

## 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 personagiilor. (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 dezuumanizarea 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 dataset<sup>1</sup> 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)<sup>2</sup>, 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).<sup>3</sup> 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 19<sup>th</sup> 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.<sup>4</sup> 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.<sup>5</sup> 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.<sup>6</sup> In practice, many actors considered these performances humiliating because of the principally commercial aim,<sup>7</sup> 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.<sup>8</sup>

All these factors favoured an actor-dominated industry in Romania well into the 20<sup>th</sup> 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-

- 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. [...] Cheltuelile făcute pentru decoruri, costume, rechisite 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 complecta ei dispoziție, d'impreună cu musica 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: "direcția teatrului, din pornire caritabilă, ca un ajutor, ca să nu zicem altfel, cedează artei venitului 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 însăilirea 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) (Vasilie 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 19<sup>th</sup> 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 Gusti. 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 19<sup>th</sup> 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.<sup>9</sup> 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 *emploi* 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.<sup>10</sup> 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”<sup>11</sup> 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”.<sup>12</sup> 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.<sup>13</sup> 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 tînără. 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 subreț. 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 characters<sup>14</sup> 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 19<sup>th</sup> 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*],<sup>15</sup> *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 19<sup>th</sup> 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 Bârsescu – 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, 10<sup>16</sup> were tied to the National Theatre of Bucharest, either permanently or temporarily, revealing its dominance over other theatres within the institution.<sup>17</sup> 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 Sâlceanu* [Dr. Sâlceanu] 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.<sup>18</sup> 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,<sup>19</sup> 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 Bumbești 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 Bumbești 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 Bucharest<sup>20</sup> 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 20<sup>th</sup> 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 20<sup>th</sup> 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.<sup>21</sup> 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 20<sup>th</sup> 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 19<sup>th</sup> century and to the beginning of the 20<sup>th</sup> 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.