

vealed the mix of acting styles across the drama and comedy genres, bringing together actors with different backgrounds and from different generations in the same productions. The two most popular productions reveal the development of these aspects in time, as *The Wild Duck* was performed in 1922 and 1928, whereas *A Doll's House* was performed in 1923, 1929, 1930 and 1932 with few changes to the interpreters of the secondary roles. Their presence on the stage of the National Theatre of Bucharest reaffirmed Ibsen's establishment on the Romanian stage. However, the transition towards the Ibsen ensemble-based productions was slow and they only represent a small part of the overall number of events on the Romanian stage. Finally, the ensemble productions still preserved elements specific to star actor productions, highlighting once again the actor's dominant power in early Romanian Ibsen.

4.3 Section Two. Character sites

4.3.1 Introduction

If the arrangement of research findings in the previous section focused on producing organisations as places where the mixing of theatre aesthetics occurred, in this section I investigate in detail the transmission of interpretative approaches as located within particular plays – in other words, in fictional places. The focus of this section is character as a theatrical site, and my analysis concerns the key contributors whose activity within Romanian Ibsen production revolved around specific roles. This will involve returning to some familiar names as the initial IbsenStage selection of key contributors applies not only to Section One, but also to Section Two.

The first step in identifying the characters that attracted most the Romanian key contributors was to select the most performed Ibsen plays on the national stage, namely *Ghosts*, *A Doll's House* and *An Enemy of the People*. The next step looked at the contributors associated with the leading roles in these works. Finally, the statistical results pointed to three roles – Dr. Stockmann, Osvald, Mrs Alving – and at five actors who interpreted them: Petre Sturdza, Aristide Demetriade, Ion Manolescu, Agatha Bârsescu, and Mărioara Voiculescu. Their contributions in productions of *Ghosts* and *An Enemy of the People* either signify generational transmission or marks the actors' ownership of particular Ibsen roles. The contribution of Agepsina Macri-Efitmiu, the actress who was quantitatively the most influential Nora, cannot be discussed without considering the role of the National Theatre of Bucharest in the emergence of an ensemble tradition. In her case, the play/character hub is interwoven with the National Theatre of Bucharest, and she belongs to the network of actors tied to the Romanian ensemble tradition. For this reason, I considered it appropriate to analyse her contribution within the earlier discussion of the role of the National Theatre of Bucharest in the Romanian Ibsen production.

This section is divided into three parts, analysing: 1. The generational, vertical transmission thread enacted by Aristide Demetriade and Ion Manolescu as Osvald; 2. The prestige, horizontal transmission thread enacted by Agatha Bârsescu and Mărioara Voiculescu as Mrs Alving in *Ghosts*, and 3. The contribution of Petre Sturdza as Dr.

Stockmann in *An Enemy of the People*. I consider the impact of Ibsen upon these actors' development in terms of acting and staging, and I look at the mix of acting genres and techniques in their interpretations. Finally, I analyse how they contributed towards Ibsen's dissemination through tours and guest performances.

4.3.2 The Romanian Osvald thread. Constantin I. Nottara, Aristide Demetriade and Ion Manolescu

The second part of this section addresses the Romanian *Ghosts* tradition from the perspective of the two actors who achieved recognition for their interpretation as Osvald: Aristide Demetriade and Ion Manolescu. Yet, in order to understand their contributions both as actors in general and as Ibsen promoters, we must first consider their debt to Constantin Nottara. He was not only their teacher,⁶⁹ but also the first Romanian actor to interpret Osvald in 1897. They shared his Romantic approach, both in acting and staging, but this influence faded into the background because of the new elements they integrated into their Ibsen performances. However, Nottara's central position in the Romanian actor training until late in the 1920s and his pioneering role in introducing *Ghosts* on the Romanian stage places these three actors in a generational axis of cultural transmission. They are connected by their common training at the Conservatoire in Bucharest, and through the National Theatre of Bucharest. The influences assimilated by these actors were gathered in the same *spatial* location over a long period of time, and this hub had the longest and highest coagulation power in the Romanian Ibsen tradition. It does not mean that this coagulation entailed the same recipe of performing Ibsen throughout generations. In *time*, the various influences were assimilated differently and did not melt into a unique Romanian Ibsen tradition of performing Osvald in *Ghosts*. Eventually, the contributions of Aristide Demetriade and Ion Manolescu enable us to visualise a temporal and spatial overlapping of different recipes and ingredients for performing Osvald. Thus, the inter-war period witnessed the coexistence and the communication between various tradition of performing Osvald in *Ghosts* in Bucharest, which also spread across the country by means of touring and guest performances of Aristide Demetriade and Ion Manolescu respectively. But how did these three actors interpret Osvald, and how is the mix in their Ibsen interpretation interrelated, yet unique?

4.3.2.1 Constantin I. Nottara

Although his presence is not relevant statistically,⁷⁰ Nottara is the starting point of a thread of Osvald interpreters in the Romanian Ibsen tradition fulfilled by Aristide Demetriade and Ion Manolescu. His⁷¹ contribution to the introduction of Ibsen to Romanian

69 For instance, the 1907 exam schedule for students of dramatic arts included a production of *Rosmersholm*, prepared by the students taking the declamation course of Nottara (National Theatre of Bucharest Collection, Folder 17/1907: 63).

70 He is registered with only three events in IbsenStage.

71 The actor did not mention any of these Ibsen productions in his memoirs. Instead, his presence in *Ghosts* and *Pillars of Society* is recovered through other sources. For instance, the collection "The National Theatre of Bucharest" at the State Archives, and the aforementioned historians Ioan Massoff, Ovidiu Drîmba and Ion Vartic account for the presence of Nottara in these pro-

theatre is tied to that of Aristizza Romanescu, the most important drama actress at the National Theatre of Bucharest in the last quarter of the 19th century. They both followed the generation of the Romanian theatre's founders, Mihail Pascaly and Matei Millo, and were Petre Vellescu's students at the Conservatoire. His stage partnership with Aristizza Romanescu made Nottara one of the early Romanian interpreters of Ibsen in the two first Ibsen stagings performed in Bucharest, namely *Rosmersholm* in 1895, and *Ghosts* in 1896. Our inquiry concerns the latter.

In terms of acting, Nottara belonged to the Romantic drama school founded by Mihail Pascaly. Nottara was considered "expresia dramatismului masculin" (the expression of the masculine dramatic character; my translation) (Alterescu 1971: 328), and was renowned for his repertoire of romantic plays, especially historical dramas.⁷² In this respect, his acting style was based on romantic techniques beautifully and eloquently executed:

Actorul este preocupat de redarea complexă și cât mai în detaliu a personalității pe care o întruchipează, fără însă a pierde din vedere efectul glasului melodios, al gestului plastic. (The actor is interested in a complex and detailed rendition of the personality he is embodying, yet without losing sight of the musical voice and of the plastic gesture's effect; my translation.) (Berloga 2000: 11)

However, Simion Alterescu insists on Nottara's realistic turn towards the end of his career, emphasising his ambivalent position, in-between the Romantic and realist acting tradition:

Nottara pornește de la datele interpretului de factură romantic (a fost multă vreme sclavul sentimentului, a cultivat, dincolo de controlul rational, vocea și gestica și a fost preocupat în cea mai mare măsură de emoție), pentru ca, sub înrăurirea noilor concepții de teatru și a repertoriului jucat, să evolueze spre o artă realistă. (Nottara begins as a Romantic interpreter (he was the slave of the feelings for a long time, he cultivated the use of voice and gestures beyond a rational control and was mostly interested in delivering emotions). But under the influence of the new theatre and repertory perspectives, he developed a realist art; my translation.) (Alterescu 1971: 328)

He is known as the one actor of the old generation who best managed to adapt his acting to realism. Therefore, Simion Alterescu considers that

valoarea artei lui Nottara constă tocmai în transformarea ei în timp, în adaptarea mijloacelor scenice la noul repertoriu și la noua sensibilitate artistică a spectatorului" (the value of Nottara's art consists precisely in its transformation throughout time, in its accommodation to the new repertory; my translation) (ibid: 328).

ductions. See Collection "The National Theatre of Bucharest", Folder 40/1896: 14; Massoff (1969: 386); Drîmba (1997: 113); Vartic (1995: 168).

72 Brădăteanu (1966: 225–236) gives a comprehensive overview of the roles performed by Constantin Nottara.

Nottara's realism is, however, of Italian inspiration – that is, Italian *verismo* – which implies a less radical change than we might be tempted to assume. In fact,

Nottara se păstrase însă de-a lungul vremii la noblețea gestului larg, aulic, la dicția sonoră și învăluitoare a Comediei Franceze, pe care o filtra prin arta de efecte răscolitoare a veriștilor italieni. (Throughout time, Nottara preserved the nobility of the broad, majestic gestures, the resonant and alluring diction of the Comédie-Française, which he had filtered through the Italian *verismo* artists' focus on overwhelming effects; my translation.) (Bumbești 1964: 13)

The influence of the actor-based Italian theatre system of the time explains why only his acting was affected, whereas his position as star actor remained untouched. Also, besides performing the leading masculine role in *Rosmersholm* and *Ghosts*, Nottara was also the stage director of the latter,⁷³ confirming the dominance of the stars at the industrial level of production.

One aspect that probably influenced Nottara's participation in Ibsen productions and made him approach roles such as Rosmer or Osvald was that these roles provided the context for a connection between Romantic and realist acting. The Romantic approach valued his strong artistic temperament together with a certain solemnity of the voice and gestures, and the ability to lucidly control the delivery of emotions.⁷⁴

How was the “realist” part in Nottara's acting connected to his romantic background? The answer to the connection between Romanticism and *verismo* lies in the latter's focus on the pathological rendition of the characters, which made it possible for Nottara to switch between the two genres. In other words, the interpreter of the Romantic drama protagonists found a connection between his background actor training and the pathological renditions of Italian *verismo*. The role of Osvald was particularly suitable to bridge the transition from Romanticism to *verismo*. And, as the success of the Italian actors proved it, *verismo* allowed Nottara to employ the Romantic rendition of passions and the control over voice and gestures, while also striving for truthfulness:

73 In fact, Nottara was the stage director [“director de scenă”] for all the productions of the National Theatre of Bucharest in a period when the function of stage director had not been established yet.

74 “dacă nu e absolut nevoie de o întreagă frumusețe a formelor, apoi actorul trebuie să aibă un corp care să întrunească diferite condiții de ansamblu potrivite la transformarea fizicului personajului ce interpretează, ținând socoteala întotdeauna de propriul lui temperament, înălăturând orice defect fizic sau de organism, care afară din teatru nu se observă, dar care pe scenă devine o cauză fatală de nesucces. Printre însușirile de căpătenie ale actorului, precum gest, expresie, atitudine, vine în primul rând vocea, care prin ajutorul întregilor vibrațiuni și printr-o continuă varietate de tonuri produce acele izbucniri are sufletului, când omul e cuprins de o frământare provenită dintr-o anumită patimă, și cu cât frământarea se desfășoară mai mult, cu atât vocea e supusă la o acțiune și mai puternică, așa că de la simplele accente nearticulate, trece la forma materială a cuvântării, însotită fiind de gest, de atitudine și mai cu seamă de expresie fizionomică, cerință înainte-mergătoare a manifestării că cutare accent sau cutare cuvânt este pornirea unei patimi. Coordonarea ăstor însușiri este neapărat trebuincioasă, căci o mică abatere de la înlătuirea lor strică tot efectul ce actorul și-a propus să producă” (Nottara 1960: 85).

Acolo unde pasiunile sunt mai încordate, unde suferințele sunt mai pronunțate, unde vicile sunt mai aprige, actorul e obligat să le adâncească, să le scormonească și să le pătrundă cu spiritul său de observație ca, apoi, să dichisească tipurile ce le plăsmuiește, cu toate însușirile prinse din observațiunile adevăratelor realități, în vederea foloaselor ficțiunii reprezentative, devenită realitate la rândul ei, prin interpretarea cea justă ce dă actorul rolului său. (It is there where the passions are most tense, where the sufferings are strongest and where the vices are most ardent that the actor must seek to deepen, to stir up and to penetrate them with his sense of observation. Then, he must adorn the human profiles he is creating, with all the characteristics he captured during the observation of the true reality. Only then would it [his creation] be useful to the fiction of representation turned into reality, through the just interpretation the actor gave to his role; my translation.) (Nottara 1960: 87)

On the one hand, the similarity between the romantic and the *verismo* acting techniques concerned the controlled virtuosity displayed by the Italian actors in their excessive renditions. On the other hand, the main difference concerned Romanticism's interest in displaying beauty in the rendition of any human passion, in contrast to *verismo*'s truthfulness. The main issue here is that this aim for truthfulness was rather indifferent to whether the final rendition displayed beauty or not. Consequently, striving for truth and sincerity often led to a display of evil, ugliness, misery, sickness, debauchery and, finally, pathology. The latter even became a key attribute of *verismo*, displacing the very beauty of passions the romantic actors focused on in their renditions. Finally, this shift changed the way these actors spoke on stage. The displacement of beautiful passions entailed a necessary displacement of the beautiful romantic speech, and its substitution with the asperities of everyday speech.

The role of Osvald in *Ghosts* fits all requirements of such a change from Romanticism to *verismo*. In this respect, it is no wonder that the Italian actors preferred this role and that the Romanian actors' preference for it was a consequence of this Italian influence. Actors and directors such as Ernesto Rossi, Tommaso Salvini, Ermete Novelli and Ermete Zacconi, who visited Romania several times, marked the transition from Romanticism to *verismo* not only in Italian theatre history, but also in the Romanian practice of acting, as the example of Nottara and other Romanian actors of the time indicates.⁷⁵ As we have al-

75 "Evoluția artistului spre realism n-a fost întâmplătoare și își află originea încă în anii de învățătură ai lui Nottara. Căci pe lângă înrâurirea lui Pascaly, Tânărul actor s-a bucurat și de învățătura lui Ștefan Vellescu [...]. Nottara a fost, apoi, în același timp, un admirator pasionat al marelui Matei Millo, acela căruia teatrul nostru îi datorează în cea mai mare măsură existența unei puternice tradiții realiste. Trebuie avută în vedere, de asemenea, împrejurarea că Nottara n-a fost influențat numai de artiștii francezi reprezentați ai unei școli depășite, ci a cunoscut și apreciat interpretarea realistă a unor mari artiști dramatici străini, de talia lui Ermete Novelli, a Eleonorei Duse, a lui Ernesto Rossi sau chiar a lui Ferraudy." (The evolution of the artist towards realism was not coincidental and stems from Nottara's years of training. Beside Pascaly's influence, the young actor enjoyed the advice of Ștefan Vellescu [...]. Then, Nottara was also a passionate admirer of Matei Millo, to whom our theatre owes the existence of a powerful realist tradition. We must also consider that Nottara was not only influenced by the French artists representing an old-fashioned school, but also knew of and appreciated the

ready seen, in terms of interpretation of Ibsen, both Novelli and Zacconi were renowned for their *verismo*-based approach to *Ghosts*. Thus, Nottara's interest in Ibsen and his acting of Osvald were influenced by the actor's preference for the Italian acting perspective. The very proof of is that he chose *Ghosts* for his "benefit" staging on March 1, 1897. Thus, he not only became the first Romanian actor to perform Osvald, but also settled the framework of a Romanian Ibsen tradition, the climax of which was reached by Aristide Demetriade and Ion Manolescu as renowned interpreters of Osvald. Eventually, the Romanian Osvald tradition developed Nottara's initially fluid mix of Romanticism and *verismo* by bringing in new influences, while abandoning the previous ones in the acting of Aristide Demetriade and Ion Manolescu.

4.3.2.2 Aristide Demetriade

On the generational transmission axis, starting with Constantin Nottara as Osvald, the first statistically relevant example is Aristide Demetriade. He appears in 9 events between 1908 and 1929, and ensured a wide dissemination of Ibsen plays in southeastern Romania, performing Ibsen on tour and in Bucharest. He performed not only in leading roles (5 events), but also in secondary roles (4 events) in Ibsen performances, which indicates a balanced Ibsen contribution. This proves that despite his being a star actor, he was also involved in ensemble-based productions. His presence both in leading roles such as Osvald and Rubek, and in secondary roles such as Ejlert Løvborg, Dr. Rank and Johan Tønnesen, points to the tensions at stake in the transition from actor-based to ensemble-based productions.

Significantly, his Ibsen touring activity was entirely associated with *Ghosts*, confirming his preference for it both as performer of Osvald and director of the play. There are five *Ghosts* events in the database, but the actor himself and the historians indicate that there were more. By contrast, his activity as participant in an ensemble did not coagulate around any play. It was marked instead by diversity, with the actor performing as Dr. Rank in *A Doll's House*, as Johan Tønnesen in *Pillars of Society* and as Ejlert Løvborg in *Hedda Gabler*.

Our next step is to clarify Aristide Demetriade's position in the Romanian Ibsen tradition developed at the National Theatre of Bucharest from 1895. To begin with he was part of the drama school in Bucharest at the beginning of the 20th century, although he was not the first to perform Ibsen there. Nevertheless, his contribution is far more statistically important than that of those responsible for introducing Ibsen plays, namely Aristizza Romanescu and Constantin I. Nottara, both of whom are registered with three events. Since Constantin Nottara was Demetriade's teacher, we must consider the former's influence on his performances as Osvald.

Nottara's experience with the transition from Romanticism to Italian *verismo* and the handing over of his great roles to Demetriade demonstrates their strong connection. The visits to Romania of Antoine, Zacconi and de Sanctis with *Ghosts* add a further dimension to the attraction Demetriade had for Osvald. How did he assimilate and combine

realist interpretation of some great foreign dramatic artists, such as Ermète Novelli, Eleonora Duse and even Ferraudy; my translation) (Nottara 1960:11).

the influence of Nottara, and the French and Italian actors, and what characterises his interpretation of Ibsen's role?

Demetriade belonged to an epoch of transition, and his acting accounts for a combination of techniques drawn from three different genres: Romanticism, naturalism and Expressionism. The timespan of his Ibsen performances proves that he witnessed many changes in the Romanian practice of acting of the time, ranging from Romanticism to *verismo*, realism, naturalism and Expressionism.

Demetriade is considered one of the last romantic actors in the Romanian theatre history and the influence of Nottara lies precisely in the romantic interpretation:

Demetriade încheie [...] ciclul actorilor de tragedie din școala nouă. Contemporanii îi apreciau prestația, distincția de efigie, ținuta fizică, lirismul straniu, suavitatea și langoarea; erau impresionați de muzicalitatea versului, de naturalețea declamării, de căldura comunicativă, de jocul poetic și de nostalgica participare în interpretarea eroilor din dramele romantice în versuri. (Demetriade is situated at the end [...] of a generation of tragedy actors of the new school. The contemporary audience appreciated his stateliness, his distinction, his physical posture, his strange lyricism, his suavity and wistfulness; they were impressed by the musicality of his verse, by the naturalness of his declamation, by his communicative warmth, by his poetic acting and by his nostalgic enacting in the interpretation of the heroes in the romantic dramas in verse; my translation.) (Alterescu 1971: 349)

In fact, most descriptions of Demetriade highlight the musicality and warmth of his voice, his ability to speak verse, his diction, elegance, and noble posture, as well as the beauty of his slender body and harmonic gestures. The qualities of his voice are praised: musicality, warmth, harmony, combined with a Latin, specifically southern intensity, and passion. Emotion and beauty marked his renditions, and he was most admired for the interpretation of versified roles, although all these matchless traits “îi lipsea în proza teatrului modern” (seemed absent in the modern theatre's prose; my translation) (ibid: 349). Virtuosity and self-control are also characteristics of Aristide Demetriade's romantic acting. The romantic background of Aristide Demetriade also emerges in his technique for preparing roles: he used written notes to remember gestures, postures and vocal inflexions. This was a technique used by his teacher Constantin Nottara, as well as other Romanian romantic actors, such as Aristizza Romanescu and Grigore Manolescu. Another signpost of his romantic background lies in his complete identification with a role, unfiltered through psychological understanding. The threat of being dominated by the role is often mentioned by the romantic actors. However, Demetriade references the double identity of the actor, which allowed for the controlling of a stage identity. Psychological reasoning is not taken further, and the romantic characteristics remain dominant in the actor's profile. Finally, Demetriade's repertoire confirms his status as romantic actor in the Romanian theatre.⁷⁶

76 He was renowned for the interpretation of roles such as Ovidiu, Vlaicu, Răzvan, Zefir, Ruy-Blas, Hamlet, Osvald, Armand Duval, Don Quijote, Ștefăniță, Făt-Frumos, Zmeul, Tipătescu, Dante, Saul, David, Romeo (Brădățeanu 1979: 184).

On the other hand, the actor was not inclined towards the Italian *verismo* assumed by his teacher. Although intensity, explosion, and eventually truthfulness and simplicity marked Demetriade's acting, he did not assume the pathological display of human decadence of the Italian actors, but rather moved directly from Romanticism to naturalism. In this respect, the intensity of his acting reveals "o concepție italiană și totuși fără ea" (an Italian role conception that is nevertheless non-Italian; my translation) (Bumbești 1957: 99), pointing instead to a naturalist acting approach. One proof of his naturalist perspective is given in an interview connected to one of his *Ghosts* performances. Here he insists on a naturalist interpretation of the play, inspired by Antoine, and considers the *ghosts* as the ideas of the past that haunt the characters:

- Și credeți că piesa 'Strigoi' a fost înțeleasă de toți?
- Desigur că nu, dar e suficient ca zece la sută să priceapă și fiți încredințat că a doua zi și cei nedumeriți – care se așteptau să vadă strigoi...eșind din trape – erau lămuriri că strigoi de care era vorba, sunt toate credințele, prejudecățile, patimile sufletești și trupești ale părinților și strămoșilor noștri, care se redeșteaptă și trăesc în noi.
- (– And do you think that the play *Ghosts* was understood by everyone?
- Of course not, but it is enough for ten per cent to understand and you can be sure that, the next day, even the puzzled ones – who expected to see the ghosts coming out from the manholes – will have understood that the ghosts at stake here were our beliefs, prejudices, as well as the spiritual and corporeal sins of our parents and ancestors, which awaken and live within us; my translation.) (R.P. 1920: 1)

The naturalist influence in his acting is attributable to his presence at the National Theatre of Bucharest during Alexandru Davila's reforms, which were inspired by Antoine. When Davila rejected the acting approach of Constantin Nottara, based on Romanticism and *verismo*, resulting in the actor's departure from the National Theatre, Demetriade remained at the institution and benefitted from Davila's support. Demetriade took over Nottara's roles and his acting was shaped according to Davila's expectations:

Anul 1907 înseamnă începutul marilor interpretări ale lui Aristide Demetriade. Seria lor fusese deschisă de Vlaicu-Vodă, care se numără printre cele mai valoroase creații ale sale. Și în acest rol Aristide Demetriade înlocuiește pe C.Nottara, care tocmai părăsise temporar Teatrul Național, în urma unui regrebatibil conflict cu Al.Davila. Astfel, fără să vrea, Aristide Demetriade trece în fruntea strălucitei echipe de actori ai primei noastre scene, purtând pe umerii săi răspunderea mai tuturor marilor roluri din repertoriul clasic și modern. (The year 1907 represents the beginning of Aristide Demetriade's greatest interpretations. This series had opened with *Vlaicu-Vodă*, which is among his most valuable creations. Aristide Demetriade replaced Constantin Nottara in this role too, as the latter had temporarily left the National Theatre, after a regrettable conflict with Al. Davila. Thus, although he did not desire it, Aristide Demetriade became the head of the brilliant ensemble of actors of our premier stage, and bore the responsibility of almost all the greatest roles of the classic and modern repertory; my translation.) (Bumbești 1957: 11)

We can see here Davila's clear rejection of both Romanticism's declamation and pose, and *verismo*'s exaggerated pathological renditions. Although Demetriade preserved many of the romantic acting characteristics, he never switched to Italian *verismo*, but used everyday speech and a less rigid bodily posture. He followed Davila's naturalist path and changed his speech patterns, although he never reached the same subtlety in modern drama as he had in the versed plays. Yet the "natural" aspects of his declamation remain one of his most memorable characteristics. He always preserved a typically romantic focus on beauty and passion, together with a special care for the bodily expression and the musicality of the voice. Another signpost for this assumption of a naturalist inflection to his mainly romantic acting can be found in Alexandru Davila's appraisal of his performance as the protagonist in the famous historical drama *Vlaicu-Vodă*:

Al. Davila constata "o unitate armonioasă, simplă, între mișcare, expresie și starea sufletească, redată printr-o nesimțită trecere, uneori bruscă, de la o situație la alta contrară. Cât de impunător știe apoi să redea d. Demetriade stăpânirea de sine și cât de concentrat este jocul d-sale, de parcă uneori trecerea de la o ordine de gândire la alta se face printr-un fel de scoborâre progresivă a sufletului în adâncurile lui". (Al. Davila noticed the "harmonic, simple union between movement, expression and state of mind, which was rendered through a sometimes imperceptible, other times abrupt passage from one situation to its opposite. How impressive can Mr. Demetriade render self-control and how concentrated is his acting, as if the passage from one thought to another sometimes happens through a kind of progressive descent of the soul into its depths"; my translation.) (ibid: 109)

But this does not change the fact the Demetriade was mainly acknowledged as a romantic and not as a naturalist/realist actor.

Lastly, Victor Bumbești insists on the actor's interest in Alexander Moissi's acting technique of expressionist inspiration. Moissi was also a renowned interpreter of Osvald in *Ghosts*, collaborating with Max Reinhardt. Moissi became Demetriade's model towards the end of his career:

Moissi, pe care însuși Aristide Demetriade îl socotea mai aproape de adevăr, se distingea între toți înaintașii săi prin accentele de adâncă umanitate. Pe această linie a căutat să realizeze și Aristide Demetriade interpretarea sa, adăugând noi elemente sufletești, care i-au dat o valoare cu totul originală. (Moissi, whom Aristide Demetriade himself considered to be closer to the truth, was different from all his predecessors through his interpretative focus on deep humanity. Aristide Demetriade sought to develop his interpretation on this trajectory, by adding new spiritual elements, which made him totally original; my translation.) (ibid: 82)

For Demetriade, the expressionist approach worked as a bridge between the romantic and the naturalist techniques, and favoured the recycling of elements of these two genres in his interpretations. The focus on an essentialised acting technique synthesised the most ardent passions, and debates on the human being switched the performance not only from naturalism to Expressionism, but also from Romanticism to Expressionism. However, the Expressionism of Aristide Demetriade did not totally abandon Romanti-

cism. In this respect, he is similar to Mărioara Voiculescu and Agatha Bârsescu, who did not abandon the temperamental, southern or Latin framework they were renowned for:

În mișcări e impulsiv, tipul meridionalului. Cunoșătorilor marilor maeștri ai scenei germane să le servească drept punct de reper că vorba și atitudinea sunt mai asemănătoare cu aceleia ale lui Moissi și Matkowski, decât cu ale interpretilor autentic germani. În fiecare clipă se vede trecerea cuvântului rostit prin suflet, în toate fibrele corpului până în vârful degetelor: interpretare cu caracter specific romanic. Tot astfel preferința pentru gesturile vii și pentru atitudinile nesilite și impunătoare. [...] E o spontană revârsare a sufletului în afară. O explozie. Apoi o imediată înfrâñare. (His movements reveal him as an impulsive, southern individual. His example is a reference for the experts of the German stage in the sense that his speech and attitude are more similar to those of Moissi and Matkowski than those of the authentically German interpreters. Every instant one can see how the spoken words comes out right through the soul, going through the fibres of the entire body, from tip to toes: this is a specifically Romanic [Latin] interpretation. The same applies to the preference for the vivid gestures, and the unforced and impressive gestures. [...] This is a spontaneous bursting of the soul outwards. An explosion. Then immediately followed by refraining; my translation.) (ibid: 98–99)

Demetriade focused on the symbolist, expressive aspect of Expressionism, rather than on the realist, stylised one. In his case, Romanticism was his main bridge towards Expressionism.

Demetriade's interest in Osvald and his referring to Moissi as a model, made this Romanian actor take his romantic-based interpretation, infused with naturalist-realist elements, one step further to an expressionist-inspired approach in his later performances. It is probable that Demetriade also performed Rubek in what would be the first Romanian staging of *When We Dead Awaken* directed by Soare Z. Soare in 1924. This would further confirm the expressionist touch in the actor's profile (ibid: 158). The symbolist atmosphere of the play and the engagement of the acknowledged director Soare Z. Soare are the two clearest indicators of the expressionist approach not only in the leading masculine role, but also in the entire play.

Was Aristide Demetriade influenced by Ibsen's dramaturgy? As in the case of Dragomir, Pruteanu and Nottara, Ibsen had a special place in Demetriade's romantic repertoire. Yet, it is difficult to assess whether Ibsen influenced Demetriade's acting approach by turning it from a romantic-based acting to naturalism or to stylised realism/Expressionism. It seems that the actor was following his own trajectory between Romanticism and Expressionism, as well as favouring a naturalist touch to his acting. Performing Ibsen might have contributed to this process. The overlapping of the period when Demetriade started to perform Ibsen's *Ghosts* in 1908 with the period when Davila imposed his naturalist-realist reforms at the National Theatre in 1907 indicates that such an influence is possible, since the actor was also an open supporter of Antoine's views. Although Davila never staged Ibsen, Demetriade might have been aware of Antoine's early interest in and perspective upon *Ghosts*. Moreover, Aristide Demetriade was in charge of the National Theatre of Bucharest during the German occupation during the First World War (Massoff 1974: 134, 136, 141), when the German ensemble performed

Ibsen in Bucharest. Consequently, the ensemble's expressionist approach could also have added subtle expressionist/stylised realism nuances to his acting. Finally, echoes of Alexander Moissi's activity and his tour with *Ghosts* in 1921 might have refined his later acting of Osvald.

As far as Demetriade's Ibsen legacy is concerned, the actor's most important contribution was on stage, especially through his tours with *Ghosts* (Figure 42). The interview with the actor published in the newspaper *Rampa* indicates a positive reception to these touring performances, attended by numerous audiences. However, the actor indicates the lack of subsidy offered by the National Theatre of Bucharest for the tours. Thus, the only financial and moral support for these performances was, according to the actor, provided by the audience itself:

- Am avut subvenția publicului, care mi-a dat-o din belșug și cea mai desăvârșită mulțumire sufletească, când mi s'a cerut și am jucat, în unele orașe, de două ori cu săli archi pline pe Ibsen și mai ales "Strigoi".
- Cum? De două ori "Strigoi" într'un oraș de provincie?
- Ba la Ploiești mi s'a cerut și a treia reprezentăție!"
- Dar la București de ce nu ați jucat?
- Probabil că...interesul teatrului Național reclama aceasta.
- (– I had the audience's full subsidy and the greatest spiritual content when, in some cities, I was asked to perform and I performed Ibsen, especially *Ghosts*, even twice, with a theatre hall full of people.
- How come? Is it possible to perform *Ghosts* twice in a provincial town?
- They even asked me for a third performance [of *Ghosts*] in Ploiești.
- But why did not you perform it in Bucharest too?
- Probably because....the focus of the National Theatre is on other things; my translation.) (R.P.1920: 1)

In any case, these tours, organised at the initiative of the actor, ensured the dissemination of Ibsen and established Demetriade as a key contributor in the Romanian Ibsen production.

Finally, Aristide Demetriade did not teach at the Conservatoire, as the teacher at the time was Constantin Nottara, so his mixed approach did not reach newer generations. Yet his contribution to Ibsen's dissemination was fully acknowledged when he was nominated along with Liviu Rebreanu as the National Theatre's and implicitly Romania's delegate in Oslo on the occasion of Ibsen's centenary in 1928:⁷⁷

La începutul lunii martie 1928, Aristide Demetriade a fost însărcinat să reprezinte la Oslo, alături de Liviu Rebreanu, lumea din România la serbările centenarului nașterii lui Henrik Ibsen. Alegerea sa pentru această misiune era cu atât mai îndreptățită, cu cât el era unul din puținii noștri actori care au cinstit, iubit și au înțeles opera dramatică a genialului norvegian. (At the beginning of March 1928, Aristide Demetriade, together with Liviu Rebreanu, were delegated to represent Romania at the centennial celebration organised in Oslo on the occasion of Henrik Ibsen's birth. His

77 See Massoff (1976: 148–149); National Theatre of Bucharest Collection, Folder 33/1928.

being chosen for this mission was even more legitimate as he was one of our few actors who cherished, loved and understood the dramatic work of the Norwegian genius; my translation.) (Bumbești 1957: 161–162)

4.3.2.3 Ion Manolescu

Ion Manolescu took Aristide Demetriade's infusion of the romantic with naturalist and expressionist elements one step further. He also had a significant impact on the Romanian *Ghosts* tradition that goes as far back as the first performance starring Constantin Nottara in 1897. His performances as Osvald also highlight the role of the private theatre companies in the dissemination of Ibsen in Romania. Here, I analyse the legacy of Ion Manolescu's interpretation of Osvald as contrasted with those of Constantin Nottara and Aristide Demetriade. The Osvalds of Nottara, Demetriade and Manolescu are interconnected in a similar way their interpretations of Hamlet are (Matei-Chesnoiu 2006: 197), which indicates the gradual classicisation of Ibsen to a status similar to that of Shakespeare. These parallels point to the transformations and transitions taking place in the Romanian practice of acting until 1947.

Nottara proposed an interpretation shaped by a combination of Romanticism and *verismo*; Demetriade's interpretation revealed the connection between Romanticism and Expressionism; but which transition does Manolescu contribute to the line of Osvald interpretations? His approach was situated in-between naturalism, realism, and Expressionism, through an acting style often described as *stylised realism*, which became his trademark.

Manolescu saw a clear contrast between himself and Nottara and dismissed not only Romantic acting, but also Italian *verismo*. "Cu modestele mele resurse am rămas credincios principiilor interpretării realiste." (With my modest resources, I stayed loyal to the principles of the realist interpretation; my translation.) (Manolescu 1962: 136) Manolescu was strongly influenced by Alexandru Davila's naturalist reforms inspired by Antoine, as well as Paul Gusty's realist approach to acting and staging. His definition of truthfulness involved realism enriched by subtle expressionist stylisation, rather than the cruel and bare truth of *verismo* or naturalism:

Oswald din *Strigoii*, rol care solicita capacitate specifică, creație care punea în valoare inedite posibilități actoricești, forță de concentrare și de superioară transfigurare, de distilare a energiilor spirituale dereglate ale eroului. (Oswald in *Ghosts*, a role that required specific abilities, a creation that cast light upon novel acting resources, the force of concentration and of superior transfiguration, of distillation of the hero's cranky spiritual energies.) (Brădățeanu 1982: 37)

He was renowned for his realist approach to the science of acting and for his ability to perform in modern realist dramas:

Eram încredințat că teatrul trebuie să se apropie cât mai mult de viață, oglindind-o just în aspectele ei cele mai diverse, cele mai caracteristice și înălțăturând tot ce este poză, artificiu, declamație și exagerare. Această convingere a mea contraria întrucâtva punctul de vedere al maestrului Nottara. (I was convinced that the theatre must resemble life as much as possible and mirror it justly in its most diverse,

characteristics aspects, removing everything that is pose, artifice, declamation and exaggeration. This conviction of mine was somehow contrary to the viewpoint of the master Nottara; my translation.) (Manolescu 1962: 240)

He reproduced everyday speech according to realist aesthetics and rejected the naturalists' view that the spectator should witness on stage the same speech as in everyday life:

Teatrul realist cere, dimpotrivă, mai înainte de orice, veridicitate. [...] Aici intervine deosebirea dintre realism și naturalism. Nu tot ceea ce se petrece în viață poate deveni material de literatură, după cum nu tot ce se vorbește în fiecare zi poate deveni dialog teatral. [...] Dialog firesc nu înseamnă totuși acea vorbire plată, pe care o auzim adeseori la cafenea (...). Nu înseamnă nici vorbire căutată, cu vădit iz literar [...] cum nu se aude niciodată în viață de toate zilele [...]. În mod firesc deci, în literatură și în teatru dialogul este rezumat, condensat. [...] Se impune, deci, o concentrare a dialogului. Dar, astfel concentrat, el trebuie să pară totuși firesc. (Beyond anything, realist theatre requires truthfulness. [...] Here is where the distinction between realism and naturalism emerges. Not everything that happened in real life can become literature, and not everything we talk about in everyday life can become theatrical dialogue. [...] A natural dialogue is not, though, that flat speech that we sometimes hear at the café [...]. It is not the deliberately literarily constructed speech either [...], because we never hear it in our daily life [...]. Thus, naturally, in both literature and theatre, the dialogue is summarised, condensed. [...]. Thus, we must seek to synthesise the dialogue. But, such a synthesised dialogue must nevertheless seem natural; my translation.) (ibid: 182)

In his view, realist speech should create the illusion of daily life without falling into the trap of banality: stage speech should aim at an essentialised expression of the human being's experience. This emphasis on essentialised speech points to Manolescu's connection with Moissi. More specifically, the stylised aspects in Manolescu's acting indicate expressionist influences, but he never performed in an expressionist manner, which he also dismissed: "nu aveam să învățăm exagerările expresionismului, care ne erau cunoscute, dar inacceptabile" (we would not learn Expressionism's exaggerations, which we knew of, but were unacceptable to us; my translation.) (ibid: 203) Instead, he incorporated expressionist influences within his acting style to create his stylised realism. Unlike Demetriade, who applied Expressionism to his romantic acting, Manolescu's Expressionism was rooted in the actor's realist background. For this reason, his stylised realism in *Ghosts* did not revolve around temperamental, essentialised renditions of strong passions. Manolescu's realist interpretation was introverted and sober rather than expansive, with the addition of symbolic, stylised nuances. The result was a synthetic interpretation, situated in-between realism and Expressionism.

Manolescu brought "pe scena Teatrului Național, întruchipând-o în eroii tragic din dramale lui Ibsen [...], arta stilizării" (the art of stylisation onto the stage of the National Theatre, embodied in the tragic characters from Ibsen's drama; my translation) (Alterescu 1973: 365). The keywords for his acting include stylisation, synthesis, essences, emotion, subtlety, introspection, lyricism and intellectualism. No doubt he was influenced by Alexander Moissi's tour in 1921, the expressionist acting assumed by Mărioara

Voiculescu, the expressionist approach of the director of *Ghosts*, Soare Z. Soare, and, finally, the expressionist plays in the repertory of the Bulandra Company. All these events affected both the state and private theatre environments. In addition, Manolescu was as influenced by Davila as Mărioara Voiculescu, but he did not share her enthusiasm for the expressionist stagings and was not a supporter of purely expressionist experiments. He considered the expressionist approach too artificial and his opinions about Karl Heinz Martin, who staged three plays in an expressionist manner at the Bulandra Company,⁷⁸ clearly indicate his disapproval. Instead, he supported Reinhardt's perspective, which involved a more balanced mix of realism and Expressionism. His performance as Osvald combined aspects of Antoine, Moissi and Reinhardt; the French and the German models were important to him, but realism was his dominant note.

The reception to Manolescu's Osvald points to his stylised realist acting. From this perspective, the keyword "symbol" best describes his Osvald performances:

D-nu Ion Manolescu, care încă dinainte de războiu atacase rolul fiului ruinat fizicește din drama lui Ibsen, revine acum cu el, aprofundat ca gradațune în progresul ruinei fizice, lărgit ca simbol a tot ce nu poate trăi pe imoralitate, minciună și fătănicie. Căci "drama de familie" a lui Ibsen, cu tot realismul ei în ce privește ereditatea patologică, își păstrează valoarea cu mult mai mult ca simbol al educației morale putrede a societăței moderne decât ca "drama de familie" a unui fiu bolnav de pe urma depravării părintelui său. (Mr. Ion Manolescu, who already before the war had 'attacked' the role of the physically ruined son in Ibsen's drama, returns to it now. He deepened his interpretation of the gradual process of physical destruction, which is approached as a symbol of everything that cannot survive if it is based on immorality, lies and hypocrisy. The realism concerning the pathological heredity in Ibsen's "family drama" stays valid even more as a symbol of the putrid moral education of the modern society than as the "family drama" of a son who is sick because of his parent's debauchery; my translation.) (Fagure 1920: 3)

Emil D. Fagure describes the evolution of Ion Manolescu as Osvald as a transition from a simple naturalist-realist rendition focused on heredity to a rendition that nuanced the previous reading of the play in order to reach a more synthetic, essentialised interpretation. The critics agreed upon his rendition as totally realist: "O creație puternic impresionantă de un realism sguduitor, adânc cugetată, o adevărată capo d'opera de psichologie." (A strongly impressive creation, deeply analysed, a true psychological masterpiece; my translation.) (G.Hr 1916: 2) The synthetic aspect of Manolescu's approach is also detected by the critics: "Artistul care trăește în Ibsen nu vede numai un aspect tragic ci și pe mai toate celelalte." (The artist who lives [the roles of] Ibsen does not only see the tragic aspect, but most of the other aspects too; my translation.) (Fagure 1920: 3) Thus, the critics indicate that Manolescu surpassed both the romantic and the Italian *verismo* approaches of Osvald, which highlighted either the tragedy of the leading male character, or the heredity issue in *Ghosts*. He took Nottara and Demetriade's interpretations of Osvald further

78 Karl Heinz Martin staged two plays by August Strindberg and one play by Osip Dimov. See Manolescu (1962: 198–203); Massoff (1974: 306–315); Cazaban (2012: 18–22).

by applying the filter of stylised realism inspired by the nuanced Expressionism visible in Moissi and Reinhardt's synthetic perspectives.

Finally, the teaching career of Manolescu at the Conservatoire in Bucharest also marked a moment of change from Romanticism/*verismo* to realism in the Romanian acting training. In fact, for a period of 20 years (1927–1947) Manolescu was the next teacher at the Conservatoire in Bucharest after Nottara. The actor himself explains the difference between them:

Conservatorul rămăsese întrucâtva în urma teatrului. În general, teatrul era dominat de curentul [...] realismului. La Conservator, peici pe colo, mai stăruiau reminiscențe ale școlii romantice, și, mai ales, un formalism [...]. Era firesc deci să năzuiesc a în-druma noile generații de actori pe calea realismului [...]. Programul de învățământ și metodele de lucru trebuiau să fie deci cu totul altele decât acelea ce se practicaseră multă vreme la Conservator și care se rezumau la: "zi ca mine" sau "fă cum fac eu", ceea ce ucide inițial și definitiv personalitatea studentului. (The Conservatoire had somehow remained behind the [evolution of] theatre [life]. Generally, the theatre was dominated by realism. At the Conservatoire, one could notice here and there the reminiscences of the romantic school and formalism [...]. Thus, it was natural that I dreamed of steering the new generations in the direction of realism [...]. Thus, the teaching syllabus and the methods had to be completely different from those that had been practised for so long at the Conservatoire. [Those methods] could be summarised like this: 'say it like me' or 'do it like I do it', which definitively kills the student's personality from the very beginning; my translation.) (Manolescu 1962: 234)

On the one hand, Nottara focused on romantic declamation and showed the students how a role should be performed. On the other, Manolescu rejected declamation and focused on practising the refinement of everyday speech. He also encouraged students to develop their own perspective of a role and work on its conceptualisation. This reminds us of Mihail Galino, Aglae Pruteanu's teacher, who did not interfere in the actress's training by *showing* her how to interpret the role. Yet we cannot clearly assess the importance of Ibsen in this context, because Manolescu does not mention playwrights when describing his teaching perspective. Despite this lack of information, the importance of Ibsen in Manolescu's career makes it highly likely that he included Ibsen in his teaching curriculum. In fact, the repertoire of Manolescu both at the National Theatre of Bucharest and at the Bulandra Company favoured a mixed realist-expressionist acting style starting with Bjørnson, Ibsen and the Italian *verismo* playwrights, and reaching the expressionist plays of Strindberg.

To conclude, Manolescu's Osvald was contextualised by Ibsen's gradual classicisation in the repertoire of the Romanian actors. This classicisation makes his contribution different from that of previous actors, for whom Ibsen was a unique, innovative presence in the repertory. In Manolescu we see reflected the activities of Aglae Pruteanu, State Dragomir, Aristide Demetriade and Petre Sturdza, who ensured Ibsen's breakthrough both at the state and private Romanian theatre institutions, but with regard to his performances Ibsen had already become a modern classic.

4.3.3 The Mrs Alvings of the Romanian stage

The Romanian *Ghosts* tradition until 1947 was not confined to the hub generated by the actors who interpreted Osvald. Towards the end of the 1920s, when the interpretative thread of Osvald reached its peak, another emerged, placing Mrs Alving at the core of the Romanian *Ghosts* performances. Although the Mrs Alvings of the Romanian stage were generally overshadowed by the star actors interpreting Osvald, there were two actresses that counterbalanced the contribution of their male colleagues: Agatha Bârsescu and Mărioara Voiculescu. Whereas Nottara, Demetriade and Manolescu were connected by a generational thread cemented by their common actor training, the two actresses were connected by prestige rather than a common institution or training regime.⁷⁹ They shared a less visible network, tied to the German expressionist theatre environment through the directors Soare Z. Soare and Max Reinhardt. However, the influence of these directors does not emerge in the statistics; rather it operated at a subsidiary level in terms of acting and staging. In other words, Soare's and Reinhardt's expressionist-inspired approaches to *Ghosts* was disseminated by these two actresses. Consequently, instead of witnessing experimental, avant-gardist *Ghosts* productions, their productions signified a strong revival of the star actress model. They were recycling a romantic genre filtered through realist norms or through a re-configuration according to expressionist norms. How did this influence the Romanian Ibsen production and what does it say about the playwright's impact in the latter part of the interwar period?

4.3.3.1 Agatha Bârsescu: A polyglot Mrs Alving

Following the Mrs Alving thread chronologically, the first actress I will focus on is Agatha Bârsescu. A brief look at IbsenStage shows her standing out among all the other Romanian Ibsen contributors as an international star actress whose career and contribution to Ibsen extended over the European borders (Figure 43). There are 11 event records for her playing Ibsen between 1898 and 1928, with the majority of eight events taking place in Romania in 1900 and between 1925 and 1928. She performed mostly in the pre-war period, only continuing her activity to a minor degree in the interwar period. The events of 1900 were part of Agatha Bârsescu's tours in Germany and across Europe, which included not only Romanian cities, but also those in Italy, Hungary and the Ukraine. More specifically, the actress was most often linked institutionally with the German stage: She was a successful actress not only at Burgtheater of Vienna (1883–1890),⁸⁰ but also at Berlin Deutsches Theater, Hamburg Theater, Kaiserjubileums Theater, and Raimund-Theater.

79 Their employment at the National Theatre of Bucharest took place in different periods and, furthermore, the actresses belong to different generations.

80 Agatha Bârsescu also represents one link with the Burgtheater to Ibsen productions on the Romanian stage. She was not only a Romanian actress renowned for her roles in tragedies, but also a treasured employee of the Burgtheater (Bârsescu 1934: 55–119). The Ibsen productions in German on the Romanian territory recall her presence in Botoșani, in two plays – *Hedda Gabler* and *Ghosts*, during a tour organised by Burgtheater in 1900. By that time, the city of Botoșani could not provide a proper theatre building and therefore the performances with Agatha Bârsescu were held in the Workers' Hall (Sala meseriașilor) (Teatrul Mihai Eminescu Botoșani, n.d.).

She was known for her successful career at Burgtheater, in addition to her guest performances as an independent actress at German- and English-speaking theatres in Europe and North America.⁸¹ ⁸² She is the only Romanian contributor who performed Ibsen in three languages: German, English and Romanian. She also performed in French and Italian, which ensured her access to major European theatre cultures.

In Romania, Agatha Bârsescu participated in productions of both the National Theatres of Bucharest and of Iași (Bârsescu 207–219). The six events between 1925 and 1928 were part of Agatha Bârsescu's later career, when she started to perform regularly in Romanian after the return from her second stay in the United States between 1914 and 1923. Since 1925 she was employed as actress at the National Theatre of Iași, and as teacher at the Dramatic Art Conservatory and her Romanian Ibsen contribution is connected to these institutions (ibid: 228–244). By contrast, in the *Ghosts* production of 1925, she was a guest actress at the National Theatre of Bucharest.

Her presence in Iași revived Ibsen on the local stage, since Aglae Pruteanu and State Dragomir were no longer performing or teaching his plays.⁸³ Agatha Bârsescu filled the gap left by these artists in regard to Ibsen's presence on stage in Iași and at an institutional level. Following State Dragomir, she became the new teacher of declamation at the Conservatoire in Iași in 1925. As a teacher, she maintained Ibsen in the repertory of both the Conservatoire and of the National Theatre of Iași. However, she replaced most of the plays in Dragomir's syllabus in accordance with her background and acting profile, and inevitably changed the approach to acting training. To understand her Ibsen contribution on the national stage we must consider Ibsen's place in her repertoire and the specificity of her interpretation of *Ghosts*. By analysing these aspects, we can assess Agatha Bârsescu's legacy, her influence upon the permanency of Ibsen in the Romanian repertory and upon the actors in Iași, and the influence of Ibsen's dramaturgy on her acting.

81 According to her memoirs, Agatha Bârsescu spent her youth in Vienna, studying and collaborating with Joseph Altmann, Joseph Hellmersberger, Joseph von Weiler, Bernhard Baumeister, Fritz Krastel, Adolf von Willbrand, Adolf von Sonnenthal, and August Förster. She was actress of Deutsches Theater of Berlin, Burgtheater of Vienna, Stadtstheater of Hamburg, Raimund-Theater of Vienna, Berliner Theater, the German Theatre of New York, the National Theatre of Bucharest and the National Theatre of Iași. At the same time, she participated either with her own ensemble or with local ensembles in performances organised in other cities such as Botoșani, Brașov, Bucharest, Cernăuți, Chișinău, Cluj, Craiova, Constanța, Iași (Romania), Odesa (Ukraine), Budapest (Hungary), Graz, Brno, Innsbruck, Salzburg (Germany), Meran, Triest, Lipsca (Italy), Chicago, Cleveland, Detroit, New York, Ohio, Philadelphia, Saint-Louis, Washington (USA), London (Great Britain). As far as her American tour is concerned, the actress also mentions her occasional collaboration with Theatre Grand Street (New York) and Metropolitan Opera-House (Bârsescu 1934).

82 Agatha Bârsescu performed in America twice, first in 1906 and then between 1914 and 1923 (Bârsescu 1934: 161–165, 175–201).

83 Although Aglae Pruteanu continued to perform even after the end of World War One, the death of State Dragomir in 1920 affected not only their influence upon the local theatre, but also the presence of Ibsen in Iași.

Her standard repertoire⁸⁴ of great heroines in Greek and German plays attests to her romantic background of German inspiration. As Ibsen had become naturalised as a playwright in German, Agatha Bârsescu's performances in his plays is not remarkable. However, among the romantic plays in her repertoire, Ibsen's *Ghosts* and *Hedda Gabler* constituted a unique presence; in contrast, *The Vikings at Helgeland* fitted within the actress's typical repertoire. However, the most performed play in her repertoire was *Ghosts*: she performed Mrs Alving in Romanian, German and English in Romania, Europe and in North America, and she planned a performance in French: "Intenționez să mai fac un turneu la Paris pentru a juca în limba franceză rolul "Doamnei Alving" din *Strigoii* lui Ibsen." (I intend to organise one more tour to Paris in order to play the role of Mrs Alving from Ibsen's *Ghosts* in French; my translation.) (Bârsescu 1934: 259) Mrs Alving was the only Ibsen role she performed in Romanian.

What justified the actress's lasting interest in this role? Beside the fact that Mrs Alving was an appropriated role for older star actresses, I argue that her special interest in the play lies in her attempt to reconcile her romantic background with the exigencies of new approaches to the practice of acting.

Her first strategy was to approach *Ghosts* by taking her audience on "culmile celei mai pure tragedii" (the heights of the purest tragedy; my translation) (Froda 1925: 4), which provided auspicious grounds for the actress to employ her romantic acting skills. Her specialisation in interpreting tragic roles made it easy to perform not only Mrs Alving, but also *Hedda Gabler* and *Hjørdis*.

Agatha Bârsescu was responsible for the emergence of a new path in the Romanian *Ghosts* tradition, focused on Mrs Alving. Scarlat Froda noticed this change in perspective:

D-na Agatha Bârsescu, a prezentat piesa sub o nouă prismă: dragostea maternă, cea mai sublimă dintre dragoste, în fața suferințelor copilului ei și imposibilitatea în care se află de a-l putea ajuta moral și fizic. (Mrs Agatha Bârsescu presented the play from a new angle: the [perspective] of the maternal love – which is the most sublime of all loves – faced with the sufferings of her child and with the impossibility of helping him morally and physically; my translation.) (Froda 1925: 4)

This interpretation emphasised the traumatic, tragic experience of Mrs Alving instead of privileging the pathological rendition of Osvald's illness, which Ion Manolescu and Aristide Demetriade had highlighted, inspired by Ermete Zacconi and Alexander Moissi:

D-na Agatha Bârsescu a covârșit ansamblul cu amplitoarea suferinței sale, făcând să apară în primul plan al piesei mama îndurerată, care a dat naștere unui copil nenorocit. Răsfățând copios amânuntele, a scos în evidență tragedia ei, nu a fiului. Ne-a regalat cu aceiaș dicțiune clară, armonioasă, cu aceleași gesturi expresive. (Mrs Agatha Bârsescu overwhelmed the ensemble with the amplitude of her suffering in having given birth to an unfortunate child. She highlighted her tragedy rather than the son's by an abundant enriching of the details [of the interpretation]. She

84 Berlogea (1972: 241–248) gives a comprehensive overview of the roles interpreted by Agatha Bârsescu.

was lavish towards us with the same clear, harmonious diction and with the same expressive gestures; my translation.) (Sergheie 1926: 2)

Agatha Bârsescu's focus on Mrs Alving, was also a pretext for comparison with other foreign star actresses, such as Suzanne Després.⁸⁵ In this context, the actress became a symbol of the Romanian actors' ability to contribute to the enrichment of the international Ibsen tradition. Moreover, Agatha Bârsescu is considered more original and loyal to Ibsen's play than the French actress:

N'am avut însă niciodată până azi surpriza pe care mi-a procurat-o acest spectacol unic în care rolul d-nei Alving a fost ținut de d-na Agatha Bârsescu. Cu toate că la Paris Suzanne Després interpreta acelaș personaj, felul în care tragediana noastră a jucat rolul mamei din *Strigoi*, a întors toată piesa, schimbându-i complet centrul de gravitate și punând în primul plan, figura femeii. Și n'a fost interpretarea d-nei Agatha Bârsescu, în dauna piesei și pentru evidențierea calităților d-sale. Dimpotrivă. A adus prin jocul d-sale un punct de vedere în interpretarea literară a operii ibseniene. (Until today we have not experienced the surprise provided by this unique performance, with Mrs Agatha Bârsescu in the role of Mrs Alving. Although Suzanne Després interpreted the same character in Paris, the way our tragedian acted the mother's role in *Ghosts* reversed [the meaning of] the whole play, changed its centre of gravity and put the image of the woman in the foreground. And the interpretation of Mrs Agatha Bârsescu was not to the detriment of the play or in favour of her display of qualities. On the contrary, she provided the literary interpretation of Ibsen's work with a [new] perspective; my translation.) (Froda 1925: 4)

Finally, the focus on Mrs Alving rooted in the play's reading as a tragedy and in the star-based approach remained her trademark in the Romanian Ibsen production:

Constați aici influența genului tragediei asupra interpretării. Doamna Alving nu este –așa cum ne-o prezintă Agatha Bârsescu, numai văduva lui Alving și numai mama lui Osvald. (You can ascertain the influence of the tragedy genre upon the interpretation. Mrs Alving is not – and Agatha Bârsescu is right to present her this way – only the widow of Alving and not only the mother of Osvald; my translation.) (Wratislavius 1926: 4)

Agatha Bârsescu's second strategy to assimilate the new trends in the European practice of acting was by connecting Romanticism and Expressionism in her performances. Moreover, the very interpretation of the play as a tragedy helped to connect these genres. Another question then arises: what is the actual relationship between Romanticism, *Ghosts* and stylised realism/Expressionism in her acting?

First and foremost, the fact that she was renowned as a tragedian tied her to classic and romantic, rather than modern roles:

85 Yet, according to IbsenStage, the French actress did not perform Mrs Alving's role neither in Romania nor abroad.

Cu știință de a spune versurile, cu dicțiunea sa de o puritate perfectă, devine o interpretă ideală a eroinelor din dramaturgia clasică. Vocea bine timbrată, armonia și plastică mișcărilor, trăirea intensă îi dă profilul unei actrițe cu vocație de mare tragediană. [...] Pe Agatha Bârsescu Davila o caracterizează ca pe o actriță cu un fizic impunător, cu voce puternică și caldă, cu o dicțiune minunată, cu o știință impecabilă a scenei, dar care nu se poate apropiă de repertoriul modern. (The knowledge in pronouncing the lyrics, the perfectly pure diction, made her an ideal interpreter of the classic dramaturgy's heroines. The clearly defined timbre of the voice, the harmony and the plasticity of the moves, the intense feelings, defined her as an actress whose profile revealed the vocation of a great tragedian. [...] Davila describes Agatha Bârsescu as an actress who had a grandiose physical appearance, a powerful and warm voice, a wonderful diction, impeccable stage knowledge, but who could not approach the modern repertory; my translation.) (Alterescu 1971: 347)

From this perspective, her background conformed to the French *emploi* system and the actress did not break with this tradition throughout her entire career. Moreover, the display of strong passions and emotions, the beauty of bodily gestures, posture and voice were the key aspects of her characterisations, Mrs Alving included: "D-na AGATHA BÂRSESCU (Elena) cu eleganță artistică în suflet și-n mișcări." (Mrs AGATHA BÂRSESCU (Elena), with an artistic elegance both in her soul and in her movements; my translation.) (Ponetti 1926: 166)

She openly disliked naturalism due to its aim of bringing everyday speech and movements on stage, and favoured a stylised realism/Expressionism approach because it connected with her romantic acting perspective. However, her tours as a star actress, as guest actress or as employee of the various theatres across Europe encountered less and less understanding for the Romantic approach marked by beauty and passion. As a consequence, she experienced a growing discontent with the development of the dramatic art, which sacrificed beauty for "aparență cenușie a eroinelor din dramele naturaliste" (the grey appearance of the heroines in the naturalist dramas; my translation) (Berlogea 1972: 143). While she continued to preserve the romantic passion and gestures in her acting, she abandoned declamatory speech, gradually adopting the speech of the naturalist and realist actors:

Apoi, mai este nevoie de o rostire naturală, omenească, fără tonul declamator, făcând totdeauna deosebiri în ce privește tonalitatea, puterea și coloratura [...]. Eram evident într'un fel mișcată când mă aflam într'un rol de antichitate, și altfel, într'un rol modern. Dar... natural am jucat întotdeauna! (Then, one also needs a human, natural enunciation, without any declamatory tone, always paying attention to the tonality, power and coloration. [...] Obviously, I was differently moved in an antique or modern role. But...I have always performed naturally!; my translation) (Bârsescu 1934: 239–240)

In this sense, the constant presence of Mrs Alving's role in Agatha Bârsescu's repertoire reflects her positioning on the border between two genres – the romantic genre focused on clear diction and intense feelings, and the realist approach based on everyday speech and truthfulness:

Vor rămâne neuitate intensitatea, patetismul interior, accentul veridic, zbuciumul cu care marea tragediană a trăit sfâșiersea acestui suflet. [...] Câtă elocvență în privirea rătăcitoare, câtă vibrantă umanitate în vorbă și atitudine. (The intensity, the inner pathos, the truthfulness, the anxiety of the great tragedian in the display of the tearing apart of this soul will remain unforgettable. [...] There was so much eloquence in her wandering look, so much vibrant humanity in her words and attitude; my translation.) (D. 1926: 20)

Through her collaboration with Reinhardt in 1912 she found a perspective that reconciled her romantic perspective with newer approaches. Reinhardt's concept of "festive play" which entailed a display of beauty and passion, without declamation and rigid bodily postures, as well as his perspective upon the theatre as a means to re-present the reality as a theatrical illusion, suited Agatha Bârsescu's romantic views better. As her rendition of Mrs Alving demonstrates, the essentialised archetypes and stylised passions of Expressionism were only a re-shaping of the romantic ideals and archetypes: "Ea este mult mai mult: este oare-cum quintesența suferinței omenești și a resemnării în fața unei soarte implacabile." (She is much more than that: she is somehow the quintessence of human suffering and resignation in the face of an inexorable destiny; my translation.) (Wratislavius 1926: 4) Thus, Agatha Bârsescu's long career as a romantic star actress was only possible in light of the expressionist assimilation of the code of passion and beauty that had also ruled the romantic acting. Finally, her acceptance of Expressionism is demonstrated by her admiration for Alexander Moissi, the interpreter of Osvald in Reinhardt's staging of *Ghosts* in 1906, which broke with the naturalist conventions on the German stage. This is not to say that Agatha Barsescu was an expressionist actress. Her approach remained principally romantic, infused with realist elements, which allowed her to adapt more easily to the expressionist framework.

How did this affect Agatha Bârsescu? I suggest that her encounter with Reinhardt in 1912 and his influence upon the American theatre life, where Agatha Bârsescu belonged between 1913 and 1923, cemented the combination of romantic and realist means in her acting. In this respect, Expressionism became a re-interpretation of Romanticism in Agatha's acting. And, whereas her performances of *Ghosts* and *Hedda Gabler* in 1900 must have displayed a romantic rather than realist or expressionist acting, in her performances in *Ghosts* after 1912, the romantic and the realist tendencies appear more balanced. Since Agatha Bârsescu's Ibsen initiatives overlapped a period of transition from Romanticism to Naturalism/Realism then to Expressionism in both the American and Romanian theatre, her mixed approach appears as a consequence of this dynamic landscape. Her 1917 performance of *Ghosts* with Thomas Mitchell is a clear example of the transition from romantic to realist acting in the actor's career. In her interview with the critic Stix, Agatha Bârsescu confirmed her interest in the role of Mrs Alving in light of her American experience, given that she had already performed it in German and English before performing it in Romanian:

D-sa va juca pentru prima oară în românește rolul d-nei Alwing, rol pe care l'a jucat în Statele Unite ale Americii în limba germană și engleză. (She will perform the

role of Mrs Alwing for the first time in Romanian, a role she played in the United States of America both in German and English; my translation.) (Rep. 1925: 4);

În românește pentru prima oară. L'am mai jucat la New York, și cu ansambluri germane, și în engleză cu artistul Mitchell, în rolul Oswald. (I performed it in New York previously, both with German ensembles and with the artist Mitchell as Oswald; my translation.) (Stix 1925: 8)

Her invitation to perform in *Ghosts* with Moissi is even stronger proof of the bridge she created between Expressionism and Romanticism in her acting:

Se știe că d-na Bârsescu urma să joace acest rol anul trecut la Viena cu Alexandru Moissi în rolul lui Oswald, dar a fost împiedicată de un accident. (One knows that Mrs Bârsescu was supposed to perform this role with Alexandru Moissi as Oswald in Vienna last year, but she was hindered by an accident; my translation) (Rep. 1925: 4)

De altfel, numai accidentul de acum câteva luni m'a împiedică să reiau rolul la Viena cu Moissi. (Otherwise, it is only the accident of a few months ago that stopped me from performing the role again with Moissi in Vienna; my translation.) (Stix 1925: 8)

One of the critics even imagined a fictional *Ghosts* performance by joining her Mrs Alving to Alexander Moissi's Oswald. Moissi's interpretation of *Ghosts* was renowned among Romanian spectators due to the actor's tour of 1921. The result was an idealised staging, highlighting Agatha Bârsescu's ties to the German expressionists:

Iar dacă spectatorul are darul de a putea sintetiza – pe lângă o asemenea doamnă Alving și pe Oswald al lui Moissi, el atunci își însușește unul din tablourile cele mai mărețe pe care e capabil să-l evoace opera lui Ibsen. O mai perfectă armonie nu ne poatea imagina. De o parte nucleul mare – profund tragic și pe de altă, sau mai bine zis alătura, al doilea nucleu – mai mic și drept, nucleul lirizmului, cu care Moissi impregnează pe Oswald. Lirizmul acesta temperează tragicismul Bârsascăi. Și rezultă atunci – cum am spus mai sus, o armonizare ideală, o simfonie a durerei omenești. (And if the spectator has this power to synthesise [the image of] Moissi's Oswald beside the image of Mrs Alving, then he acquires one of the most splendid pictures evoking Ibsen's work. We cannot imagine a more perfect harmony. On the one hand, there is the great core which is profoundly tragic, and on the other hand, or, better said, alongside this core there is a second core – smaller, indeed, which is the core of lyricism infused by Moissi in [the interpretation of] Oswald. This lyricism tempers Bârsescu's tragicism. The result – as I have mentioned above – is an ideal harmonisation, a symphony of human pain; my translation.) (Wratislavius 1926: 4)

On the Romanian stage, her contribution marked the expressionist assimilation of Ibsen rooted in the “re-theatricalisation”⁸⁶ of the National Theatre in the interwar period. Here,

86 The Romanian historians use the “re-theatricalisation” concept in three different contexts. The first one concerned the naturalist-realist reforms of Alexandru Davila, and took the shape of

Reinhardt's model is assumed both by the actress and by Soare Z. Soare,⁸⁷ the director of the 1925 production of *Ghosts*, who invited the actress to perform the role of Mrs Alving in a guest performance:

Sunt încântată să joc din nou [...]. Și aceasta grație talentului regisor Soare Z. Soare, care mi-a făcut plăcută surpriză de a mă invita să joc rolul d-nei Alwing din Strigoii. (I am delighted to perform again. [...] And this is thanks to the talented director Soare Z. Soare, who surprised me deeply by inviting me to perform the part of Mrs Alwing in *Ghosts*; my translation.) (Stix 1925: 8)

Her Ibsen contribution between 1925 and 1928 was relevant not only in terms of acting, but also from the perspective of her teaching at the Conservatoire of Dramatic Art of Iași. Agatha Bârsescu employed a mainly romantic acting technique, in contrast to Dragomir and Pruteanu, who had marked the transition towards realism. Her position as a teacher reinforced her status as star actress with her romantic acting background infused with realist and expressionist elements. It also preserved Ibsen as a unique presence in the repertoire of the students. This indicates once again the influence of the playwright upon the actress, whose play must have influenced her turn from declamation to everyday speech.

Bârsescu's most significant contribution was tied to her acting on stage with her students at the National Theatre in Iași. Her broad theatrical experience made her a mentor in the rehearsal room and she constantly promoted her students on the stage. Her pedagogical influence is most relevant in relationship to actors interpreting Osvald. She performed with a number of Osvalds: George Vraca, Bruno Braeschi,⁸⁸ Carol Kron and

a reaction to Romantic acting and staging principles. The most evident elements associated with Davila's "re-theatricalisation" entailed the use of everyday speech and the focus on the ensemble. The second "re-theatricalisation" in the Romanian theatre emerged as a reaction to the conservatism of naturalist and realist norms employed on stage. Expressionism was one tendency in art that affected the actors, the directors and the stage designers' approach, and led to their seeking to highlight theatrical conventions in the minds of their audiences and encouraging them to see theatre as an artificial spectacle instead of a reflection of real life. This second "re-theatricalisation" moment is addressed here. The third "re-theatricalisation" is tied to the development of Romanian theatre life in the communist era and emerges as a reaction to the proletkult culture that had invaded the national stage between 1947 and 1956. See Alterescu (1971: 387–393); Alterescu (1973: 244–249); Runcan (2003: 306–31); Gheorghe (2009: 6–7).

87 Soare Z. Soare was a Romanian director renowned for the introduction in the national theatre of the expressionist directing approach focused on the stylisation of the stage design and on lighting effect. He travelled to Berlin and as Max Reinhardt and Karl Heinz Martin's disciple was influenced by these two German directors' approach. Soare was often criticised and even mocked at the beginning of his career because he neglected the actors' contribution and the content of the texts, while he privileged the formal aspects of the productions. Later on, he revised his perspective, acknowledging the still important position of the actor within the theatre production, without abandoning other expressionist elements. See Alterescu (1973: 261–262); Brădățeanu (1982: 67–72); Bumbești (1964: 144); Cazaban (2012: 26–27).

88 For instance, Bruno Braeschi was one of State Dragomir's students and had studied precisely the role of Osvald with his teacher, according to the exam sheet. In this respect, the realist influence of

Petre Cotescu, two of whom were her students.⁸⁹ None of these actors played another Ibsen character, and they are not statistically significant as Osvald. Although the critics did not attend rehearsals, they did notice her influence upon the acting of her partners. Em. Serghie focused on her pedagogical role in the 1926 and 1928 productions, especially regarding the performance of Osvald: "Am avut impresia că anumite indicații ale d-nei Bârsescu au reușit să-i fie de folos [d-lui Braeski]." (I had the impression that certain suggestions of Mrs Bârsescu were useful to him [Mr. Braeski⁹⁰]; my translation.) (1926 : 2) Const. Cerbu reinforces Em. Serghie's opinions : "rolurile celelalte au fost jucate de elevi ai Conservatorului, din clasa d-nei Agatha Bârsescu." ([T]he other roles were interpreted by Conservatoire students, from the class of Mrs Agatha Bârsescu; my translation.) (Cerbu 1928: 5) Finally, the critic also indicated her positive response to a student's initiative to stage *Ghosts*: "Initiativa [...] a avut-o un Tânăr și talentat absolvent al Conservatorului, avocatul Karol Cron." (The initiative [...] belonged to a young and talented graduate student of the Conservatoire, namely the lawyer Karol Cron; my translation.) (ibid: 1928: 5) These remarks summarise her pedagogical contribution to strengthening the theatre life of Iași.

Yet, regardless of the changes in her acting, she remained a star actress her entire career – even when she attempted to shape homogeneous ensembles, she still focused on the ways in which the ensemble could enhance the star's performance, rather than on the equal interaction between all actors. The pedagogical portrait of Agatha Bârsescu also reinforces her presence as star actress, either as a stage partner for older actors, or as a teacher performing with students. Wratislavius represents her as "umbra mare a glorioasei lor partenere" (the great shadow of [a] glorious partner; my translation) (Wratislavius 1926: 4) or as "umbra mare, care nu se putea evita, necum înlătura" (the great shadow which is neither avoidable nor escapable; my translation) (ibid: 4). Scarlat Froda does not dismiss the contribution of the other actors, although he considered the ensemble was not at the same level as the actress:

Și nici nu se poate spune că axa piesei putea fi schimbată fiindcă ceilalți parteneri ar fi fost slabii. Nu. D-sa l-a jucat astfel fiindcă aşa l-a simțit și convinea mai bine

Dragomir was probably stronger than Agatha Bârsescu's romantic influence (Collection Academia de Muzică și Artă Dramatică "George Enescu", Folder 5/1914: 128).

89 In her memoirs, the actress quotes some excerpts of theatre reviews and articles. One them, published in the *Opinia* newspaper praises her activity as a teacher and mentions the interpretation of her student Petre Cotescu in the role of Osvald: "Cu privire la profesoratul meu, ziarul *Opinia* din Iași face următoarea mențiune: 'La Conservatorul din Iași nu este o sinecură. Marea tragediană își exercită misiunea cu aceeași tragere de inimă și cu același entuziasm cu care a privit întotdeauna arta sa, singura ei preocupare în viață. După un singur an de profesorat, roadele catedrei încredințate Agathei Bârsescu se și văd: două din elevele ei au fost angajate la Teatrul Național din Cernăuți. Un elev Petre Cotescu a jucat pe „Osvald” din „Strigoi” alături de marea sa profesoră.' (Bârsescu 1934: 254). Yet the actress does not mention any detail concerning the date and the author of this piece of text. The review specifies that it was only a year since the actress had started teaching in Iași. As Agatha Bârsescu started teaching in Iași on January 1, 1925, the staging of *Ghosts* with Petre Cotescu as Osvald must have taken place either at the end of 1925 or (more likely) in 1926, but no later.

90 Bruno Braeschi/Braeski was the interpreter of Osvald in this production.

temperamentului d-sale. Dealtfel întregul ansamblu a fost bun și pe alocuri chiar strălucitor. (And one cannot even say that the play's axis could have been changed because the other [acting] partners acted poorly. No. She performed it [the role] like this because she felt it this way and because this was the most convenient manner in accordance with her temperament; my translation.) (Froda 1925: 4)

Froda insists on the balanced evolution of the whole ensemble, but also points to the actress's generosity in her collaboration with the actors. His remark is suggestive, as most renowned guest-artists were known for their tendency to monopolise performances and minimise the efforts of the rest of the ensemble in order to display their talent.

To conclude, Agatha Bârsescu's Ibsen interpretations have a strong German influence, originating in German Romantic and expressionist acting. Ibsen's *Ghosts* had an important role in cementing the actress's mix of romantic and realist acting via Reinhardt's expressionist approach to the production of the play. By focusing on Mrs Alving, she preserved the privileged status of the star actress, and the interpretation of the play as a tragedy contributed to this by putting the actress's skills on display. In Bucharest, her performance in *Ghosts* revealed her use of the expressionist mode as a way of preserving the passion and the beauty of romantic acting within a modern setting, while in Iași her *Ghosts* performances were part of her pedagogical training programme. Here Ibsen remained a modern presence among the romantic repertory, but in contrast to State Dragomir and Aglae Pruteanu, her focus was on romantic-expressionist rather than realist elements: the beauty, the passion, the archetype, and so on. Her performances ensured the vivid presence of Ibsen on stage in Iași and continued the initiatives of Dragomir and Pruteanu in the local dissemination of his plays.

4.3.3.2 Mărioara Voiculescu in *Ghosts*

The interpretation of Mrs Alving initiated by Agatha Bârsescu was developed further by Mărioara Voiculescu during the later stages of her career, when she performed Ibsen in the state theatre environment at the Studio of the National Theatre of Bucharest. She consolidated Ibsen's position in this repertory during the interwar period. The *Peer Gynt* experiment of 1924 remained an isolated event, but the three *Ghosts* stagings of 1943, 1944 and 1946⁹¹ starring Mărioara Voiculescu as Mrs Alving were different. The performances between September 1943 and September 1944 were extremely successful, reaching an incredible number of 83 performances. This transformed *Ghosts* into a box-office success, which supports Mărioara Voiculescu's observation that although The Studio was intended for experimental stagings, these performances were a strong source of additional revenue.

The accounts confirm the frequency of the performances and the financial success of the production in both the 1943–1944 and 1944–1945 seasons (National Theatre of Bucharest Collection, Folder 27/1944: 105, 106, 108, 109, 198, 202) (Table 4) as the box office

91 The performances took place at the Studio Hall in 1943–1944 and at the Theatre Comoedia in 1946, two secondary buildings used by the National Theatre of Bucharest both during World War Two and afterwards.

returns did not drop under 10,000 lei. The most successful performances generated at least 50,000 lei per evening.

Table 4: Revenues for production of *Ghosts* at the National Theatre of Bucharest in 1944

Date	Amount
April 2, 1944	65,559 lei ⁹²
April 4, 1944	12,450 (10,167 lei net amount, only for ticket sales)
April 6, 1944	14,010 (11,175 lei net amount, only for ticket sales)
April 25, 1944	50,210 lei
October 1, 1944	69,186 (55,034 lei net amount, only for ticket sales)

Mărioara Voiculescu also commented on the number of performances:

Suntem la al 40-lea spectacol cu casa închisă (We are at the 40th sold-out performance; my translation) (Voiculescu 2003: 118);

Diseară joc Strigoii pentru a 40-a oară cu casa închisă (I will perform in *Ghosts* for the 40th time tonight with tickets sold out; my translation) (ibid: 120);

Sunt la al 75-lea spectacol cu Strigoii (This is the 75th performance of *Ghosts* I am in; my translation) (ibid: 120);

Am jucat Strigoii pentru a 83-a oară (I performed in *Ghosts* for the 83rd time; my translation.) (ibid: 127)

Yet the success of *Ghosts* was accompanied by the criticism of the National Theatre of Bucharest's management. Despite the play's undeniable success, initial expectations were low:

Succes mare la care nu mă așteptam [...], dar asta nu ar însemna nimic dacă piesa ar fi fost o piesă modernă (It was a great, unexpected success [...], but this would not have meant anything had the play been a modern one; my translation) (ibid: 118)

Am fost aruncată la Studio anul acesta, cu piesa Strigoii, în credință fermă că piesa nu va avea succes—și uimirea lor, și dezolarea lor, e că piesa e un mare succes. (I was cast out to the Studio Hall this year, with the performance of *Ghosts*, in the strong belief that the play would be a failure. To their surprise and dismay, the play is a great success; my translation.) (ibid: 128)

Strigoii care au adus milioane și cinste teatrului. (*Ghosts*, which brought millions and honour to the theatre; my translation.) (ibid: 120)

92 Leu (pl. lei) is the Romanian currency.

The management's attitude to *Ghosts* suggests a mistrust of Ibsen as a commercial playwright and paradoxically suggests an almost deliberate insistence on the production's failure. Voiculescu is dismissive of a theatre of mere entertainment and considered that theatre institutions should assume responsibility for moulding their audience's tastes.

Ce este foarte important, e faptul că e o piesă de Ibsen, și încă o piesă așa de sumbră, a putut să aibă un success atât de mare, când azi lumea merge numai la piese unde intelectul nu are de rezolvat nici o problemă. Aceste spectacole răstoarnă deci părerea unor dirigitori de teatru care pretind că nu avem deloc public pentru spectacolele de înaltă ținută literară. Dă publicului teatru bun și jucat bine, și vinzi săli cu șapte-opt spectacole înainte. (It is very important that such a sombre Ibsen play could attain such a great success in these days when people only attend plays that do not ask the intellect to solve any problem. Performances [such as *Ghosts*] overturn the opinion of those theatre directors who pretend that we do not have an audience for serious, literary elitist performances at all. If you provide the audience with well executed theatre, then you will also sell out tickets even seven or eight performances in advance; my translation.) (ibid: 120)

Her opinions faithfully reflected not only the contemporary Romanian theatre environment, but also Ibsen's reception. Although his plays were not new to Romanian audiences in 1943, managers still perceived them as too intellectually demanding. In this context, the 83 *Ghosts* performances contradicted this prejudice and are a demonstration of the outstanding impact of Mărioara Voiculescu's contribution to the Romanian Ibsen production.

As Mrs Alving, Mărioara Voiculescu became Agatha Bârsescu's heir. Tudor Șoimaru acknowledges the connection between them:

De aceea, apariția d-nei Mărioara Voiculescu în rolul Elenei Alving era așteptată cu legitimă curiozitate, mai ales după ce strălucita Agatha Bârsescu ne dăduse acum câțiva ani o lecție de adevărată interpretare. (This is why the performance of Mrs Mărioara Voiculescu as Helene Alving was expected with a legitimate curiosity, especially after the real lesson in interpretation that the brilliant Agatha Bârsescu gave us some years ago; my translation.) (Șoimaru 1943: 11).

In this sense, Valeriu Mardare also approved of Mărioara Voiculescu's interpretation:

În "Strigoii", deși personajul central este Osvald-fiul, d-na Mărioara Voiculescu a isbutit, prin jocul său, să capteze atenția asupra nefericitei mame, care suferă pentru copii, se sbate, se frământă, îi trăește toata gama nenorocirii! Ce limpede despiciă d-sa intenția, nuanța, spiritul unei replici! Parcă ar bate cue în sufletul spectatorului! Nu poți să-i scapi... (Although Osvald the son is the protagonist in *Ghosts*, Mrs Mărioara Voiculescu managed through her play to focus our attention on the unfortunate mother who suffers and fights for her children, who experiences all the torment and misery! She analyses so clearly and detailed every intention, nuance and the spirit of her lines! It is as if she was hammering up the spectator's soul! You cannot escape her...; my translation.) (Mardare 1943: 6)

However, some critics still insisted on Osvald being a co-protagonist as important as Mrs Alving:

Perfecta unitate de compoziție care trebuie să existe între jocul Doamnei Alving și al lui Oswald. Ei bine, în momentele principale ale conflictelor lor [...] jocul doamnei Voiculescu formează un cuplu atât de unitar cu al d-lui Mihai Popescu, încât un joc devine complementar celuilalt" (The perfect unity of composition that must exist between Mrs Alving and Oswald's acting style. Oh well, in the main moments of their conflicts, Mrs Voiculescu's acting creates such a unitary coupling with Mr. Mihai Popescu's acting that they become complementary; my translation.) (Ștefănescu 1943: 2)

The critics expected the actress performing Mrs Alving to deliver a faultless interpretation to ensure the impact of the character, while Mrs Alving was seen as merely a *ghost* behind Osvald's dominating presence.

At the acting and staging level, the aspects that characterised Mărioara Voiculescu's *Peer Gynt* – namely her status as star actress and her acting inspired by Expressionism (Cazaban 2012: 16,17, 23, 24, 51,52) – applied equally to *Ghosts*. The production was ensemble-based, but she still dominated the production; she shared the stage with Mihai Popescu, the interpreter of Osvald, but the rest of the ensemble remained of minor importance. The expressionist influence was also evident in Popescu's training and in the direction of Soare Z. Soare.

An analysis of Mărioara Voiculescu's acting brings us back to a question of balance between Romanticism and Expressionism in the codification of passion and beauty that was crucial to the assessment of Agatha Bârsescu's interpretation. Although Mărioara Voiculescu preserved and enriched this stylistic trajectory, nothing indicates a direct transmission of Mrs Alving's interpretation through rehearsal room practice. Instead, Mărioara Voiculescu's contact with Agatha Bârsescu can be viewed as a form of prestige transmission, as the two actresses performed together in a production organised by Alexandru Davila to launch a new generation of actors. His intention was to develop their skills by working with Bârsescu because she was such a renowned, experienced actress.

An additional thread connects the two actresses, as they both had a preference for displaying strong passions and emotions on stage that connected Romanticism and Expressionism in their acting. While Agatha Bârsescu was more tied to the romantic display of passions marked by declamation, without fully embracing expressionist acting, Mărioara Voiculescu did assume a more stylised and tempered approach. The major difference between the two actresses was the degree to which they incorporated the new influences into their acting. Whereas Agatha Bârsescu's acting was shaped by the German romantic school and by Reinhardt's Expressionism, Mărioara Voiculescu's acting was influenced equally by Aristizza Romanescu's French Romanticism, Davila's naturalism, Paul Gusty's German realism and Soare Z. Soare's German Expressionism.

What did Mărioara Voiculescu's performance in *Ghosts* look like? Both in her productions of *Peer Gynt* in 1924 and of *Ghosts* 1943/1944, her expressionist, temperamental acting, which was rooted in her romantic and realist actor training, was commented upon

by the critics. The reviews suggest that her performance in *Ghosts* marked a subtle change, characterised by the expressionist acting of the latter part of her career; the staging also probably included naturalist elements from her earlier theatrical experience with Davila and Gusty. Most of the critics praised Mărioara Voiculescu's temperamental, yet simpler approach to the role:

Doamna Alving a doamnei Voiculescu e un mare rol, jucat de o mare artistă. Și ce pildă de studiu și de analiză adâncită a personajului să generăților mai tinere doamna Voiculescu, a cărei splendidă maturitate artistică știe să găsească mereu noi forme de expresie dramatică! [...] O făptură care urcă gama celei mai dureroase experiențe umane, se frământă în sine și-ți trimite până în creier și până în inimă vibrările cutremurului interior. Iar temperamentul neîntrecut al artistei unește toate celulele dramei cu un fier unic, întregindu-le organic într-o creație monumentală. (Mrs Voiculescu's Mrs Alving is a great role performed by a great artist. Mrs Voiculescu provides an example of deep study and analysis of the character to the younger generations. Her splendid artistic maturity manages to find new forms of dramatic expression! [...] [She is a] being who can express the most painful human experiences, she torments herself and conveys the vibrations of her inner convulsion to your mind and heart. And the artist's unsurpassable talent unites all the cells of the drama with a unique thrill, making them organically complete in a monumental creation; my translation.) (Ștefănescu 1943: 2)

Despite her lowered voice tonality and more introverted acting of realist inspiration, the actress's emotional outbursts revealed an essentially romantic-expressionist approach: "Mărioara Voiculescu, pe afiș, era o garanție: – Nu se poate să n-o vedem! Plângă cu lacrimi adevărate." (Mărioara Voiculescu's name on the playbill was a guarantee: – We cannot afford not to see her! She cries with real tears!; my translation) (Mardare 1943: 6)

This same approach was also cause for some criticism as some of the critics remarked upon the inadequate impact of the performance, the abuse of passionate gestures, and a lack of control. As a correction to these flaws, some of the critics proposed a realist, more sober, simpler approach to Mrs Alving:

D-na Mărioara Voiculescu a adus rolului d-nei Alving serviciul autorității sale personale, dar nu și al celei mai bune înțelegeri. Pentru chinuita mamă a lui Oswald se cerea o interpretare de severă simplitate și de discreție a durerii. Nu au ce căuta aici nici exhibări de rampă, nici mai ales acele "bibluri" dramatice care fac atâtă de bine unei piese de Bernstein. Și apoi, trântirea pe jos dela final este un gest cu totul potrivnic și textului și intenției spirituale a piesei. D-na Alving nu cade pe covor, nu poate să cadă: ea rămâne stană de piatră, în durerea sacră a veghei [...]. (Mrs Mărioara Voiculescu brought along her authority, yet not her best understanding in the interpretation of Mrs Alving. Osvald's tormented mother would have required a severely simple interpretation, infused with discretion in [the display] of pain. No stage exhibition, even less the dramatic "embroidery" so suitable to a Bernstein play [are fitting]. And then, the gesture of throwing herself on the ground is completely against the text and the spiritual intention of the play. Mrs Alving does not fall on the ground, she cannot fall: She stays there, like a rock, in the middle of the sacred pain of the vigil; my translation.) (Theodorescu 1943: 2)

Thus, it seems that in some eyes, her attempts resulted in acting that was either too introverted, or too temperamental:

Şoapta aleasă de d-na Voiculescu pentru replicile întregei piese are un element intenţional de frână şi nu a personajului, ci a artistei, care pune o ceată voită pe frumoasele linii ale creaţiei. Să cotim că un ton obișnuit, ca al celorlaţi interpreţi, domolit fireşte, menajând marile izbucniri finale, ar da un efect mai direct (The whisper that Mrs Voiculescu chose for the lines of the entire play are an element purposely breaking if not the artist, then surely the character. It willingly puts a mist over the beautiful line of the creation. Except for the great, final burst, we consider that a usual, still tonality, similar to that of the other actors, would create a much more direct effect; my translation.) (Sadoveanu 1943: 2)

Este păcat însă că spre sfârşitul piesii, d-na Voiculescu nu şi-a mai stăpânit elanurile, revenind la ceiace făcuse pe vremuri marele său succes: o tumultoasă izbucnire de vorbe şi plânsete. (It is a pity that Mrs Voiculescu could not contain her pathos towards the end of the play, going back to what constituted her great success once: a tumultuous burst of words and cries.) (Şoimaru 1943: 11)

Mărioara Voiculescu's approach allowed for an excess of gestural, vocal and corporeal display; it was reminiscent of a romantic approach, but still attempted a tempered interpretation, inspired by realism's everyday speech inflected with an expressionist essentialism:

Jocul domniei-sale s'a simplificat din ce în ce, ajungând la redarea potenţelor esenţiale ale unui rol. Nimic nu mai e de prisos, ca şi în piesa marelui constructor. Totul se înşiră în discreţii cu rezonanţe profunde şi în izbucniri cu atât mai emoţionante. (Her acting grew more and more simplified so that she rendered only the essential potentialities of the role. There is nothing working as a surplus, just as in the great creator's play. Everything flows discreetly, with a profound resonance and an even more emotional burst; my translation.) (Ştefănescu 1943: 2)

This mix of romantic, naturalist and expressionist elements followed the thread initiated by Agatha Bârsescu.

To sum up, the contribution of Mărioara Voiculescu concludes the period of the star actors in the early Romanian Ibsen history prior to 1947. Her interpretation of Ibsen marked the end of the gradual evolution of Romanian acting from the romantic to the expressionist genre prior to the communist era. Finally, her Ibsen interpretations contain the same intercrossing of acting styles created by the back-and-forth movement between the different genres that were active in the Romanian theatre until 1947.

4.3.4 Petre Sturdza: The “subversive” Latin Dr. Stockmann of the Romanian stage

Petre Sturdza is by far the most influential contributor in the early Romanian Ibsen production, openly acknowledged as Romania's “actorul ibsenian prin excelenţă” (Ibsenite

par excellence; my translation) (Vartic 1995: 148). The lasting interest and the recognition he acquired as a promoter of Ibsen prove his most influential role in establishing and strengthening the playwright's position as a classic on the Romanian stage. IbsenStage confirms this fact through 19 events⁹³ across the country over a period of roughly 20 years (1907–1928).⁹⁴ The overview of the plays shows his preference for *An Enemy of the People*. The 13 events registering Sturdza as Dr. Stockmann indicate that he was the main contributor to this play in the overall landscape of the Romanian Ibsen production; his numerous performances in the role ensured *An Enemy of the People*'s status as the third most performed play after *A Doll's House* and *Ghosts* until 1947. Sturdza also performed in four other Ibsen plays: *Pillars of Society*, *Ghosts*, *John Gabriel Borkman* and *The Lady from the Sea*.

IbsenStage also indicates that Petre Sturdza was the interpreter with the most extensive touring circuit (Figure 44), particularly with his production of *An Enemy of the People*, which he directed, translated, and promoted most often across the country. His performances as Dr. Stockmann at the National Theatre of Craiova in 1907–1908, the National Theatre of Bucharest, in guest performances at the Bulandra Company (1921) and at the National Theatres of Iași (1925, 1928), Cluj-Napoca (1927) and Cernăuți (1925), prove his dominance in this role.

The Romanian audience witnessed the first⁹⁵ performance of *An Enemy of the People* starring Petre Sturdza in the autumn of 1907, the same year his translation was published. The actor was employed at the National Theatre of Craiova and engaged its ensemble in the performance. According to him, the production was well received; it was performed on tour in Târgu-Jiu, Galați, Brăila and Bucharest from the end of 1907 to the beginning of 1908. Petre Sturdza's recognition as an Ibsen promoter started with this touring production in Craiova; it encountered enthusiasm, scepticism and rejection alike (Sturdza 1966: 228–229). Why?

93 He is registered as actor in 17 events and as translator in 3 events.

94 The event of 1956 took place after Sturdza's death, and registered him only as translator. Otherwise, his acting career as Ibsen interpreter developed between 1907 and 1928.

95 Petre Sturdza's first attempt to stage Ibsen's *An Enemy of the People* as part of his repertoire was intended for several tour performances he organised in provincial towns in 1906–1907. These stagings took place in the context of his leaving the National Theatre of Bucharest together with his wife because of Alexandru Davila's dictatorial modernisation measures. Petre Sturdza managed his own ensemble from January 1906 until the autumn of 1907, when he was employed at the National Theatre of Craiova as actor and stage director. In this period, Petre Sturdza first intended to stage *An Enemy of the People*, encouraged by Al. B. Leonescu, an impresario also known as "the Vampire". His plans failed, yet the potential staging generated rumours among the audience of the small town of Constanța. In brief, Leonescu insisted on Petre Sturdza staging the play. The actor started to rehearse it, but stopped. However, "the Vampire" had not only announced the performance of the play in Constanța, Galați and Brăila, but also deliberately did not tell the audience that Sturdza had changed the production, generating confusion on the day of the performance. As all the tickets had been sold for the evening performance, this anecdote suggests that there was an audience for Ibsen's *An Enemy of the People*. Sturdza fulfilled multiple roles as a promoter of Ibsen and translator of a published version of the play included in the collection "Biblioteca pentru toți" ("A Library for Everyone") (Sturdza 1966: 220–222).

Firstly, to perform Ibsen in Bucharest was to implicitly undermine the authority of the National Theatre of Bucharest. Sturdza had left the National Theatre of Bucharest and, by joining the ensemble of the National Theatre of Craiova, became part of the provincial and peripheral Romanian theatre environment. The tour he organised in 1907–1908 was Sturdza's rebel initiative to prove that the theatre ensembles in the provinces were as valuable as those of the capital city. As well as performing in Târgu-Jiu, Galați and Brăila, Sturdza proposed a tour to Bucharest, "ca o sfidare" (as a gesture of defiance; my translation) (ibid: 228). The repertory was also a challenge and the staging of Ibsen's *An Enemy of the People* was met with consternation and scepticism:

Actorii din Capitală, auzind că are să fie trupa din Craiova să joace la Bucharest și că printre alte piese anunțase și *Un dușman al poporului* de Ibsen – mi s-a spus că unii se încințau în piața teatrului zicând: – Să nu mor până nu voi vedea pe Petrache Sturdza cu craiovenii jucând pe Ibsen. M-au văzut și n-au mai zis nimic. Cei de bună credință n-au putut decât să aplaudă. Înghiebasem o distribuție omogenă și care se nimerise și potrivită tipurilor din piesă. (I was told that the actors from the capital city were crossing themselves in the theatre's square upon hearing that the ensemble of Craiova was going to perform in Bucharest and that Ibsen's *An Enemy of the People* was among other plays they had promoted. Even more, they kept saying: 'May I not die before seeing Petrache Sturdza performing Ibsen with the actors from Craiova.' They saw me and made no more comments. Those of goodwill could not but applaud. I had organised a good cast, which was adapted and suited to the types [of characters] in the play; my translation.) (ibid: 229)

Although the ensemble hardly achieved any financial gain, performing a modern author such as Ibsen ensured its symbolic recognition:

Cu mare greutate reușii să înlături teama și sfiala ce deșteptase în membrii comitetului temeritatea propunerii mele să-i hotărăsc să încerce această lovitură, care chiar dacă ar fi fost să rămâne materialmente neproductivă, eram încredințat că va ridica prestigiul artistic al vechii trupe craiovene, ștergând trista reputație la care ajunse. (It was hard for me to dispel the fear and the shyness aroused in the members of the committee by the temerity of my proposal, and to convince them to accept this blow, which would have uplifted the prestige of the old ensemble from Craiova and wiped away its currently sad reputation, even if this attempt would lead to no material gains; my translation.) (ibid: 228)

Am încheiat seria spectacolelor de la Liric fără nicio pierdere materială, dar în schimb cu un imens câștig moral care ridică prestigiul artistic al trupei craiovene în Capitală. (I ended the series of performances at the Lyrical [Theatre] with no financial loss, but with an immense moral gain, which enhanced the artistic prestige of the ensemble from Craiova in the capital city; my translation.) (ibid: 229)

The content of the play enhanced the impact of the tour, since it was considered inappropriate by some of the audiences. The principal of the High School for Sciences in Brăila forbade pupils to attend *An Enemy of the People* because of its revolutionary, subversive content:

Îmi aduc aminte că directorul liceului real din Brăila, invitat de administratorul trupei să îndemne elevii să vie să asculte *Un dușman al poporului* de Ibsen, răspunse că nu numai că nu-i îndeamnă, dar chiar le-a interzis să asiste la reprezentarea acestei piese subversive și revoluționare. Sărmanul Ibsen, iată-l ajuns și subversiv! (I remember that when the impresario of the troupe invited the principal of the High School of Natural Sciences in Brăila to encourage the students to attend Ibsen's *An Enemy of the People*, he replied that he not only would not encourage them to do so, but even forbid them to assist in the performance of such a subversive and revolutionary play. Poor Ibsen, he who is now seen as a subversive!; my translation) (ibid: 229)

Challenging the authority of the National Theatre of Bucharest and taking *An Enemy of the People* on tour was the means by which Sturdza gained symbolic recognition both for himself and for the ensemble of Craiova. The subversive tour of 1907–1908 to Bucharest and the staging of *An Enemy of the People* on November 28, 1907 was Ibsen's first real breakthrough in Romania, and also Sturdza's first step to being acknowledged as the most influential Romanian Ibsen actor. His performances at the National Theatre of Bucharest⁹⁶ enhanced the impact of the tour. Sturdza's initiative was supported by the manager of the National Theatre's at the time, I. Bacalbașa.

Bacalbașa [...] cu dorința de marca direcția sa [...] prin introducerea în repertoriu, pe lângă cât mai multe lucrări originale, și a câtorva cap de opere străine. Astfel în partea întâi a stagiușii mi-a făcut plăcerea să montez *Stâlpii societății* de H. Ibsen, tradusă de mine, încredințându-mi marele și dificilul rol al Consulului Bernyk, într-o distribuție care cuprindea forțele cele mai vii și mai evidente ale teatrului. (Bacalbașa [...] wished to mark the period of his management [...] not only by introducing as many original plays as possible in the repertory, but also some foreign masterpieces. Thus, I was delighted to stage *Pillars of Society* by H. Ibsen in the first part of the theatre season. I translated the play and was also entrusted [with the interpretation of] the great and difficult role of Consul Bernyk, together with a cast that included the most vivid and powerful actors of the theatre; my translation.) (ibid: 240)

Sturdza marked that "Ibsen a intrat oficial la Teatrul Național" (Ibsen was officially introduced at the National Theatre; my translation) (Massoff 1972: 364) of Bucharest with *Pillars of Society* in 1911, which was also the Romanian premiere of the play. Secondly, he interpreted the leading masculine roles in two Romanian Ibsen premieres: *John Gabriel Borkman* (1919) and *The Lady from the Sea* (1928). Thirdly, the performance of *An Enemy of the People* at the National Theatre of Bucharest was the first time when the staging included Act IV. Finally, in 1921, he performed in *An Enemy of the People* at the Bulandra Company in a run of approximately 20 days, enjoying a positive reception. Undoubtedly, Dr. Stockmann remained his favourite role throughout his entire career.

96 The actor returned to the National Theatre in 1908. This happened when Alexandru Davila left and Pompiliu Eliade became the new manager (Sturdza 1966: 230).

Although he performed in numerous romantic and modern plays of the French repertory,⁹⁷ Sturdza was acknowledged for introducing the modern Italian and Scandinavian plays to the Romanian stage, marking an important transition that affected both the acting and the staging techniques. The actor became renowned for being “un entuziasat al operei ibseniene și fidelul interpret al repertoriului scandinav” (an enthusiast [promoter] of Ibsen’s work and the loyal interpreter of the Scandinavian repertory; my translation) (Alterescu 1971: 302).

In his version of Ibsen, particularly in the portrayal of Dr. Stockmann, Sturdza presented the Romanian audience with a blend of acting genres that marked the actor’s transition from Romanticism to realism, distilled through naturalism and Italian *verismo*.

Italian *verismo* exerted the strongest influence upon Sturdza, with Zaconi, Novelli and Duse as his main models. However, it would be incorrect to say that Sturdza was completely shaped by Italian *verismo*. His early career as actor in Iași points to his background as a romantic actor, as he assumed a realist interpretation inspired by Italian *verismo* only later in his career. He also assimilated German and French naturalist-realism influences through his contact with Paul Gusty and Alexandru Davila at the National Theatre of Bucharest. The assimilation of these influences was relevant at an acting and industrial level. Although Petre Sturdza was clearly an example of a star actor influenced by romantic and Italian *verismo* techniques, he was a supporter of ensemble-based productions and was attracted to realism and naturalism. For this reason, most of his productions were a mix of actor-based and ensemble-based approaches, revealing the same transitional intercrossings typical of other Ibsen key contributors.

To understand the connection between Romanticism, Italian *verismo*, French and German naturalism in the acting of Petre Sturdza, it is important to acknowledge that Sturdza came into contact with not one, but several different versions of romantic and naturalist interpretation. He was aware that French and German Romanticism, as well as naturalism, entailed different nuances, despite common genre designations. On the other hand, Sturdza’s conceptual clarity was not without flaws, and his memoirs reveal a confusing overlapping of naturalism and *verismo*:

Eram neliniștit de lupta ce se da între vechile principii adoptate la Paris, modul meu de-a declama de până atunci, de care nu mă putusem dezbată bine și noua manieră naturalistă, pe care, deși simteam că se potrivea ca o mănușe firii și temperamentului meu – încă nu eram complet stăpân și nu puteam, nu știam cum să folosesc în cursul interpretării. (I was anxious because of the conflict aroused within me between the old principles learned in Paris, which were enacted in the manner I declaimed until then, and which I still had not abandoned yet, and the new naturalist manner, which I still had not mastered, although I felt that it fitted my personality and my temperament like a glove. I could not, I did not, know how to use it in my interpretation; my translation.) (Sturdza 1966: 132–133)

Yet Sturdza used the term *verismo* more often than naturalism:

97 A comprehensive list of the roles interpreted by Petre Sturdza can be found in Sturdza (1966: 331–340).

În loc de strigăte și urlete mai mult sau mai puțin dramatice, asistaseră numai la desfășurarea unui proces sufletesc. Cu rolul acesta mi-am făcut intrarea în școală naturalului și a simplicității, cu el m-am botezat actor modern și verist. (Instead of witnessing a more or less dramatic shouting and howling, they had witnessed the unfolding of a spiritual process. With this role, I had entered the school of naturalness and simplicity. With this role, I had baptised myself as a modern and *verismo* actor; my translation.) (ibid: 134)

Therefore, we must understand not only the interweaving of the various genres in Sturdza's acting, but also Ibsen's influence in generating and supporting this mix.

Declamation governed the young Romanian acting tradition when Petre Sturdza started his acting career:

Deocamdată însă, declamam și eu ca toți colegii de la dramă, până vedeam apărând pe buzele maestrului zâmbetul de satisfacție pe care i-l pândeam. (For the moment though, I declaimed just as my other colleagues in the drama class, until I saw a smile of satisfaction secretly lurking on the face of my master; my translation.) (ibid: 35)

His teacher, Mihail Galino, was a proponent of the romantic technique, while allowing students enough freedom to develop their own style. This romantic background to Sturdza's training is visible in his interpretation of Don Salluste in *Ruy Blas* through declamatory tonality.⁹⁸ He preserved traces of Romantic acting in his work until very late, as his Ibsen rendition in *John Gabriel Borkman* in 1919, which focused on gestures and vocal amplitude, suggests:

Capul d-sale de Herr-Professor convențional care-și mângâie mereu barba e de sigur departe de intențiile autorului. Apoi tonul profetic din partea finală depășește oarecum limitele naturaleței. (His head of a conventional Herr-Professor who always caresses his beard is, of course, far from the author's intentions. Then the prophetic tonality in the final part goes somehow beyond the limits of naturalness; my translation.) (Filotti 1919: 68)

The focus on identification with a role also reveals a romantic nuance in his approach:

Interpretarea ce dam eu acestui rol căruia firea mea i se adaptează mai puternic decât oricărui altuia, aşa că de câte ori îl joc ajung să mă identific complet personajului. (My interpretation of this role, to which my personality could adapt more than to any other role, made it so that I could completely identify myself with the character; my translation.) (Sturdza 1966: 283)

98 "Ma, amico mio, vous êtes plou dei artisti, ma veri dervischi urlanti! Avea dreptate bietul om, dar ce vreți, pe vremuri lozinca la teatru era: cine tipă mai tare, are mai mare talent." (But, my friend, you are more than artists, but real howling dervishes! The poor man was right, but, what could you expect more? At that time, the main slogan in the theatre was: the more one shouts, the greater the talent one has; my translation) (Sturdza 1966: 127).

As for the French romantic model, he considered it artificial and too technical, and thus unable to convey any emotion and passion. His view of the French theatre world reveals his rejection of the French romantic interpretation promoted by the actors and his teachers of the Comédie-Française. Yet Petre Sturdza does not downplay its influence upon his acting profile. From Got, Sylvain, Worms and Feraudy he learned the technical aspects of preparing a role in terms of controlling the gestures, the voice, the diction, as well as historical, social and clothing details of each interpretation. However, the keyword that most characterised Sturdza, and that he considered the French actors lacked most, was "emotion". The terms "simple, natural and sincere" would haunt the actor throughout his career. These words would be always used in opposition to the romantic tradition that he considered artificial, unnatural, and in danger of automatising the interpretation due to the excessive control of the body. He also rejected the German model of romantic interpretation, which he considered very similar to the French. Sturdza preferred Gabrielle Réjane to the French actors of the Comédie-Française, the German actors at Burgtheater, or the British actors, because her romantic interpretation was much nearer the emotion, simplicity and naturalness that he sought on stage. It was her mix of romantic and realist techniques that rendered her style different and unique compared with the romantic interpretation of her colleagues at the Comédie-Française. The same applied to the Italian actor Ernesto Rossi, who became a model for Sturdza through their direct encounter and Borelli's background as actor in Rossi's ensemble (*ibid*: 45, 53, 54, 104, 105, 106, 107, 111):

La Comedia Franceză i-a văzut pe marii ei actori în roluri ale literaturii clasice, a admirat perfectiunea tehnicii tradusă în dicțiune și gestică, dar n-a putut să treacă peste faptul că nu făceau să simtă, nu transmită emoție. Și aceasta nu numai în ceea ce privește dicțiunea sau gesturile, ci în general comportamentul scenic, perfect stăpânit, repetat cu o precizie care purta, purtând în ea pericolul automatizării. Dar prin arta franceză și slujitorii ei Sturdza a pătrus aspecte însemnante ale creației actoricești, a învățat cum se abordează și se studiază un rol, cum pot fi puse în valoare trăsăturile proprii fiecărui personaj. A învățat să gândească și să conceapă un caracter dramatic, să urmărească și să stăpânească efectele necesare [...]. A găsit evident și la Paris actori care l-au emționat [...]. Ceea ce înseamnă "sufletul" într-un rol i-au arătat mai cu seamă italienii, începând cu Ernesto Rossi, trecând la Eleonora Duse, la Ermete Zacconi și la Novelli. Un alt italian a avut un rol însemnat în formarea artistului nostru, Napoleone Borelli, director de scenă vreme de cinci ani la Teatrul Național din Iași, care l-a ajutat direct să valorifice ceea ce strânsese prin studiu și călătorii. (At the *Comédie-Française* he saw all its great actors in the great roles of classic literature, he admired the technical perfection applied to their diction and gestures, but he could not ignore the fact that they could not convey feeling and emotion. This not only concerned diction and gestures, but also their general stage behaviour, perfectly controlled, and repeated with a precision which brought with it the danger of doing things by rote. But through the French art and its servants, Sturdza delved into significant aspects of the acting craft, learned how to approach and to study a role, how to bring the aspects of each character to light. He learned how to imagine and create a dramatic character, how to achieve and control the necessary effect [...]. In Paris he evidently also found actors who

conveyed emotion [...]. But only the Italians showed him what “soul” meant in [the interpretation of] a role, starting with Ernesto Rossi, then going further to Eleonora Duse, Ermète Zaconi and Novelli. Another Italian who played a significant role in the formation of our actor was Napoleone Borelli, who was stage director for five years at the National Theatre of Iași, and who helped him directly to bring what he had learned through his studies and travels to light; my translation.) (Brădăteanu 1979: 158)

The actor's rejection of the French and German romantic model, which had received so much praise in the early Romanian acting tradition, and his aim for simplicity, emotion and sincerity, explain his attachment to Italian *verismo*. Petre Sturdza was inspired by Italian actors such as Ermète Zaconi, Ermète Novelli and Eleonora Duse. Ibsen's special position in the careers of these three most influential Italian contributors was echoed in Sturdza's repertoire. In Italian *verismo* he found the form for his interpretation of Ibsen roles.

Napoleone Borelli, who was the director of the National Theatre of Iași between 1896 and 1903, also reinforced Sturdza's preference for Italian acting. Petre Sturdza himself mentioned Borelli's contribution as essential to his development as actor:

Mărturisesc cinstit că Borelli a fost pentru mine un revelator. Revelatorul propriilor mele calități pe care nu știam încă să le valorific. Lui i-am rămas recunoscător toată viața pentru succesele obținute în cariera mea, căci le dătoreșc mai ales sfaturilor și îndemnurilor lui. (I confess honestly that Borelli was a revealing personality for me. He helped me realise qualities I did not know that I possessed. I will be grateful to him my entire life because I owe all the successes I obtained during my career to his advice and encouragement; my translation.) (Sturdza 1966: 126)

Yet, Borelli did not completely approve of the pathological Italian version of realism (*verismo*). Instead, he professed a tempered version of it. However, despite Borelli's advising against romantic declamation and broad gestures, as well as against the pathological exaggerations of Italian *verismo*, the latter remained Sturdza's most powerful models. His travels across Europe – to French, Italian and German theatres – and his meetings with Duse, Novelli and Zaconi, cemented the Italian influence on his career. Sturdza abandoned the Romantic acting style and turned to *verismo* in his interpretation of Ibsen's characters. His early collaboration with Borelli was consolidated by the fact that Sturdza spoke Italian, and in 1895, when Borelli became director at the National Theatre of Iași, Sturdza became his special assistant. From this perspective, Petre Sturdza “va beneficia în cea mai largă măsură de sfaturile regizorului italian” (would benefit most from the advice of the Italian director; my translation) (Alterescu 1971: 313). Consequently, Borelli influenced Sturdza not only as actor, but also as stage director, a role he assumed in his Ibsen productions.⁹⁹

Early in his career in Iași, he collaborated with Aglae Pruteanu and State Dragomir. For this reason, Romanian historians consider the three actors as part of “psychological realism” school. Although Sturdza did not work through the concept of psychology

99 “atașat special pe lângă persoana d-lui Borelli” (Massoff 1978: 561).

when studying roles, it is likely that his colleagues' discussions about the importance of psychology and philosophy for the science of acting influenced his approach. As he does not refer to these influences in his memoirs, they either played a minor role in his acting perspective, or he considered them an inherent part of his realist acting, requiring no further conceptualisation. The only example he gives is reminiscent of Aglae Pruteanu's technique based on the imagination concept, which entailed the elaboration of an ideal model/shape of the character and followed its evolution in the context of the play:

Nu mai căutam să simt nimic decât rolul meu și întreaga lui structură. Și tortura asta ținea până în momentul când ajungeam, în fine, să-mi văd apărut înaintea ochilor personajul la care mă gândeam de atâtă vreme, să-l văd ca și cum dintr-o dată s-ar fi desprins ca dintr-o ceață și mi-ar fi apărut în carne și oase încălțat, îmbrăcat, grimat, mișcându-se, vorbind, râzând sau plângând. Din clipa aceea era al meu. Nu îmi mai rămânea decât să intru în el, să mă identific cu el. [...] Iar când intram în scenă, chiar să fi vrut altfel nu mai puteam să fiu "eu", ci în mod automat, devineam "el", tipul, caracterul, omul în fine, pe care îl descoperisem. Niciodată din clipa când am început să pătrunde miezul și temeiul artei mele, niciodată n-am studiat mai dinainte vreun gest sau un joc de fizionomie. Din moment ce intrasem în personajul meu, ele veneau de la sine fără să le mai caut. Apariției mele îi luam aspectul exterior, mersul, figura, îmbrăcămintea, gesturile, atitudinile și în schimb îi împrumutam emotivitatea, nervii și sufletul meu. Nu mă mai ocupam de el. Singur își vedea de drum îndeplinindu-și fără greș întreaga misiune din cursul acțiunii. Așa mi-am studiat toate rolurile din partea a doua a carierei mele. (I did not seek anything else but to feel my role and its entire structure. And this torture lasted until the moment I could see the character I had been thinking of for so long in front of my eyes. [It lasted] until I could see it as if it had emerged from a fog and appeared in front of me, made of flesh and bones, with shoes, clothes and make-up, moving, talking, laughing or crying. It was mine from that moment on. I only had to enter it, to identify with it. [...] And, when I was entering the stage, even if I wished to be otherwise, I could no longer be "myself", because I automatically became "him", the type, the character, the human being whom I had discovered. Ever since I penetrated through the core and the foundation of my art, I never studied any gesture of physiognomic acting beforehand. From the moment I entered my character, these [gestures] emerged by themselves without me trying to find them. My appearance adopted the external aspect, the walking, the face, the clothing, the gestures, the attitudes, and, in turn, I was lending my emotions, my nerves and my soul to it. I was no longer looking after it. He was following its own path, accomplishing flawlessly its entire mission during the action. This is how I studied all of my roles in the second half of my career; my translation.) (Sturdza 1966: 232)

He does not mention the use of additional written notes to establish gesture, facial or vocal expressions like Aglae Pruteanu, and his handwritten notebook with the translation of *Pillars of Society*, which seems to have been used as a manuscript for learning the role, does not include such notations. Despite Sturdza's early theatre education with Aglae Pruteanu and State Dragomir, he followed his own path once he left Iași. It is the naturalist-realist elements in Petre Sturdza's acting that most define his perspective. The everyday speech, the small, detailed gestures, the sober voice lacking romantic effects,

the partial abandonment of faithfully historical renditions in favour of highlighting the humanity of the characters, all point towards naturalist/realist approaches:

Mille îl distingea pe Sturdza ca pe 'singurul artist' care pe scenă vorbește firesc și emoționează prin naturalețe, declanșând prin aceste considerații destule orgolii. Aprecierile supărau cu atât mai mult cu cât în acea perioadă "jocul natural", verismul, reprezenta noul, pentru că și în teatrul nostru între nou și vechi lupta se ascuțea, vechile modalități îi țineau în cătușele lor pe încă destui, iar cele noi nu erau la îndemâna a foarte mulți. (Mille considered Sturdza as "the only artist" who talked naturally and conveyed emotion through naturalness, thus giving many conceited people reason to react. These appraisals upset them even more, as in that period "natural acting", *il verismo*, represented the new path. Besides, in our theatre, the fight between the old and the new [tendencies] was growing more intense as the old practices had still shackled enough people, whereas the new ones were inaccessible to many; my translation.) (Brădățeanu 1979: 159)

But these approaches have multiple sources. On the one hand, the influences of psychological realism are tied to the drama school of Iași. On the other hand, the French naturalist influence was attributable to his contact with Alexandru Davila. Additionally, the German naturalist-realistic influence came from Paul Gusty, who was the director of the productions starring Petre Sturdza at the National Theatre of Bucharest. Eventually, the actor approved of and adopted the naturalist interpretation of Emanuel Reicher in the Romanian production of *John Gabriel Borkman* in 1919. Sturdza had seen the German actor in the role of John Gabriel Borkman:

În cursul verii aflând că la teatrul Lessing din Berlin va avea loc sub direcția lui H.Brahm un ciclu ibsenian compus din principalele douăsprezece piese ale titanului nordic, cu orice sacrificiu m-am repezit pentru 15 zile în capitala Germaniei. Am văzut: *Strigoii*, *Nora*, *Stâlpii societății*, *Un dușman al poporului*, *Construcțorul Solness* și *John Gabriel Borkman*. Ansamblul trupei era desăvârșit. Protagoniștii erau marii artiști germani Albert Bassermann, Emanuel Reicher, Else Rechmann și Irene Trisch. Tot ansamblul în complexul lui era de o omogenitate fără cursur. Jocul lor simplu, plin de sinceritate și de emotivitate discretă a nordicilor, mi-a dat o senzație de artă vie și puternică. (During the summer, I had found out that the Lessing Theatre in Berlin would present an Ibsen cycle to include the twelve main plays of the Nordic titan, directed by H. Brahm. Regardless of any sacrifice, I swiftly travelled to Germany's capital for 15 days. I attended *Ghosts*, *Nora*, *Pillars of Society*, *An Enemy of the People*, *The Master Builder* and *John Gabriel Borkman*. The ensemble was faultless. The protagonists were the great German artists Albert Bassermann, Emanuel Reicher, Else Rechmann and Irene Triesch. The entire ensemble had a flawless homogeneity. Their simple acting, full of the discrete sincerity and emotion of the Nordic people, created a strong sensation of art that is full of life and powerful; my translation.) (Sturdza 1966: 239)

A brief interrogation of the IbsenStage database confirms the naturalist profile of Reicher, who collaborated with Emil Lessing at Lessingtheater and performed John Gabriel Borkman in 10 events between 1908 and 1915. In addition, Sturdza not only witnessed the

naturalist performance of *John Gabriel Borkman*, but also attended an entire cycle of six plays, which helped familiarise him with the German naturalist version of Ibsen, under the direction of Brahm, starring Albert Bassermann, Emanuel Reicher, Else Rechmann and Irene Triech. Thus, Petre Sturdza's performance of John Gabriel Borkmann indicates that he considered the German model when preparing the role:

Cu cât drag, cu câtă sărguință am studiat acest rol pe care îl văzusem câțiva ani în urmă la Berlin, mai mult trăit decât jucat de marele artist Emanuel Reicher. (I had so dearly, so eagerly studied this role, which I had seen performed in Berlin several years ago, and which the great artist Emanuel Reicher was living rather than playing; my translation.) (ibid: 275)

Sturdza positively referred to the naturalist interpretation example of Agnes Sorma, strengthening his preference for the German naturalist acting model:

Simpatică, blondă, subțire, captiva prin dulceața și drăgălașenia ei. Amintea în joc de Eleonora Duse. Același procedeu, aceleasi priviri, aceleasi gesturi, în minus bineînțeles bogătie de mijloace a modelului. [...] În toate dovedea că e înzestrată și absolut stăpână pe arta ei. La noi a obținut un mare succes, dar mai mult artistic căci rețete mari n-a făcut. Societatea noastră nu s-a înghesuit ca de obicei s-o vadă, căci nu juca...în franțuzește. (She was nice, blonde, thin and captivating because of her sweetness and grace. Her acting resembled that of Eleonora Duse. The same method, the same glances, the same gestures, except for her model's richness of means [...]. She proved that she was gifted and completely in control of her art at all levels. She was successful here, yet more artistically than financially. Our people did not crowd as usual to see her, because she was not performing...in French; my translation.) (ibid: 205)

This combination of Romanticism, Italian *verismo*, naturalism and realism generated a passionate, emotional, temperamental interpretation of the Ibsen roles he performed. These characteristics led the critics to classify the interpretation of Sturdza as evidently Latin/southern, focusing on emotion and truthfulness simultaneously:

Dar Petre Sturdza, în admirabila sa creație a pus prea mult din temperamentul său de meridional. Ne-a dat atunci un Stockman latin, prea expansiv și cu prea multă impetuositate în toate manifestările sale. (But Petre Sturdza put too much of his southern temperament into his admirable creation. At the time, he gave us a Latin Stockmann, too expansive and impetuous in all his acts; my translation.) (Wratislav-ius 1928: 1)

The interpretation in *An Enemy of the People* is the best example of a "Latin" interpretation, attesting not only to the power of the Italian model, but also to the power of Ibsen in modelling Sturdza's realist acting perspective.

At the level of the theatre production, Petre Sturdza was a star actor. However, his approach did not deny the importance of a balanced ensemble. The staging of *Pillars of Society* in 1911 is one example:

Dimpreună cu tot restul numeroasei distribuții am reușit să realizăm un ansamblu care ne-a făcut cinstă nouă, teatrului și marelui Ibsen, iar publicului o deosebită plăcere. Ermete Novelli care s-a nimerit să asiste la unul dintre spectacole, în afară de felicitările exprimate pe scenă tuturor artiștilor, între patru ochi, prietenese, mi-a mărturisit că interpretarea piesei i-a făcut o puternică impresie de omogenitate. (We managed to assemble an ensemble together with the rest of the numerous cast, which honoured us, the theatre and the great Ibsen, while delighting the audience. Ermete Novelli happened to attend one of the performances, and besides the congratulations he expressed on stage to all the artists, he confessed to me privately that the interpretation of the play left him with a strong impression of homogeneity; my translation.) (Sturdza 1966: 241)

On the one hand, the star actor was crucial in both the touring productions and the guest performances of the time in Romania¹⁰⁰. This status is confirmed by the fact that Sturdza also translated three of Ibsen's plays, *Un dușman al poporului* [An Enemy of the People] (Ibsen and Sturdza 1907) and *Strigoi* [Ghosts] (Ibsen and Sturdza, n.d.). and *Pillars of Society*. All three served as scripts for productions, and the first two were published as stand-alone books. He played the lead role of Consul Bernick in his translation of *Pillars of Society* and his handwritten notebook includes the detailed date and the hour of not only the first rehearsal – May 5, 1911, 05:36:14 – but also of the first reading of the play – May 3, 1911, 04:06:35, almost six months before the official opening night on October 21, 1911 (Ibsen and Sturdza 1911). Petre Sturdza did not simply translate the plays and use the translations as scripts, but followed the Italians in adjusting the play in accordance with the context of the staging. The most relevant example of this process is the omission of Act IV in the touring performances of *An Enemy of the People*:

Curând după aceasta s-a montat *Un dușman al poporului* de H. Ibsen, de astă dată jucată în completul ei și cu actul al IV-lea, al întunirii, pe care îl omiseseam la Craiova din lipsă de personal, (omisiune pe care de altfel o văzusem și la trupele italiene și care nu stărbește cătuși de puțin nici înțelesul, nici eficacitatea lucrării). (Soon after, we staged *An Enemy of the People* by H. Ibsen. But this time, we performed it entirely, including Act IV – that of the meeting – which I had omitted in Craiova because of the lack of personnel. Yet I had noticed this omission in the [performances of the] Italian ensembles, without demeaning either the meaning or the effectiveness of the work; my translation.) (ibid: 244)

To assess the importance of the ensemble in the productions starring Petre Sturdza, we must consider his contact with Alexandru Davila and Paul Gusty, and the actor's contact with the German theatre tradition. He was temporarily confronted with the naturalist-realist, ensemble-oriented reforms of Davila, although he was less inspired by this approach. The star actor approach of Sturdza inspired by *verismo* was opposed to the ensemble-based, naturalist-realist approach of Davila and the Germans. Their only common aspect was related to the acting, which entailed the use of everyday speech instead

¹⁰⁰ However, he did not teach but in a private environment, hence the younger generations of actors did not benefit from his vast experience.

of declamation. His real engagements with the ensemble-based approach are tied to his Ibsen initiatives staged at the National Theatre of Bucharest under the supervision of Paul Gusty. *Pillars of Society* in 1911 and *An Enemy of the People* in 1912 with the integration of Act IV are two such examples. In these productions, Sturdza as star actor and Gusty as director create ensemble-based productions performed in a realist acting style without removing the power of the leading role. The critical reception also focused on Sturdza rather than on the other actors:

Dintre toți interpréții, numai trei par a fi simțit intențiile lui Ibsen, d-nii Petre Sturza, C. Radovici și C. Belcot. Chiar și aceștia au avut pe alocuri ezitări de caracterizare, clipe de îndoială și de oboseală, dar au găsit nota justă a rolului și au păstrat unicitatea în joc. Scenele în care erau numai dânsii, umpleau teatrul de viață, de artă adevărată. [...] Deci mai întâi Doctorul Stockmann al d-lui Sturdza. E cald, e încrezător în triumful adevărului, e copilăros în naivitățile sale romantice, e sincer și convingător în izbucnirile sale entuziaste, e puternic și impresionant în clipele de revoltă și indignare, și e comunicativ mai ales în durere. E simpatic chiar și în clipele lui de vanitate trecătoare. Dar e obosit și plăcut la întrunirea din actul al patrulea. E atât de plăcut [...] încât actul acesta e o scădere simțitoare față de actele precedente. și nu are tocmai prea multe nuanțe în vorbire. Pe urmă, scena VIII, în actul al treilea, când se reîntoarce la tipografia: prea umilit, prea e timid față de Hovstad, pe când, cred că dimpotrivă, ar trebui să fie încrezător și numai políticos. Umilința și timiditatea ne face să credem că Stockmann ar fi auzit ce au pus la cale onorabilitii Hovstad, Thomsen și Primarul. și apoi felul acesta de-a introduce scena face ca tot sfârșitul actului să piarză din elan și din temperament. Precum într-adevăr a și pierdut. [...] Oricum, d. Sturza este un Stockmann bun și adevărat. Ne pare bine că-l putem felicita cu toată admirația și mulțumirea ce datorim singurului nostru ibsenist pasionat. (Of all the interpreters, only three seem to have felt Ibsen's intentions, namely Mr. Petre Sturdza, C. Radovici and C. Belcot. But even they hesitated here and there in their characterisations, they had moments of doubt and fatigue, but they found the role's right note and preserved the uniqueness of their acting. The scenes in which it was only them performing filled the theatre with life, with real art. [...] Firstly, there was Mr. Sturdza's Dr. Stockmann. He is warm, he believes in the triumph of truth, he is childish in his romantic naivety, he is sincere and convincing in his enthusiast outbursts, he is powerful and impressive in his moments of revolt and indignation, and communicative especially when he conveys pain. He is nice even in his brief moments of vanity. But he is tired and bored in the meeting in Act Four. He is so bored [...] that this act is evidently less powerful than the previous acts. And he lacks nuances when he speaks. Then, in scene VIII in Act Three, when he returns to the typography, he is too humble, too shy towards Hovstad instead of being, by contrast, confident and only polite. The modesty and the timidity lead us to believe that Stockmann had heard what Hovstad, Thomsen and the Mayor were planning. And, so, this way of performing the scene reflects a loss of energy and temperament at the end of the act. And it did lose that. Nevertheless, Mr. Sturdza is a good and genuine Stockmann. We are happy to congratulate him with all the admiration and contentment owed to our only passionate Ibsenite; my translation.) (Rebreanu 1912: 2)

Petre Sturdza's return to his favourite Ibsen play, as it was performed with the National Theatre of Bucharest, entailed a special focus on the ensemble. It was the first time that a Romanian production of the play had included Act IV, which required integrating a large number of extras into the ensemble:

Mi-am bătut mult capul, mai ales cu afurisita de întrunire pomenită, unde în afară de actorii care își vedea conștiincios de treabă mi se dăduseră la dispoziție câțiva elevi de Conservator care pentru a se pune în evidență făceau exces de zel, iar restul era compus din figuranță – cei mai mulți străini de teatru – aleși la întâmplare și aduși numai la cele câteva repetiții de scenă. (I have struggled a lot, especially when it comes to that damned, aforementioned meeting, in which, besides the actors who were dutifully doing their job, I had some Conservatoire students at my disposal, who, in order to highlight their skills, showed an excessive zeal. The rest [of the ensemble] included extras – most of whom knew nothing about theatre. They had been chosen arbitrarily and only attended the few stage rehearsals; my translation.) (Sturdza 1966: 245)

Yet, paradoxically, the critics considered the 1912 production less well organised than the incomplete one of 1907–1908. It was precisely the ensemble-focused staging of Act IV that detracted from the quality of the performance and attracted criticism:

“Un dușman al poporului” a fost mai cald și mai convins jucat acum vreo patru ani de d. Petre Sturdza, cu trupa Teatrului Național din Craiova, decât aseară la Teatrul Național din Bucharest. [...] E adevărat că atunci s'a suprimat actul întrunirei, din motive lesne de înțeles la o trupă în turneu. Era, însă, preferabil să se fi suprimat și aseară acest act decât să se fi dat dezlinat și monoton cum s'a dat. [...] Nu e de ajuns ca d. Sturza să primeapă rolul capital și să lucreze cu străduință pentru ca succesul piesei să fie asigurat. Nicăierea că în teatrul lui Ibsen nu se cere mai multă omogenitate, coheziune și rotunzire a ansamblului – și tocmai aceasta a lipsit spectacolului de-aseară. (*An Enemy of the People* was more warmly and convincingly performed about four years ago by Mr. Petre Sturdza with the ensemble of the National Theatre of Craiova than tonight at the National Theatre of Bucharest. [...] It is true that the act of the meeting was suppressed at the time, which is easily understandable for a touring ensemble. But it would have been preferable to suppress it tonight too rather than perform it in such a disorganised and monotonous manner. [...] It is not enough only for Mr. Sturdza to understand the leading role and to work eagerly in order to ensure the play's success. Nowhere else in Ibsen's theatre does one need more homogeneity, cohesion and an ensemble tied together – and this is precisely what tonight's performance lacked; my translation.) (Fagure 1912: 1)

Nevertheless, this does not diminish the fact that Petre Sturdza's Ibsen initiatives combined the actor-based and the ensemble-based approach, gradually changing the Romanian theatre industry.

Finally, how did Ibsen influence Sturdza's acting? The actor is renowned for having promoted and disseminated the Italian *verismo* plays and the Scandinavian repertory, including both Ibsen and Bjørnson, across the country. In this respect, the Italian repertory and the Scandinavian plays accompanied the actor in the transition from Romanticism

to *verismo* and then to naturalism. The Italian interpretation and staging of Ibsen was his most powerful model, whereas the German model was secondary and acquired later in his career.

To conclude, the Italian influence is the strongest in the case of Petre Sturdza. His example confirms the power of the star actor in the promotion of Ibsen across Romania and in his establishment in the repertory of the National Theatre of Bucharest. In addition, the strong Italian influence indicates that passion and emotion emerge as Latin, southern traits in his acting as an Ibsen protagonist, especially as Dr. Stockmann. Ultimately, Petre Sturdza's interest in Ibsen contributed to the consecration of the playwright as a modern classic in the Romanian theatre. Sturdza was not only a cornerstone of his generation, but also the most powerful actor in the Romanian history of Ibsen, given that

în general piesele lui Ibsen au prins la noi în bună parte datorită lui Sturdza, interpret cum nu se poate mai potrivit pentru eroii săi, mai în măsura decât mulți alții să înțeleagă și să redea cauzurile de conștiință ibseniene (generally, Ibsen's plays were popular for us because of Sturdza, a most adequate interpreter of his heroes, who was more apt than others to understand and render Ibsen's case studies in consciousness; my translation). (Brădățeanu 1979: 160)

Petre Sturdza as Dr. Stockmann is the very pillar of Henrik Ibsen's reception in the Romanian theatre.

4.3.5 Conclusions Character Sites

The analysis of the character sites has revealed that the aesthetic intercrossing applied equally to all the actors' interpretative work. Together, they further enriched the landscape of Ibsen production by providing unique combinations and approaches to Romanticism, naturalism, realism and Expressionism in their performances of *Ghosts* and *An Enemy of the People*.

The section on Osvald has highlighted Ibsen's gradual classicisation by means of the contribution of three actors belonging to three different generations all performing the same role, but applying different, interwoven perspectives enacted within a transitional process. Demetriade and Manolescu's contribution overlapped; however, Nottara, Demetriade and Manolescu belonged to the same spatial hub, deepening the generational connection at the level of their interpretation of Osvald. Their connection provides the most strongly coagulated network within a character site in the Romanian Ibsen production over a period of roughly 30 years. Finally, the contribution of these actors confirms, together with the contribution of the actresses in the next section, that *Ghosts* was the most influential play in early Romanian Ibsen production.

The Mrs Alvings of Agatha Bârsescu and Mărioara Voiculescu created an adjacent line of *Ghosts* productions, coexisting with the thread of productions that focused on Osvald. *Ghosts* was part of a successful tradition in the Romanian theatre created by actors in both the female and the male leading roles. Prestigious Romanian actors such as Agatha Bârsescu, Constantin I. Nottara, Ion Manolescu and Aristide Demetriade, and foreign actors such as André Antoine, Alfredo de Sanctis, Alexander Moissi and Ermète Zaconi gained

recognition through performing *Ghosts* on the local stage. The two *Ghosts* perspectives coexisting on the Romanian stage oscillated between Osvald and Mrs Alving as the main character. Eventually, the perspective of Osvald as protagonist seemed more powerful. The foreign actors who visited Romania and performed Osvald must have influenced the overall emphasis on the male protagonist in the Romanian Ibsen tradition. The perspective focusing on Mrs Alving was not backed by any foreign performance in Romania. This perspective was introduced by Agatha Bârsescu as late as 1925, almost 30 years after the first Romanian performance with Constantin Nottara as Osvald. By this time, the powerful thread of Osvald interpreters was already consecrated through performances both numerous and regular. The late emergence of this second interpretative thread focusing on Mrs Alving, and the brief timespan covered by the nevertheless numerous performances, resulted in the weaker impact of Agatha Bârsescu and Mărioara Voiculescu. The generational links between the actors performing Osvald created a stronger network of transmission than the prestige transmission between the actresses performing Mrs Alving.

At the level of their interpretation, the diversity of these actors' interpretative approaches is some of the strongest evidence of the complex interweavings in the Romanian Ibsen production. On the one hand, the six actors I have investigated had not only the same romantic background due to their common training at the Conservatoire, but also drew their interpretation from the same genres: *verismo*, naturalism, realism and Expressionism. Here the notion of interweaving is subtle, involving isolating key aspects in the performance techniques employed by each actor to determine the hierarchy of elements within their interpretative mixes, thus pointing to differences between the actors' relationship to the same genres. For instance, Constantin Nottara's interpretation of Osvald combined Romanticism and *verismo* alike; he overcame his initial acting background, in contrast to his generational peers. Yet the similarities between Romanticism and *verismo* rendered his changes less revolutionary, and point to the dominance of the former in his acting. Aristide Demetriade was also primarily a romantic actor. Unlike Nottara, Demetriade's Osvald was a naturalist interpretation inspired by André Antoine with subtle expressionist influences from Alexander Moissi. The third most influential Romanian interpreter of Osvald, Ion Manolescu, had also been trained in romantic acting principles, but his interpretation completely abandoned them. Instead, he turned towards a realist interpretation of Osvald in which he integrated expressionist elements to such an extent that his acting style belonged to a stylised realism genre. Demetriade and Manolescu employed expressionist influences differently in their Osvald interpretations: the former focused on emotion and passion, the latter privileged essences and human archetypes. The main difference is that Demetriade exploited the relationship between Romanticism and Expressionism in his renditions, whereas Manolescu created a bridge between realism and Expressionism. Moreover, the expressionist influence was secondary to the main romantic approach of Demetriade, while Manolescu's stylised approach became a dominant characteristic of his interpretation of Osvald.

The same genres were interwoven in the acting approaches of Agatha Bârsescu and Mărioara Voiculescu. The former used the same combination of Romanticism, naturalism and Expressionism as Demetriade and also maintained Romanticism as her dominant mode with naturalism and Expressionism as minor influences. Mărioara

Voiculescu also built her acting technique by connecting Romanticism with Expressionism, but she favoured temperamental expressiveness and the passionate outbursts. In contrast to Agatha Bârsescu, but with similarities to Ion Manolescu, she made naturalism and realism fundamental in her renditions. Further, she was inspired by Expressionism, and together with Romanticism, it became a dominant feature of her performance technique. Yet the early integration of naturalism and realism in her interpretations mark a clear difference from Agatha Bârsescu, for whom these genres remained peripheral influences.

The contribution of Petre Sturdza is the only isolated case study in this section on character sites due to the actor's strong ownership of the Dr. Stockmann role. No other actor surpassed his ownership of this character, and there was no large network of artists to further a development of a Romanian Ibsen tradition based on *An Enemy of the People*. Sturdza assumed the Italian model in his acting and staging approach, yet the psychological realism school and French and German naturalism strongly marked his career. Thus, although Italian *verismo* was dominant in his interpretation, German realism and French naturalism were powerful influences, in spite of their subsidiary status in his acting. Petre Sturdza was the most significant of the Romanian Ibsen contributors; he covered broad temporal and spatial horizons, as well as a complex range of aesthetic approaches. He was the most famous Ibsenite not only of his epoch, but of the entire history of Romanian Ibsen production.

To conclude, the character sites reveal the extremely complex, yet subtle interweavings that marked the contribution of the Romanian Ibsenites, based on the different combination of elements drawn from Romanticism, naturalism, realism and Expressionism. Whereas one can still identify the components that enter each mix, this does not undermine their uniqueness and the creativity of the Romanian contributors in their application of these acting genres to the interpretation of Ibsen characters. Eventually, Ibsen's dramaturgy itself encouraged the emergence of these mixes, both during the period when the plays were the very symbol of theatrical innovation and when they had become modern classics.

4.3.6 Final remarks

What are the main cores in the Romanian Ibsen tradition?

The first is the psychological training core/hub represented by State Dragomir and Aglae Pruteanu. They engendered a change in the approach to acting because of their contact with experimental psychology. This change ultimately influenced the actor-training system by way of State Dragomir, who taught at the Conservatoire in Iași. His teaching triggered the transition away from Romanticism towards psychological realism. Moreover, it affected the *emploi* system by making the students perform any kind of role, regardless of their inclinations towards one specific character type. Ibsen's introduction to the curriculum by State Dragomir supported this change. Aglae Pruteanu also contributed to the transition from romantic to realist acting, influenced by Ibsen and by the new findings in the field of experimental psychology, just as State Dragomir was.

The second core coagulated around the Ibsen productions staged by the private companies of the Bulandra family and of Mărioara Voiculescu. This pattern encompasses the star actors who performed Ibsen at these companies, either achieving long-term recognition or providing experimental productions. The contribution of Ion Manolescu in *Ghosts* together with the ensemble of the Bulandra Company and the experimental staging of *Peer Gynt* organised by Mărioara Voiculescu at her private theatre company were the most representative moments. Finally, this pattern acknowledges the subsidiary influence of Alexandru Davila, who participated directly in the training of these two actors. His periods as manager of both the National Theatre of Bucharest (1905–1908, 1912–1914) and of the Davila Company (1909), where all these actors worked at a certain point during their careers, account for his influence upon them and, implicitly, upon the Romanian Ibsen production in the private theatres.

Finally, the third core is represented by the ensemble-based Ibsen productions at the National Theatre of Bucharest, successfully combining drama and comedy actors. In this case we see how the national actor training was reflected in the Romanian Ibsen production. For instance, most of the actors performing in the Romanian Ibsen productions were specialised in drama. However, actors belonging to the comedy school also made a considerable contribution, even competing with the drama actors. Finally, the dominant aspect here is Ibsen's plays being approached as dramas, whereas the specific, underlying element is the combination of drama and comedy in the productions. In addition, this pattern highlights the role of Paul Gusty in the emergence of the ensemble tradition in the Romanian Ibsen production, focusing on *The Wild Duck* production in 1920 and the production of *A Doll's House* premiered in 1921.

The fourth core revolves around those plays and characters performed most often, and is dominated by star actors. This pattern indicates Osvald and Mrs Alving in *Ghosts* and Dr. Stockmann in *An Enemy of the People* as the most influential role-oriented approaches. This pattern also reveals the widespread dissemination of Ibsen across the country by means of tours. For instance, Agatha Bârsescu as Mrs Alving, Aristide Demetriade and Ion Manolescu in the role of Osvald, and Petre Sturdza as Dr. Stockmann were the actors who toured most with Ibsen until 1947, either as actor-managers or as guest performers.

To conclude, these cores highlight the dominant features and coalescing moments in the Romanian Ibsen production until 1947 in spite of its fluidity, fractures and decentralisation. Therefore, we must remember that they were not isolated, but interwove themselves in the individual Ibsen profiles of the Romanian key contributors.