanian Ibsen production would have been necessary to privilege one specific thread since creative diversity depends on how powerfully the forces of constraint confine artistic experimentation: "We look for the forces that have constrained the diversity of world theatre through the successful promotion of the play; we look for similarities between adaptations because they point to constraining forces that in some way influence the creative process" (Holledge et al. 2016: 20). However, in the fluid institutional context of the newly emerging national theatre, marked by the instability of the financial, administrative and legislative structures and by a constant shift in focus from commercialism to protectionism and aestheticism, a strong overarching force of constraint did not exist. Therefore, we must not judge the ephemeral and fragmentary existence of the main production hubs as a disadvantage; rather, we should view it as the preconditions for the expression of artistic richness in an inherently open and fluid cultural landscape, marked by intercrossings and tensions between local and foreign elements.

This is especially relevant since the Romanian Ibsen production under communism did involve creative restrictions tied to an apparent institutional stability. The extraordinary playfulness in Ibsen production, which lasted for more than 50 years, ended once a strong force of constraint was imposed when the communist regime took hold of the national theatre field and dissolved its eclectic diversity. Once the liberty to experiment on the national stage was diminished, artists could no longer utilise the actor-based system to display the uniqueness of their own interpretations. The contrast before and after 1947 highlights the importance of the diversity of the star actors' recipes for the Romanian Ibsen production, how it was supported by the fragmented, decentralised institutional system, and why no dominant tradition coagulated.

What is truly unique about Romanian Ibsen prior to 1947 is its history as a European, cosmopolitan meeting point in which processes of coagulation and hybridisation were suspended. It was as kaleidoscopic and polyphonic as the Romanian theatre culture itself; it refused to close its geographical and aesthetic borders, and suspended the process of merging influences into a single form out of autochthonous and allochthonous elements. It was not a "melting pot", but maintained the discrete character of each of these

elements precisely because of the national theatre's decentralised, unstable and fluid nature. This playful diversity, based on fluidity, openness and a rejection of closing made it impossible for a hybrid Romanian Ibsen to emerge on the national stage; it also hindered the emergence of a local Ibsen cleansed of foreign influence. Whereas diversity, hybridisation, and the intercrossings of foreign with local theatrical forms are typical of many theatre cultures, it is common that either diachronic or synchronic processes of cultural transmission arrive at a point at which dominant traits are decisively defined. By contrast, there is no final moment or point of arrival in the Romanian Ibsen production prior to 1947, as none of the threads I have identified assumed a dominant position.

The desire to assert an aesthetically unique quality to the early Romanian Ibsen tradition and thus to validate the national theatre culture might encourage us to isolate and elevate a specific interpretative approach, but this investigation has shown the impossibility of pointing to one hub or site and declaring that "this is *the* Romanian Ibsen". If anything, the Romanian Ibsen production is, ironically, an example of a culture's ability to suspend essentialism and re-invent itself continuously. The Romanian Ibsen reveals that defining a "national essence" is not possible in a cultural space that rejects essentialisation in spite of the very desire to define itself through one specifically national element. Thus, I agree with the authors of *A Global Doll's House*, who stated that the "attempts to identify unique properties [...] are doomed to fail, not only because of the diversity of cultural, geographical, and temporal locations of production, but also because of the transformative processes inherent in theatrical adaptation" (ibid: 12). Their analysis applies to much broader geographical and temporal frameworks, yet this statement equally applies to the Romanian Ibsen production, at the crossroads of Europe, marked by fluid spatial and temporal frames, and by the constant shift in any force that might have constrained diversity. The Romanian Ibsen production prior to 1947 was a space that welcomed diversity rather than national xenophobia, despite inevitable tensions; it was an egalitarian society that empowered theatre as a negotiation tool between cultures as early as the first half of the 20th century.

Finally, this research opens up avenues for new inquiries into Henrik Ibsen's presence in the Romanian cultural space. The focus on the national practice of acting until 1947 provides the premises for a further study of Romanian Ibsen production during the communist era. The emergence of constraint over the national theatre culture that accompanied the new political regime contrasts with the earlier institutional instability, which had allowed an extremely diverse and free landscape. The dissolution of the private theatre companies was replaced by the absolute dominance of the institution of the National Theatre, although decentralisation did not entirely disappear. In addition, the geographical landscape also remained stable, in contrast to the period prior to 1947, when the fluid territorial shape favoured the immersion of numerous foreign influences. At the level of staging, the reign of the actors, which had characterised the national theatre life before communism, ended once the ensemble-based approach was institutionalised and directors gained industrial power. At the level of acting, the richness of acting genres and the unique mixes in the acting styles of the star actors shifted into the richness of the directorial approaches in ensemble-based productions. Finally, even the focus on specific Ibsen plays and characters changed, so that *Ghosts* and *An Enemy of the People* were no longer the most frequently performed plays.

A second area of further study that builds upon the research in this thesis is tied to the theatre reviews, memoirs and biographies that I have employed to identify the diversity of aesthetic interpretation in the Romanian Ibsen productions through the practice of acting. This data is a rich resource to further explore the audience reception to early Romanian Ibsen performances. A future research path would involve analysing the impact of these diverse acting approaches on the meanings extracted by audiences from the narrative within Ibsen's plays. For instance, at the industrial level it is possible that an ensemble approach highlights the social dynamics in a drama for the spectator by focusing on the multiple interrelationships of the characters, thus revealing social structures. By contrast, the star actor approach can encourage spectators to concentrate on an individual's experience and view the social structure of the play through her/his eyes.

At the acting level, the various genres employed by actors highlight different meanings in Ibsen's plays. For instance, a naturalist production encourages the spectator to perceive the mimetically represented environment as causal in the construction of characters on stage. By contrast, *verismo*, emphasising physiological pathology, prevents the spectator from identifying himself/herself with the character due to its extreme renditions and in spite of the passionate and emotional approaches. Finally, Expressionism encouraged the spectator to focus on the theatrical nature of the performance and acknowledge the archetypal human traits in the characters.

All the meanings concerning Ibsen's plays highlighted in the Romanian productions and based on the aforementioned genres were integrated in the critical reception of the performances. Therefore, a reception study on Ibsen in the Romanian theatre will involve interrogating the traces left from performances in reviews, memoirs, and articles in order to establish these meanings and connect them with the findings of this thesis. Moreover, the diversity of meanings would be interrogated with relation to the diversity of literary viewpoints applied to Ibsen's dramaturgy. Since most theatre reviews were written by Romanian men of letters, the critical reception to Ibsen's dramaturgy represents a field where literature and theatre meet, pointing at the complex encounter of meanings drawn from the practice of acting and from literary analysis. Finally, I argue that the real literary breakthrough of Ibsen in Romania took place in the interwar period, when most translations of his plays were published, after his breakthrough on the Romanian stage. Therefore, the present research is a fundamental step in understanding how the contribution of the theatre practitioners' and the diversity they promoted through their unique styles paved the way for Ibsen's assimilation into Romanian culture and even impacted the playwright's literary reception. The actors not only prepared the way for his establishment in the Romanian literary landscape, they also furthered the translations of his plays in their performances. This study of Ibsen's reception in Romania offers a particularly rich direction for further research because it can connect the theatrical and literary Romanian theatre fields, and point to intersections and tensions between them. It could provide us with an interdisciplinary analysis of the meanings discovered within Ibsen's texts by the men of letters and theatre practitioners alike, enhancing once again the interpretative diversity of the Romanian cultural space that has been demonstrated by the findings of this thesis.

Part Six: Technical Appendix. Networks

In order to understand the connections between the most influential contributors in the Romanian reception of Ibsen, I worked with several networks that covered the need to know the position of the key contributors in: 1. the Romanian Ibsen production landscape and 2. the national theatre landscape. They also accounted for relevant connections in the Romanian Ibsen production that were less visible in the Ibsen network.

The starting point was that the key contributors were dynamic agents at the industrial level of the theatre production. Their movements, actions and connections within the Ibsen, and national theatre landscapes respectively indicated interweavings shaped either heterogeneously in actor-based productions, or homogeneously in ensemble-based productions.

On the one hand, the interweaving was heterogeneously shaped in the case of the star actors, especially visible in their different choices of performance styles. In some cases the star actors were also directors of the productions, managers of the tours, guest actors and translators of the play(s). Petre Sturdza is the strongest example of this. In addition, actors such as Agatha Bârsescu performed Ibsen as guest actress in 1925, Aristide Demetriade managed some tours with *Ghosts* in 1908–1909, whereas Mărioara Voiculescu managed her own theatre company, re-opening with a performance of *Peer Gynt* in 1924.

On the other hand, the Romanian field of Ibsen production was also characterised by homogeneously shaped interweavings in the case of ensemble-based performances. The star actors dominated the Romanian history of Ibsen, yet there were still signs of a slowly emerging ensemble tradition.

How do we detect the ensemble productions statistically? How do we know that they were ensemble productions and not simply actor-based productions? And finally, how do we assess their impact? Here I considered the lists of actors in both leading and secondary roles, as well as the plays in which they performed.

A look at the 12 actors initially identified by IbsenStage and at the events that connect them revealed that four of them were closely connected to each other: Agepsina Macri-Eftimiu, George Ciprian, Aurel Athanasescu and Nicolae Soreanu. They were all actors at the National Theatre of Bucharest, reaching the peak of their careers in the interwar period. On the one hand, the number of events starring Agepsina Macri-Eftimiu and the history of her career indicated her as a star actress. On the other, while we might be

tempted to say the same about George Ciprian, Aurel Athanasescu and Nicolae Soreanu, this is hardly the case. Although they were all renowned actors, they were not stars. In addition, these three actors had a balanced presence in Ibsen productions in both leading and secondary roles.

This forces us to look at the actors who had most performed secondary roles too. The most obvious was that there were few actors with a consistent contribution in secondary roles. Only six out of 238 actors in secondary roles performed in at least five Ibsen events. Some of them were also noticeable leading role contributors, such as George Ciprian, who ranks high on both lists. The remaining five actors performed only secondary roles. One of them, Ion Crețu, was part of Petre Sturdza's tour in 1907–1908. Yet, given the dominant role of the latter, I did not pursue an analysis of Crețu's contribution. As for the remaining four – Ana Luca, Ion Morțun, Ion Livescu and Victor Antonescu – they statistically compete with the star actors in leading roles.

Thus, we are left to wonder why few actors had a statistically consistent contribution in secondary roles and how the two statistics on leading and secondary roles are interconnected. The two productions in which these actors were mostly cast, namely *A Doll's House* (1921–1932) and *The Wild Duck* (1920–1928) provide the answers. More specifically, they starred the eight actors highlighted by both leading and secondary roles statistics: Agepsina Macri, Aurel Athanasescu, George Ciprian, Nicolae Soreanu, Ana Luca, Ion Morțun, Ion Livescu and Victor Antonescu.

Finally, the evidence tells us that the star actor still dominated. Agepsina Macri-Eftimiu in the *A Doll's House* production is the most striking example. Yet, the ties between the actors indirectly suggested by the statistics indicate that the ensemble gained similar importance to the star in the interwar period. Moreover, actors performing in both leading and secondary roles strengthened the idea that ensemble-based productions became more and more important in the Romanian Ibsen tradition. Finally, these productions maximised the interactivity between contributors and provided a balanced interaction between them.

6.1 Three layers

The network analysis was based on the three layers: 1. An Ibsen network layer; 2. A Romanian Ibsen key contributors layer; and 3. A national network layer. The connections and interweavings of these layers were indispensable in understanding Ibsen's impact upon the Romanian theatre, as they helped us visualise the interaction between the key contributors.

6.2 Ibsen network layer

This layer was based on SQL queries. The networks of this layer were exclusively contributor-based: Contributor-event, Contributor-play, Contributor-venue, Contributor-organisation. What do they indicate?

Firstly, the contributor-event network indicated a low degree of connectedness and a landscape marked by fractures and fluidity. Many events were isolated, so that the network highlighted the high degree of decentralisation in the Romanian Ibsen landscape. In other words, the network indicated the lack of a dominant pattern in the Romanian Ibsen tradition until 1947, pointing instead at brief moments of coalescence shortly followed by fracturing.

Secondly, the contributor-play network pointed at main characters and, implicitly, plays in which the Romanian actors performed most often. Naturally, if the most performed Ibsen plays were *A Doll's House*, *Ghosts* and *An Enemy of the People*, their main characters, namely Nora, Oswald, Mrs Alving, Dr. Stockmann, were performed most often. However, there were clear differences between the three contributor-character networks. For instance, the network of Nora had many nodes connected to the role, and hardly pointed to any actress that could have claimed ownership for this role, except for Agepsina Macri-Eftimiu. As far as the Mrs Alvings and Oswalds are concerned, the respective networks indicated the actors with a consistent contribution in these roles much more clearly: Agatha Bârsescu, Mărioara Voiculescu, Aristide Demetriade and Ion Manolescu. Finally, the network with Dr. Stockmann at its core indicated Petre Sturdza as the strongest contributor.

Thirdly, the contributor-venue network pointed at those contributors with the largest dissemination potential in the early Romanian Ibsen production and identified the cores associated with either touring or guest-performances. In this network, the most important contributors were Agatha Bârsescu, Aristide Demetriade and Petre Sturdza.

Fourthly, the contributor-organisation network linked the contributors with the institutions to which they belonged. On the one hand, the network highlighted the most important institutions in the Romanian Ibsen production. Also, it presented the actors and the directors as elements connecting the Romanian theatre institutions that staged Ibsen. On the one hand, the institutions that dominated the Romanian Ibsen field were the National Theatres of Bucharest, Iași, Cluj and Craiova, and the private theatre company Bulandra. On the other hand, actors such as Ion Manolescu, Mărioara Voiculescu and Petre Sturdza were equally connected with National Theatres and private theatre companies, whereas the remaining most important actors and directors were connected with the National Theatres alone.

Finally, the networks confirmed the lack of a dominant tradition in the Romanian Ibsen production, and the coexistence of different traditions. They highlighted institutions, characters, actors, directors and dissemination trajectories, all of which were useful in identifying the main interweaving patterns in the early Romanian Ibsen history.

6.3 Romanian Ibsen key contributors layer

This layer consisted of the 12 main contributors selected based on IbsenStage statistics. The main connections in this layer concerned the participation of at least two of the key contributors in the same Ibsen event. The connections thus identified were between: 1. Aglae Pruteanu and State Dragomir; 2. Paul Gusty, Agepsina Macri, Nicolae Soreanu, George Ciprian and Aurel Athanasescu; 3. Paul Gusty, Petre Sturdza and Nicolae Soreanu

(Figure 46). However, we were more interested in how the connections between all these contributors were integrated in the larger national theatre field, expanding thus the field of Ibsen production. This helped us to integrate better Ibsen in the national landscape, as well as to understand the cultural transmission dynamics in the Romanian theatre world.

6.4 National network layer

This last layer highlighted the connections that were invisible in the previous layers and, implicitly, in the Ibsen networks, yet were essential to understanding the framework that shaped the activity of the 12 key Ibsen contributors. From this perspective, if the Ibsen network revealed a low degree of connectedness, the national network layer highlighted exactly the opposite. In this respect, the connections between the Romanian theatre practitioners filled in the gaps in the network of Ibsen contributors. In the end, they helped us better understand the emergence of the various patterns in the Romanian Ibsen production.

There are two types of connections in this layer, concerning: 1. the actor training and 2. the institutional affiliation. That is, we considered the mechanisms of cultural transmission both vertically and horizontally.

On the one hand, the vertical transmission is a generational one, based on actors who taught newer generations of actors (Figure 47). On the other, the horizontal transmission is developed on two other levels: individual and institutional. Individually, it took place through the encounter of prestige actors with either less prestigious or younger colleagues, usually during guest performances. Institutionally, the horizontal transmission was enacted in the connection between theatre practitioners working at the same institution.

How did the generational, vertical level emerge in the national network layer? Its most typical form was that of a genealogical tree. This visual pattern helped in reconfiguring the way in which the Romanian actor training was fulfilled through actors in Conservatoires at the Drama and Comedy/Declamation classes. However, the generational actor-training scheme was divided in two. On the one side was the branch of the Ibsen actors trained in Iași by Mihail Galino. These actors were State Dragomir, Aglae Pruteanu and Petre Sturdza, who thus shared a brief period of their careers before Petre Sturdza left Iași for Bucharest. The branch of the actors trained in Iași therefore had weak connections at the generational level with the branch of actors trained in Bucharest. The only real connections existed at the lower, background level, by means of Costache Caragiale, Matei Millo and Mihail Pascaly.

Nevertheless, the actor-training generational tree extended across time. The two teachers relevant here were Aristizza Romanescu and Constantin Nottara. They not only introduced Ibsen to the stage in Bucharest, but also trained most of the future renowned Ibsen actors such as Aristide Demetriade, Ion Manolescu, Nicolae Soreanu or George Ciprian. In this respect, the actor training provided by Nottara dominated the generational landscape. Moreover, the acting techniques taught in Iași by Mihail Galino and in Bucharest by Constantin Nottara were in both cases those of the classical and roman-

tic genres, due to the shared, three-pronged root of the tree represented by Costache Caragiale, Matei Millo and Mihail Pascaly. In addition, Petre Velleşcu connected four important contributors in the Romanian theatre field – Aristizza Romanescu, Grigore Manolescu, Constantin Nottara and Agatha Bârsescu – as he was teacher to them all. The scheme showed not only that the Romantic tradition was very persistent on the local stage, but also that it had many ramifications, providing an interactive environment.

On the other hand, the horizontal level, both individual and institutional, revealed complex entanglements between star actors, managers and directors, although the display of the connections differed visually.

For instance, the individual level of horizontal transmission, based on the contribution of the prestige actors, developed linearly (Figure 48). Similar to the generational axis, the base of this level is represented by Matei Millo and Mihail Pascaly. This time, however, the core of the network was constituted by Grigore Manolescu, Aristizza Romanescu and Agatha Bârsescu as the most influential actors. Their impact was mostly visible in relationship to younger actors. For instance, all three actors above contributed to the formation of Aglae Pruteanu, State Dragomir and Petre Sturdza in their early career years at the National Theatre of Iaşi. Their guest performances put older and younger generations on stage together. In Agatha Bârsescu's case, her influence expanded over the younger actors in Bucharest too, through the same guest performances. Finally, the romantic actors were as central at the individual level of horizontal transmission as in the generational scheme. Generally, these two networks confirmed the power of the star actor.

By contrast, the institutional level of horizontal transmission put Alexandru Davila and Paul Gusti at the network's core (Figure 45). Their achievements dictated the shift from Romanticism to naturalism/realism in the acting and in the staging of a theatre production. Furthermore, their position in the main theatre institutions revealed a national network in-between state and private theatres. Both Davila and Gusti were linked to all the key Ibsen actors except for Aglae Pruteanu and State Dragomir, who worked their entire careers at the National Theatre of Iaşi. This proved that the National Theatre of Bucharest and the Davila/Bulandra Company were the main institutional cores in the national network. Although the National Theatres of Iaşi, Craiova and Cluj were also part of the network, their quantitative significance is minor. The examples of Petre Sturdza and Ştefan Braborescu connecting the theatres of Iaşi, Craiova and Cluj with Bucharest did not account for a strong institutional impact either. In other words, they could not compete with the large network systems of the National Theatre of Bucharest and of the Davila/Bulandra Company. Undoubtedly, these two institutions dominated the theatre market because of their powerful networks. Finally, the overlapping of actors and directors in the institutional networks proved the strong connection between the state theatre and the private theatre environment.

6.5 Final remarks

Finally, a constant interweaving movement characterised the interaction between the main frames of the complex background of the Romanian Ibsen production. The networks augmented the effects of this interweaving by pointing at the connections between

the main agents. Time, space and place coagulated and provided an interweaving frame for encounters within both the Ibsen field and the national theatre field. These contact points between the local theatre practitioners highlighted not only those who directly influenced the Romanian Ibsen production through their actual participation in the stagings; they also revealed those who did not participate in any Ibsen staging, yet influenced the further approach to his plays. Ultimately, by assembling the information extracted from this interweaving background by means of graphs, maps, and networks, we identified the coagulation of ephemeral cores for brief periods, only for them to quickly disintegrate. In other words, these cores constituted the patterns of cultural transmission in the Romanian Ibsen production until 1947 analysed in Part Four of this thesis.

Figures

The following pages show the figures referred to in the text.

Figure 1: Romanian present border

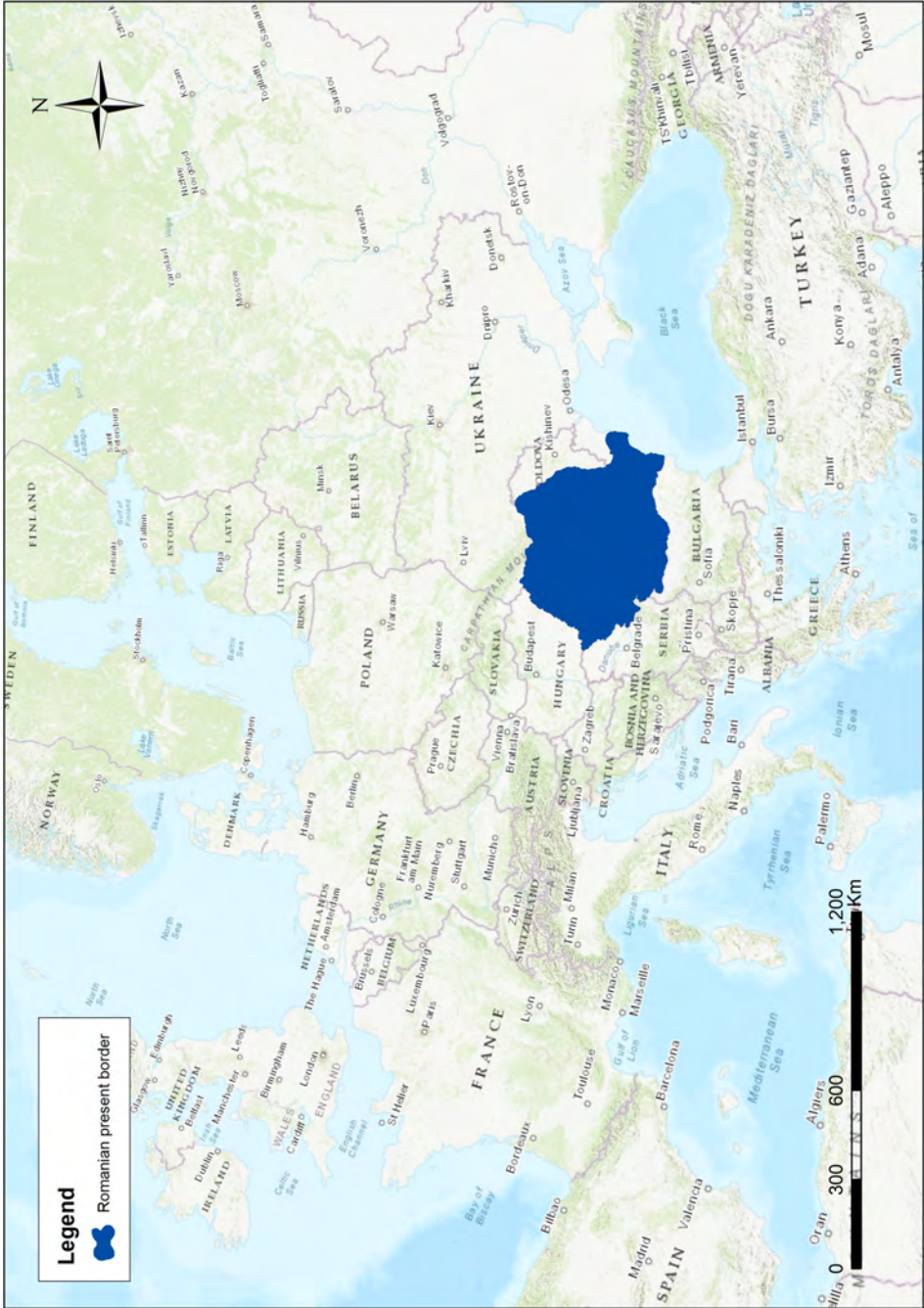


Figure 2: Historical borders of Romania

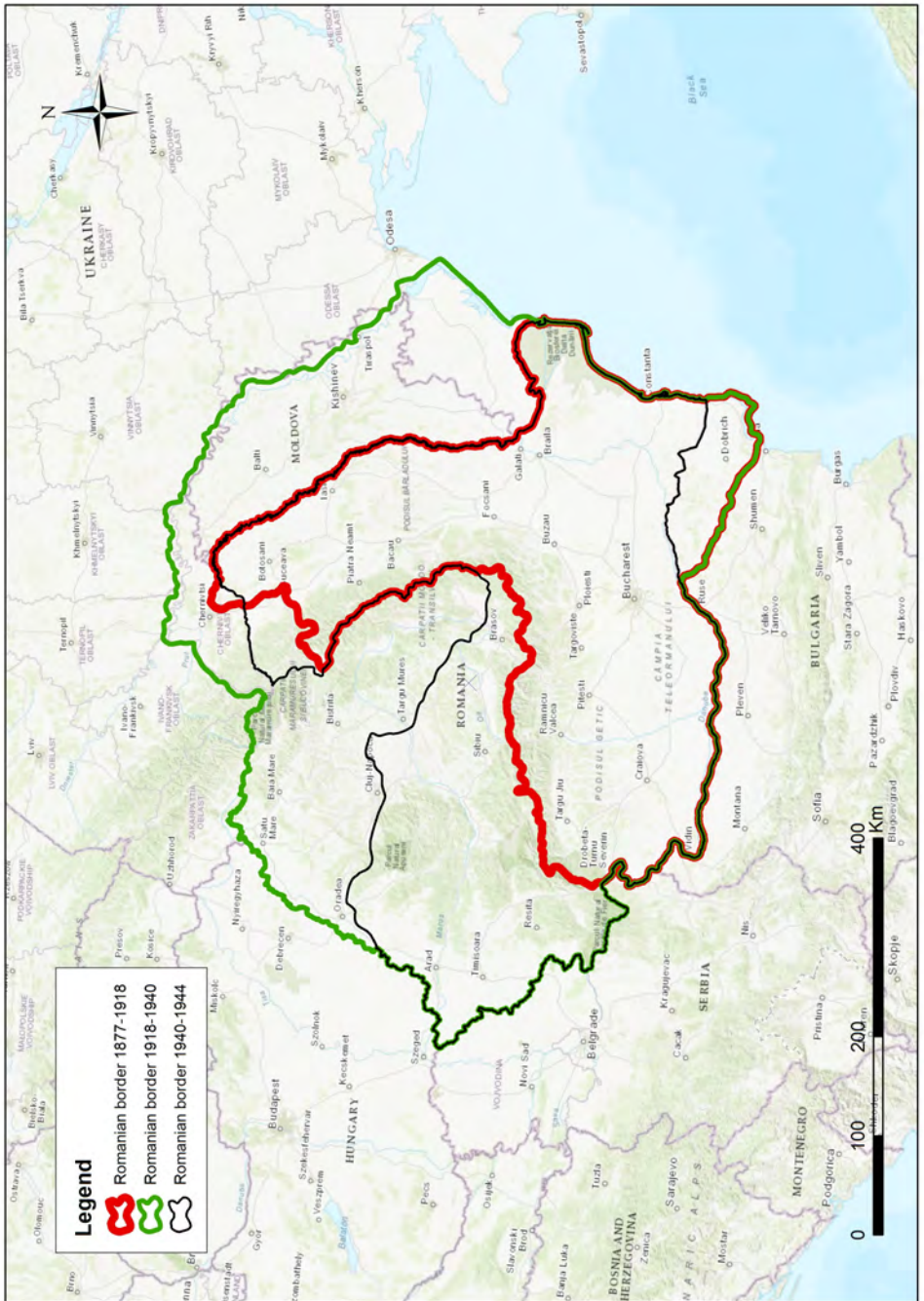


Figure 3: Limit of Transylvania



Figure 4: Events in Romanian per year 1894–1947

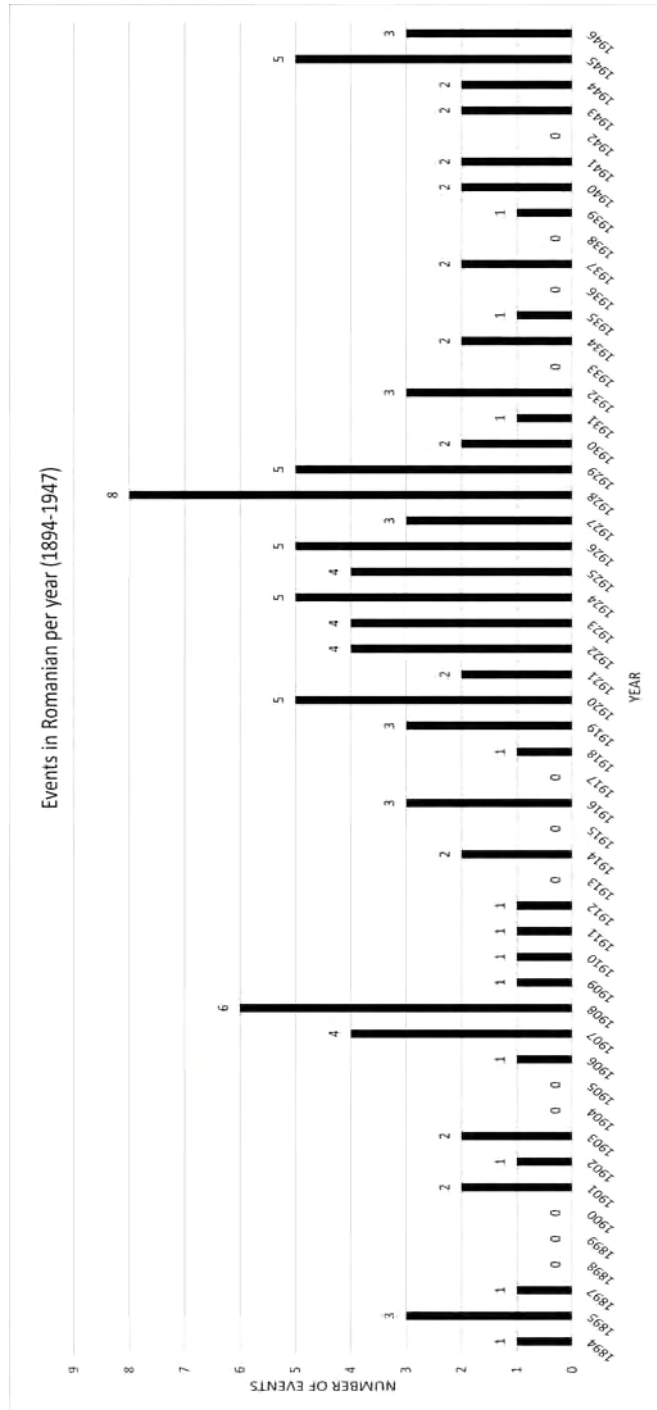


Figure 5: Events in Romania in all languages 1879–1947

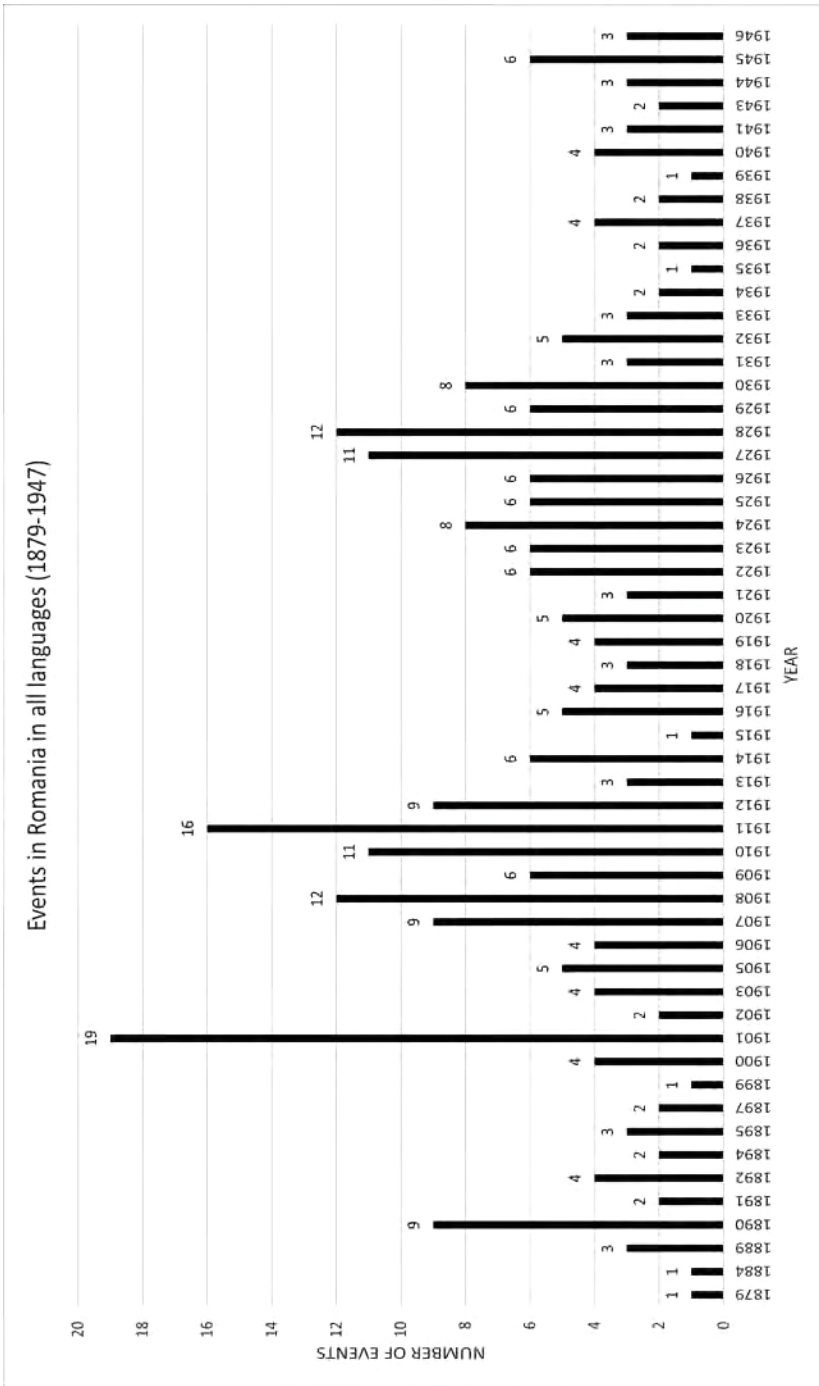


Figure 6: Events in French, Italian, German and Yiddish 1884–1940

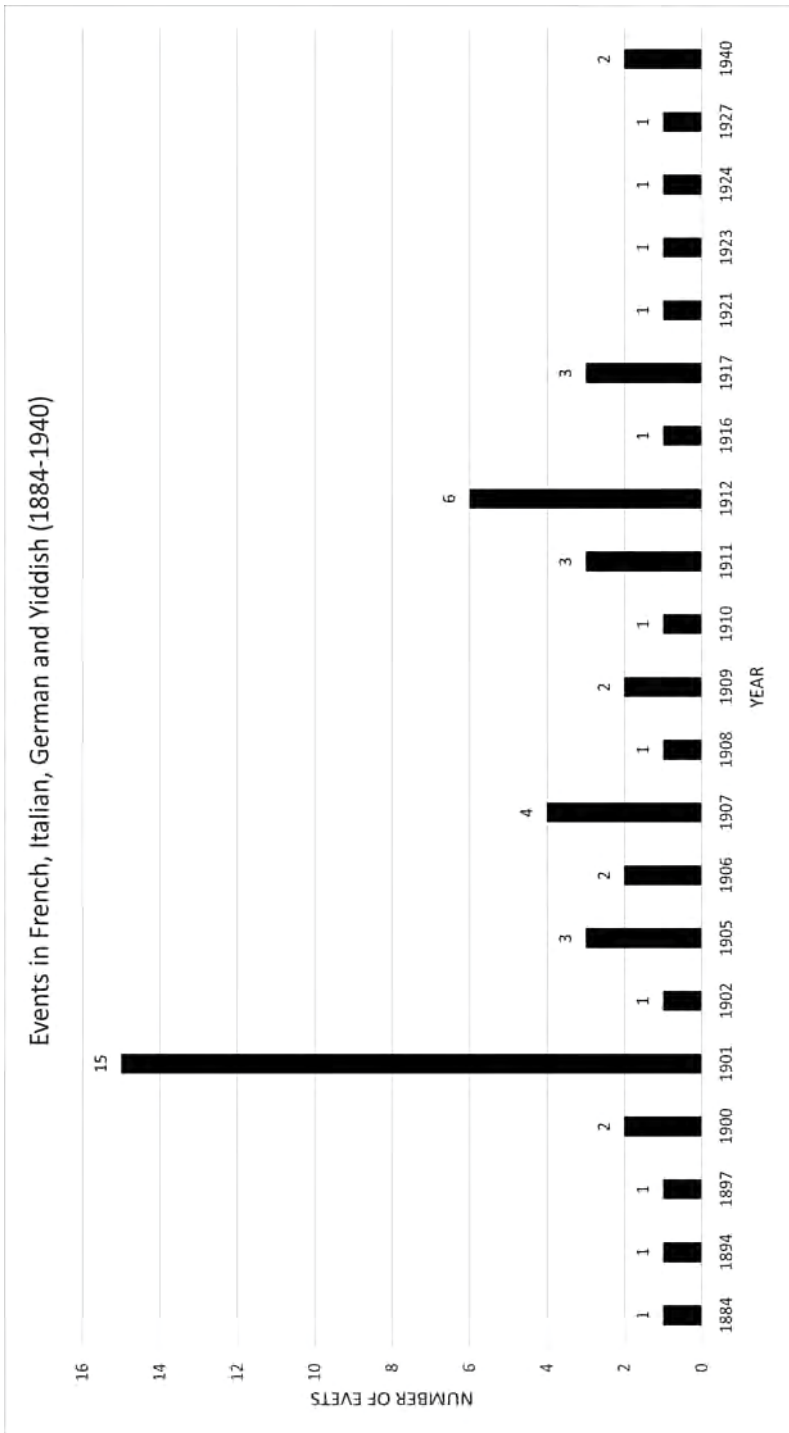


Figure 7: Events in Hungarian in Transylvania 1879–1945

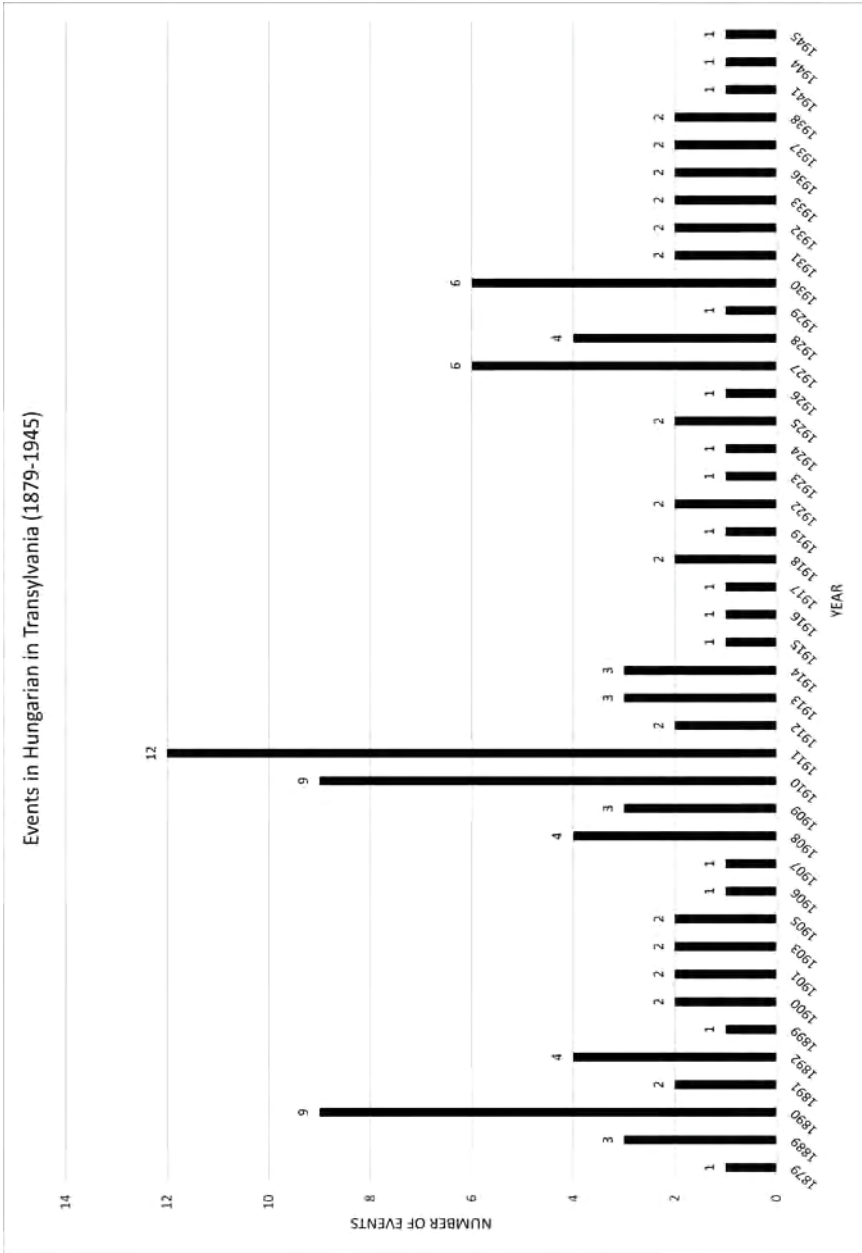


Figure 8: Foreign language tours 1879–1945

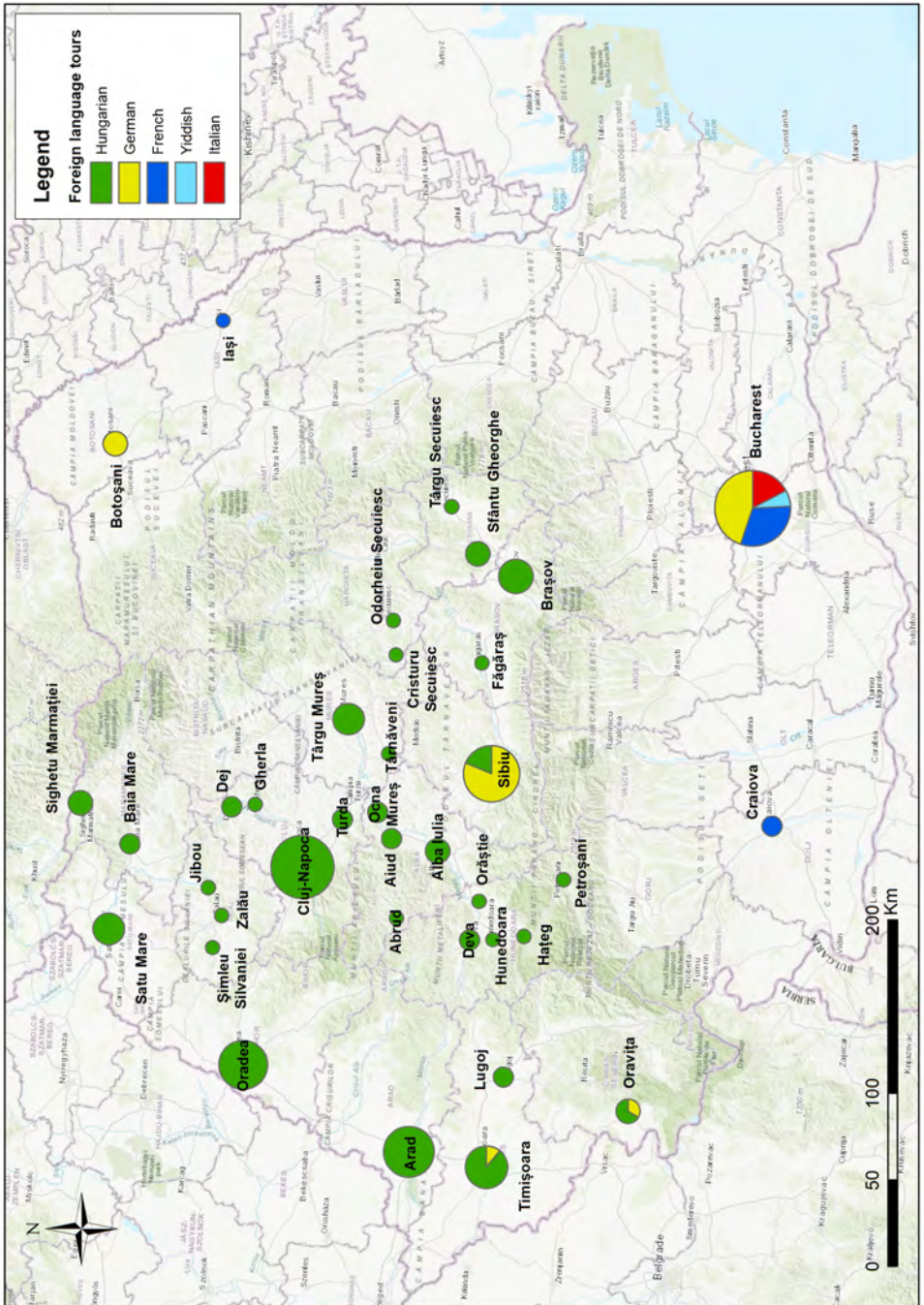


Figure 9: The French Ibsen tours visiting Romania

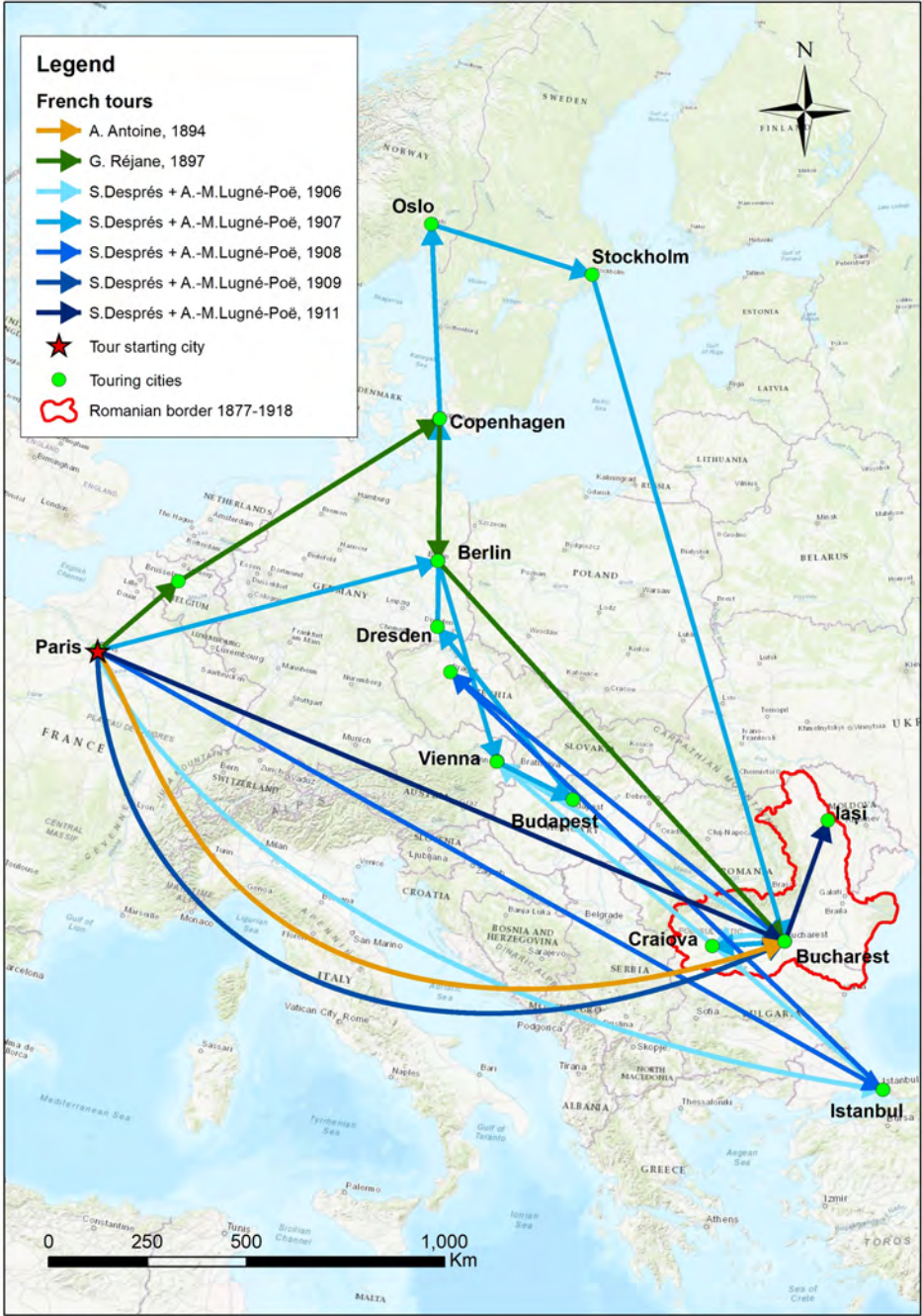


Figure 11: The German Ibsen tours visiting Romania

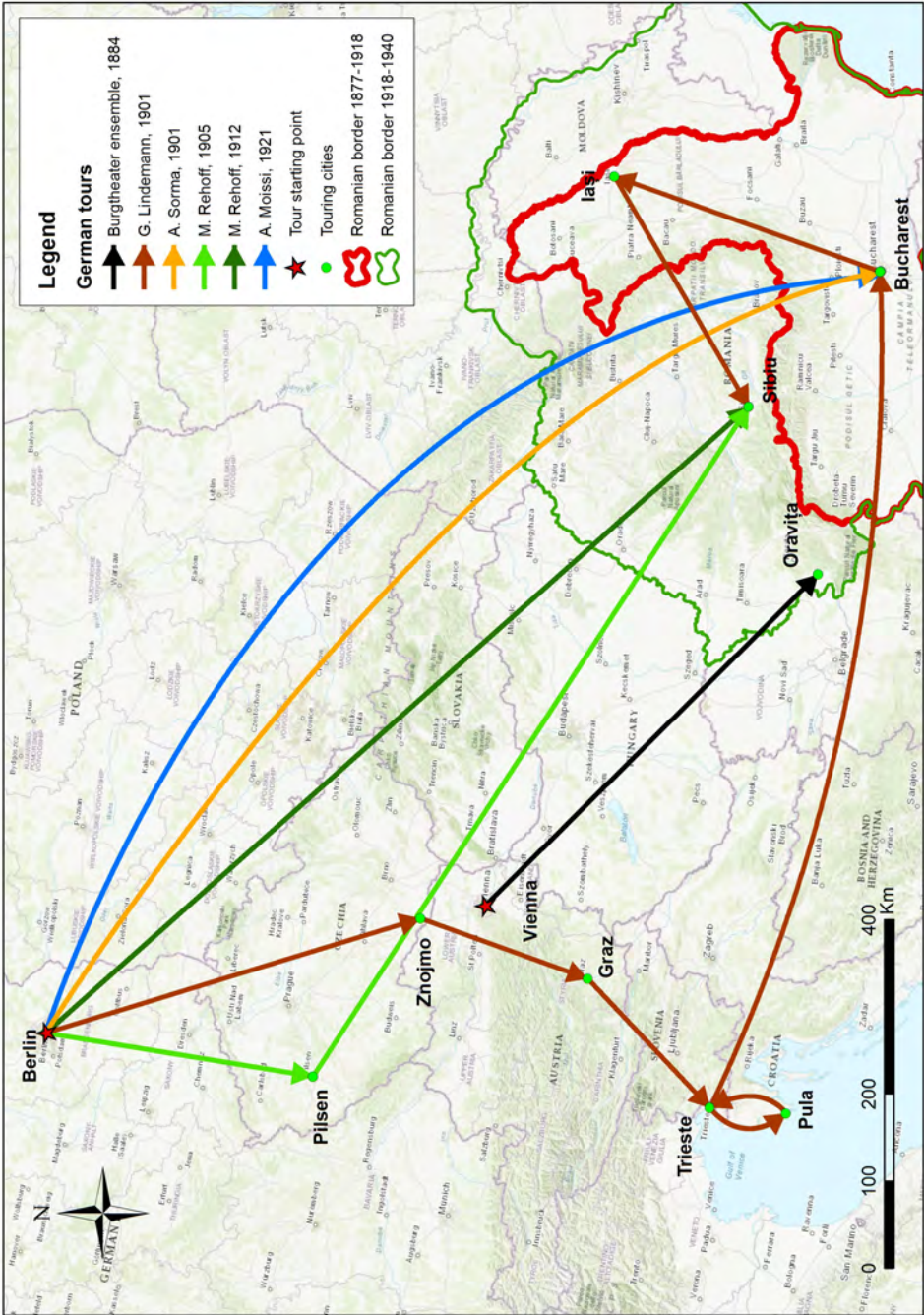


Figure 13: Number of events in Hungarian in Transylvania/Venue (1879–1945)

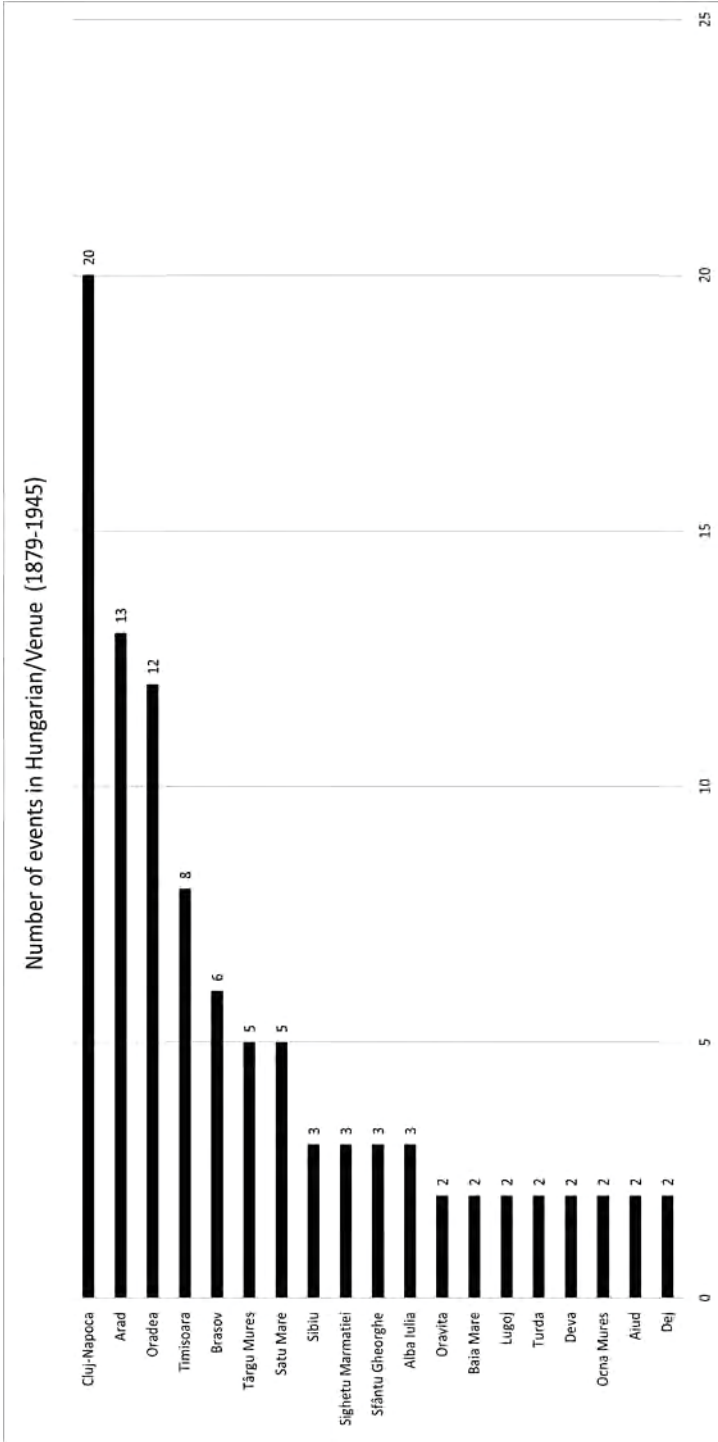


Figure 14: Hungarian organisations staging Ibsen in Transylvania (1879–1945)

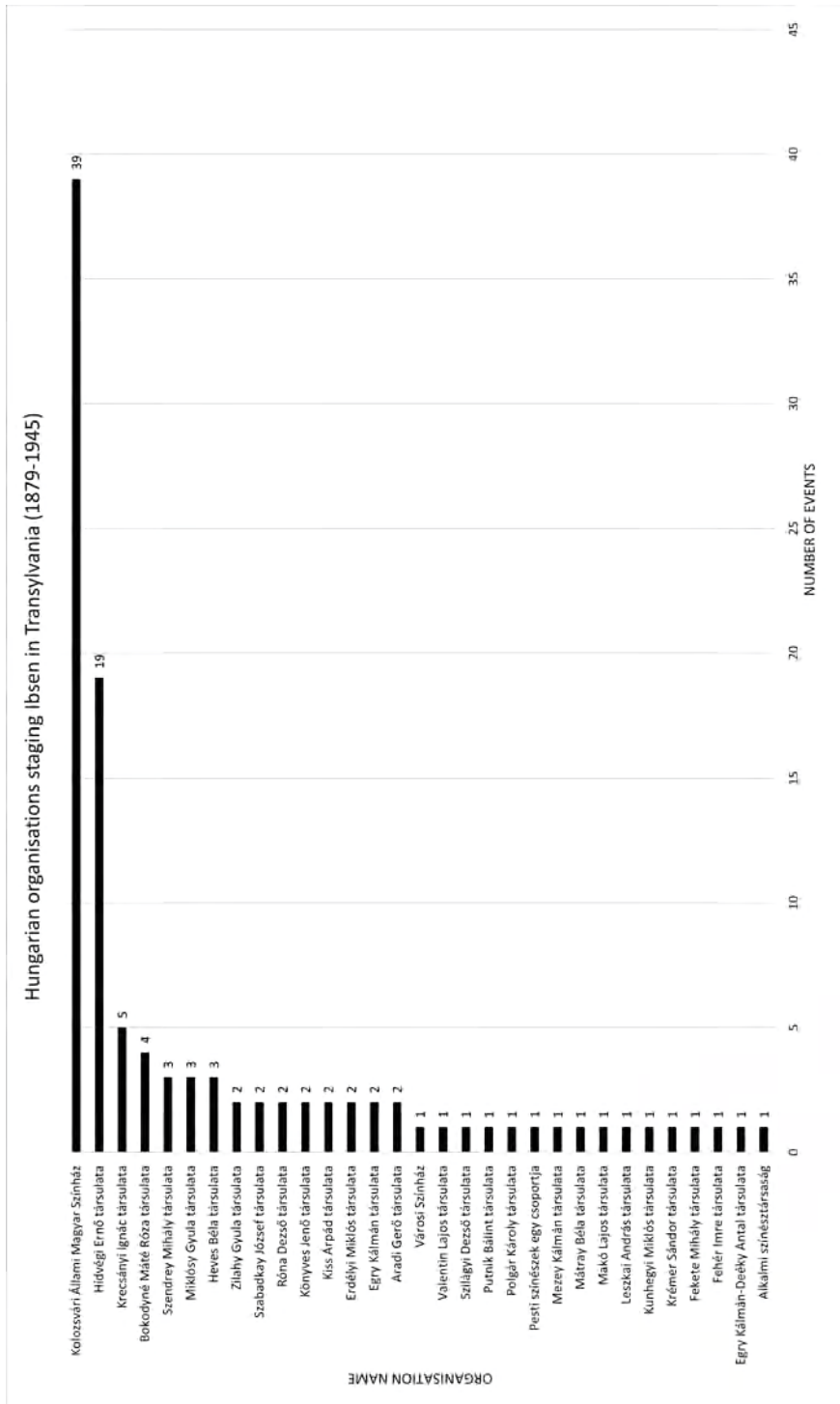


Figure 15: Ibsen plays performed in Hungarian in Transylvania (1879–1945)

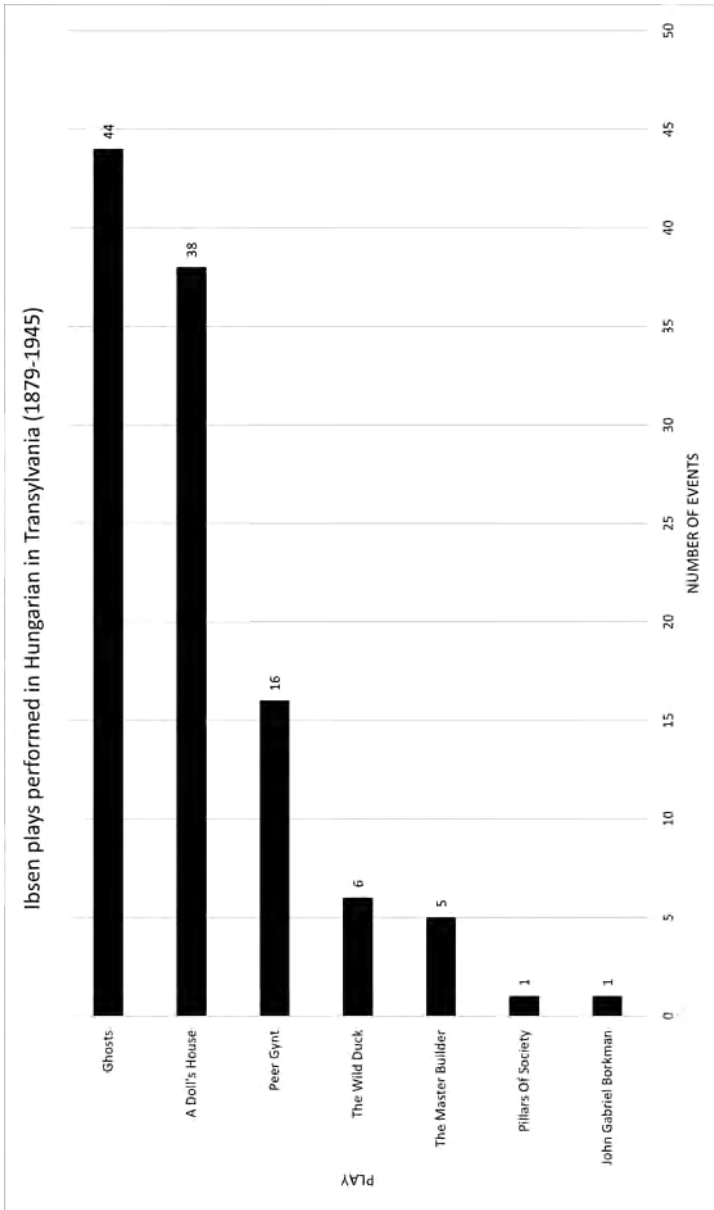


Figure 16: Ibsen plays staged by The Hungarian theatre of Cluj (1879–1945)

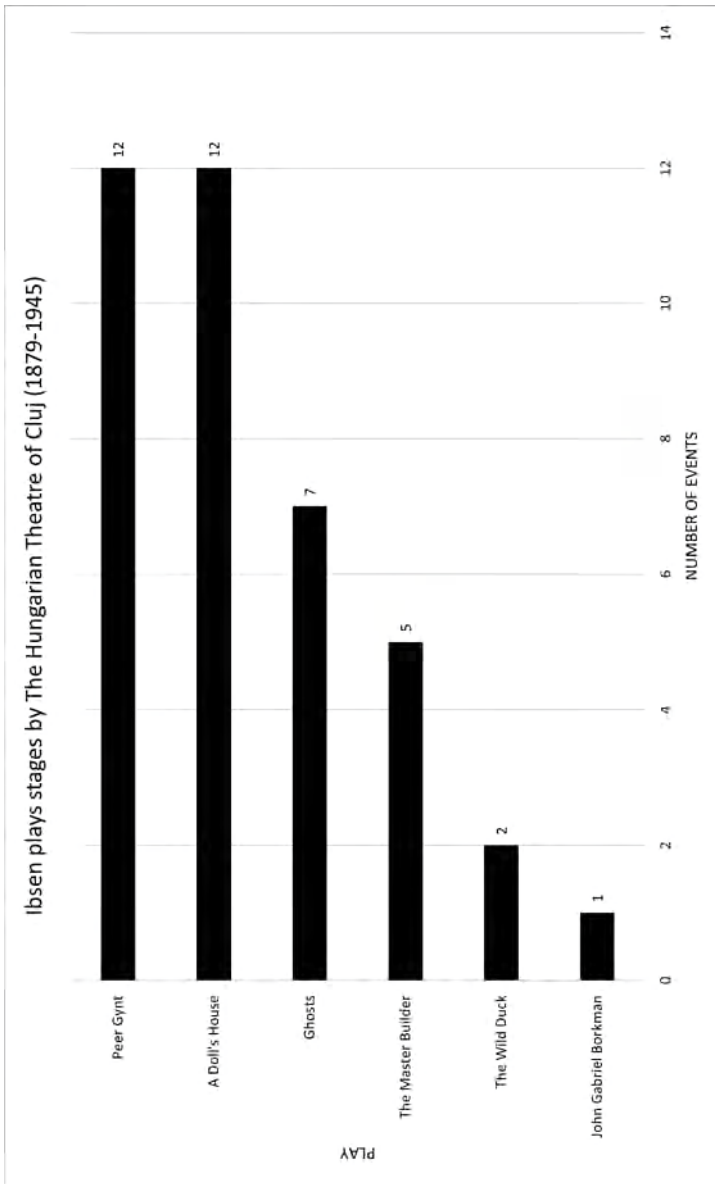


Figure 17: Hungarian actors/actresses performing Ibsen in Hungarian-speaking events in Transylvania (1879–1945)

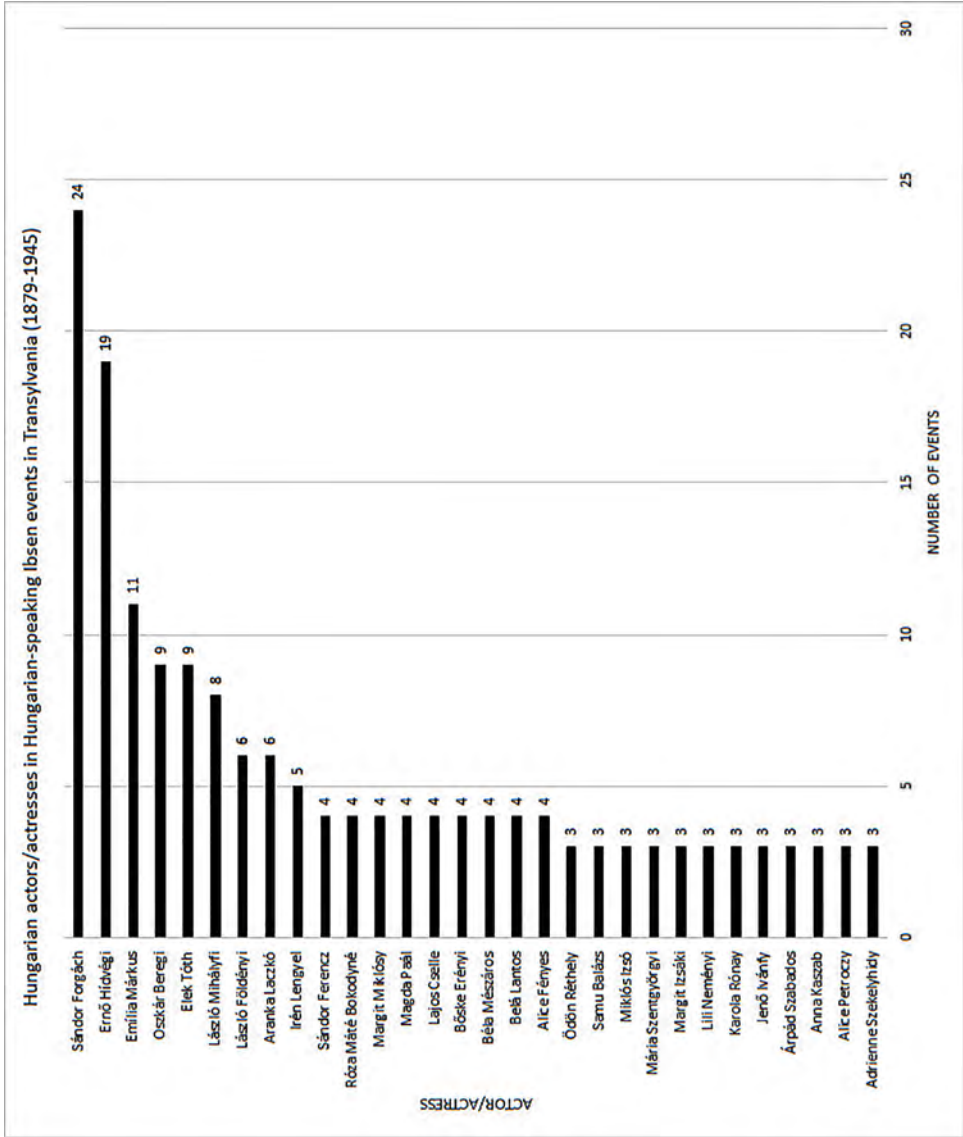


Figure 18: Máté Róza Bokodyné touring performances

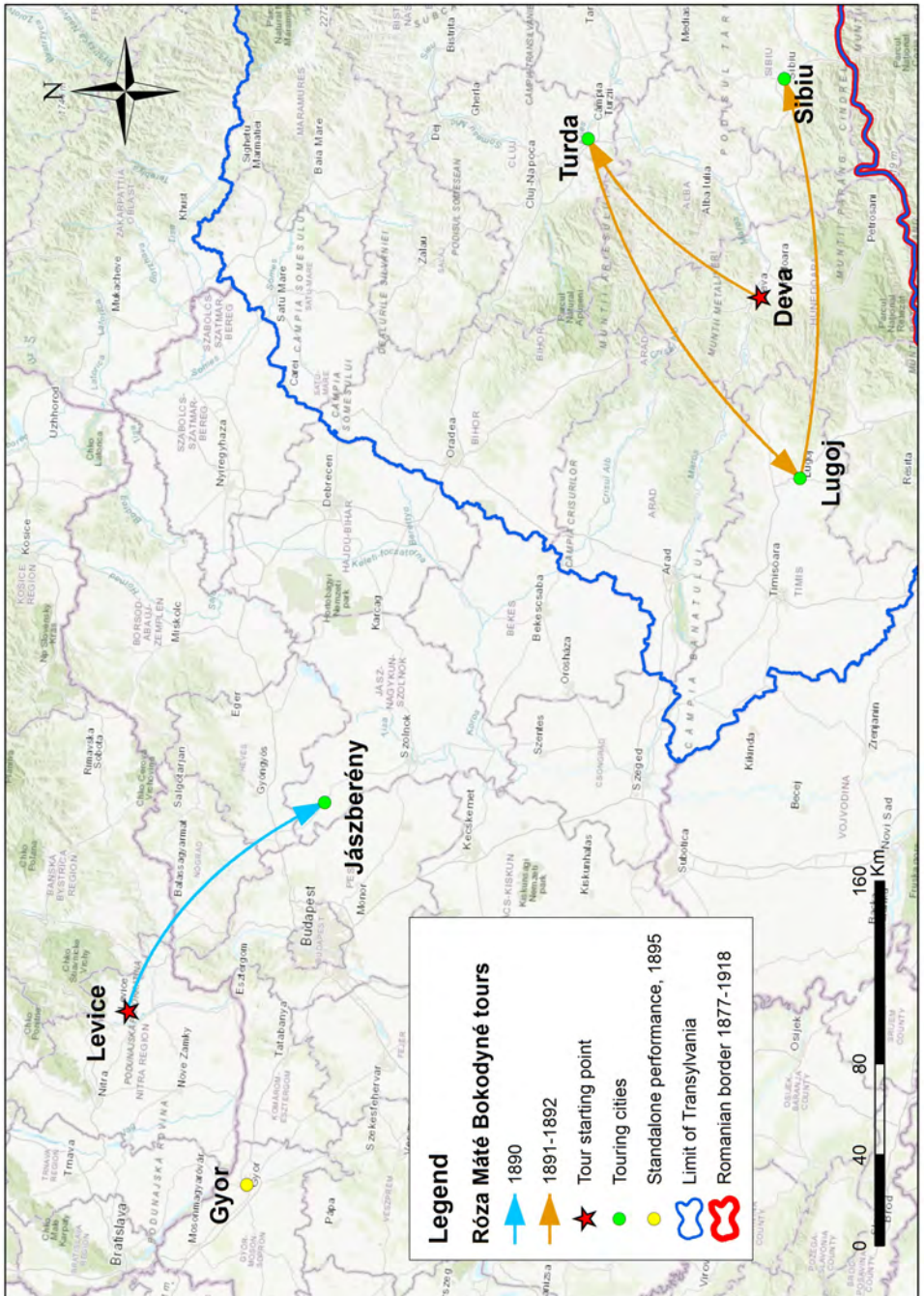


Figure 19: Krecsányi Ignác company touring performances

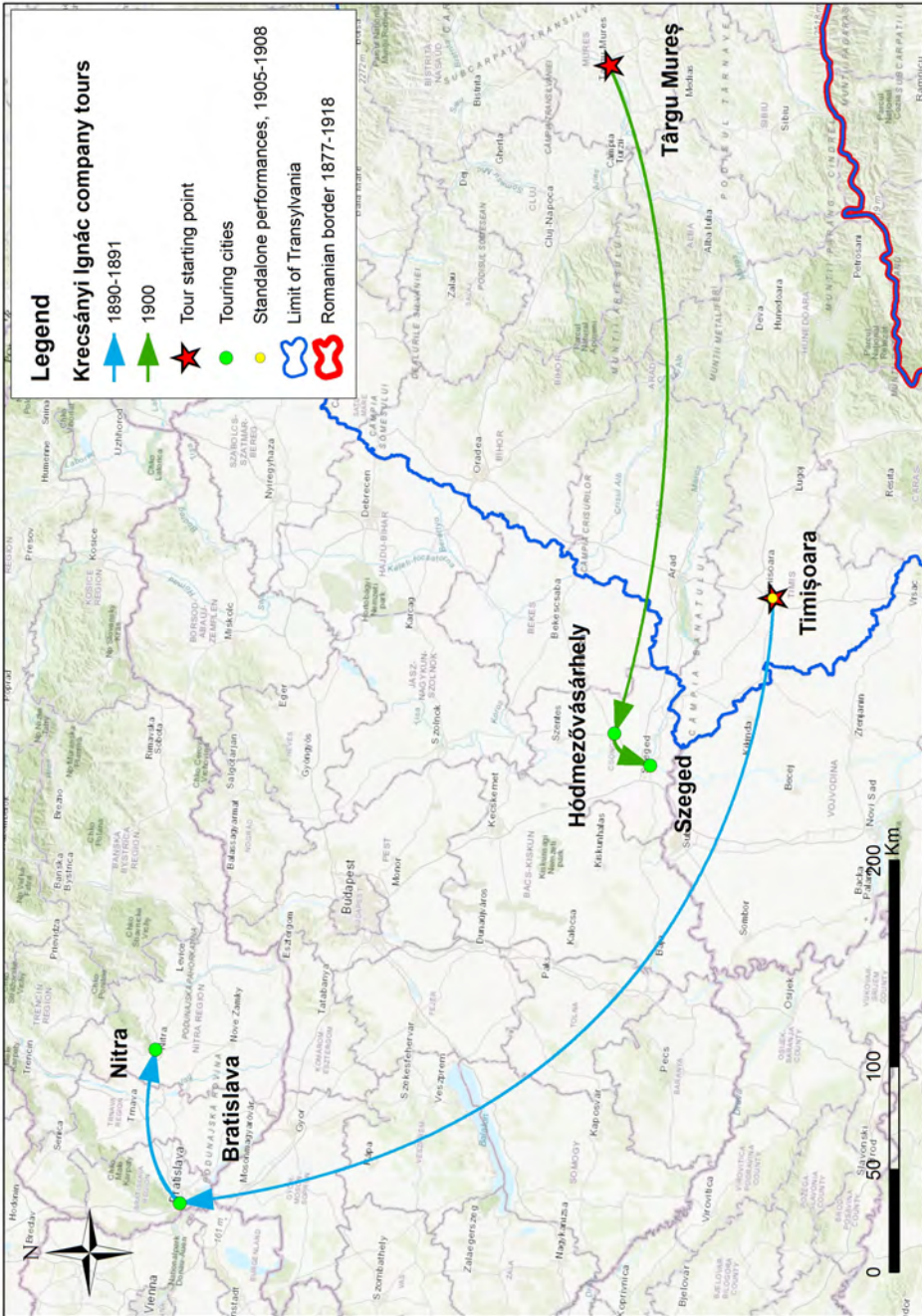


Figure 21: Emília P. Márkus Ibsen performances

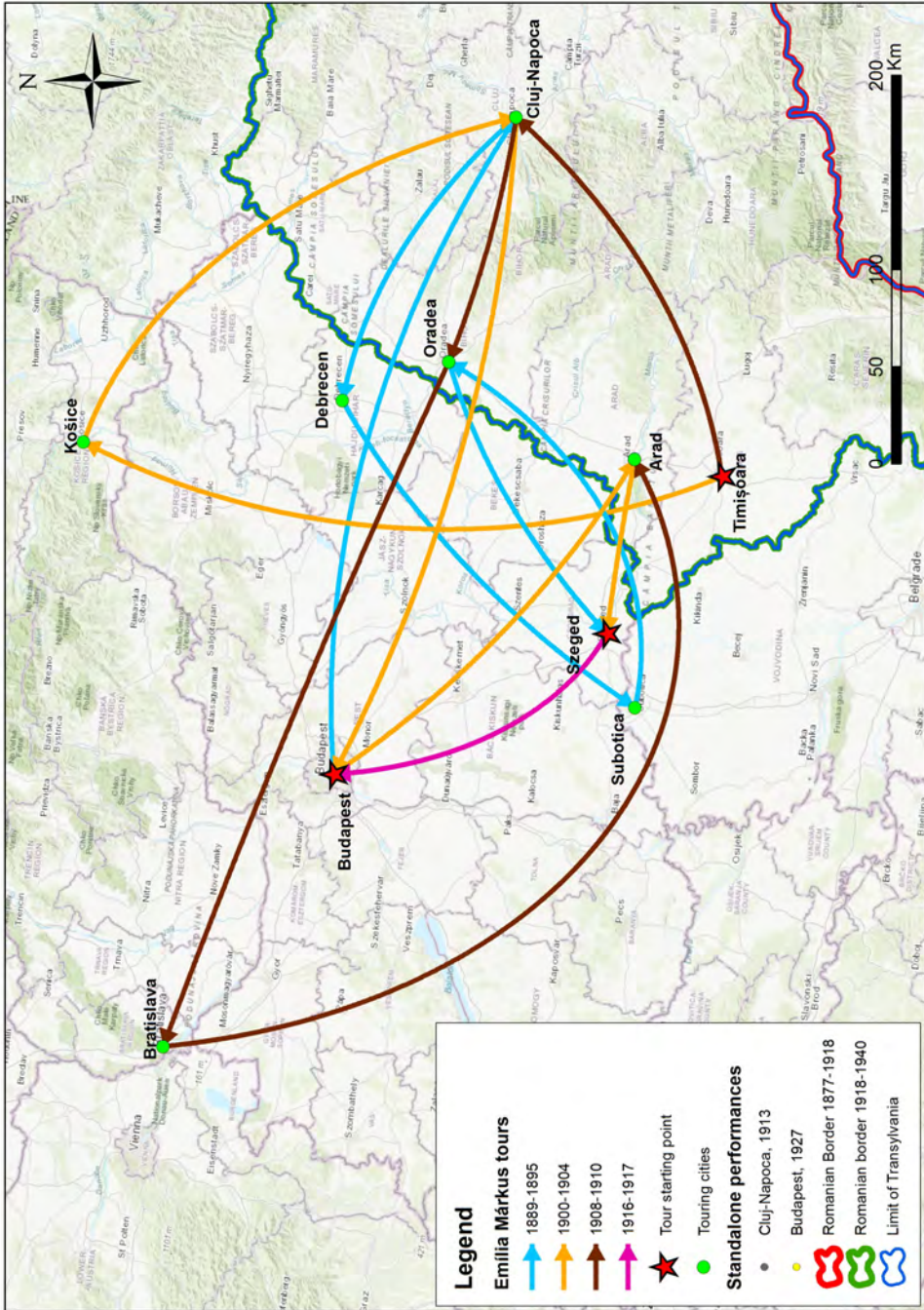


Figure 22: Oszkár Beregi Ibsen performances

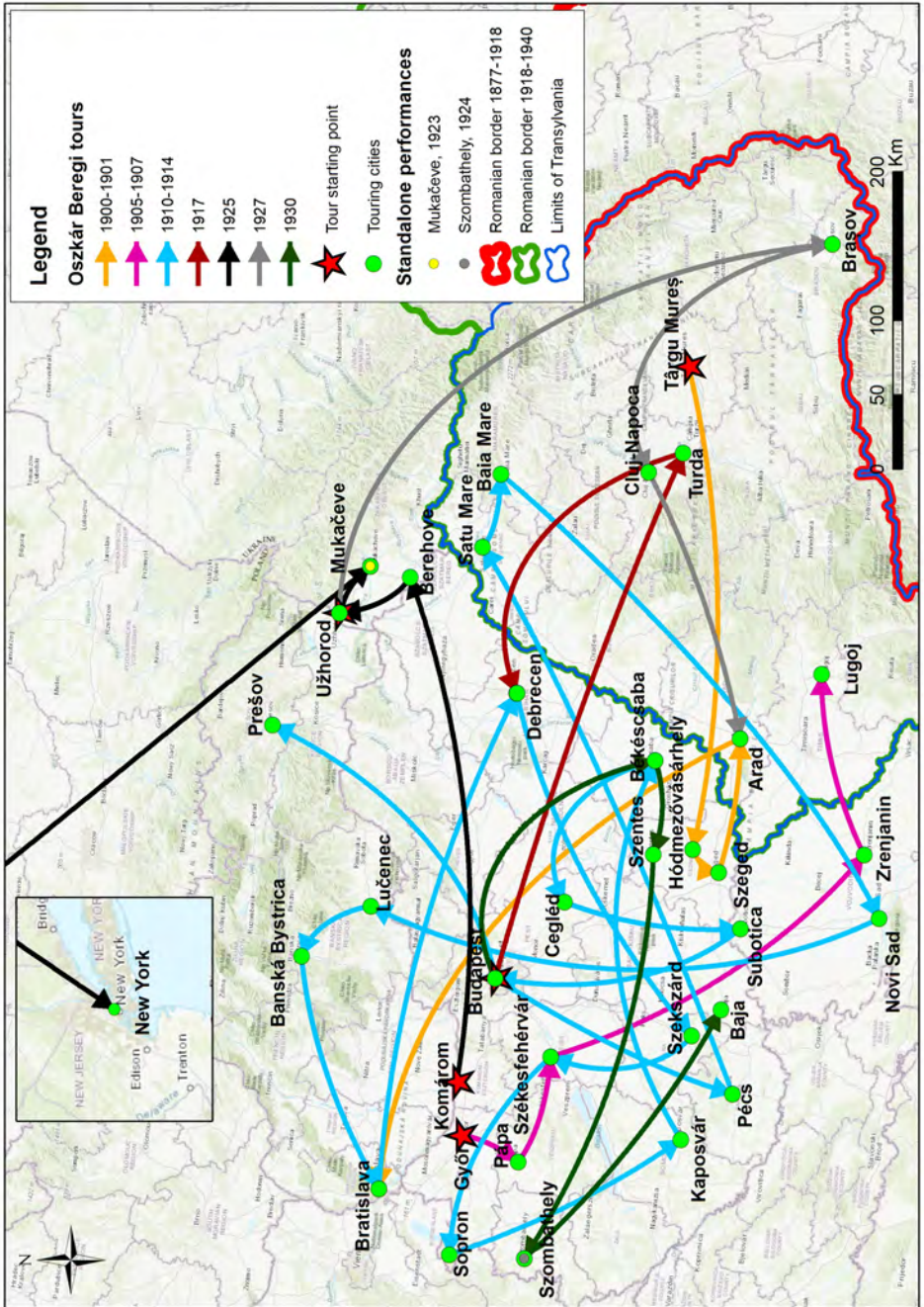


Figure 23: Sándor Forgách Ibsen performances

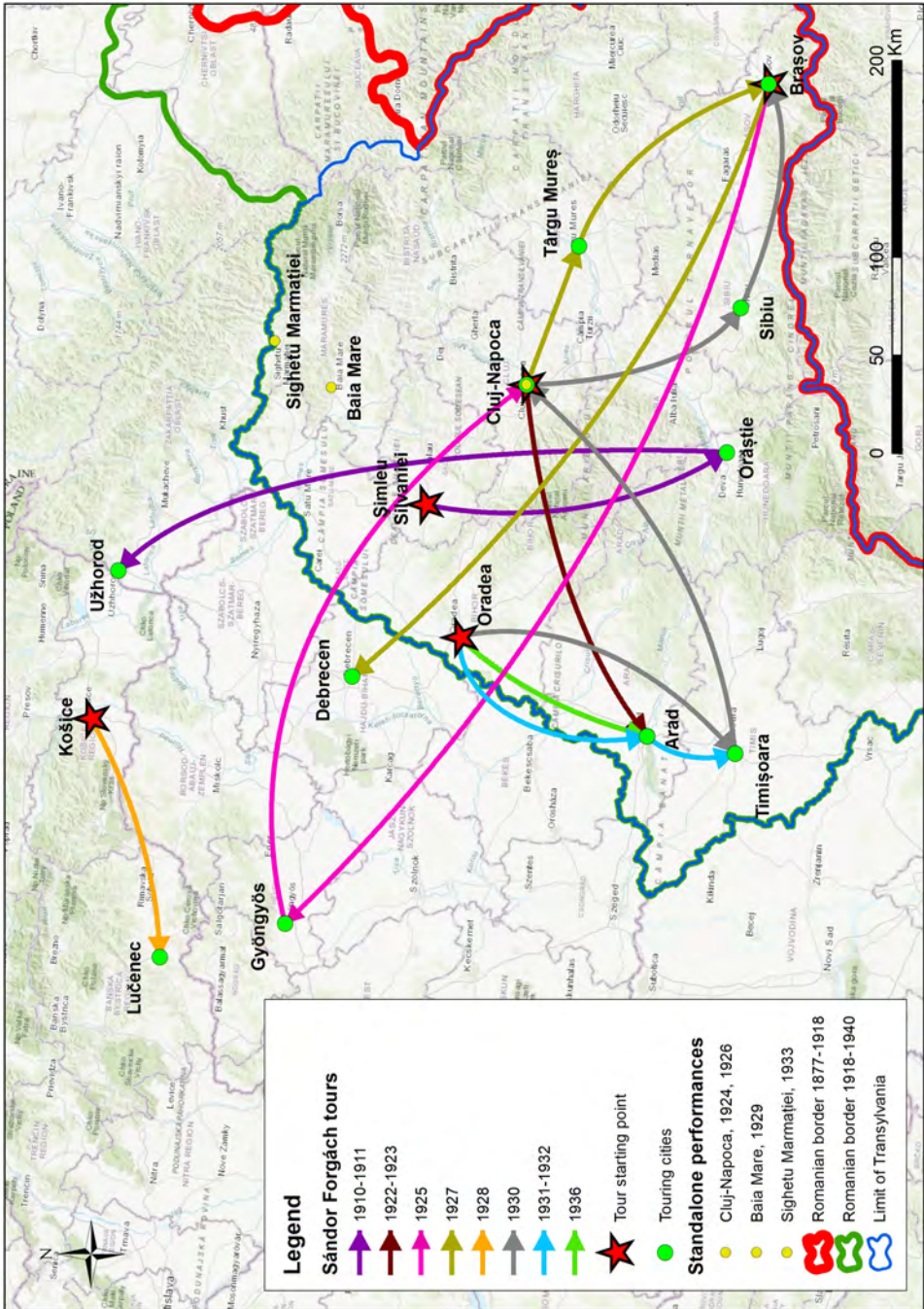


Figure 24: The Yiddish Ibsen tours visiting Romania

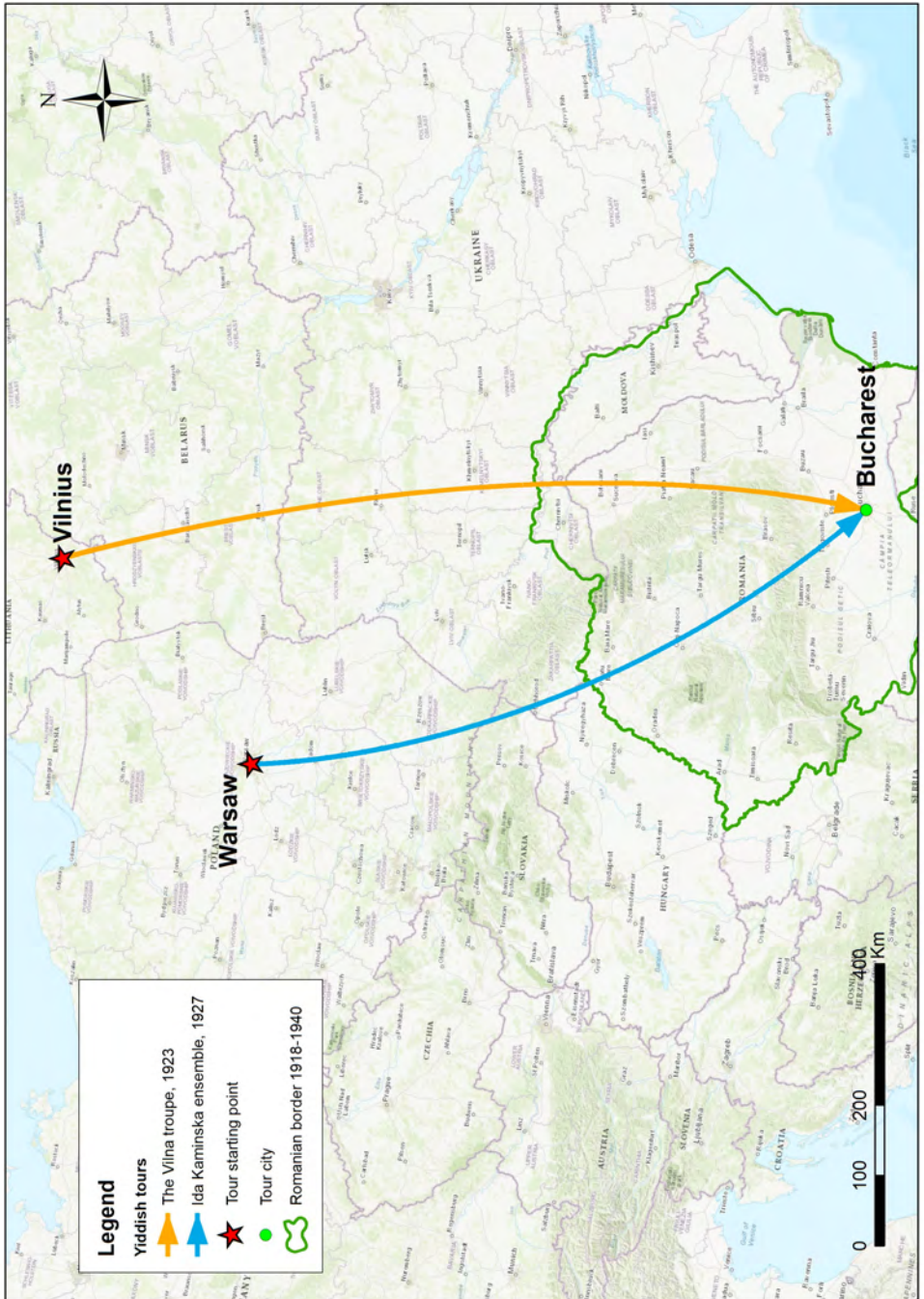


Figure 25: Ibsen events in Romanian 1894–1947

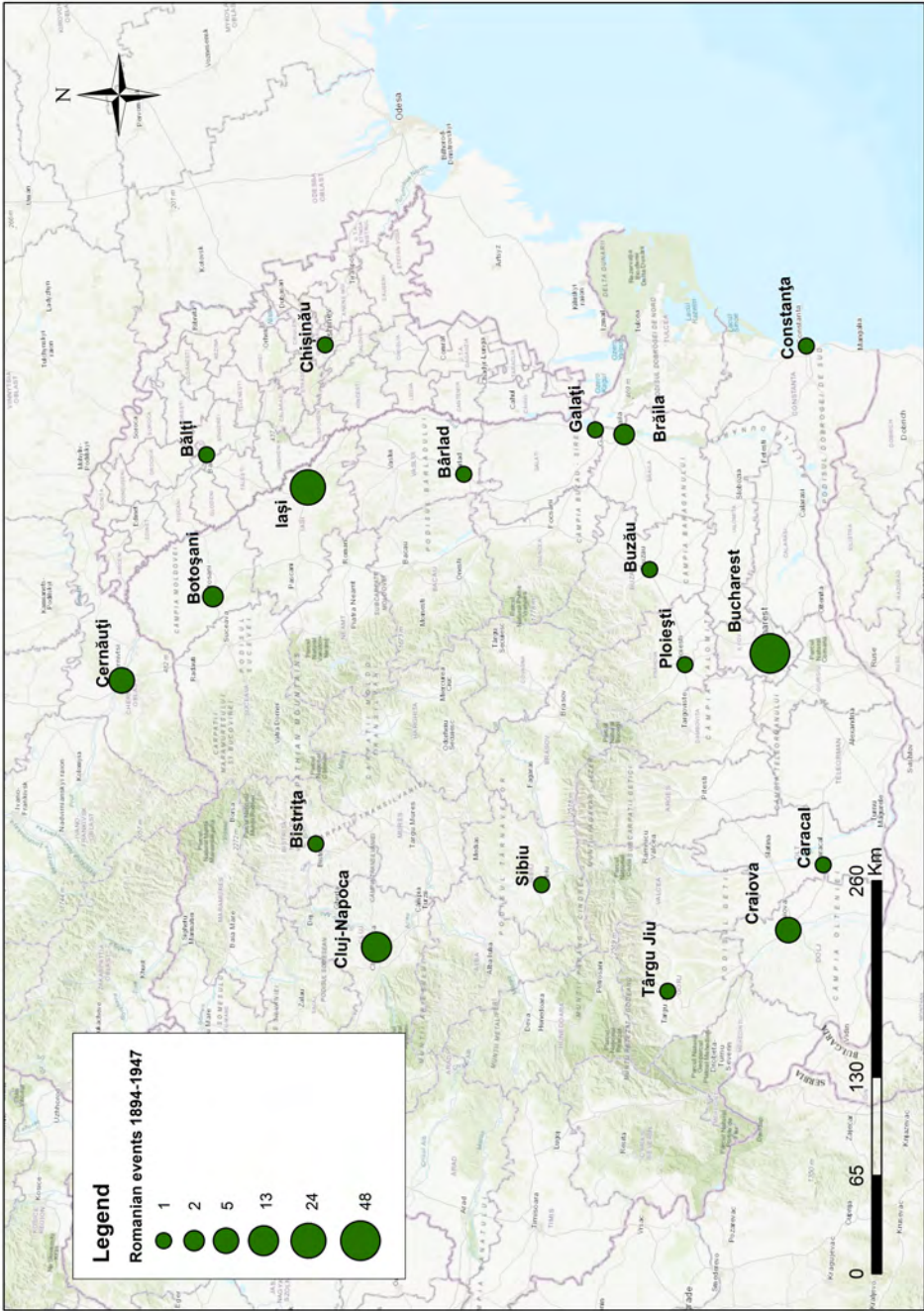


Figure 26: Ibsen plays performed in Romanian 1894–1947

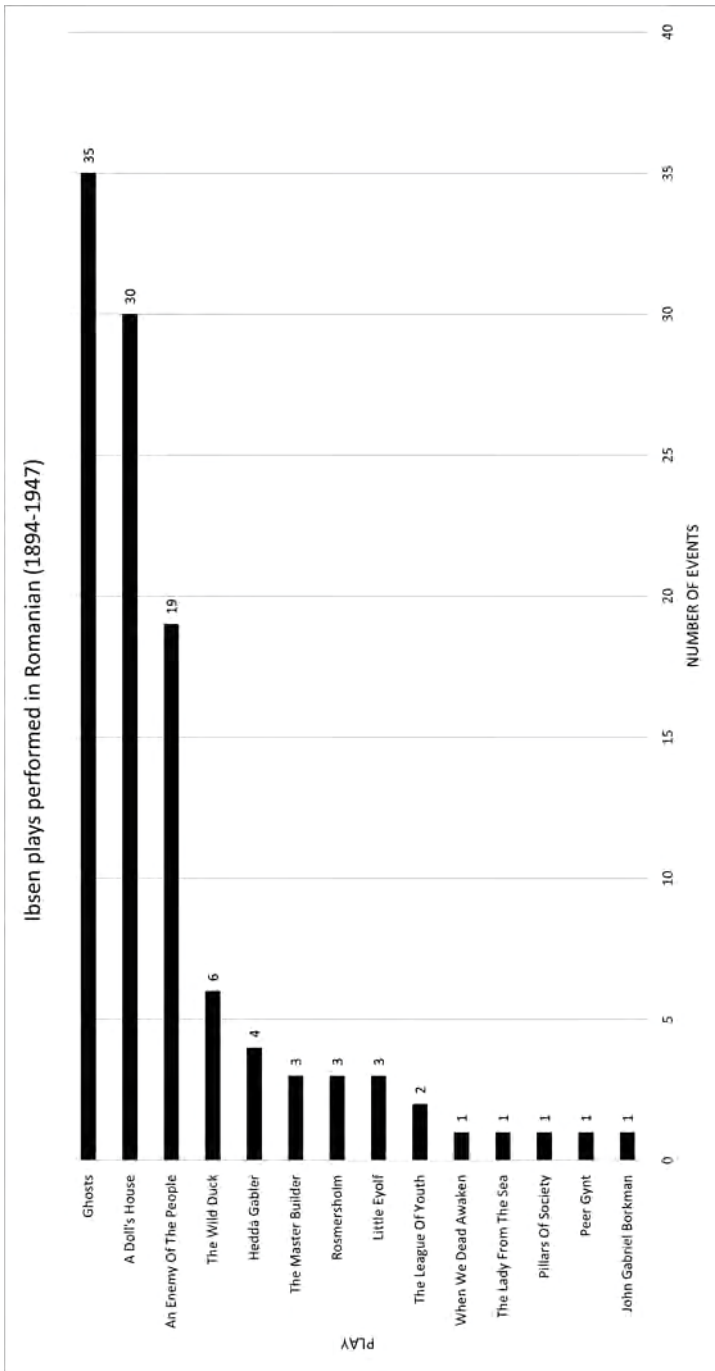


Figure 27: Repertory statistics National Theatre of Bucharest, 18 out of 54 theatre seasons

Origin of the play/Theatre season	1895-1896	1896-1897	1911-1912	1917-1918	1918-1919	1919-1920	1921-1922	1922-1923	1923-1924	1927-1928	1928-1929	1930-1931	1931-1932	1932-1933	1936-1937	1943-1944	1944-1945	1945-1946
Czech	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	1	-	-	-	-	1	-
English	3	5	2	-	-	1	2	1	4	1	8	9	7	3	3	2	5	4
French	13	21	7	6	8	3	5	1	7	5	3	13	6	3	3	2	3	6
German	3	3	3	6	3	1	1	-	1	1	-	4	6	1	2	2	-	1
Greek	-	1	-	-	-	2	1	-	1	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	1	-
Hungarian	-	-	1	1	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	2	-	-	-	-	-	-
Italian	-	1	-	2	1	-	2	-	-	1	1	-	-	-	-	2	2	4
Norwegian Ibsen	1	1	1	1	1	1	2	1	1	1	2	1	1	2	1	1	1	1
Norwegian Other	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	1	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
Romanian	9	10	23	16	18	20	13	10	21	12	16	15	16	23	9	16	14	9
Russian	-	-	1	-	1	-	1	-	-	1	-	1	3	2	-	1	2	5
Spanish	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	1	-	-	-	1	1	-	1	-	-
Swedish	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	1	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-

Figure 28: Repertory statistics National Theatre of Iași, 11 out of 54 theatre seasons

Origin of the play/Theatre season	1894-1895	1900-1901	1903-1904	1909-1910	1919-1920	1925-1926	1927-1928	1928-1929	1944-1945	1945-1946	1946-1947
Czech	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	1	-	2	1
English	-	3	7	-	2	-	3	3	-	1	2
French	-	17	15	19	15	13	15	4	11	-	6
German	-	9	3	3	5	1	-	7	1	3	-
Hungarian	-	-	-	-	-	-	1	1	1	-	-
Italian	-	-	2	2	1	-	1	1	-	-	1
Norwegian Ibsen	-	2	1	1	2	1	1	1	1	1	1
Norwegian Other	-	-	-	-	1	-	-	-	-	-	-
Romanian	-	10	20	6	5	8	5	5	5	10	6
Russian	-	1	-	1	-	-	2	-	3	2	6
Yiddish	-	-	-	-	-	-	1	-	-	1	-

Figure 29: Actors performing in Romanian Ibsen events (1894–1947)

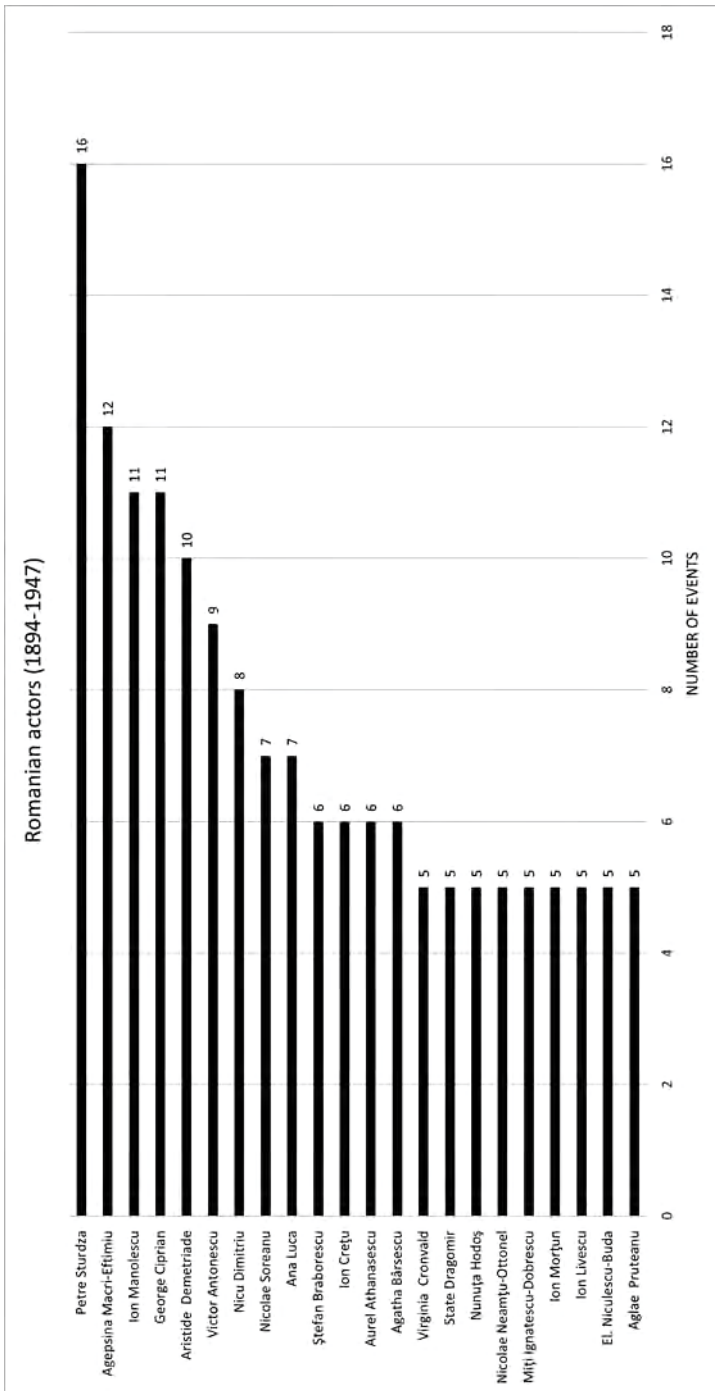


Figure 30: Actors performing in leading roles in Romanian Ibsen events (1894–1947)

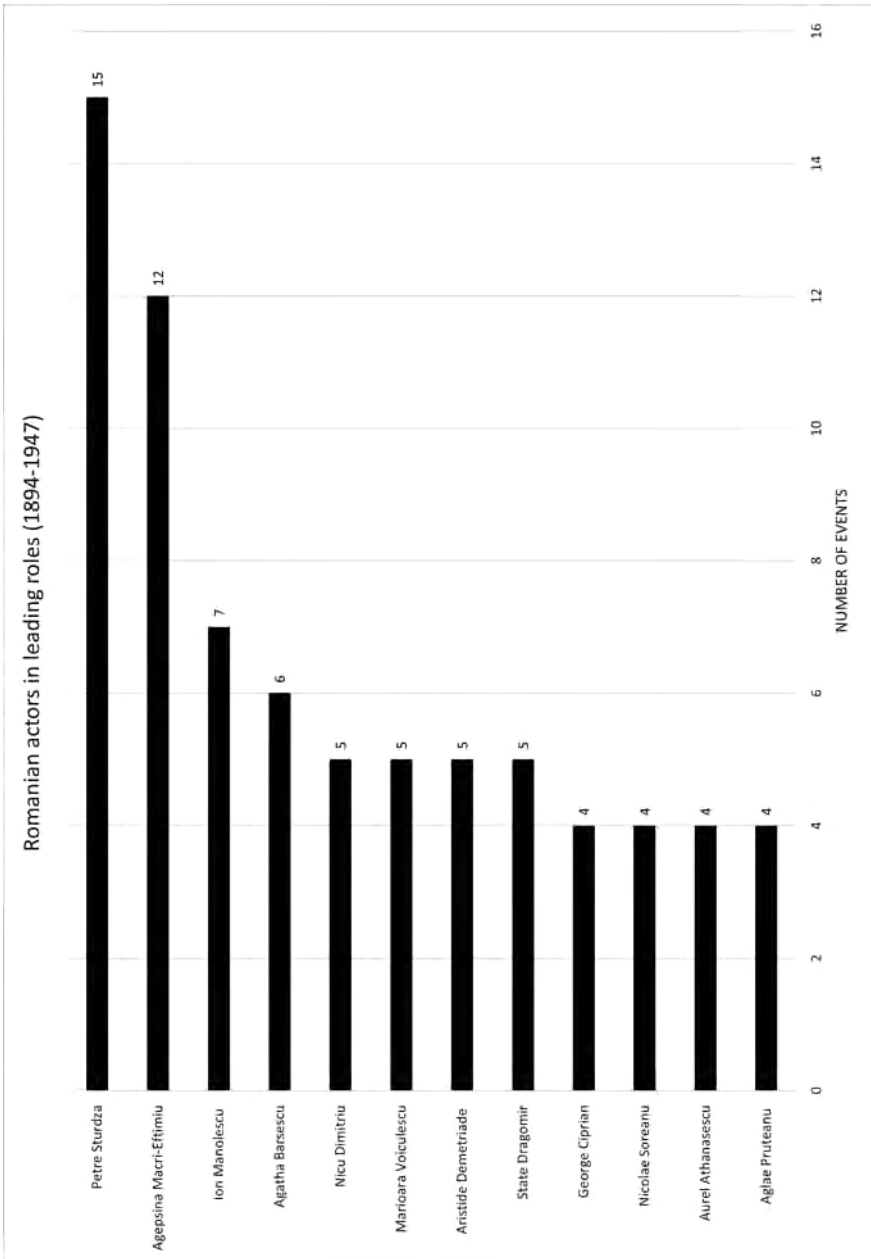


Figure 31: Actors performing in secondary roles in Romanian Ibsen events (1894–1947)

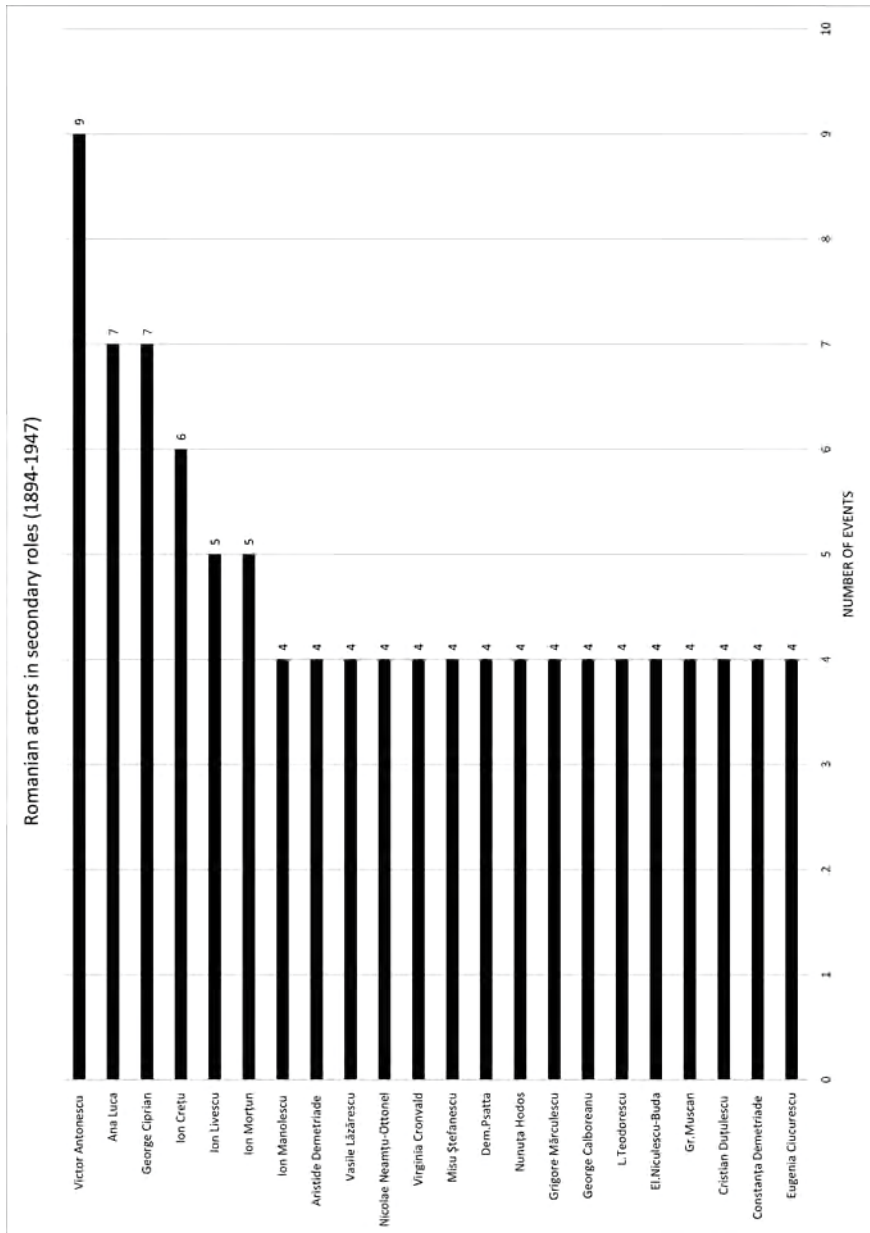


Figure 32: Directors staging Romanian Ibsen events (1894–1947)

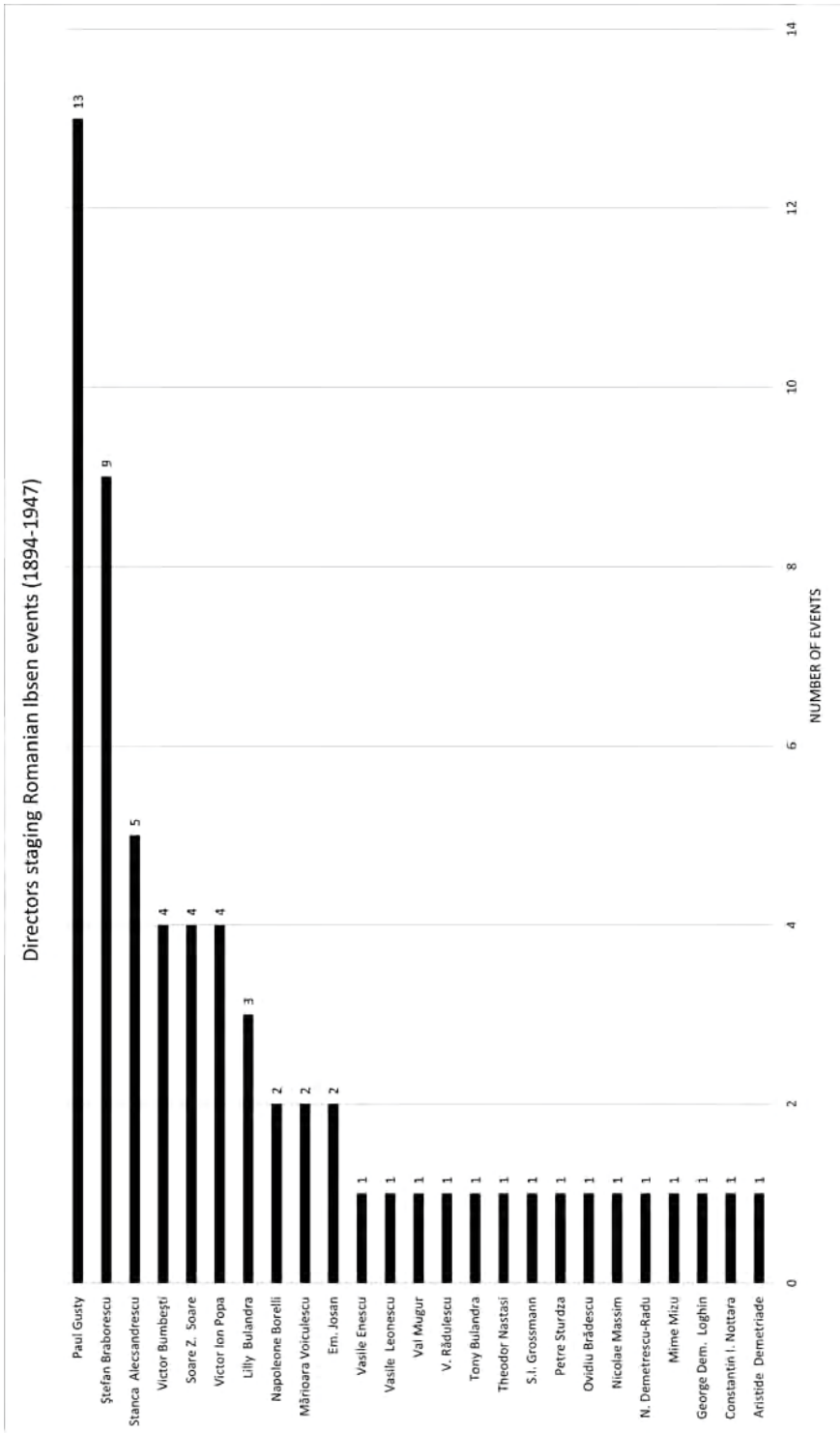


Figure 33: Directors vs. Star-actors (as stage directors)

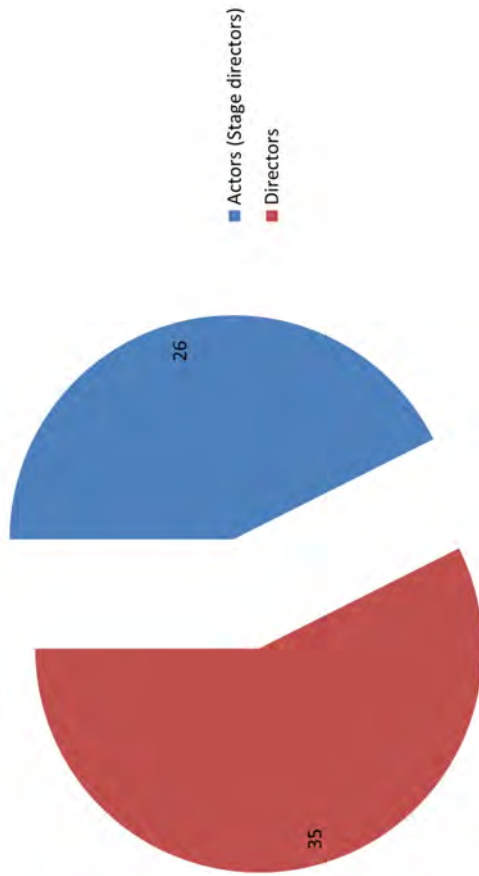


Figure 34: Temporal frame. Romanian Ibsen contributors (1894–1947)

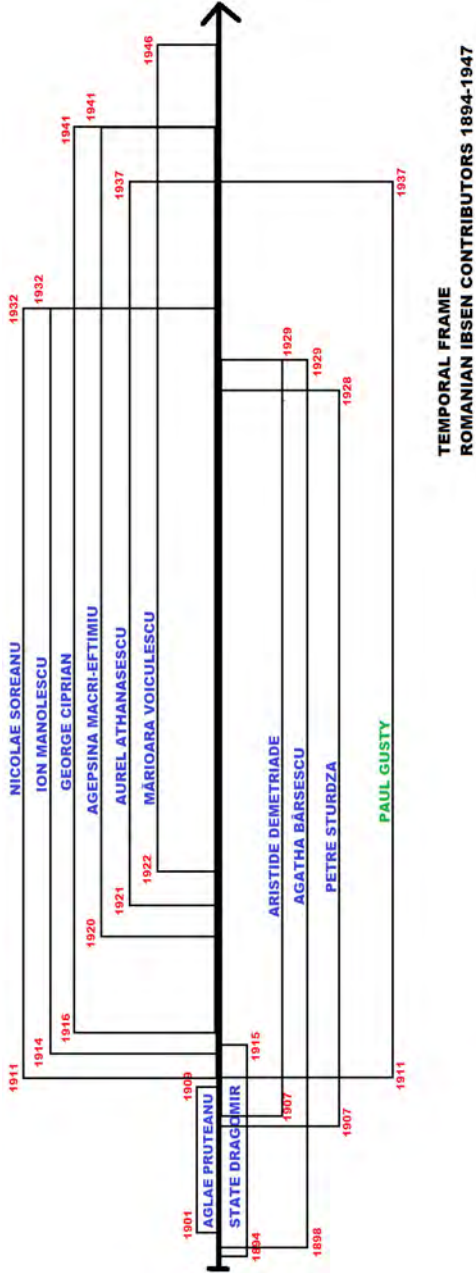


Figure 35: Romanian organisations staging Ibsen (1894–1947)

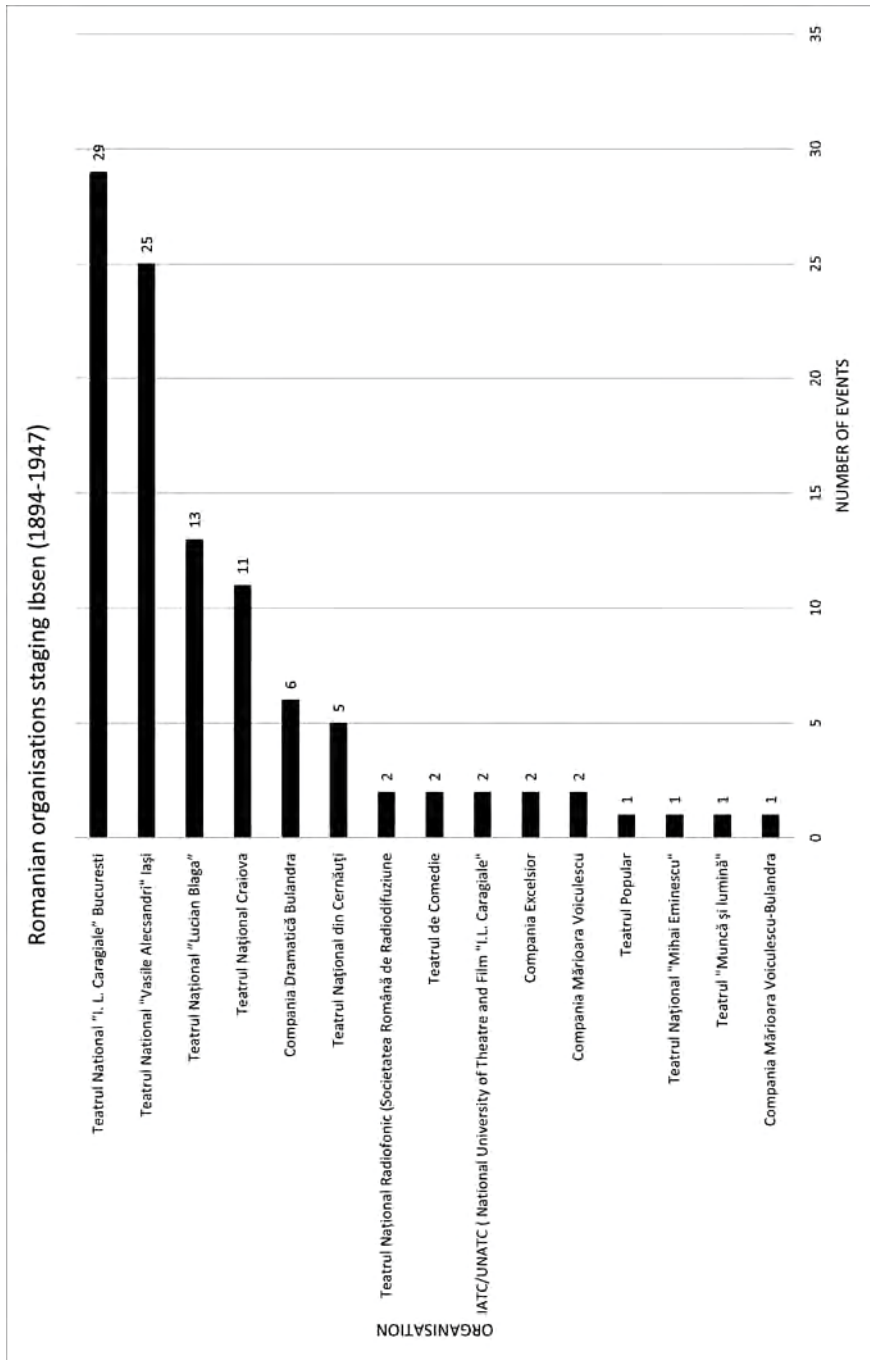


Figure 36: Ibsen plays staged at the National Theatre of Bucharest (1894–1947)

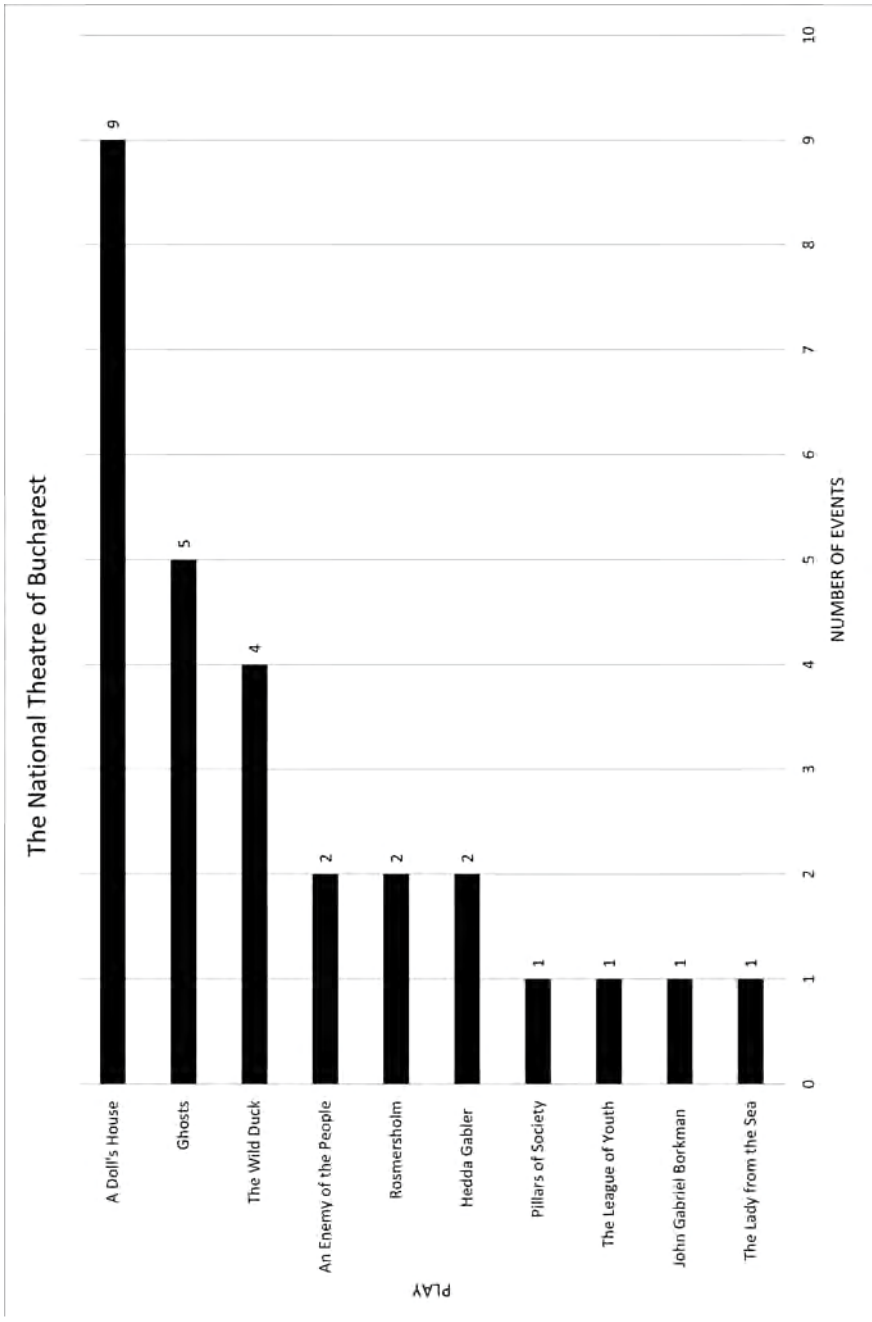


Figure 37: Ibsen plays staged at the National Theatre of Iași (1894–1947)

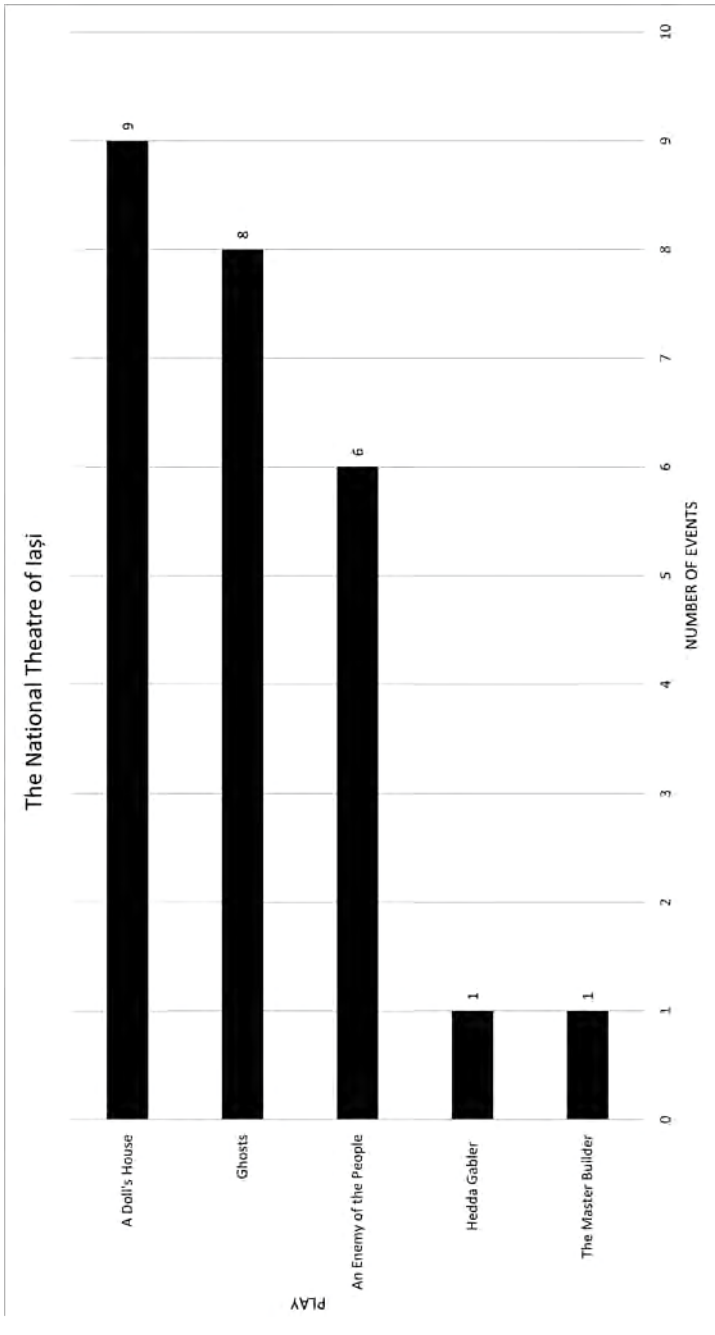


Figure 38: Ibsen plays staged at the National Theatre of Cluj-Napoca (1894–1947)

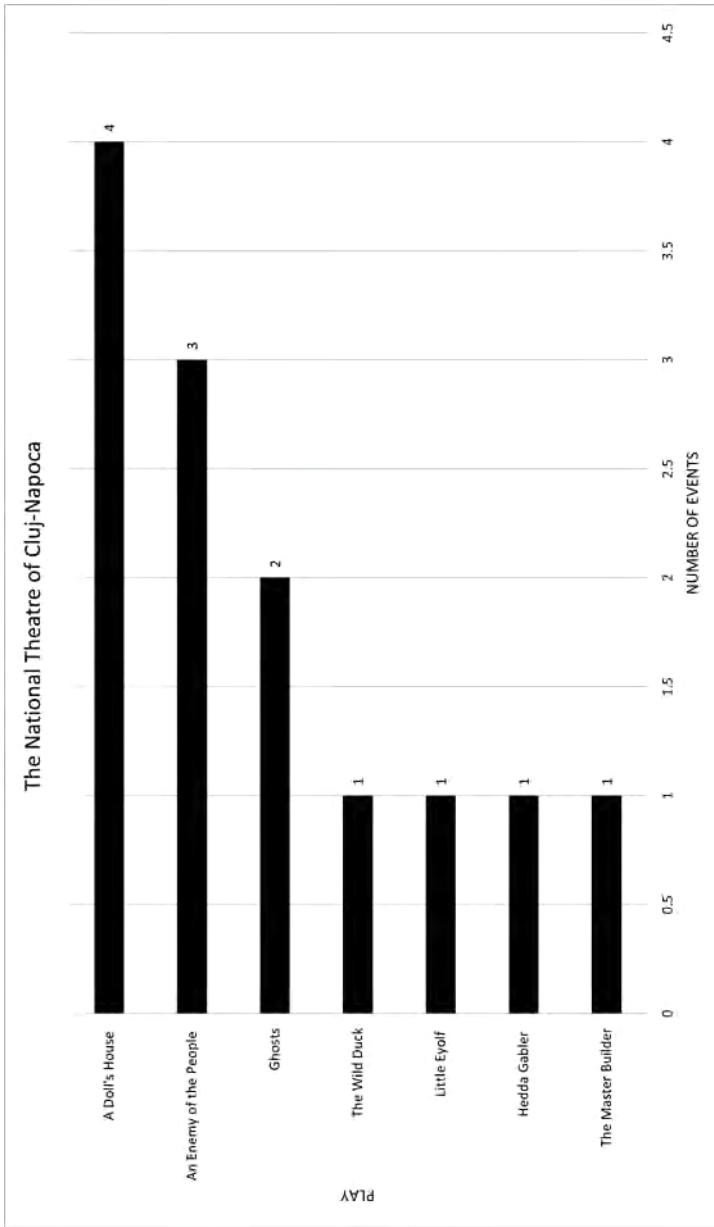


Figure 39: Aglae Pruteanu and State Dragomir Ibsen tour

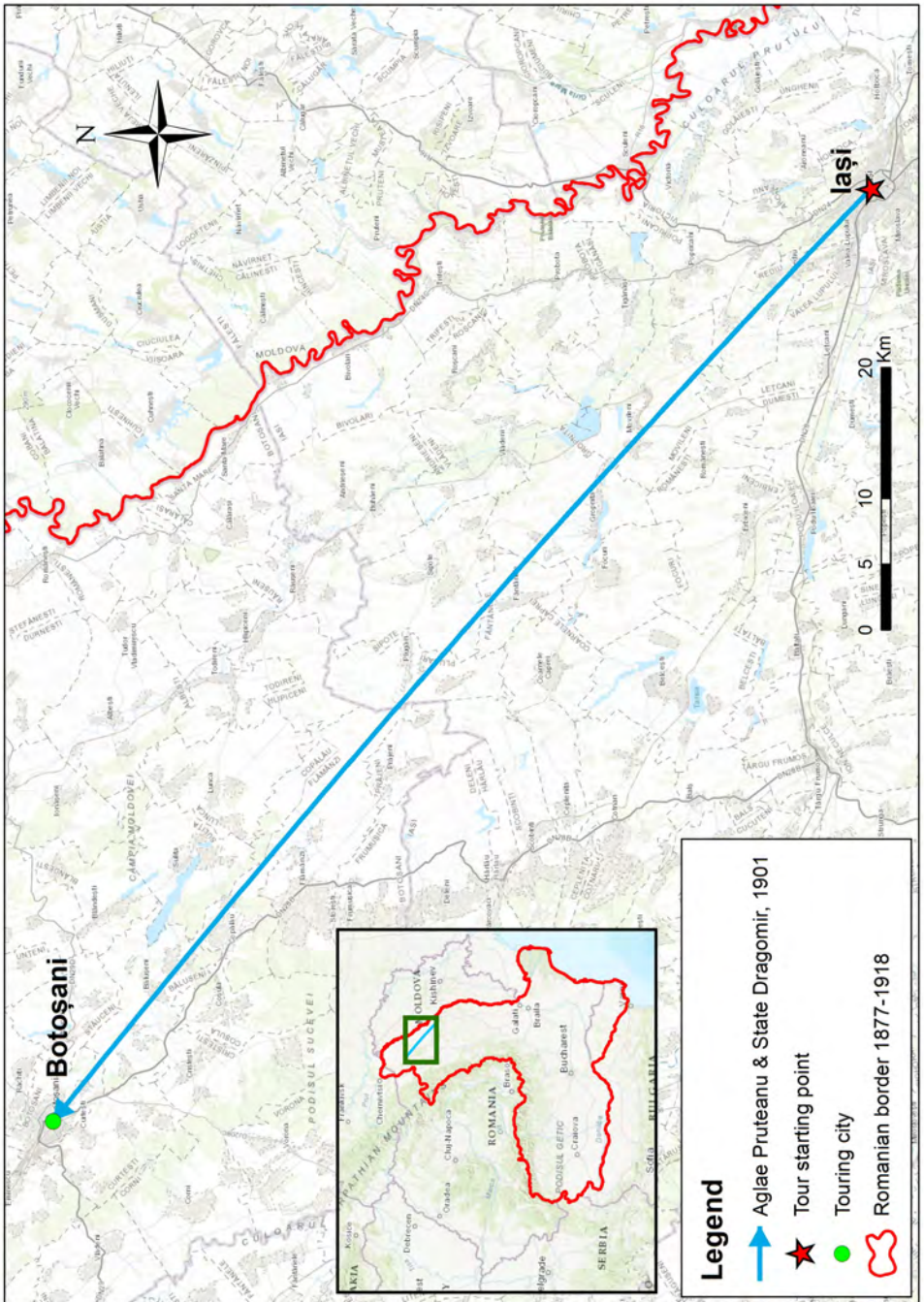


Figure 40: Ion Manolescu Ibsen tours

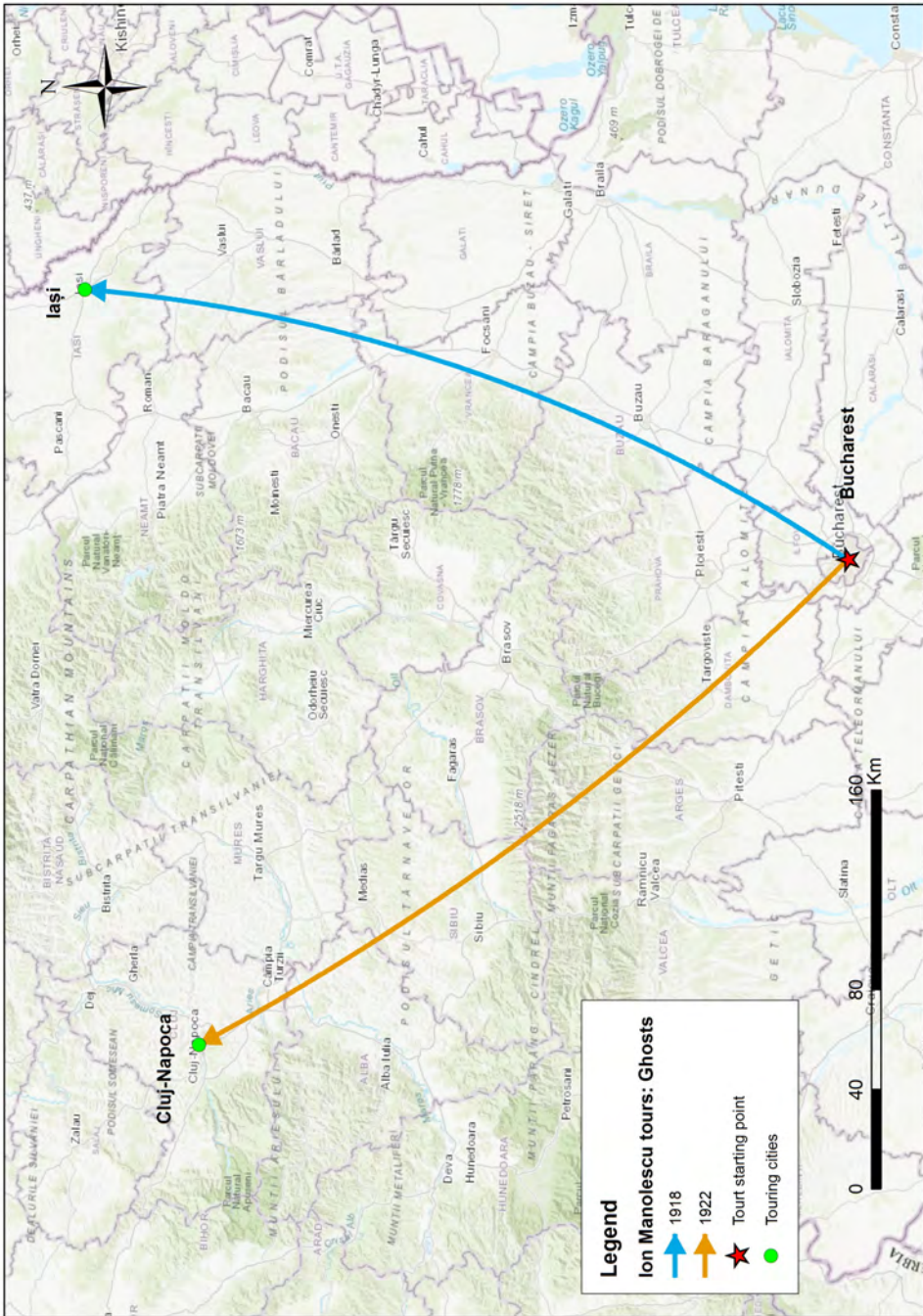


Figure 41: Mărioara Voiculescu Ibsen tour

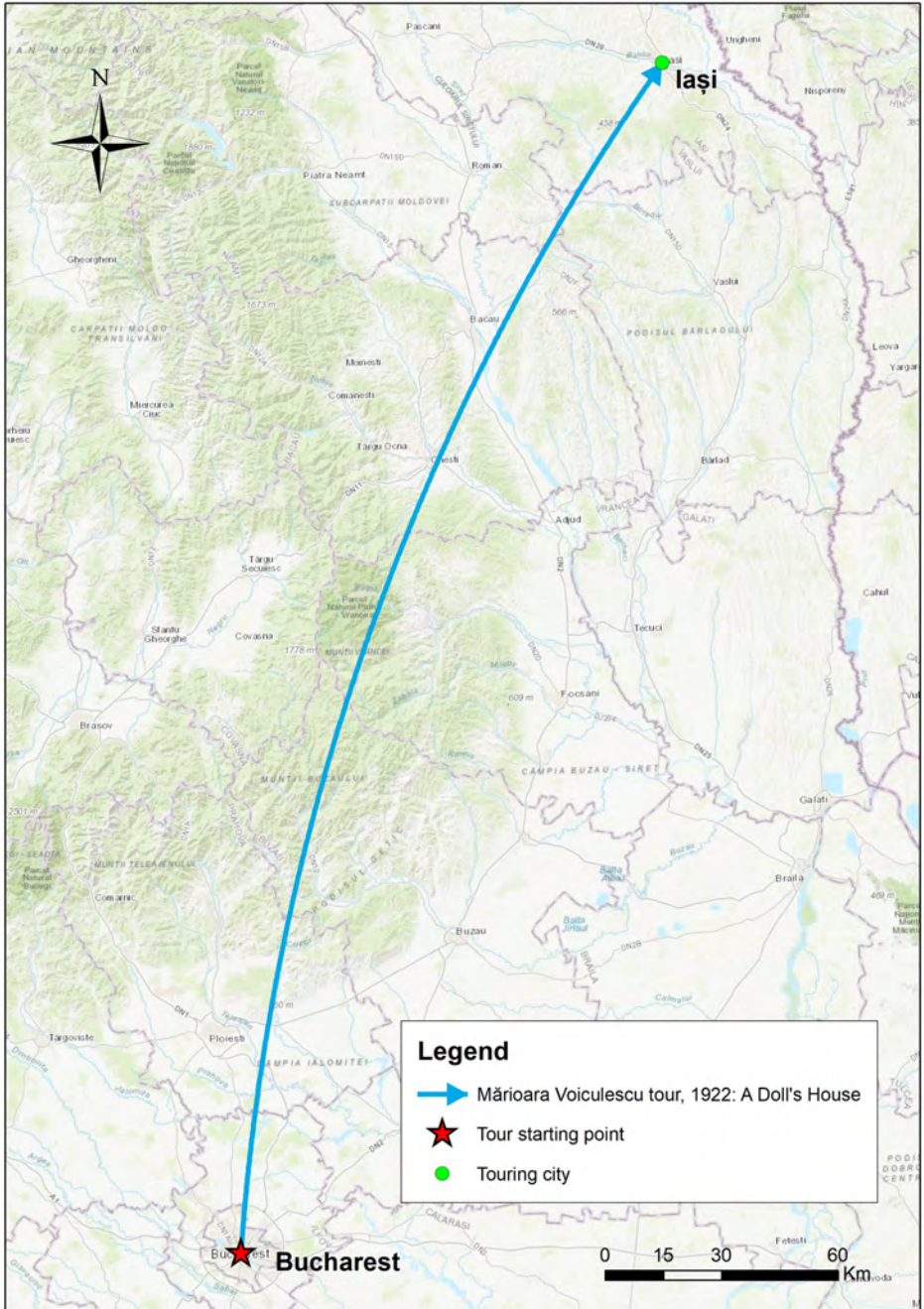


Figure 42: Aristide Demetriade Ibsen tours

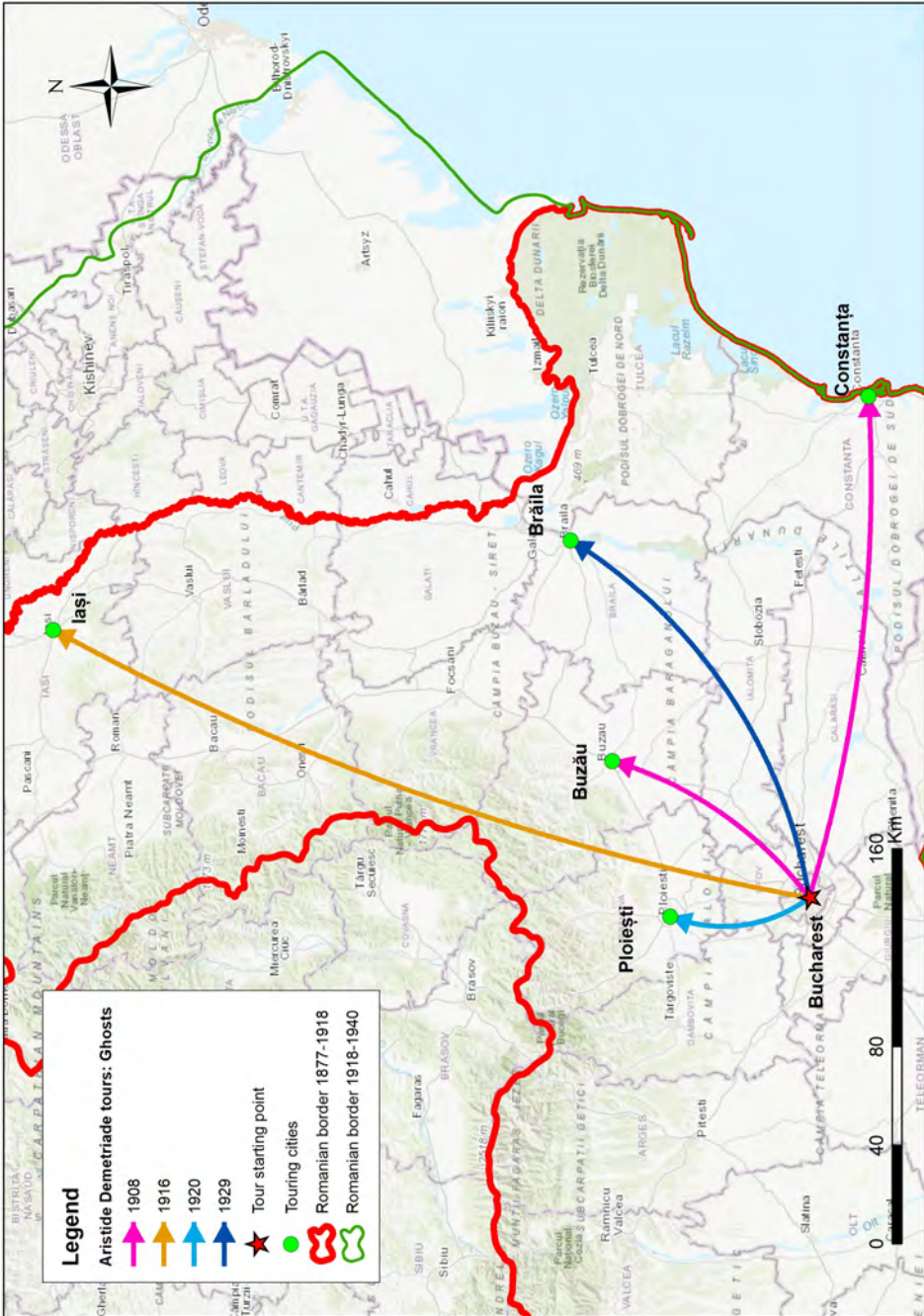


Figure 44: Petre Sturdza Ibsen tours

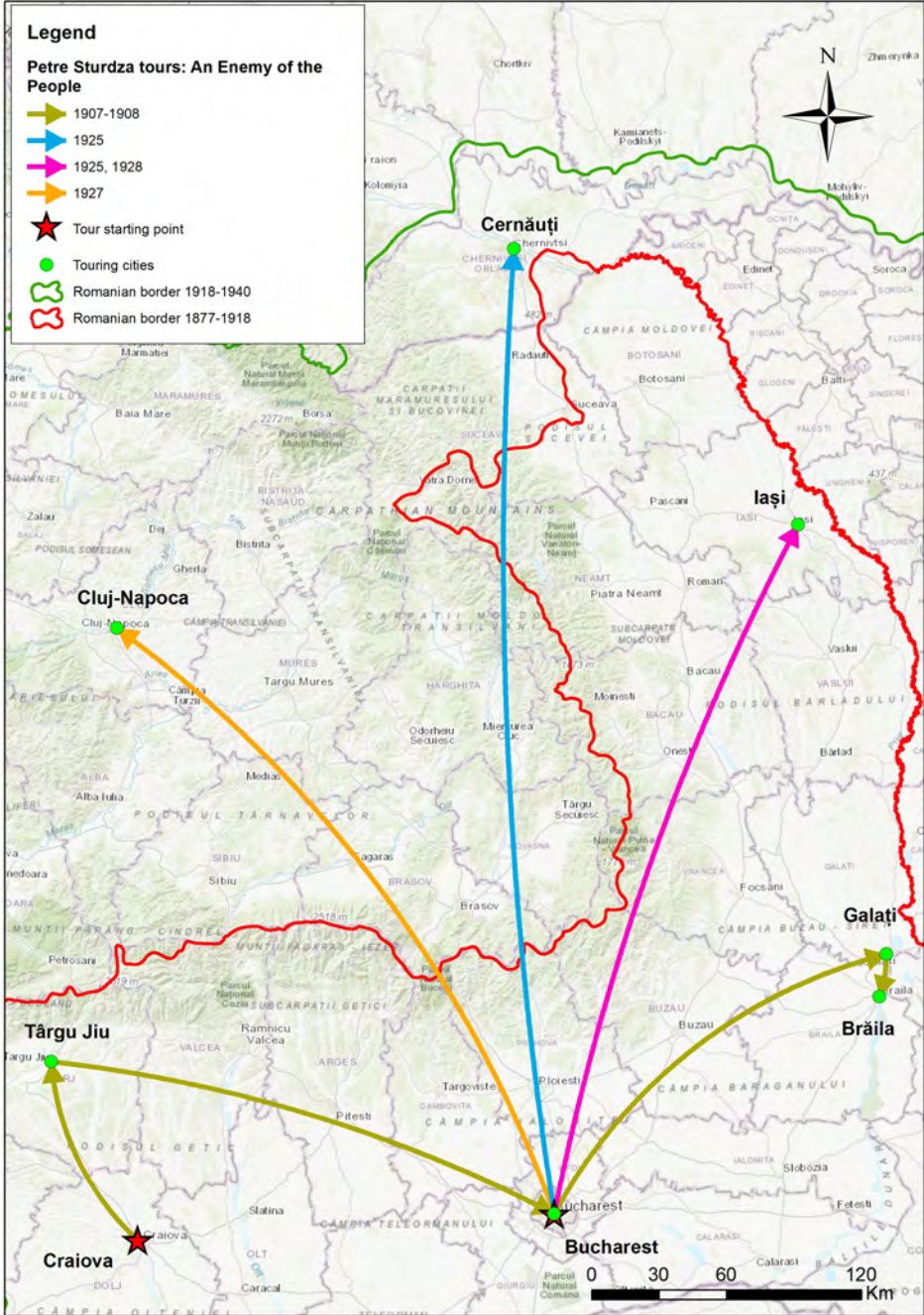


Figure 45: Institutional transmission

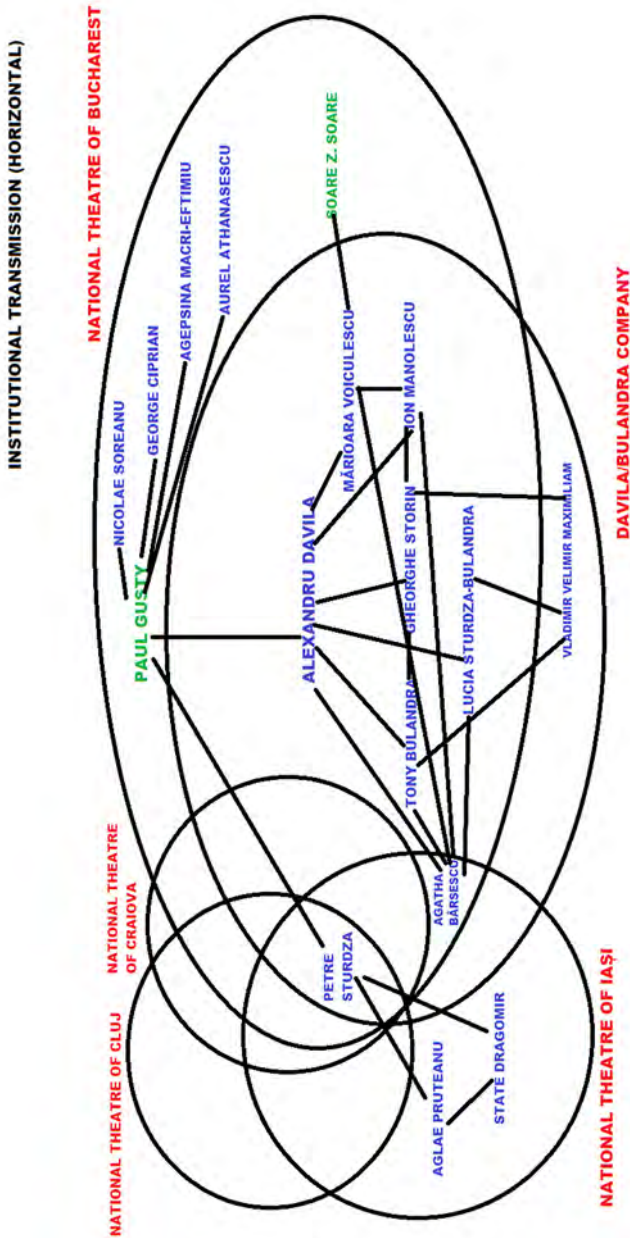


Figure 46: Production hubs

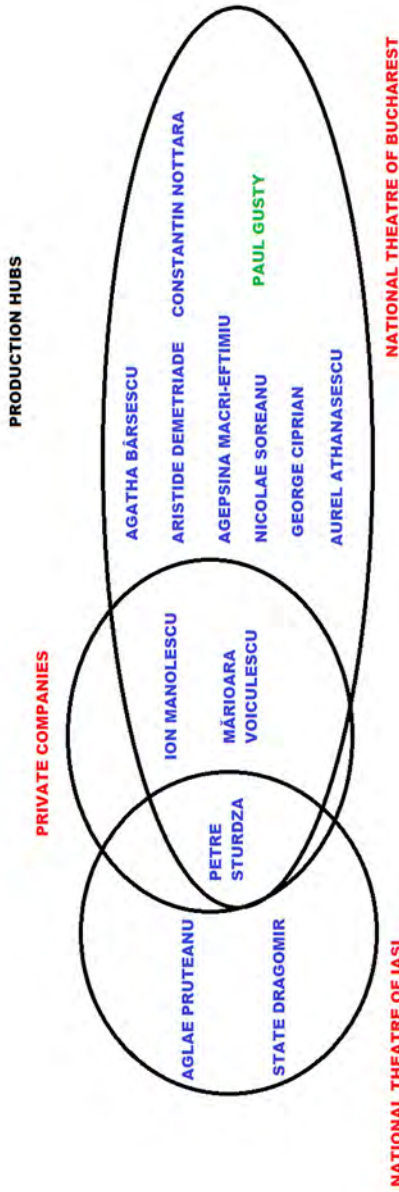


Figure 47: Generational transmission



Figure 48: Prestige transmission



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