

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

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

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

2.5.1 The Transylvanian Henrik Ibsen (1879–1945)

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

2.5.1.2 Tours and actors

2.5.1.2.1 Actor-managers

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

2.5.1.2.2 Guest actors

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

2.5.1.3 Final remarks

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

2.5.2 The Yiddish tours

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

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

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

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

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

2.5.2.1 The Vilna Troupe

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

2.5.2.2 Ida Kaminska and the Warsaw Yiddish Art Theater

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

2.5.2.3 Final remarks

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

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

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