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Where Did Ibsen Come From? The Contribution of the Foreign Language Tours to the Emergence of Henrik Ibsen on the Romanian Stage

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WHERE DID IBSEN COME FROM? THE CONTRIBUTION OF THE FOREIGN LANGUAGE TOURS TO THE EMERGENCE OF HENRIK IBSEN ON THE ROMANIAN STAGE

GIANINA DRUTA

This article addresses the contribution of the foreign language theatre companies' performances to Ibsen's emergence in Romania until the middle of the twentieth century. The Romanian map of Ibsen performances demands a methodological framework that acknowledges that space, time, people and places are mobile points on the map, and that processes of cultural transmission do not always have clear departure and arrival points.

HISTORICAL CONTEXT

Before discussing Ibsen's position on the Romanian stage, it is necessary to clarify first what I mean by *Romania*. The specificity of *Romania* has been hard to define as a historical or cultural content because of the openness and fluidity visible in its relationship with other European cultures and in the evolution of its territorial boundaries until 1945.

The discussion concerning the fluidity and the ambiguity of the Romanian cultural space is rooted in its geographical location and historical status on the European continent. Romania is situated both at the crossroads and at the periphery of Europe, equally tied with East, West, North and South. As Lucian Boia

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notes, “the first difficulty with Romania is deciding where it belongs on the map of Europe ... : Eastern Europe, the Balkans, Central Europe?” (Boia 2001, 11).

The Romanian cultural space is thus an entangled peripheral space within Europe because it has always been situated geographically at the border of great cultures and political powers, namely the Roman Empire, the Ottoman Empire, Tsarist Russia, the French and the German. This geographical position of the Romanian landscape at the crossroads of the major European cultures facilitated the immersion of influences from all sides. Their shifting dominance is not merely the consequence of politics, but of both cultural and political intertwinings, as Katherine Verdery indicates: “culture and intellectual activity are *inherently political*,—not *underlain* by politics, but *interwoven* with it” (Verdery 1995, 106).

The territorial changes prove the fluid nature of Romania as country. The foundation of the nation state in 1859 through the establishment of the “Smaller Union” or “The United Principalities of Moldova and Wallachia” after the Crimean War (1853–1856);¹ its consolidation in 1918 through the “Greater Union” at the end of World War I when Transylvania, Banat, Crişana, Bessarabia and Bukovina were integrated within its boundaries; and the territorial losses during World War II, in 1940 and 1944—constantly reshaped Romania’s territory. Only after 1945 did Romania’s boundaries become stable.

The case of Transylvania was the most problematic until 1945 because of its multicultural population consisting of Romanians, Hungarians and Germans. The Transylvanian Romanians had the same rights and obligations as the other minorities under the Habsburg rule (1804–1867). Yet, under the Austro-Hungarian reign (1867–1918), Transylvania was dominated by Hungarians, who sought the area’s cultural, linguistic and religious homogenisation in order to create a Hungarian nation state. Transylvania became Romanian territory in 1918 but the battle between Hungary and Romania over Transylvania is still long-debated by historians.²

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The constant territorial readjustments indicate the fluidity of “Romania” until the middle of the twentieth century. This fluidity also applies to its relationship with other cultures. On the one hand, the French contribution was essential. One example is that the establishment of the new nation state in 1859 was supported by France as a strategy for strengthening the political stability of the region.

In the second half of the nineteenth century, the French influence was counterbalanced and partially overcome by the German, pointing at the tensions between these models, which Boia designated as the “French myth” and the “German counter-myth.” Although I agree with the appropriation of the two models as opposite tendencies, I disagree with them being seen as “myths.” Instead, I consider Keith Hitchins’s approach to the French and German influences as “models of development” more appropriate (2014, 121). I will also use the notion of “model” to discuss the traditions that the foreign language Ibsen touring performances disseminated in the country.

The German presence within the Romanian cultural space is especially rooted in the political context. On the one hand, the arrival of the Prussian Prince Karl of Hohenzollern-Sigmaringen in Romania in 1866 strengthened and secured the status of the newly formed nation state of Romania in the unstable political context of South-Eastern Europe. On the other hand, the German influence upon Romanian culture can be seen in the principalities of Wallachia and Moldavia, which were adjacent to the Habsburg/Austro-Hungarian Empire. Moreover, Transylvania, Banat, Crișana and Bukovina, inhabited by numerous Romanians, constituted the Eastern border of the Empire.

Finally, Transylvania needs separate consideration due to the claims of the Hungarian elites over this territory. In contrast, the Romanian elites argued that it belonged to Romania through common Daco-Roman descent. In addition, there has been a strong German presence in Transylvania since the Middle Ages due to the colonising initiatives of Hungarian and Austrian kings, who ensured the permanency and influence of German culture

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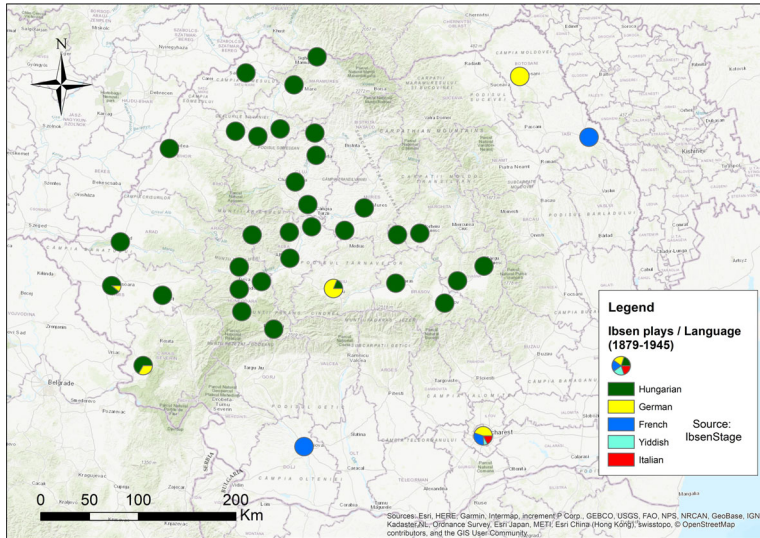
in Romania. Unlike the Hungarians, the Germans have always been a minority group in Transylvania, whose influence was nevertheless very important for Romanians in fields such as literature and theatre. However, Transylvania stays marked by the strong Hungarian influence at the level of political, cultural and social institutions, beside its particular linguistic, societal and cultural mixture.

In summary, due to its position at the crossroads of European civilisations and history, the Romanian cultural space was exposed to several major Eastern and Western European cultures, hence its ambiguity and complexity. Romanians were equally enthusiastic and reluctant about these influences, constantly questioning their role in the development of the national culture and society. The fluidity of the Romanian territory and cultural space has affected the interactions and the practices of Romanian theatre culture and marked the early performance history of Henrik Ibsen on its stage.

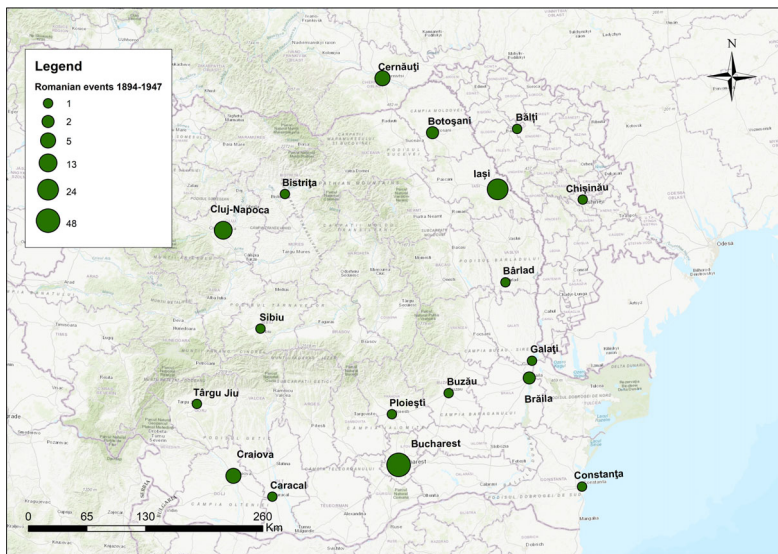
DATASET

The first step in the research that underpins this article was the interrogation of the Romanian dataset in IbsenStage. The cartographic visualisations by language and touring productions of this data indicated the importance of the foreign language performances between 1879 and 1947 ([Map 1](#)).³ In addition to the 110 events in Romanian ([Map 2](#), [Figure 1](#)), Ibsen was also performed in German, French, Italian, Hungarian and Yiddish ([Figures 2–4](#)). He was never to be performed so frequently in so many languages on the Romanian stage again as in this period. For instance, IbsenStage registers 165 events performed in other languages than Romanian for the 1879–1947 period, whereas for the 1947–2020 period the number decreases to 62 events. IbsenStage displays only 18 events in German, Hungarian and Yiddish for the communist period. In the post-communist period, the 44 IbsenStage events prove that Ibsen was performed in German, Hungarian, Norwegian, Spanish and Bulgarian, largely

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Map 1. Ibsen plays per language 1879–1947.



Map 2. Romanian Ibsen events 1894–1947.

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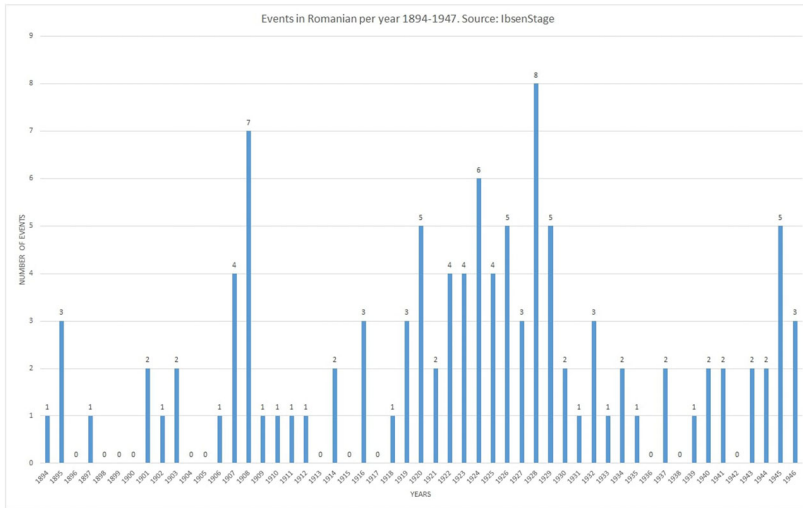


Figure 1. Events in Romanian per year 1894–1947.

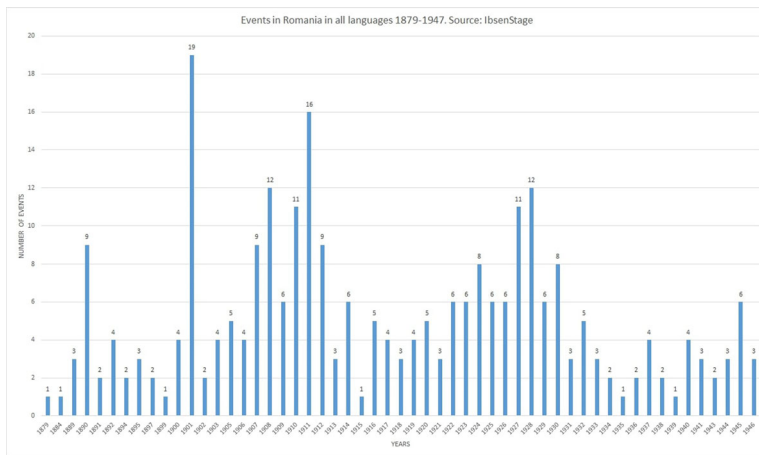


Figure 2. Events in Romania in all languages 1879–1947.

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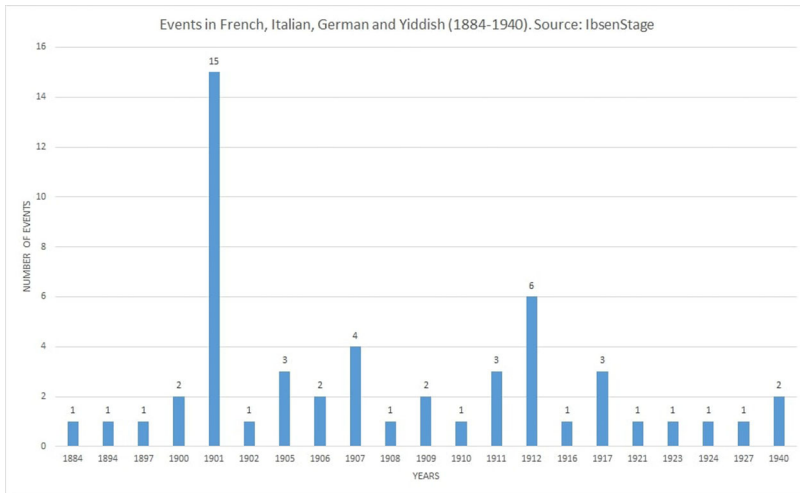


Figure 3. Events in French, Italian, German and Yiddish 1884–1940.

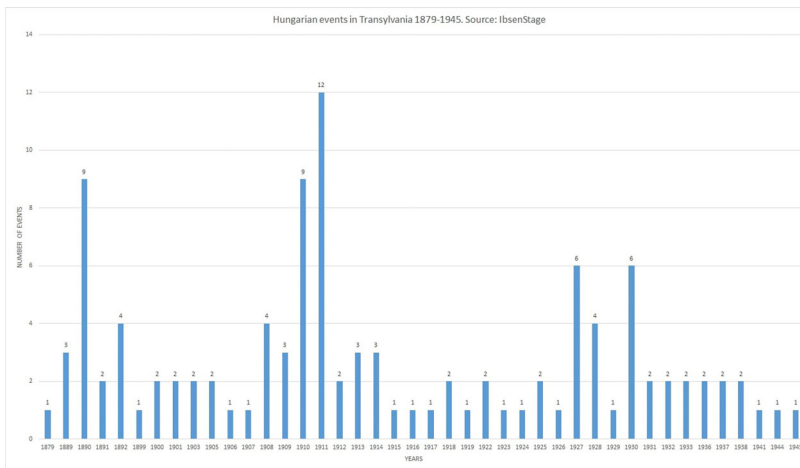
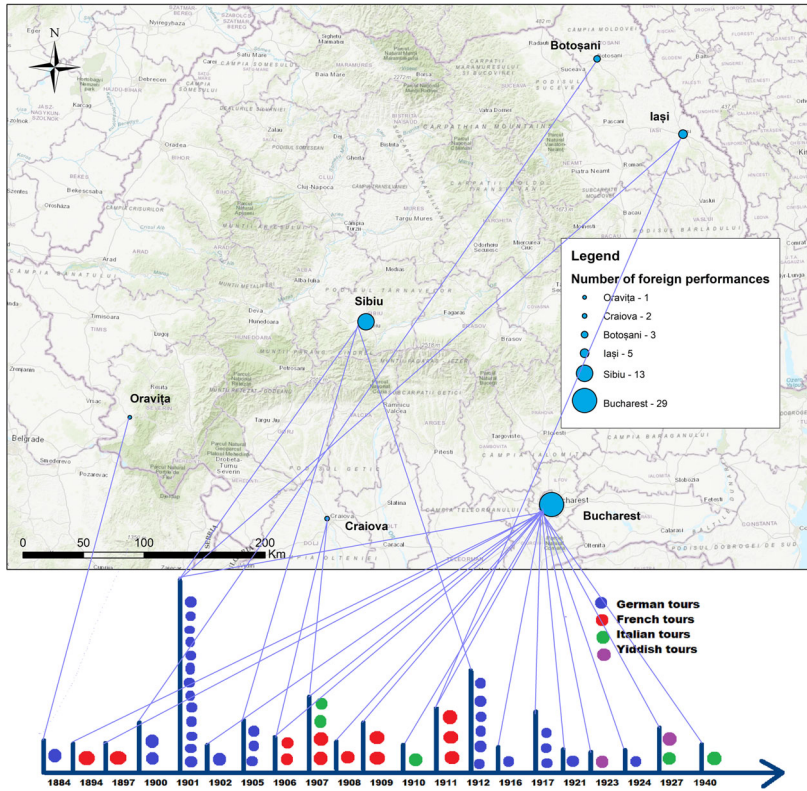


Figure 4. Hungarian events in Transylvania 1879–1945.

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Map 3. Overlapping foreign Ibsen tours in time and space.

as a consequence of international theatre festivals that gathered productions from around the world. Thus, the numbers also support viewing the period before 1947 as the richest linguistically and, implicitly, in terms of cultural influences.

A closer diachronic look reveals that most foreign language productions were staged between 1890 and 1920. In the global flow, the 1890s is the decade when Ibsen moved beyond the Scandinavian and the German-speaking world, through performances in the United Kingdom and France. The emergence of Ibsen in foreign language tours in Romania is part of this early European

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expansion. For instance, most performances in German were staged around 1900–1917, those in French are constant between 1906 and 1911, while the Italian ones are concentrated around 1907–1910. Finally, the largest number of productions in Hungarian is also registered between 1890 and 1912.

These foreign language tours brought conflicting local traditions to Romania, and as their intersection was both spatial and temporal (Map 3), it must be pursued both diachronically and synchronically. Whereas some elements of these intercrossings remain the same, others change, appear, or disappear.

IbsenStage indicates five models of Ibsen reception in the field of theatre and performance, based on the French, Italian, German, Hungarian and Yiddish performances. Each has its own multi-layered story, with various degrees of permeability, interdependency and even rigidity across time and space. The impact of these performances, and their reasons for coming to Romania, are case specific. Most French, German and Italian artists were driven by commercial aims. The Hungarian and the German productions staged in Bucharest during World War I, reflect discrete political contexts. Finally, the Yiddish and Hungarian productions are justified by the societal structure of the Romanian society.

The presence of foreign language productions across the country indicates that the theatregoers in Bucharest and Iași had a particularly wide knowledge of foreign languages. They attended performances in French, Italian, German and, later on, English. While performances in French and Italian were not necessarily associated with minorities, the performances in Hungarian and Yiddish were mostly associated with the respective societal groups, with native speakers of Romanian attending these events sporadically. The German performances combined both criteria. In Sibiu/Nagyszeben/Hermannstadt or Timișoara/Temesvár/Temeschwar, where Germans were an acknowledged minority group, they attended the performances most. In cities such as Bucharest or Iași, however, it was the locals and not the members of this minority group who filled the performances.

METHODOLOGY

The article builds upon an interdisciplinary methodological and theoretical framework combining theatre historiography, digital humanities, and the concept of *histoire croisée* of Michael Werner and Bénédicte Zimmermann. A constant shift between close and distant reading results in a qualitative analysis deepened by the digital framework.

First, the range of materials provide the theatre historiographical background with studies of Romanian theatre history, memoirs, biographies, previous research on Henrik Ibsen's reception in Romania and worldwide, theatre reviews and miscellaneous archival material.⁴

Second, the Romanian dataset registered in IbsenStage frames the research. In addition to map visualisations, I use graphs and statistics to analyse this dataset.⁵ This approach is rooted in previous research on Ibsen's worldwide impact employing digital humanities tools, such as the pioneering studies conducted by Julie Holledge, Bollen, Helland, and Tompkins (2016) and Jens-Morten Hanssen (2018).

Third, I apply the concept of *histoire croisée* of Werner and Zimmermann to the fluid territorial borders, the mix of languages, the movements of touring companies, and the coexistence of different theatre traditions in Romania (Werner and Zimmermann 2004; Werner and Zimmermann 2006). All these factors contribute to the uniqueness of the early Romanian tradition of Ibsen production.

While the *histoire croisée* concept is situated at the intersection of history and social sciences, Werner and Zimmermann argue its validity for other fields of research. In this article, I apply it to theatre and performance history. The authors demonstrate it as a "relational" concept, in contrast with comparative and transfer studies, and argue that neither comparative studies nor transfer studies can be employed in cases that require diachronic and synchronic perspective simultaneously:

Quite often, however, a situation is more complex than this, bringing into play movements between various points in at least two and sometimes several

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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)

With the help of *histoire croisée*, researchers can apply multiple viewpoints to a single research object and investigate “a variety of directions and multiple effects,” making it possible to focus “on a multiplicity of possible viewpoints and the divergences resulting from languages, terminologies, categorizations and conceptualizations, traditions, and disciplinary usages” (Werner and Zimmermann 2006, 37; 32).

This flexibility is vital to any discussion of the fluidity of the national context and the emergence of Ibsen on the Romanian stage. The multiple influences from other theatre cultures that marked the acting and staging practices in the Romanian theatre institutions coexisted within an unstable temporal and spatial framework. The focus of *histoire croisée* on intercrossings highlights the complexity of the evolution of the Romanian Ibsen productions as they interact with other theatre traditions within a fluctuating cultural landscape.

My choice of *histoire croisée* as overarching concept in this research has been dictated by the results of the data interrogation performed on the Romanian IbsenStage dataset. In other words, I did not adjust the data on the foreign language tours to fit the theoretical framework. Instead, I let the patterns emerging in the data lead me towards the choice of a conceptual tool capable to encompass the complexity emerging in the statistical graphs and in the maps. In this respect, it was only after exploring the data visualisations that the intercrossing metaphor appeared as the most suitable to articulate and interpret the geographical, temporal, institutional and aesthetic complexity that marked Ibsen’s emergence on the Romanian stage. Yet, instead of forcing the concept into my interpretation of the data by adjusting the visualisations to fit the new analysis framework, I chose to root my analysis in the initial, original graphs and maps, and refer to the

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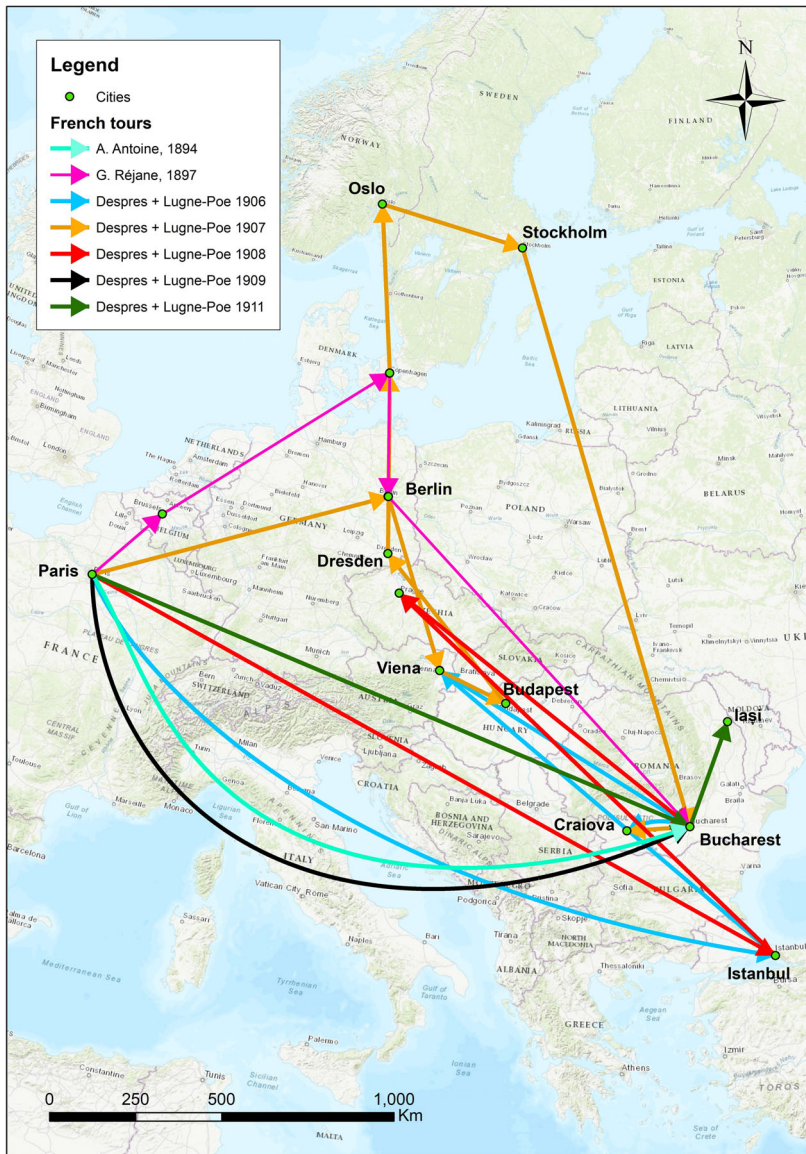
concept as a guide on how to approach the complex landscape of Ibsen's emergence on the Romanian stage. Consequently, this article pursues an analysis of the tours grouped by language as the overarching criteria, with space, time, people, institutions and practices as intersecting elements. The concept proved helpful in drawing conclusions regarding the impact of the foreign language tours by assessing their impact in light of their movement on the Romanian stages.

The multicultural structure of the Romanian society, the changes it underwent until Communism, and the complex interactions between theatre agents indicate an uneven emergence and assimilation of the various influences, hardly to confine to a stable temporal axis with one clear departure and arrival point. The specificity of the Romanian case fits conceptually within *histoire croisée*, which "engages in a to-and fro movement," mapping both stability and change (Werner and Zimmermann 2006, 50). This concept matches the constant need to readjust the spatial, temporal and methodological frames while analysing Ibsen's early Romanian performance history, hence key-terms such as entanglement, crossing or interweaving provide the most suitable framework.

THE FRENCH TOURS

Romanian theatre life was strongly influenced by the French model. For example, the first Romanian theatre law of 1877 adopted the French system of the "Dramatic Society" after "La Comédie Française." The influence is also evident in the interaction between French and Romanian theatre practitioners. On the one hand, French practitioners participated in the Romanian theatre life as early as the second half of the nineteenth century.⁶ On the other hand, Romanian actors travelled to Paris to improve their skills both by observing the French actors' performances and by taking classes with them. Some renowned actresses who travelled to Paris to improve their acting and who also performed Ibsen were Aristizza Romanescu, Aglae Pruteanu,

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Map 4. French Ibsen tours visiting Romania.

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and Mărioara Voiculescu.⁷ In addition, Romanian directors such as Alexandru Davila followed the French model and developed both the state and private theatre environment based on André Antoine's example. Finally, the Romanian amateur theatre groups whose aristocrat members performed in French in private environments confirm the strong influence of this model.⁸ Thus, the French influence was strong both before and after Ibsen was introduced on the national stage. But which French traditions modelled Ibsen's early staging in Romania?

To begin with, IbsenStage registers 12 events between 1894 and 1911, revolving around four key artists: André Antoine, Gabrielle Réjane, Suzanne Desprès and Aurélien-Marie Lugné-Poë (Map 4). The latter two travelled together several times to Romania, and are associated with the largest number of Ibsen events (10). By contrast, André Antoine and Gabrielle Réjane performed Ibsen only once, although they also visited Romania several times.

Geographically, these tours met in Bucharest, Romania's capital city, which dominated the local theatre life. The troupe of Desprès and Lugné-Poë also performed in Iași and Craiova. However, the French artists did not meet temporally, visiting Romania in sequence, starting with Antoine in 1894, Réjane in 1897, and Desprès and Lugné-Poë between 1906 and 1911.

To understand the practices that entered Romania through the French Ibsen performances, we must consider Ibsen's French reception. Kirsten E. Shepherd-Barr acknowledges the narrative of a "battle for Ibsen" between Antoine's naturalist version and Lugné-Poë's symbolist version suggested by Joan Templeton, but insists that the French reception was not confined to these perspectives (Barr 2012, 61-63; Templeton 1998, 71). She mentions Réjane's interpretation as a unique alternative to Antoine and Lugné-Poë's avant-gardism and experimentalism. Romanian audiences witnessed all three conflicting Ibsen versions, as the country was a commercial market for the French artists and aesthetic choices were secondary to financial considerations.

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André Antoine

The first French Ibsen staging in Romania, *Ghosts*, was a touring production starring André Antoine as Oswald and took place in April 1894 at Teatrul Liric in Bucharest (Alterescu 1971, 82). Antoine's performance took place at the beginning of Ibsen's Romanian reception, one month after the first local Ibsen performance of *An Enemy of the People* in Iași and three years before the Romanian premiere of *Ghosts* in 1897. He presented a mainly naturalistic repertoire, which included seven French plays and two Norwegian plays: Ibsen's *Ghosts* and Bjørnson's *The Bankrupt*.⁹ Antoine "expressed his satisfaction with respect to the way his performances were received in Romania and promised he would return" (Massoff 1969, 338).¹⁰ Yet he never performed Ibsen in Romania again.

Internationally, IbsenStage registers Antoine in 12 events between 1890 and 1903, 11 of which are associated with *Ghosts* and one with *The Wild Duck*.¹¹ Antoine's Ibsen activity unfolded over 13 years from 1890–1903 across France, Italy, Germany and the Netherlands, with Romania as its easternmost point. His first Ibsen production, *Ghosts*, staged on 30 May 1890, was also Ibsen's French premiere.

Antoine presented his naturalist Ibsen version on the Romanian stage, which entailed that everything should render a "slice of life" on stage:

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 ... 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 ... Antoine had abolished the star system. His company worked as ... a cohesive whole. (Knapp 1988, 866)

The acting challenged the Romanian audiences; they had not previously witnessed 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

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cannot be heard” (Massoff 1969, 338). The critics noted that the naturalist interpretation resulted in excessive renditions of real-life situations, attributable to the “excessive study of the roles—attitudes, gestures, silences even, which were all calculated in detail” (Massoff 1969, 338). This made the pathological dimension seem more artificial than real.

Ioan Massoff states that “the interpretation of Oswald from the long-awaited play *Ghosts* was received with admiration” (Alterescu 1971, 82). Yet Ion Vartic evaluated the Romanian audience’s reaction as “moderately” enthusiastic (Vartic 1995, 168). Antoine’s repertoire, inspired by a “petty, grey world” contrasted with that of other foreign language non-Romanian theatre companies providing sheer entertainment (Alterescu 1971, 82). “The suppleness of Antoine’s acting” did not appeal to the larger audience either (Alterescu 1971, 82). Laura Vampa’s review highlights a positive reception, while commenting on the audience’s lack of previous contact with Ibsen performances:

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.... I believe very few of the audience had any idea of who Ibsen was. Yet the play gained authority from the very beginning... and won everyone’s sympathy. (Vampa 1894, 1)

Gabrielle Réjane

Renowned for her contribution as Nora, Gabrielle Réjane is registered in 15 IbsenStage events, of which 14 are associated with *A Doll’s House* during 1894–1903. She played Nora mostly between 1894 and 1897 (11 events), when she toured both Europe and North America. She performed this role only once on the Romanian stage, in Bucharest at Teatrul Liric in 1897, during a tour with the ensemble of Théâtre de Vaudeville. Excepting *A Doll’s House*, her repertoire consisted only of French well-made plays.¹² Like Antoine, she returned to Romania several times (1901, 1905, 1910 and 1914), but never performed Ibsen again (Alterescu 1971, 82–83).

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As for the Ibsen tradition Réjane brought to Romania, she “steered away from these two dominant modes of presenting Ibsen”, that is from the naturalist and symbolist genres (Shepherd-Barr 2012, 62). Réjane belonged to the “boulevard” theatre tradition and ensured “the first... mainstream theatrical success for Ibsen” (Shepherd-Barr 2012, 61). She enacted also the French romantic tradition, based on a declamation and on the star-system where a role was chosen to highlight the interpreter’s virtuosity: “Réjane, like her rivals, inherited a Romantic tradition of acting, only rarely was she sublime, and only very rarely indeed... was she ‘tragic’. Mostly was she witty, ironical and wonderfully physical” (Stokes 2005, 122). John Stokes notes Réjane’s tendency towards a naturalist and realist acting: “The terms of Réjane’s success show a like adhesion to the newer naturalism of established mechanics... she transformed, deepened and complicated the predictable workings of her popular repertoire” (Stokes 2005, 122). In London her acting was seen to have “one firm claim upon realism,” thus distancing her from Romanticism (Stokes 2005, 136).

In the 1897 production of *A Doll’s House* staged in Romania, “the simplicity of her acting, the moving sensibility and the naturalness” emerge as the main characteristics (Massoff 1969, 415).¹³ The critics do not, however, clarify what “simplicity,” “sensibility” or “naturalness” mean. We might be tempted to associate her interpretation with naturalism or realism, yet given Shephard-Barr’s categorization, the actress appears to belong between Romanticism and realism. Finally, the critics mention the controversy marking the Romanian audience’s first encounter with *A Doll’s House* on stage: “a lively discussion unleashed in the theatre hall, as the audience was divided regarding the behaviour of Ibsen’s heroine” (Massoff 1969, 415).

Suzanne Desprès and Aurélien-Marie Lugné-Poë

The 43 events with Suzanne Desprès as leading actress between 1895 and 1937, and the 111 events with Aurélien-Marie Lugné-Poë as actor and/or director between 1892 and 1934 reveal their

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outstanding contribution to the spread of Ibsen across Europe. In Romania, IbsenStage records their presence in 10 events in 1906, 1907, 1908, 1909 and 1911, touring Bucharest, Craiova and Iași. *A Doll's House* was their most performed Ibsen play, but they also staged *The Master Builder* in 1901 and *Hedda Gabler* in 1911. Additionally, their repertoire included mainly French playwrights, as well as Italian, Russian, German and Romanian (Massoff 1972, 163, 164, 189, 226, 270, 388). The repertoire reveals a combination of well-made plays, as well as classical, naturalistic and symbolistic plays, attesting to the aesthetic transitions taking place in the French theatre. At the same time, the wide range of plays reveals the wish of the two contributors to balance their artistic and their commercial aims. While Ibsen and other naturalistic or symbolistic playwrights challenged the spectators, the classical plays appealed more easily to the taste of larger audiences.

This is also supported by the fact that their Romanian tours were part of a state initiative for cultivating a closer relationship between Romania and France through cultural exchange. Massoff notes that some of the most important French theatre ensembles received a subsidy to tour Europe and promote France. This eased the financial burden of touring, as foreign language touring companies paid taxes. Desprès and Lugné-Poë's Romanian tours were financially successful despite the travel costs and taxes (Massoff 1972, 269).

Desprès and Lugné-Poë are associated with *Théâtre de l'Oeuvre*, but historians of theatre indicate that the theatre was closed to the Parisian audience between 1899 and 1912.¹⁴ The *Théâtre de l'Oeuvre*'s brand developed almost exclusively outside France during that period. Desprès and Lugné-Poë visited Romania during these international tours, which ensured them worldwide recognition (Robichez 1955, 138–139). In Robichez's words, it was the period of the "triumphant expansion of L'Oeuvre on the circuits of the entire world" (Robichez 1955, 144).

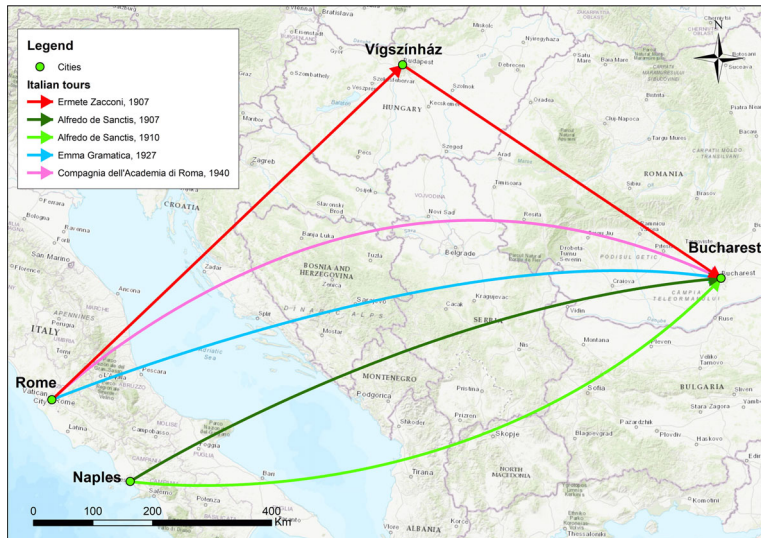
Desprès and Lugné-Poë brought a symbolist sensibility to Romania. Their Ibsen stagings were generally characterised by an extreme, highly controversial symbolism, which enacted Lugné-

Poë's "vision of the theatre [that] went beyond the visible world, directly into the occult, sometimes nightmarish, transcendental domains" and ensured "Ibsen's full and final breakthrough in France" in spite of all criticism (Knapp 1988, 872; Shepherd-Barr 2012, 61). Yet, no Romanian historian evaluated their performance tradition as "symbolist." Instead, they indicate that Lugné-Poë proposed a milder version of symbolist theatre, imbued with realist elements so that "the stage language that dominates employs a simple and low tonality, and is cleared of conventions, without being devoid of *poetry*" (Alterescu 1971, 84). Giuliana Altamura explains that once the *Théâtre de l'Oeuvre* closed in 1899 for the Parisian audience, the extremely experimental-symbolist phase of Lugné-Poë's activity ended. Thus, when Desprès and Lugné-Poë arrived in Romania, they probably did not confront the audience with experimental symbolism, instead presenting a balanced Ibsen interpretation that combined symbolism and realism. Robichez confirms this aesthetic change around 1900 in favour of "a poetical realism which is often nuanced by means of a rough humour, sometimes sneering, always profoundly original" or "*réalisme mitigé*" (Robichez 1955, 27; 16). If the term "poetical" suggests that symbolist traits were preserved in the new "realist" formula, "*mitigé*" suggests a mild realism, "sweetened" with symbolist elements. The critical reception in Romania does not suggest extreme symbolism in Desprès' acting, but tempered renditions with a realist touch: "she moved [the audience] with her simple acting and managed to create effects through sudden movements, through words whispered as if from mysterious depths" (Massoff 1972, 388). Massoff adds that:

the great actress moved the audience with her sincere acting that lacked any emphasis, and with an extreme economy of her external means.... This simplicity of the acting surprised some of those used to people on stage speaking "differently than in [real] life..." (Massoff 1972, 189–190)

Finally, the actor George Ciprian confirms that Desprès's performance as Nora balanced a symbolist approach with a realist acting characterised by simplicity: "[she performed]... with such a seldom encountered penetrating power, that she elevated to an

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Map 5. Italian Ibsen tours visiting Romania.

unexpected standard the great final scene by the simplest means” (Ciprian 1965, 172).

THE ITALIAN TOURS

The entanglement of Ibsen traditions stimulated by the French tours on the Romanian stage was enhanced by five Italian performances between 1907 and 1940 (Map 5). Latin kinship has supported a deep relationship between Italian and Romanian culture. The linguistic similarity, which is even stronger than with French, contributed to the permanency of this perspective and encouraged constant interaction. Alina Dorojan highlights that Italians acted as middlemen in Romanian territory, providing expertise in numerous areas, from architecture or medicine to religion, literature, arts and politics from the very establishment of the Roman domination in Dacia, throughout the Middle Ages

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and into the modern era (Bokor 2017, 13). Ion Cârja confirms the functionality of an “Italian model” in Romanian culture too:

A parallelism of the essential moments marked the building process of the two Romanian and Italian nations and modern nation 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. (Bokor 2017, 8)

The historical background of the interactions between Italians and Romanians supports the exchange of theatre practitioners and the importation of their repertory. This background helps us understand better the strong impact of Italian practitioners involved in both Italian and Romanian Ibsen performances upon the local theatre culture. The Italian tradition of performing Ibsen became a model as performances of actors such as Ermete Zacconi, Alfredo de Sanctis and Emma Gramatica shaped the Ibsen interpretation of the Romanian actors as strongly as the French.

Before analysing the Italian Ibsen performances that visited Romania, we must also consider the influence of the Italian acting system on the interpretation of Ibsen at the turn of the twentieth century. The lack of a National Theatre encouraged the Italian actors to tour, granting them celebrity outside of Italy. The repertory reflected this institutional structure dominated by the practice of touring and by the star-actor as “the absolute *dominus* of the stage” (Petrini 2018, 272). The most important star actor/actress in the company was the manager and the director of the ensemble, controlling the repertory, the interpretation, the *mise-en-scène* and even the distribution of the roles according to a pre-established scheme that remained stable long into the twentieth century (Bottoni 1999, 13).

Moreover, the text of the plays in the repertory was arranged according to the commercial interests of the company and the aesthetic aims of its star-actor and manager. This freedom regarding the text is most evident in its domestication, which involved “cutting, moving, adding” (Alonge 1988, 14). This approach changed during the period analysed, evolving from the complete dominance of the actor over the text to a more balanced

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perspective. The change paralleled the transition from Romanticism to *verismo* in the acting practice. This implied an even slower transition from the reign of the actor to that of the playwright and the director that emerged in the 1930s.

Roberto Alonge's view on the relationship between the "great actors" of Italy and the dramatic texts reflects a "dualism of powers" and he defines these tensions as:

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. (Alonge 1988, 210)

Armando Petri's historical categorisation of the actors within the Italian theatre history reflects these changes. Despite the increasing dominance of the director and of the "ensemble" in the French, German or Russian theatre, the Italian theatre remained actor-based until very late. The Italian Ibsen performances that visited Romania highlighted these changes too.

IbsenStage reveals the spatial overlapping in Bucharest of the Italian tours. However, while the spatial pattern confirms the dominance of Bucharest, as in the case of the French performances, the temporal pattern differs. The French tours were concentrated at the turn of the twentieth century, but the Italian performances were spread in time reflecting three moments. The first one reveals a temporal overlapping, with two performances in 1907 of *Ghosts*, starring Alfredo de Sanctis and Ermete Zacconi. This temporal overlapping is increased if we add the French production of *A Doll's House* with Lugné-Poë and Després, taking place in Bucharest and Craiova the same year. In 1910, Alfredo de Sanctis returned with *Ghosts*. The remaining two Italian productions reveal bigger temporal gaps: *A Doll's House* with Emma Gramatica as Nora in 1927, and the only performance of *Love's Comedy* on the Romanian stage, staged in 1940 by the ensemble of *Compagnia dell'Accademia di Roma* and directed by Corrado Pavolini. In the following, I focus on the *verismo* tradition the Italian actors brought to Romania because of its powerful impact on the local theatre practitioners.

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Ermete Zacconi and Alfredo de Sanctis as Oswald

In 1907, Ermete Zacconi's *Ghosts* spatially and temporally overlapped with the *Ghosts* of Alfredo de Sanctis, both providing a *verismo* interpretation and belonging to the category of *mattatori* according to Roberto Alonge and Alessandro D'Amico (Alonge 1988, 227; D'Amico 1990, 44). IbsenStage shows that the international spread of Zacconi's *Ghosts* outshone the local impact of Alfredo de Sanctis, despite their common aesthetics. Therefore, these two *Ghosts* productions highlight more than a spatial and temporal intersection. Their simultaneous presence in Bucharest echoes the changes in the Italian acting practice and the European impact of *verismo* as it has been understood by Romanian critics such as Camil Petrescu (Petrescu 1983, 132).¹⁵

Ermete Zacconi

Il mattatore Ermete Zacconi was crucial to Ibsen's global reception. Alonge designates him and Eleonora Duse as "the vectors of Ibsenism's dissemination in Italy" (Alonge 1988, xi). Zacconi performed *Ghosts* from 1892 and brought *verismo* in the Italian theatre. IbsenStage also shows the actor's preference for Oswald, with 74 of 96 events registering him in this role.

Zacconi's Oswald is the most striking example of the use of *verismo* acting in the Ibsen performance history at the turn of the twentieth century. When Giuliano D'Amico mentions Zacconi's performances of 1892, he highlights the actor's interpretation: "Through this 'pathological' rendering he managed to create a theatrical effect that 'mesmerised' the audience and granted him long-lasting success. Nevertheless, Zacconi faced criticism for his naturalistic and pathological interpretation" (D'Amico 2013, 132).¹⁶ When Alonge refers to "the most contested Oswald of Ermete Zacconi" he alludes to the debates that his interpretation generated in both Italian and European theatrical circles (Alonge 1990, 84). Ibsen himself disliked this characterisation: "Zacconi uses my name to recite a drama, *Ghosts*, that it is not my drama" (Ojetti 1951, 21). Alessandro Tinterri described the actor as "the

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so-called *mattatore*, able to privilege the identification [with the role] to the largest extent” (Tinterri 1990, 20). Lucia Re adds that 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 (Re 2002, 133)

The Romanian audience rejected Zacconi’s Oswald and his pathological *verismo* interpretation. The actor generated bewilderment and spectators left the theatre “with completely shaken nerves” (Mohr 1937, 119). The other plays he performed, mostly from the *verismo* repertoire, caused the same “terror”:¹⁷

Zacconi, a great 'technician,' managed to shake more than to emotionally move, in contrast to Novelli It was said that the latter 'was striving to dress the cruel reality with the garment of beauty.' In a certain sense, Zacconi constituted a disappointment. (Massoff 1972, 226)

The actor never returned, but his *verismo* approach marked the Romanian acting practice, especially Petre Sturdza, whose Ibsen interpretation was also influenced by Ermete Novelli and Eleonora Duse.

Alfredo de Sanctis’s company

Zacconi’s *Ghosts* performance competed with that of Alfredo de Sanctis, whose ensemble included Alda de Sanctis Borelli and Napoleone Borelli too. The tours of 1907 and 1910 with *Ghosts* to Bucharest are their only visits to Romania, and the historian Simion Alterescu describes the ensemble as “one of the best touring groups that visited Bucharest lately” (Alterescu 1971, 85). IbsenStage holds 50 events for this company over a period of roughly 30 years between 1893 and 1924. *Ghosts* is associated with 21 of the 50 events, but *Pillars of Society*, *Love’s Comedy*, *The Lady from the Sea*, *John Gabriel Borkman*, *Rosmersholm*, *When We Dead Awaken* and *An Enemy of the People* were also in the repertoire. The 1907 Romanian visit apparently was the company’s first tour outside Italy, and they only performed in Bucharest (Popescu 2000, 80–82). The company performed primarily in

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Italy; the Ibsen performances in Romania are an exception to its trajectory. In terms of repertory, it staged Italian and French plays, and only occasionally German or Norwegian (Ibsen) plays.¹⁸ Nevertheless, the repertoire reveals a focus on naturalist/*verismo* plays.

Massoff comments on De Sanctis's *verismo* performance in 1907: "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" (Massoff 1972, 190). Three years later, in 1910, Massoff indicates a major turn towards a moderate *naturalist* interpretation:¹⁹

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 naturalism of the Italian actors was going through a period of evolution towards a more human style. (Massoff 1972, 308)

Thus, Alfredo de Sanctis broke with Zacconi's extremely pathological Ibsen interpretation, proposing a tempered, and more nuanced realist acting.

Emma Gramatica

There was a break in the Italian Ibsen productions in Romania that lasted until 1927 when Emma Gramatica performed in *A Doll's House* in Bucharest at the Theatre "Carol cel Mare" ("Eforie"), which premiered in Budapest on 31 March 1927. IbsenStage holds 57 event records for Gramatica between 1894 and 1930. *Ghosts* is her most performed play (34 events), and *A Doll's House* is second (17 events). The geographical distribution shows that she performed mostly in Italy, while also touring Europe.

Petrini places Gramatica in the generation of actor-interpreters, who followed the era of *il mattatore* to which Zacconi, Novelli and Duse belonged, and who:

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

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protagonists. [The actors] question in a much more stringent manner the interpretation and the staging of the text they choose to recite. (Petrini 2018, 289)

This generation of Italian actors that Gramatica belongs to no longer dominated, but respected the primacy of the text, in contrast to *il grande attore* or *il mattatore*. Yet, they were still situated somewhere between the star and the ensemble systems. This transition is also manifest in Gramatica's acting moving from Romanticism to *verismo*. In the latter part of her career, when she visited Romania, the actress employed *verismo* techniques, yet her interpretations were infused with subtle poetic tonalities in contrast to her predecessors:

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 ...*). (Casa Editrice Le Maschere 1958, 1555)

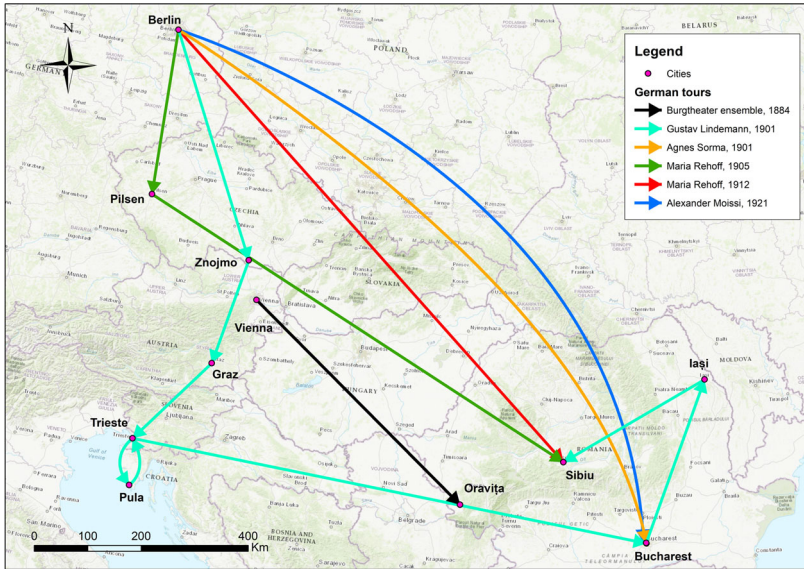
Apart from *A Doll's House*, Gramatica's 16 touring performances were based on Italian, French, German and British plays mixing naturalistic and well-made plays, enjoying a positive reception in Romania (Alterescu 1973, 115):²⁰

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.' (Alterescu 1973, 115)

This description indicates the audience's approval of her mild *verismo* interpretation. Yet her Ibsen performance was strongly criticised. Scarlat Froda argued that despite Gramatica's accurate psychological interpretation of Nora, she no longer possessed the physical qualities for a credible interpretation because of her age:

The point of view embraced by Emma Gramatica is very just.... 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 Tarantella scene or any other endearment anymore. At the same time, Emma

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Map 6. German Ibsen tours visiting Romania.

Gramatica's acting skills in the scenes in which age does not matter are impressive. (Froda 1927, 4)

THE GERMAN TOURS

Between 1884 and 1921, a plethora of German actors and ensembles toured with Ibsen in Romanian territory (Map 6).²¹ The number of German productions exceeded both the French and Italian. The tours were not the work of a single dominant theatre agent, so no visible dominant pattern rules the quantitative and geographical panorama of the 35 German Ibsen events. While patterns can also be created by theatre spaces, paying audiences or language skills, in the case of the German contributors, the theatre agents had the strongest cohesive power. It was their travelling to specific places, and their encounter with the local audiences at different moments in

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time that determined the impact of the German Ibsen tradition on the Romanian theatre.

In order to analyse the influence of the German Ibsen reception, it is important to understand the relationship between the Romanian and German cultural space. The German “model of development,” in Hitchins’s words, was a major influence (Hitchins 2014, 121). The political proximity of the Habsburg/Austro-Hungarian Empire in Transylvania, the Saxon minorities in Sibiu, as well as the World War I invasion and occupation of Bucharest by the German army, created the context for on-going interactions between Germans and Romanians.

The German influence on the Romanian theatre was subtler than that of the French or Italian. It was more of a background influence at the turn of the twentieth century, with the Romanian director Paul Gusty acting as an important promoter. The German model also influenced the actors, the earliest example being the 1895 interpretation of Rebekka West by Aristizza Romanescu, which was influenced by a performance of the same role by Adèle Sandrock. During the 1920s, a variety of German influences were present in the Romanian theatre. On the one hand, in 1925 Agatha Bârsescu brought her knowledge of the aesthetics of the Viennese Burgtheater to Romania. On the other hand, the influence of Max Reinhardt was visible in the director Soare Z. Soare’s approach and in Mărioara Voiculescu’s rendition of the *Peer Gynt* production of 1924/1925, as well as in the *Ghosts* production of 1943/1944.

The German dataset highlights five key moments: 1) The 1884 performance of *The Pretenders* of Burgtheater; 2) The 1901 *A Doll’s House* performance of Agnes Sorma in Bucharest; 3) The tours of German Ibsen ensembles managed by Gustav Lindemann, Maria Rehoff and Ludwig Stärk in 1900–1902, 1905 and 1912; 4) The Ibsen performances of the German ensemble at the National Theatre of Bucharest during the German occupation in 1916–1917; and 5) The *Ghosts* performance of Alexander Moissi in Bucharest in 1921.

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In the following, I will focus on two major perspectives in the German Ibsen reception these moments brought to Romania. The first one concerns the contrast between the star-system and the ensemble system. The second perspective concerns heterogeneity in acting revealed in the transition from romantic to naturalist, realist and expressionist genres.

STARS AND ENSEMBLES

Agnes Sorma

In 1901, the audience in Bucharest witnessed a Deutsches Theater production of *A Doll's House* starring Agnes Sorma, as well as some other naturalistic and romantic plays.²² IbsenStage registers Sorma in 63 events, 55 of which are performances of Nora. Hanssen (2018, 190–191) identifies Sorma as a crucial figure in the network for Ibsen performances between 1876 and 1918 on the German, European and American stages, comparable with Duse and Réjane. Sorma's Romanian performance as Nora illustrates the importance of the star-system in the successful international and national dissemination of *A Doll's House*. This system, common in France and Italy, also characterised the German stage until 1918. It promoted “the system of solo guest performances” and ensured “public interest, high salaries, and critical attention” by allowing stars to perform a repertoire based on their preferences (Hanssen 2018, 118, 124). Yet, after the controversial reception of Réjane's Nora, the Romanian audience hardly attended Sorma's performance and the actress never returned to Romania.

The Ibsen Ensembles: Gustav Lindemann, Maria Rehoff and Ludwig Stärk

Hanssen states that in the first decade of the twentieth century, once the stars' independent and dominant position diminished, the art of directing and the ensemble system gained influence. This was also the period when Ibsen was “in command of the German stage” (Hanssen 2018, 153).

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The Romanian stage also experienced an influx of Ibsen productions that decade due to the “growing significance of symbolist plays, the advent of the Ibsen ensembles, [and] the tradition of Ibsen cycles” (Hanssen 2018, 153). The Ibsen ensembles provided the Romanian audience with the largest number of not only German, but also foreign language Ibsen performances, that is 23 events between 1901 and 1912. This is due to the Ibsen ensembles of Lindemann, Rehoff and Stärk.

Statistically, *Das Ibsen-theater aus Berlin*—which was the name used by all these contributors for their companies—staged six Ibsen plays, produced 45 events and toured 20 cities throughout Europe. Gustav Lindemann was the manager of the first Ibsen ensemble to arrive on Romanian soil. The leading actress in Lindemann’s company was Maria Rehoff, his wife. Their marriage ended in 1903. Thus, the next time the company came to Sibiu in 1905 and 1912, the manager was no longer Lindemann, but Rehoff. Ludwig Stärk, who performed in Sibiu in 1905, was connected to Lindemann and Rehoff only as a member of the former’s ensemble in 1901 (Hanssen 2018, 174–176). He must have also participated in Lindemann’s tours to Sibiu, Bucharest, Iași and Botoșani that year.

Lindemann’s ensemble had a special connection with Sibiu, preserved by both Rehoff and Stärk. Leo Bauer, the Viennese manager of the theatre of Sibiu between 1893 and 1921, brought these ensembles to Sibiu in 1901 and in 1905, and presumably in 1912 (Alterescu 1971, 97). Bauer contributed to the development of the local theatre life by preserving “for more than twenty years the only professional theatre institution in the German language” in Transylvania (Alterescu 1971, 97).

The German Ibsen ensembles brought the Ibsen cycles to the Romanian lands—that is “a non-fixed set of plays” with performances usually following the chronology of Ibsen’s work. This tradition is typically German, and emerged at “the end of the 1880s and continues into the 1920s,” reaching its peak in the first decade of the twentieth century (Hanssen 2018, 176–177). The statistical “frequency and density” it generated indicate Ibsen’s

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great “level of consecration and canonization” on the German stage, that is, his status as a classicised playwright (Hanssen 2018, 184, 182).

The ensembles brought Ibsen’s symbolist plays to the Romanian stage. They dominated the repertory of the German ensembles in the first decade of the century (Wittstock 2016, 122). At least two of the four Ibsen plays—*Rosmersholm*, *Hedda Gabler*, *Ghosts* and *When We Dead Awaken*—staged in 1901 by Lindemann, clearly bear the symbolist label. In 1905, Maria Rehoff kept the latter in the repertory, as the symbolist plays dominated her 1912 tour:²³ *The Master Builder*, *When We Dead Awaken*, *The Lady from the Sea*, *John Gabriel Borkman* and *Rosmersholm*.

The Romanian impact of the Ibsen ensembles was not consistent. The high impact of Lindemann is indicated by the number of events and geographical distribution covering four cities—Sibiu, Bucharest, Iași and Botoșani—in just a few weeks. In contrast, the ensembles of Rehoff and Stärk play marginal roles. Although the eight performances of Rehoff compete statistically with Lindemann’s, her presence is confined to Sibiu, and the same applies to Stärk. These tours added density to Ibsen’s presence on the German and Romanian stages in the first decade of the twentieth century, but their influence on the Romanian Ibsen tradition was negligible.

Alexander Moissi

With Alexander Moissi performing Oswald in *Ghosts*, the German Ibsen tradition in Romania returns to the dominance of the star-actors. Moissi visited Bucharest in December 1921 (Heininger 2005, 84), with a complex repertoire including the tragedies *Hamlet*, *Othello*, *Oedipus Rex*, and the naturalistic play *The Living Corpse* in addition to *Ghosts* (Alterescu 1973, 113, 582). The positive reception caused him to return to Romania in 1930 and 1932, but he never performed Ibsen again.²⁴

This “cosmopolitan nationalist,” born in Trieste of Albanian parents, and trained in the Austrian Burgtheater, became one of

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the most influential actors of the German-speaking world and in the German and international reception of Ibsen (Connolly 2010, 83; 87–88). The 36 IbsenStage events between 1906 and 1934, of which 34 are associated with *Ghosts*, as well as their geographical distribution highlight the diverse theatre contexts in which Moissi performed, and his strong impact as Osvald.

ACTING HETEROGENEITY

Acting heterogeneity is another characteristic of the German Ibsen performances on the Romanian map. First, *The Pretenders* in 1884 provided an example of romantic acting. Second, Agnes Sorma and the Ibsen ensembles of Lindemann and Rehoff displayed a naturalist acting style. Finally, Alexander Moissi was known for his expressionist acting.

The Pretenders, a production mounted by K.K. Hofburgtheater²⁵ in 1884 in Oravița was the first Ibsen play performed in German within the boundaries of today's Romania (Bota 2013, 115).²⁶ *The Pretenders* was the first Ibsen play performed not only on a German stage on January 30, 1876, but also at Burgtheater in Vienna in October the same year. Its limited presence in the repertory of Burgtheater suggests that “performances of Ibsen's historical plays assume only a marginal role” (Hanssen 2018, 32). Ibsen's historical plays also entailed declamatory acting. Since Adolph von Wilbrandt, while managing the Burgtheater, is associated with Romantic acting, this genre was likely used for *The Pretenders* in Oravița. The performance probably had little impact on the local audience, so its significance remains mainly historical.

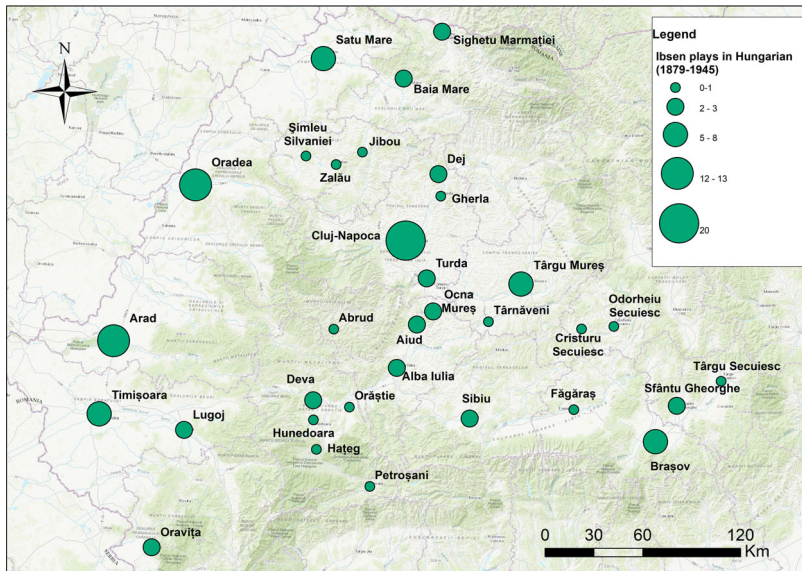
Sorma most likely brought the naturalist Ibsen to Romania. She was renowned both for Nora, whom she played from 1894, and for performing Regine in 1894 and Mrs Alving in Max Reinhardt's controversial *Ghosts* production in 1906 (Marker and Marker 1989, 58). Whereas she approached Regine as a naturalist actress in 1894, in 1906 she employed expressionism-oriented acting as Mrs Alving (Williams and Hamburger 2008, 116–118;

Fischer-Lichte 2007, 65–68, 72–75). When she visited Romania in 1901, she probably performed a naturalist Nora.

The acting in the productions of the ensembles of Lindemann, Rehoff and Stärk was also of naturalist inspiration, as Wittstock signals (2016, 121, 123). Hanssen also reveals that Lindemann “strived for ... a naturalness without naturalism” in his directing approach (2018, 173). So, while seeming to be tied to this genre, he was actually breaking with the naturalism of Carl Heine and Otto Brahm. Therefore, the “naturalness” of his direction suggests a realist approach. Lindemann’s presumable shift from naturalism to realism may also have been tied to the techniques used by actors to portray believable social interaction in Ibsen’s late, symbolist plays, because of the need to preserve the illusion of real life.

According to Alex Călin, Moissi’s *Ghosts* brought a naturalist, pathological style of acting to the Romanian stage, which strongly affected the spectators: “In front of the terrified, tortured and disheartened spectators, Moissi renders, step by step, the frightening and destructive progression of a general paralysis” (Călin 1921, 5). This description is reminiscent of the “terror” generated by the performances of actors like Ermete Zacconi. But other scholars indicate a deviation from both the Italian *verismo* and the French and German naturalist *Ghosts* interpretations: “the novelty of Moissi’s art consisted of the use of other than the ‘traditional’ expressive means of the great Italian and French actors” (Massoff 1974, 327). Ion Marin Sadoveanu pointed to an expressionist characterisation of Oswald: “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” (Sadoveanu 1921). Massoff also highlights the “simplification, the stylisation of the acting, in which the glances, the silences had their own meaning” (1974, 327). An expressionist embodiment of feeling and emotion supplanted the naturalist expression of terror, as Erika Fischer-Lichte’s analysis of the 1906 *Ghosts* performance confirms:

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Map 7. Ibsen plays in Hungarian in Transylvania 1879–1945.

Proceeding from the naturalistic acting style..., 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. (2007, 74–75)

Finally, Moissi moved the spectators' nerves by revealing the beauty of the theatrical event and presenting a symbolic rather than real, fleshy slice of life on stage.

THE TRANSYLVANIAN PERFORMANCES

When we see the 111 Henrik Ibsen performances in Hungarian registered in Transylvania between 1879 and 1945, the special status of this area is apparent (Map 7). The “common historical experience,” which entailed conflicts, tensions, separations, reconciliations and collaborations between Romanians and Hungarians in Transylvania, marks the Ibsen map (Blomqvist et al. 2013, 6; Mitu 2013). The high number of events suggests the significant

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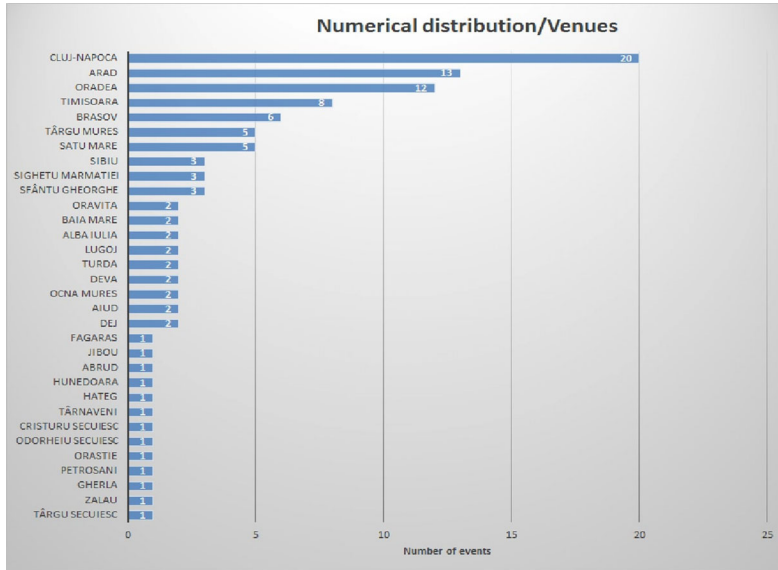


Figure 5. Ibsen events in Hungarian in Transylvania per venue 1879–1945.

impact of the Hungarian societal group in Transylvanian theatre life regardless of the political situation. In Hitchins’s words, “the areas of encounter between Romanians and Hungarians were all-encompassing: political, cultural and economic,” but “the decisive point of encounter between the elites was not political” (Hitchins 2013, 130; 126).

In fact, the numerous Hungarian Ibsen performances in Transylvania suggest commercial and aesthetic commitment more than political interests. Although the cultural context was influenced by politics, the Hungarian theatre agents in Transylvania had little interest in representing minority issues on stage: “companies were private investments for profit, and economic gain ... not for the cultural development of an ethnic group” (Burciă 2019, 72). That aesthetic aims prevailed is evident in the attention paid to the “repertory selection and acting talent before ethnic solidarity” (Burciă 2019, 80). When analysing the dissemination of Ibsen’s

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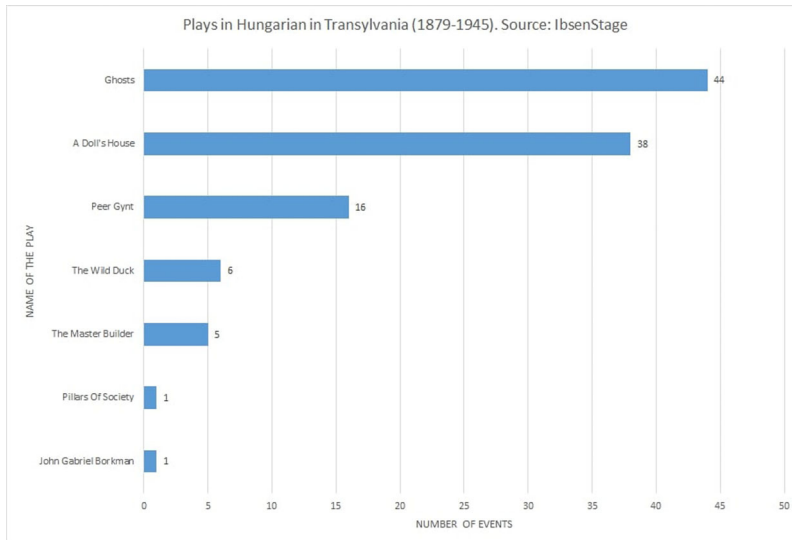


Figure 6. Ibsen plays performed in Hungarian in Transylvania 1879–1945.

plays in Transylvania, the dataset confirms the importance of: 1) the Hungarian Theatre in Cluj/Kolozsvár/Klausenburg; and 2) the touring activity of actor-managers and guest-actors.

The Hungarian Theatre of Cluj/Kolozsvár/Klausenburg

The dataset reveals a wide geographical distribution of Ibsen performances, marking Transylvania as a core of the Ibsen Hungarian-speaking reception. Ibsen was staged in 32 different venues (Figure 5) and the first Ibsen production ever in Hungarian, *Pillars of Society*, took place in Transylvania in 1879. The Hungarian Theatre of Cluj provided the highest number of Hungarian Ibsen events (Alterescu 1971, 88–89).

The dataset reveals that the Hungarian Theatre of Cluj was central to Hungarian-speaking theatre life in contrast to the provincial theatre companies that disappeared before 1945. It is connected to 39 Ibsen events across Transylvania, with 20 events taking place in Cluj, and 19 events on tour. Six of the seven Ibsen plays staged in

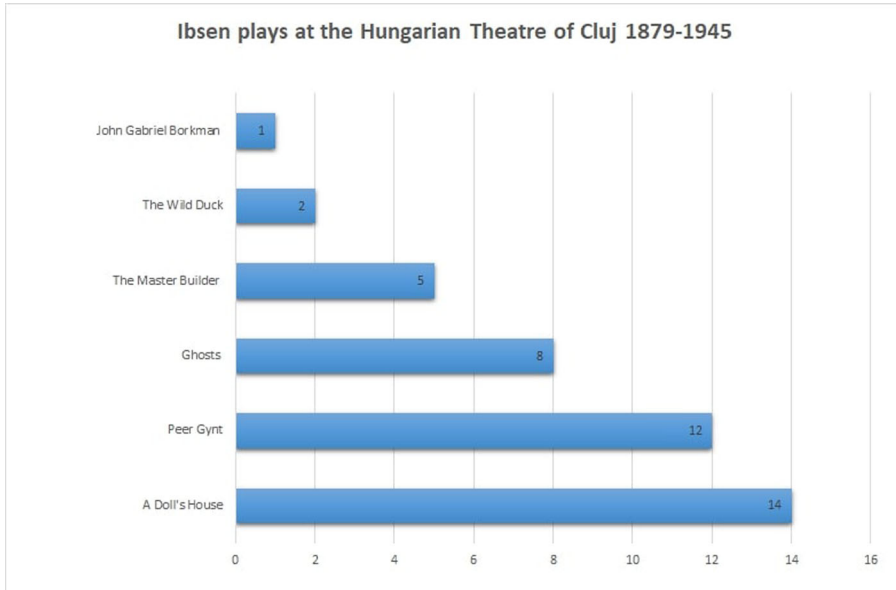


Figure 7. Ibsen plays performed at the Hungarian Theatre of Cluj 1879–1945.

Hungarian in Cluj between 1889 and 1945 (Figure 6) were in the theatre's repertory: *A Doll's House*, *Peer Gynt*, *The Master Builder*, *John Gabriel Borkman*, *Ghosts* and *The Wild Duck* (Figure 7). The last two plays even had their Hungarian premieres in Cluj, on 23 April 1890 and 15 November 1906 respectively.

The central position of the Hungarian Theatre in Cluj was secured by its manager, Jenő Janovics (1872–1945), who introduced modern playwrights into the repertory. “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” (Alterescu 1971, 90).²⁷

Finally, the centrality of Transylvania and of the Hungarian Theatre of Cluj was supported by the constant contact with the National Theatre in Budapest, which led to fruitful exchanges of actors such as Emília Márkus.

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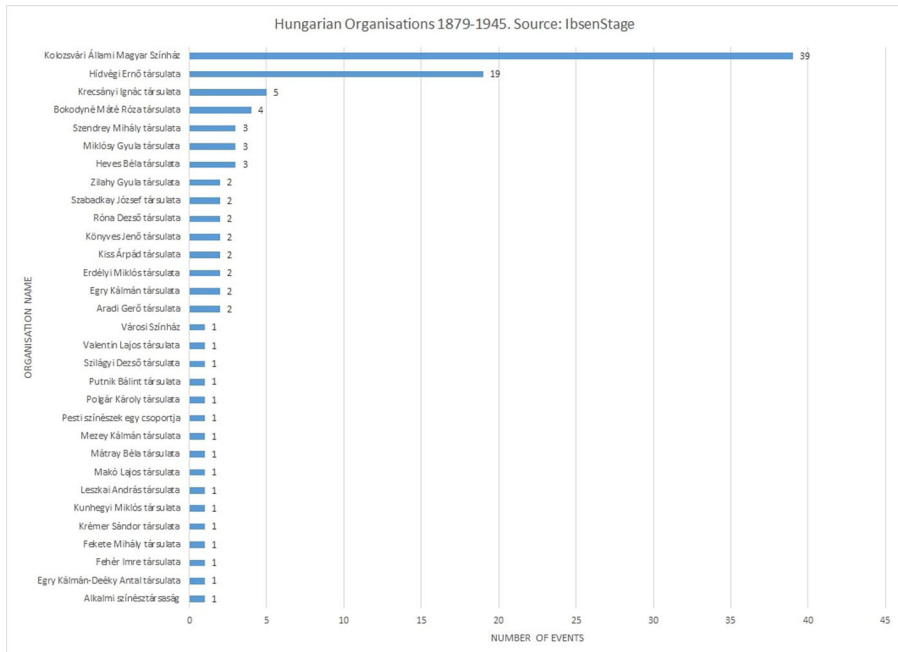


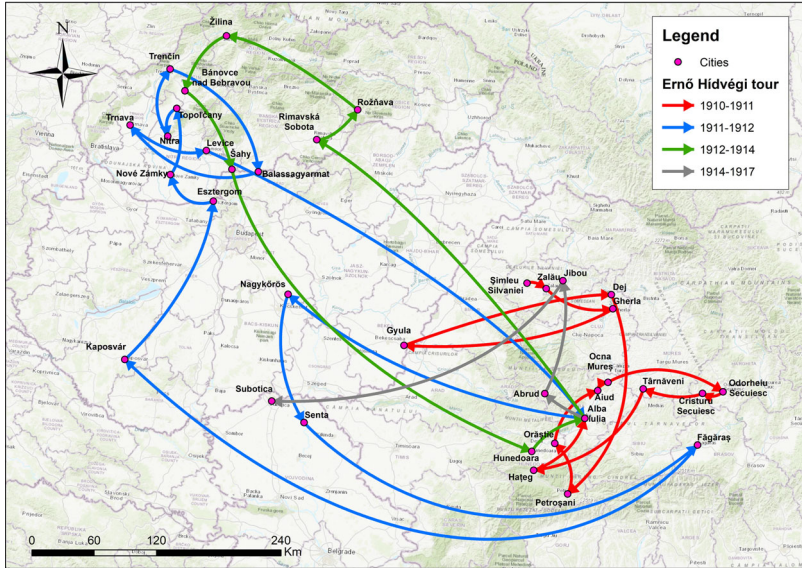
Figure 8. Ibsen events in Hungarian in Transylvania per organisation 1879–1945.

Actor-managers

While the Hungarian Theatre of Cluj never relinquished its dominant position, IbsenStage confirms the crucial role of numerous touring theatre companies in disseminating Ibsen in the Hungarian-speaking world (Figure 8). Yet, of the 29 “organisations” in the dataset, Hídvégi Ernő társulata gave the highest number of performances between 1879 and 1945: (19 events).²⁸

Ernő Hídvégi’s (1871–1950) was actor-manager of his own company between 1910 and 1914, while he also collaborated with companies and theatres throughout the Austro-Hungarian Empire (Map 8).²⁹ IbsenStage shows his interest in *Ghosts* with 38 events recording him as Oswald. His touring map shows that 19 of these events were staged in Transylvania, but that he also

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Map 8. Ernő Hidvégi touring performances.

visited Hungarian, Slovakian and Serbian cities, performing *Ghosts* all over the Empire.

Star-actors

The IbsenStage dataset also reveals the impact of Emília P. Márkus, Oszkár Beregi and Forgách Sándor as star-actors in leading Ibsen roles (Figure 9). They dominated the stage as guest-actors in both touring ensembles and in the ensembles of the local permanent theatres.

Márkus was one of the best Hungarian actresses of her time. She was the first interpreter of Nora in the Hungarian-speaking world on 4 October 1889, at the National Theatre of Budapest, and on the Transylvanian stage, as guest-actress at the Hungarian Theatre in Cluj, on 9 December the same year. IbsenStage records her in 22 events, of which 19 were *A Doll's House* productions. Of these events, 11 were staged in Transylvania, while the

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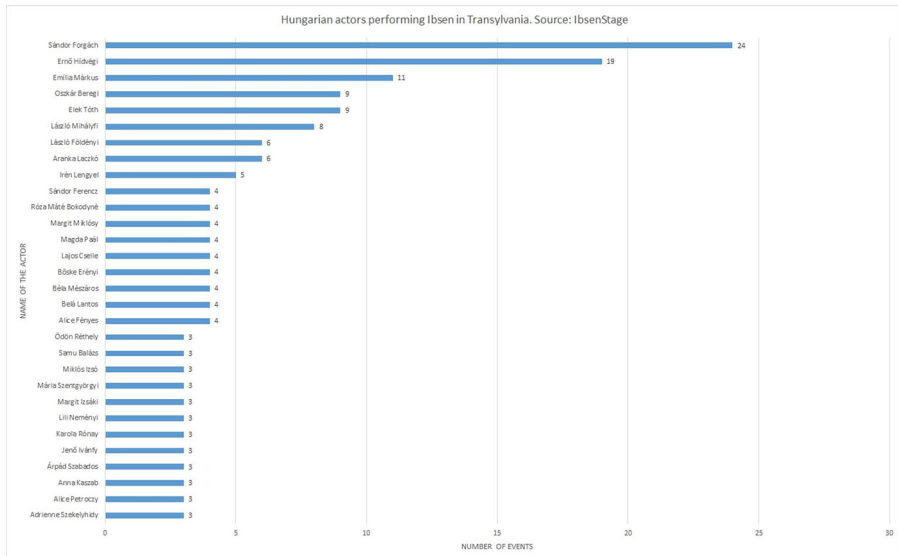


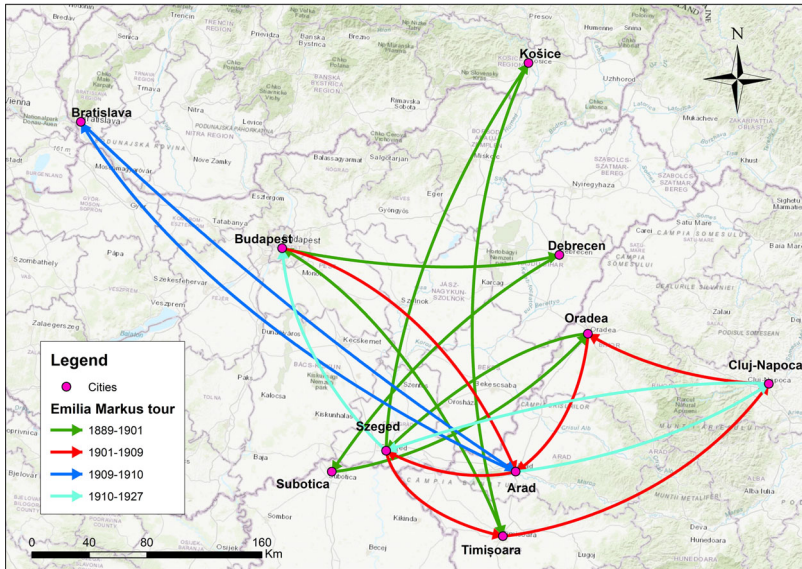
Figure 9. Hungarian actors performing Ibsen in Transylvania 1879–1945.

remaining took place in Hungarian, Slovakian and Serbian cities (Map 9).

The star-actor Beregi is even more present on the Ibsen map than Márkus. He also collaborated with the Hungarian Theatre in Cluj as guest-actor. The 48 IbsenStage events reveal extensive activity over a 30-year period (1900–1930) across the Austro-Hungarian Empire and reaching the United States of America (Map 10). Nevertheless, Beregi performed less in Transylvania than Márkus, touring mostly the Empire’s Hungarian area. He is cast in only nine events in Transylvania, compared with 25 events in Hungarian cities. Finally, *Ghosts* dominates his Ibsen repertoire, with 46 events.

Forgách, the last contributor highlighted in the dataset, was not a guest-actor, but an employee at the Hungarian Theatre in Cluj. All the 29 IbsenStage events between 1922 and 1936 register him as contributor with this theatre. Sixteen of them took place in Transylvania, which makes him the actor who performed

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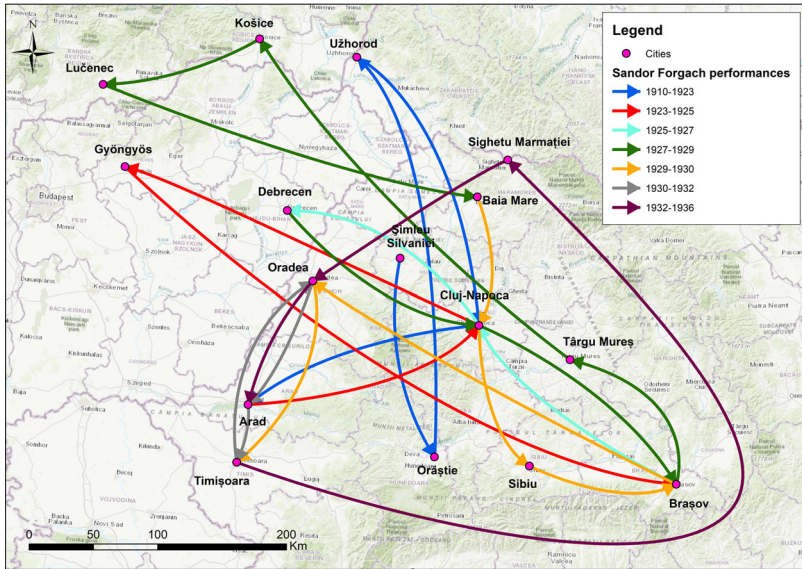
Map 9. Emilia Márkus touring performances.

most here (Map 11). He interpreted *Osvald*, *Peer Gynt* and *John Gabriel Borkman*, but is mostly remembered for the first two roles. He was known as a “great tragedian, influenced in his acting style by the expressionist theatre” (Alterescu 1973, 116).

The Yiddish tours

The two Ibsen performances in Yiddish on the Romanian map prior to 1945 were staged by the *Vilna Troupe* in 1923, and the *Warsaw Yiddish Art Theater’s* ensemble of *Ida Kaminska* in 1927 (Map 12). These Yiddish companies were drawn here by the strong Jewish community in Eastern and Southern Romania. *Israil Bercovici* states that Jewish theatre started in Iași in 1876 at the initiative of *Avram Goldfaden*, the “father of Jewish theatre” (Bercovici 1982, 13–18). Characteristics of the Jewish theatre movement are visible in both ensembles: transnational travelling; an ensemble-based practice; and eclectic stagings, marked by a

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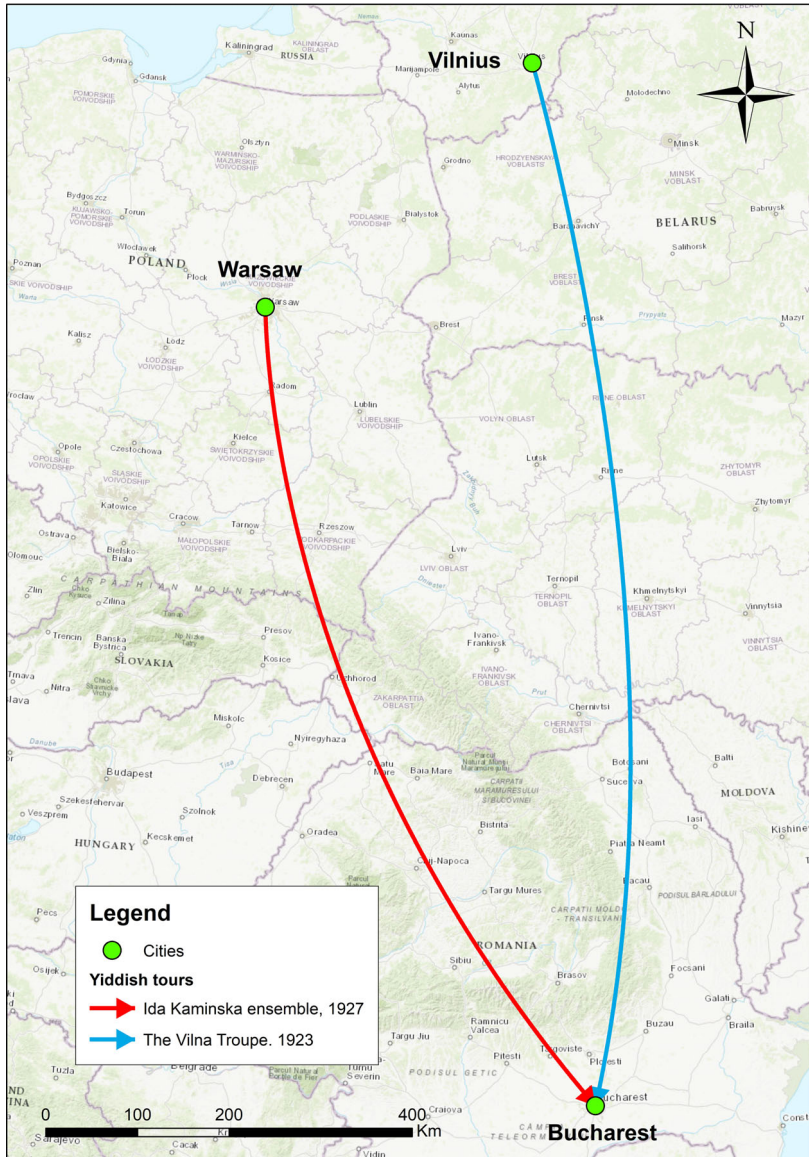


Map 11. Sándor Forgách touring performances.

founded in today's Vilnius, “as a direct result of the German occupation” during World War I (Caplan 2014, 251). Touring produced their unique theatrical approach: “The troupe did not develop their famous theatrical style at home in Vilna, but rather in Warsaw, Bucharest, London, Vienna, Chicago ... They did not become the Vilna Troupe in Vilna ... but rather *en route* to Warsaw” (Caplan 2013, 135). To complicate matters, Caplan indicates that “six Vilna Troupes were performing around the world” in the 1920s (Caplan 2013, 246). By analysing their trajectories and the presence of the manager Mordechai Mazo, we find that the first of them toured Romania (Alterescu 1973, 136; Caplan 2013, 246).

The troupe stayed in Bucharest between 1923 and 1925, and presented a complex repertory ranging from classical comedy to naturalistic drama, including Ibsen's *Ghosts*.³⁰ The quality of the plays was extremely important to this ensemble that attracted not only Yiddish, but also numerous Romanian spectators. The

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Map 12. Yiddish Ibsen tours visiting Romania.

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repertory included only “highly regarded Yiddish authors” and plays with a “perceived literary value” (Caplan 2014, 252). The status of Ibsen as a modern classic presumably explains the presence of *Ghosts* in the tour.

The Vilna troupe represented “a revelation for the cultural life of the capital city,” and, implicitly, for the Romanian theatre (Bercovici 1982, 129). At the production level, Vilna Troupe had an ensemble-based approach. Homogeneity, harmony, and merging were the keywords for its style: “the warmth and the sincerity of the harmonious, merging acting of the actors” and “the collective acting, the homogeneity, the lexical discipline” (Massoff 1974, 366; Bercovici 1982, 130). Caplan indicates that this ensemble-based approach was chosen so that “there were no ‘star’ performers and the entire company would rotate roles amongst themselves” (Caplan 2014, 252).

At the acting level, the techniques proved the connection of the troupe with the European theatre movements of the time. The Vilna Troupe combined multiple genres in eclectic stagings. Realism, naturalism and German expressionism, the popular and the avant-garde, constructivist elements were all there in Vilna Troupe’s performances (Mickute 2017, 109–110). Romanian scholars described the troupe’s approach as “stylized realist theatre” and considered its productions as “expressionist” (Mickute 2017, 138; Alterescu 1973, 320–321).

Despite our lack of information on Vilna Troupe’s *Ghosts*, the performance was probably an experimental one. Given that the troupe performed the play before World War I, “when [it] held fast to realism and performed the dramas of Hirschbein, Kobrin, Asch, and Pinski alongside Tolstoy, Hauptmann, Molière, and Ibsen,” we can assume that the production went through multiple changes incorporating naturalism, realism, and finally expressionism, in an eclectic Yiddish mix (Caplan 2013, 219). The combination probably resulted in the most complex Ibsen production witnessed by the Romanian audience.

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Ida Kaminska and the Warsaw Yiddish Art Theater

A Doll's House, starring Ida Kaminska as Nora with the ensemble of the Warsaw Yiddish Art Theater was performed in Bucharest in 1927 (Kaminska 1973, 59–73). In contrast to Vilna Troupe's ensemble approach and theatrical experiments, Kaminska's interpretation privileged the star actress, and preserved the realist acting inherited from her mother, Esther Rachel Kaminsky. The latter had also performed Nora in 1910 on tour in the United States of America, and also translated and adapted *A Doll's House* (Randone 2015, 158).³¹ This suggests that Kaminska's Nora probably maintained a strong commitment to realist acting. According to Bercovici, Kaminska was "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" (Bercovici 1982, 151). It is likely that she reinforced the naturalist and realist Ibsen interpretations for the Romanian audience.

CONCLUSIONS

Diverse theatrical interpretations of Ibsen visited Romania until 1947, producing numerous intersections in both space and time, and showing how Romania's unique geographical and political position marked Ibsen's emergence on the national stage. The free flow of European Ibsen traditions brought into the country by the French, Italian, German, Hungarian and Yiddish touring productions, generated an extremely diverse theatrical landscape. Romanian theatre culture fostered these encounters, spread their divergent influences, and integrated them into the national theatre culture. Yet their spatial and temporal interweaving was not uniform and this highly heterogeneous landscape was marked by productive tensions.

Here is where *histoire croisée* proved helpful to tell the story of Ibsen's emergence on the Romanian stages in light of the foreign language tours without deliberately seeking to reduce its essence into a single dominant discourse. The concept activates

conceptual awareness with respect to the constantly changing frames that affect the early Romanian Ibsen reception. Rather than providing a framework to shape the data and its interpretation, *histoire croisée* allowed me to articulate the entanglements revealed by maps and graphs. Thus, *histoire croisée* helped me identify the intercrossings emerging from the visualisations for each set of tours grouped by language and thus formulate my conclusions on their impact by comparing them according to the following criteria.

First, the foreign language touring productions bringing so many acting and staging practices into the Romanian theatre culture seldom overlapped on the temporal axis, although the majority are spatially connected as they took place in Bucharest. The temporal landscape, however, reveals different degrees of impact from these productions. The period between 1890 and 1910 has the highest density of events, due to the performances of Lindemann's ensemble and the Hungarian actor-managers performing in Transylvanian. This period also overlapped with Ibsen's international breakthrough and promotion by star-actors and skilful managers. This intensive Ibsen activity built his profile as canonical playwright not only internationally, but also on the Romanian stage. Until 1911, the Romanian audience witnessed a foreign language touring Ibsen production almost every year. By contrast, after 1911, the number of such foreign language performances decreased slowly, and sank drastically between 1927 and 1947.

Second, the French, Italian, German, Hungarian and Yiddish actors, ensembles and directors told different, conflicting, even paradoxical stories about Ibsen on stage. They displayed not only contrasts between different acting and staging traditions, but also performed the transitions in various European theatre cultures on the Romanian stage. The marks they left on the multilingual Romanian audience and on the Romanian theatre practitioners also point at a multitude of perspectives. Moreover, these perspectives generated contrasts between the short-term audience reception and the long-term effect upon the approach of

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Romanian actors and directors to staging Ibsen. Finally, the map of the foreign language touring Ibsen events pictures the Romanian theatre as a fluid space of intersection, with few to no restrictions. While these performances were, with few exceptions, not allowed to perform on the stage of the National Theatres, they found their place in private Romanian theatres.

Third, in terms of impact, The French, Italian, German and Yiddish performances exerted the strongest influences, although they were smaller in number than the Hungarian performances. As most French, Italian, German and Yiddish performances overlapped spatially in Bucharest, they had a higher impact than the Hungarian-speaking performances that took place only in Transylvania.

Fourth, such a diversity of foreign language productions entailed also a diversity of acting approaches, which varied from German Romanticism, naturalism, realism and expressionism, French naturalism and symbolism, Italian *verismo* and realism, to the eclecticism of the Yiddish performances. This richness was enhanced by the tensions between the star-based and ensemble-based approaches. If the French, Italian and Hungarian performances revolved around the star actors, the German and the Yiddish performances were acknowledged for their ensemble-based approach. Nevertheless, the star-actor system was strongest in the Romanian Ibsen tradition.

The intersection of the different Ibsen perspectives prove that the Romanian tradition in this period tells a very complex *histoire croisée*. The intercrossing of the foreign touring companies confirms the Romanian stage as a marker of fluidity at the crossroads of European theatre culture. A key question concerns the absorption of the elements from other theatre cultures into the emerging national Ibsen production. Comparing the Yiddish and Romanian Ibsen traditions highlights differences. The former emerges as a “melting pot” in which the focus on the ensemble, privileges consistency and unity in the application of performance techniques, even when genres were mixed. By contrast, the latter reveals a coexistence of traditions. The dominance of the star-

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actors made it possible for the elements assimilated through the contact with the foreign language touring performances to preserve their individuality when adopted by the Romanian theatre practitioners. In addition, the merging of influences in the Yiddish ensembles was tied to a lack of national boundaries, so that elements from other theatre cultures were absorbed through a constant, fluid, transnational movement within and beyond borders. In contrast, these elements were employed by the Romanian practitioners to develop unique styles, within the framework of a national theatre culture. Actors had more freedom to follow their own preferred style even within the same production, as long as they did not undermine the virtuoso performance of the star. Thus, while the Yiddish tradition favoured hybridisation, the Romanian tradition suspended the hybridisation process, so that the elements brought by the foreign language touring performances remained identifiable in the interpretative mixes of the local Ibsen contributors.

NOTES

1. This is the Western part of Moldavia. The Eastern part, also known as Bessarabia, became part of The Russian Empire in 1812, in the aftermath of a Turkish-Russian war (1806–1812).
2. A balanced analysis of the entanglements that characterise the history of Transylvania is offered in Blomqvist et al. (2013).
3. Due to technical reasons that make it difficult to represent all the territorial changes that affected not only the Romanian, but also the entire European map in the period addressed in this paper, I chose to work with a cartographical representation of today's (2021) borders. While these maps might seem to suggest anachronistic cultural circulations, their focus is less on the changes of the territorial boundaries, and more on the richness of influences that marked Ibsen's emergence in the Romanian space.
4. All the information regarding the data sources and the researchers who collected it for each of the theatre productions analyzed in this article is visible for any external user of the IbsenStage database: <https://ibsenstage.hf.uio.no/>.
5. Further referred to as IbsenStage. For more information about the founding, aims and content of IbsenStage, see Hanssen (2018, 6) and <https://ibsenstage.hf.uio.no/> (Accessed December 25, 2020).

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6. Such examples were the actress and soprano Nini Valéry, the actor and director Victor Boireaux Delmary, or the stage manager Alexandre Gatineau.
7. For example, Artistizza Romanescu took classes with Louis-Arsène Delaunay.
8. Their activity was contested, especially when they aimed to perform in French at the National Theatre. One controversial episode is that of 13 and 14 March 1906, when a Romanian amateur theatre group from the “Obolul” charity society attempted to perform in French on the stage of the National Theatre of Bucharest. Renowned intellectuals such as Nicolae Iorga officially contested this initiative. Moreover, some students organised a public demonstration, which transformed into a riot, eventually preventing the performances from taking place (Massoff 1972, 145–147; Anestin 1939, 94–96).
9. *Blanchette* (Eugène Brieux), *Un beau soir* (Maurice Vaucaire), *La dupe* (Georges Ancey), *Jacques Damour* (Émile Zola/Léon Hennique), *Marriage d'argents* (Eugène Bourgeois), *La Fille Elisa* (Edmond de Goncourt) and *Boubouruche* (Georges Courteline).
10. The original version of the quotations in Romanian, French, Italian and German used for the article can be consulted in Druta (2020).
11. <https://ibsenstage.hf.uio.no/pages/contributor/440775> (Accessed May 14, 2021)
12. *La douloureuse* (Maurice Donnay), *Madame Sans-Gêne* (Victorien Sardou et Émile Moreau), *Sapho* (Alphonse Daudet), *La Demi-Monde* (Alexandre Dumas fils).
13. The status of the research at this moment does not make it possible to quote from contemporary testimonies, hence we have to rely on the work of previous researchers with archival resources and the periodicals of the time.
14. *Théâtre de l'Oeuvre* closed in 1899, and reopened only in 1912: “Lugné-Poë closed the *Théâtre de l'Oeuvre* in 1899 but revived it in 1912, and again for a time after World War I.” (“*Théâtre de l'Oeuvre*.” *Britannica Academic*, Encyclopaedia Britannica, www.academic.eb.com/levels/collegiate/article/Th%C3%A9%C3%A2tre-d-lOeuvre/56802 (Accessed January 9 2018); “La chiusura dell’*Oeuvre* annunciata nel 1899, sebbene non definitiva, segnò effettivamente la conclusione della fase che... è stata detta *simbolista*, ma che forse sarebbe più opportuno definire *sperimentale*” (Altamura 2014) ; “Relevons une dernière fois le rideau qui vient de se baisser, le soir du 21 juin 1899, sur la scène de L’*Oeuvre*” (Robichez 1957, 471).
15. “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” (Petrescu 1983, 132).

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16. Naturalism and *verismo* acting are often confused, probably stemming from the overlapping of naturalism's definition in literature with its definition in acting. Whereas this overlap indeed applies in the literary field, where the Italian *verismo* overlaps the French naturalism, this is not the case in the theatre field. The confusion is even stronger as *verismo* and naturalist actors equally interpreted Italian *verismo* drama and French naturalist drama. However, their acting perspectives and tools differed. *Verismo* acting was a version of realist acting focused on pathological rendition, which still considered re-presenting the illusion of life on stage. By contrast, naturalist acting aimed at presenting a copy of—"slice of"—life itself on stage, rejecting the realist code of illusion.
17. Zacconi performed in plays by Paolo Giacometti, Girolamo Rovetta, Roberto Bracco and Ivan Turgenev, hence mostly an Italian repertory.
18. The 1907 repertoire included plays by Giuseppe Giacosa, Hermann Sudermann, Mélesville, André de Lorde and A. Foley, Émile Fabre, Paolo Giacometti and Henrik Ibsen. In 1910, it included Girolamo Rovetta, Émile Fabre, Henrik Ibsen, Victorien Sardou, Silvio Zambaldi, André de Lorde and A. Foley, Giuseppe Giacosa, and Carlo Goldoni.
19. The same confusion between naturalism and *verismo* in G. D'Amico's statement emerges in Masoff's case too.
20. Some examples are *Madga* by Hermann Sudermann and *La dame aux Camélias* by Alexandre Dumas fils.
21. The two productions in German performed in 1924 (<https://ibsenstage.hf.uio.no/pages/event/99033>, Accessed May 14, 2021) and 1940 (<https://ibsenstage.hf.uio.no/pages/event/99594>, Accessed May 14, 2021) are not addressed here for several reasons. The first one is the lack of consistent information to contextualize their impact. The second is the fact that they do not belong to the group of theatre agents coming from outside of Romania, but are local German ensembles, pointing at the multilingual context in Romania. Hence, their influence must be approached in light of a context that is much more similar to that of the Hungarian-speaking performances in Transylvania. The third reason is that due to the lack of information, we cannot assess correctly and accurately to what extent these productions are tied to the main trends in the German Ibsen tradition.
22. The other plays included by Agnes Sorma in the repertoire she performed on the Romanian stage were *Faust* by Goethe, *Liebelei* by Arthur Schnitzler and *Johannisfeuer* by H.Sudermann, casting light upon her acting skills in leading roles and cherishing her reputation of star actress (Masoff 1969, 491).
23. Of Ibsen's other plays, she only performed *A Doll's House* and she completed her repertoire with plays by Gabrielle D'Annunzio, Edvard Brandes and Hugo Mark.

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24. His repertory included plays by Luigi Pirandello, Hugo von Hoffmannstahl, G.B. Shaw and Leo Tolstoy (Massoff 1976, 320; Massoff 1978, 44).
25. Known as Burgtheater.
26. The Theatre of Oravița was not only the oldest theatre founded on the Romanian territory, but it also echoed the Viennese tradition. The architecture was inspired by the Burgtheater of Vienna, and the frequent tours visiting Oravița support its influence upon the local theatre life.
27. For more information about the repertory, see Zakariás (2015, 61–101).
28. “Társulata” means “company” in Hungarian.
29. <http://mek.oszk.hu/02100/02139/html/sz10/223.html> (Accessed December 25, 2020)
30. According to Bercovici (1982, 130), between 1923 and 1925 this wide repertory included 35 plays by authors such as Anski, M.P. Arțibașev, Șalom Aș, H. Berger, Leon Kobrin, Hermann Haermann, Hermann Sudermann, Peretz Hirschbein, Maxim Gorki, Karl Gutzkow, Ludvig Fulda, Șalom Alehem, Ibsen, Leonid Andreev, Moliere, David Pinski, B.Gorin, Jewish folklore, Osip Dimov.
31. <http://www.jewishvirtuallibrary.org/kaminski-or-kaminska> (Accessed December 25, 2020).

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