

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

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

3.2 What is the Romanian national theatre?

The National Theatres caught between laws, politics and money

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

3.2.1 Theatre as a “good” of the State

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

16 All users are equal, hence discrimination is forbidden.

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

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

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

3.2.2 Theatre and state finances

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

3.2.3 The National Theatre's management

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

3.2.3.1 Theatre administration and repertory

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

3.2.4 Legislation and repertory

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

3.2.4.1 Commercialism

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

3.2.4.2 Protectionism

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

3.2.4.3 Aesthetics

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

3.2.5 Conclusions

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

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

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

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

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

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

Table 3: Private theatre companies repertory statistics

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