

Although the Italian actor's Ibsen of *verismo* inspiration was rejected by the local audience, the *verismo* interpretation techniques became a reference point for Petre Sturdza, who was to become the most important Romanian Ibsen contributor. Thus, although the short-term impact of the Italian tours reveals a low power of influence, the long-term influence was undoubtedly strong. From this perspective, the Italian tours changed the Romanian actors' way of performing Ibsen at the beginning of the 20th century.

2.4 The German model

A considerable number of German actors and ensembles from Germany and the Austro-Hungarian Empire performed Ibsen between 1884 and 1924 during their tours within what is today's Romania's border (Figure 11). These external influences affecting Ibsen's early staging in Romania make the foreign intercrossings of theatrical influence even more complex as the number of German-speaking Ibsen productions was higher than that of both the French and Italian performances. As these tours displayed the activity of numerous theatre agents, they entailed a high degree of heterogeneity.

How does the German landscape of 35 Ibsen events look like on the Romanian map? The first observation is that there is no visible pattern. However, the German tours organised by Das Ibsen-Theater aus Berlin, performing in Bucharest, Iași and Sibiu, are the most numerous. Sporadic productions from Deutsches Theater starring Agnes Sorma, Deutsches Theater der Modernen, and Alexander Moissi's ensemble add heterogeneity, whereas productions from the German ensemble that performed in tandem with the Romanian ensemble at the National Theatre of Bucharest during the German occupation of the capital city in World War One (Massoff 1974: 137–141, 152–166)³⁰ complete this uneven landscape.

To understand the impact that the German tradition of staging Ibsen had on the Romanian theatre, it is paramount to look at the Romanian-German cultural interaction. According to Keith Hitchins, the Romanian culture was strongly marked by the German "model of development". Factors such as the power exerted by the Habsburg/Austro-Hungarian Empire at all societal levels in Transylvania, the existence of a Saxon minority group in Sibiu, and the presence of the occupying German army in Bucharest during World War One opened for ceaseless cultural contact.

However, in contrast to the French or Italian models, the Romanian theatre experienced the German model in a much more discrete manner, with Paul Gusty, stage manager and then director at the National Theatre of Bucharest, as its subtle promoter. Romanian actors were also influenced by their German counterparts. One example is Arisztizza Romanescu, who took inspiration from Adèle Sandrock's interpretation of Rebekka West for her approach of the same role in the Romanian premiere of *Rosmersholm* in 1895 (Romanescu 1960: 124). In the 1920s, the German elements gained even more power in the

30 The performance in German of *Peer Gynt* provided by a local ensemble in Timișoara in 1940 complicates the German story even more by bringing the German ethnic group into the already complex landscape. However, after 1940, no Ibsen play was presented in German on a Romanian stage until 1960.

Romanian theatre life. The two most relevant examples are Agatha Bârsescu whose acting perspective was rooted in her experience on the stage of Burgtheater in Vienna; and Mărioara Voiculescu whose performances as Peer Gynt in 1924/1925 and as Mrs Alving in 1943/1944 were inspired by the expressionist aesthetics of Max Reinhardt.

German theatre was no unitary system, so *which* part of the model was carried in the Ibsen German tours to the Romanian lands? Firstly, the map suggests that there were multiple trajectories: there was a major separation between the theatre produced in Berlin and Vienna; and the political division of the German-speaking world also fostered significant autonomous theatre life in minor cities with theatre troupes touring from these locations making an impact on foreign audiences just like the most famous ensembles. Secondly, the German theatre experienced conflict between star actors and ensembles, just like the French and Italian theatre cultures. Without dismissing the contribution of the star actors, the Germans tended to focus more on the ensemble system, which implicitly empowered the directors. Otto Brahm and Max Reinhardt's contribution was crucial not only to the history of German theatre, but also to the dissemination of Ibsen's plays. Thirdly, the German actors and directors created Ibsen productions using Romanticism, naturalism, and Expressionism, thus generating a diverse acting landscape.

Of the 35 IbsenStage German-language event records, I will focus on five moments in the German history of Ibsen on the Romanian stage as they reflect the intertwining of the above three factors: 1. The performance of *The Pretenders* organised by Burgtheater in 1884; 2. The performance *A Doll's House* in Bucharest in 1901 starring Agnes Sorma; 3. The touring performances of the German Ibsen ensembles of Gustav Lindemann, Maria Rehoff and Ludwig Stärk organised in 1900–1902, 1905 and 1912; 4. The productions performed by the German ensemble on the stage National Theatre of Bucharest in the period of the German occupation in Romania in 1916–1917; and 5. The performance of *Ghosts* in Bucharest in 1921 starring Alexander Moissi.

2.4.1 Burgtheater. 1884, *The Pretenders*

The very first Ibsen performance in German was *The Pretenders* and took place in 1884 in Oravița³¹, which is today part of Romania's territory. *The Pretenders* was a single performance staged by the Viennese Burgtheater during a tour managed by Adolf von Willbrand³² (Bota 2013: 115). Ionel Bota does not provide any details of the event, but Willbrand's tour must have been an important theatrical event. The choice to stage Ibsen could have been a personal initiative of the manager, pointing to the early Ibsen tradition on the German stage.

31 A small town in the South-Western Romania, in the region of Banat, which was part of the Austro-Hungarian Empire before 1918. It was peripheral not only with respect to Vienna, but also to other major Transylvanian and Romanian cultural centres, such as Sibiu, Cluj-Napoca or Bucharest. The Theatre of Oravița is the oldest theatre established on today's Romanian territory, and it echoes the Viennese tradition. The Burgtheater of Vienna was the main architectural inspiration source, and the tours that visited Oravița highlight the German influence on the local theatre environment too (Bota 2013; Florea et al. 1965: 198–200; Massoff 1961: 112–113).

32 He was the manager of the theatre between 1881 and 1887.

The Pretenders was not only the first Ibsen play ever mounted on a German stage on January 30, 1876, it was also the first Ibsen play performed at the Viennese K.K. Hofburgtheater³³ in October that same year. At that time, the manager was Dingelstedt, who had refused to stage *The Pretenders* in 1872. W.E. Yates adds that “not one of his problem plays had been seen in the old Burgtheater by the time it closed in 1888” (1996: 80). In any case, it was under Dingelstedt’s management that *The Pretenders* was eventually staged in 1876, suggesting that the label “problem plays” just applied to the realist plays. When the play appeared in the touring repertory in Oravița, Adolf Wilbrandt had taken over from Dingelstedt as the Burgtheater’s manager (80).

This production is significant in the landscape of the German Ibsen events as it borders on what Jens-Morten Hanssen has described as the Ibsen “silence” of 1882–1884 (2019: 63). The short-lived presence of the play in the repertory points at both the aesthetic profile of Burgtheater, and the fact that “performances of Ibsen’s historical plays” – such as *The Pretenders* – “assume only a marginal role” (ibid: 32). Declamation was the main acting technique employed when performing in Ibsen’s historical plays. As Adolf Wilbrandt was the manager of Burgtheater at the time and also a supporter of the Romantic theatre conventions, then Romantic acting was most probably the norm in the performance of *The Pretenders* that visited Oravița. David E.R. George has categorised Ibsen as neo-classical playwright in the second half of the 19th century, and in the 1870s (George 1983: 67–68) Romantic acting was the norm. Adolf Wilbrandt supported this approach judging by the classical inspiration of the Burgtheater repertory, which included “Molière, Shakespeare, Calderon, and most strikingly, the Greeks” (Carlson 1972: 192) rather than contemporary plays. However, the repertory performed in Oravița did not reflect this tendency: Victorien Sardou, Adalbert Stifter, Eugène-Marie Labiche and Karel Hynek Macha were included (Bota 2013: 115).

The performance of *The Pretenders* probably had as little influence on the small stage of Oravița, as it had had on the German stage: “Ibsen [...] as a neo-classicist [...] had nothing particularly original to offer the development of German drama.” (George 1983: 68) However, its importance as historical document cannot be denied, as the performance is an example of a Romantic interpretation of an Ibsen play, and of Burgtheater’s early approach to performing Ibsen on the Romanian and German stages.

2.4.2 The Golden Age of the German Ibsen on the Romanian stage. Stars and ensembles

1900–1902 was the most prolific period for performance of Ibsen in German on the Romanian stage. While 1900 in Romanian Ibsen history is primarily associated with two productions starring Agatha Bârsescu, in the following year there were two productions of *A Doll’s House* in Bucharest under the management of Deutsches Theater and Deutsches Theater der Modernen. The Deutsches Theater production is of particular significance as it starred Agnes Sorma as Nora. 1901 was also the year that Das Ibsentheater aus Berlin, under the direction of Gustav Lindemann, toured Romania with four Ibsen productions. In 1905 and 1912, Lindemann’s activity was continued by Maria

33 Further referred to as Burgtheater.

Rehoff and Ludwig Stärk with a company using the same name. Maria Rehoff was the leading actor in eight of these events, whereas Ludwig Stärk only appeared in one *Ghosts* performance. As these three contributors were all part of the process of developing the ensemble system on the German stage, I analyse their activity together. By contrast, Agnes Sorma's performance followed the star actor tradition on the German stage and I analyse her contribution separately from the ensembles.

2.4.2.1 Agnes Sorma's Nora

In 1901, the theatregoers in Bucharest met the production of Deutsches Teater with Agnes Sorma as Nora.³⁴ Statistically, IbsenStage holds records of Sorma in 63 events, with her in the role of Nora in 55 of them. Jens-Morten Hanssen highlights Sorma as a central linking agent in the contributor-contributor network based on German-speaking Ibsen performances not only in Germany, but also on the European and American stages between 1876 and 1918 (2019: 190–191). Together with Duse and Réjane, she was at the centre of Ibsen's recognition as a world dramatist. She gained recognition for performing not only Nora, whom she had in her repertoire from 1894 (Marker and Marker 1989: 58), but also for her performances as Regine and Mrs Alving in the long-debated productions of *Ghosts* of Max Reinhardt staged in 1894 and 1906. These productions mark different moments both in the Ibsen's German reception and in Sorma's career. In the 1894 *Ghosts* she interpreted the role of Regine from a naturalist perspective (Williams and Hamburger 2008: 116–118). In 1906, as a member of the ensemble of her previous companion Reinhardt,³⁵ she turned to Expressionist acting techniques to perform Mrs Alving (Fischer-Lichte 2007: 65–68, 72–75). Her approach of Nora during her Romanian tour in 1901 was most likely naturalist.

The performance of Agnes Sorma as Nora in Romania emphasizes once again the contribution of the star-system to the successful global reception of *A Doll's House*. The star-actor tradition which characterised the French and the Italian stages, was strong on the German stage too until the end of World War One. It was mainly enacted in a “system of solo guest performances” (Hanssen 2018: 118) that secured “public interest, high salaries, and critical attention” (ibid: 124) because it gave the star-actors the freedom to choose a repertoire that would highlight their virtuosity: “individual artists and theatre companies tour out of an expectation to meet public interest wherever they go, to seek new and expanded markets for their ‘products’” (ibid: 123).

Sorma's performance took place a few months after the first Romanian staging of *A Doll's House* in Iași. Considering the debates generated by Réjane's interpretation as Nora, the Romanian spectators showed little interest in Sorma's performance, despite her “classic popularity” (ibid: 122) on the German stage. The performance they saw was typical of the last phase of Sorma's career when her numbers of German performances of

34 The repertoire performed in Romania by Agnes Sorma also included *Faust* (Goethe), *Liebele* (Arthur Schnitzler) and *Johannisfeuer* (Hermann Sudermann), highlighting her skills and reputation as star actress (Massoff 1969: 491).

35 Reinhardt performed as Jacob Engstrand in the *Ghosts* production of 1894 staged at Deutsches Theater.

A Doll's House were decreasing (ibid: 168). There were low attendances at the performances and Sorma never again performed for a Romanian audience.

2.4.2.2 The German Ibsen ensembles of Gustav Lindemann, Maria Rehoff and Ludwig Stärk

According to Jens Morten-Hanssen, the star system was not the only factor ensuring Ibsen's successful dissemination on the German stage and abroad. In the first ten years of the 20th century, another tendency emerged, with the directors and the ensemble practice becoming more influential as the stars-actors started to lose their power and dominance. As Hanssen notes, Ibsen was "in command of the German stage" (ibid: 153) during this period, and "except for the first decade of the twenty-first century, no decade saw a larger number of German events" (ibid: 153).

A considerable number of German performances took place on the Romanian stages too in the first decade of the 20th century as a consequence of the "growing significance of symbolist plays, the advent of the Ibsen ensembles [and] the tradition of Ibsen cycles" (ibid: 153). The Ibsen ensembles of Gustav Lindemann, Maria Rehoff and Ludwig Stärk visited the Romanian lands in their most prolific period. Between 1901 and 1912, IbsenStage records their presence in 23 events.

According to IbsenStage, *Das Ibsen-theater aus Berlin* – a name that all the three aforementioned contributors used to advertise their troupe – included six Ibsen plays in its repertory associated with 45 events and engaged in an intense touring activity to no less than 20 European cities. The first Ibsen ensemble that visited Sibiu had Gustav Lindemann as its manager, with Maria Rehoff, his wife, as the leading actress. They divorced in 1903 (ibid: 174) so that when the company returned to Sibiu both in 1905 and in 1912, Maria Rehoff was its manager, not Lindemann. In 1905, a less powerful earlier member of the ensemble managed by Lindemann, Ludwig Stärk, visited Sibiu. The IbsenStage events indicates his contribution as actor in Lindeman's ensemble in 1901 (ibid 175–176) during the tours of the troupe to cities such as Sibiu, Bucharest, Iași and Botoșani.

How did these ensembles arrive to Romania? Their story of travelling across Europe performing Ibsen reveals a dynamic relationship between centre and periphery. Jens-Morten Hanssen argues that Ibsen scholars have neglected their activity because they performed Ibsen in culturally peripheral spaces, rather than staying in their original location of central German cities, such as Berlin and Leipzig. "Distributing Ibsen productions from the centre to periphery was their business model" (ibid: 170), argues Hanssen, and this also applies to their arrival to the Romanian lands. When they first visited Sibiu, the city was not part of Romania, it was a peripheral city on the Eastern border of the Austro-Hungarian Empire and Northwestern border of Romania. Lindemann also travelled to Bucharest, Iași and Botoșani, which were at the frontier of the manager's touring area. The later tours by Rehoff and Stärk went no farther than Sibiu; they transformed the future Romanian city into a peripheral German Ibsen location.

The geographical pattern shows that Lindemann had a special relation to the city of Sibiu, from which both Rehoff and Stärk benefited. The theatre of Sibiu had Leo Bauer as its manager between 1893 and 1921, and due to his Viennese roots, he had a particular interest in introducing the local audience to German theatre ensembles. In this sense, he was responsible for the visits of the Ibsen ensembles of Lindemann, Rehoff and Stärk

to the city in 1901 and in 1905 (Alterescu 1971: 97), and most likely in 1912 too. Leo Bauer's contribution was essential for the evolution of the German theatre life in Sibiu, as he supported “timp de mai bine de două decenii singura instituție teatrală profesionistă de limbă germană” (for more than twenty years the only professional theatre institution in the German language; my translation) (ibid: 97) that existed in Transylvania. He maintained constant contact with the German theatres, especially with those in Vienna and Berlin (Alterescu 1971: 96–97; Wittstock 2016).³⁶

A major feature of the German Ibsen ensembles is their focus on staging Ibsen cycles – “a non-fixed set of plays” (ibid: 181). According to Hanssen, this is a German practice which entails that the productions are performed respecting the chronology of Ibsen's works (Hanssen 2018: 177). This unique tradition starts at “the end of the 1880s and continues into the 1920s” (ibid: 176), but has its moment of glory in first decade of the 20th century, when the Romanian audience witnessed it too. The statistical “frequency and density” (ibid: 184) that characterises the Ibsen cycles points at the high “level of consecration and canonization” (ibid: 182) of Ibsen's plays on the German stage in a period when he was barely acknowledged as innovator in Romania.

Another important feature of the ensembles is that they introduced Ibsen's later plays to the Romanian audience. In 1901, the repertory of Lindemann's ensemble consisted mainly of symbolist plays³⁷, as demonstrated by the presence of *Rosmersholm* and *When We Dead Awaken*. In 1905, Maria Rehoff added *A Doll's House* to the touring repertory beside *When We Dead Awaken*,³⁸ whereas her last tour in 1912 included *Rosmersholm*, *The Lady from the Sea*, *Hedda Gabler*, *The Master Builder*, *John Gabriel Borkman* and *When We Dead Awaken* (Wittstock 2016: 124–125). These tours support Jens-Morten Hanssen's statement concerning the dominance of Ibsen's symbolist plays in the repertory of the German ensembles in the first decade of the century (ibid: 122).

The last feature of interest is the acting in the performances of these companies. The theatre critics of *Siebenbürgisch-Deutsches Tageblatt* highlight the modern, controversial aspect of Ibsen's drama by pointing to innovations in acting, and Ursula Wittstock draws attention to the naturalist interpretation of Lindemann, Rehoff and Stärk (ibid: 121, 123). Jens-Morten Hanssen argues that Lindemann “strived for [...] a naturalness without naturalism” (Hanssen 2018: 173), which suggests that Lindemann was most likely distancing himself gradually from the naturalist perspective of Carl Heine and Otto Brahm, while still employing some of the naturalist conventions. Thus, the “naturalness” marking his directing practice indicates a tendency towards realism. The transition of Lindemann from naturalism to realism was most probably determined by his encounter with new acting techniques that enabled a credible depiction of social interaction in Ibsen's late plays. This focus on representing the illusion of life in the context of Ibsen's symbolist plays may have initiated Lindemann's shift towards realism, while also anticipating Reinhardt's stylised realism/Expressionism.

36 For example, the ensemble of Burgtheater and Agatha Bârescu visited the theatre of Sibiu too, but they did not stage any Ibsen production.

37 *Rosmersholm*, *Hedda Gabler*, *Ghosts* and *When We Dead Awaken* (Wittstock 2016: 119–122).

38 The repertory included also plays by Gabrielle D'Annunzio, Edvard Brandes and Hugo Mark (Wittstock 2016: 122).

The Ibsen cycles had no considerable influence on the Romanian Ibsen tradition, in spite of the density and intensity they added in the statistics regarding the presence of Ibsen on the local stage in the first decade of the 20th century. On the one hand, the high number of performances across a wide area (Sibiu, Bucharest, Iași and Botoșani) and within the short timespan of a few weeks confirms the initial strong impact of Lindemann's tour. On the other hand, the impact of Maria Rehoff and Ludwig Stärk's performances was negligible. Although Maria Rehoff is registered with a total of six events, competing with Lindemann who is registered in eleven events in Romania, she only performed in Sibiu. Ludwig Stärk's presence in Sibiu is even more reduced with only one Ibsen event. All the tours shared an ensemble-based approach with the acting and staging techniques moving from naturalism toward realism; their presence on the Romanian stage in the first decade of the 20th century must have left its mark on the Romanian theatre practitioners attracted by the German model.

2.4.3 Ibsen performances during the German occupation of Bucharest (1916–1918)

In 1916, a few months after Romania joined World War One on the Triple Entente's side, Bucharest was occupied by the German troops of August von Mackensen. This forced not only the administration and the royal family, but also most of the population to leave the capital and seek refuge in Iași (Massoff 1974: 145–151). Inevitably, the political situation affected the theatre. A German ensemble³⁹ with actors from different parts of Germany started to perform in tandem with the Romanian ensemble on the stage of the National Theatre of Bucharest. The Romanian audience hardly attended the German performances, not even when the cost of the tickets was reduced:

Întrucât spectacolele (cele mai multe valoroase) ale ansamblului german erau foarte slab frecventate, s-a încercat atragerea publicului printr-o scădere a prețurilor de intrare [...]. Nici a doua reducere a prețurilor de intrare n-a avut efectul urmărit. Limba germană era puțin răspândită în popor, iar acesta ducea o viață plină de lipsuri și amenințări, încât oamenii nu puteai fi atrași în opera de culturalizare a ocupantului hrăpăreț. (Since the (mostly valuable) performances of the German ensemble had a very low attendance rate, they tried to attract the audience by dropping the entrance prices [...]. Not even the second drop of the entrance prices had the expected result. The people had little knowledge of German, and, besides, had a life full of shortcomings and threats, so that they could not be attracted to the occupying force's cultural programme; my translation.) (Massoff 1974: 140)

This was the context for the 4 German Ibsen performances of *A Doll's House* and *Hedda Gabler* that appear on the Romanian map in 1916 and 1917. Their reception was generally positive with elements of mild criticism, but the aesthetic judgements may have been designed to satisfy the German occupiers. The reviews in *Scena* were written by Adolf de Herz (Petrescu 1984: 416), the magazine's selfsame director (ibid: 413), who was of Austro-Hungarian origins (Sasu 2004: 721–722)⁴⁰. The newspaper was published between

39 Simply referred to as "Ansamblul German" in Romanian (Massoff 1974: 155).

40 He was also acknowledged as playwright, manager of the Theatre of Craiova and theatre critic.

1917 and 1918, which further suggests the pro-German attitude of Adolf de Herz. The following statement on the positive reaction of the audience makes us doubt his genuine evaluation:

Dacă diriguitorii reprezentațiilor în limba germană și-au pus în gând să cultive gustul publicului românesc pentru spectacolele cu care până acum era neobișnuit și dacă vrea să-l introducă pe Ibsen, reprezentarea *Norei*, după *Hedda Gabler*, e nu se poate mai bine venită. (If the managers of the German stagings set their mind to cultivate the taste of the Romanian audience by staging uncommon performances the spectators are not used to, and if they wanted to introduce Ibsen, the staging of *Nora* after *Hedda Gabler* is more than welcome; my translation.) (De Herz 1917: 2)

In this context, Adolf de Herz's allusion to German culture as a "civilising" influence in Romania was not innocent.

These performances were a direct consequence of the war and given their presence in a repertory of mainly German plays, they suggest Ibsen's high degree of naturalisation on the German stage (Hanssen 2018: 154).⁴¹ Ibsen could be performed freely in areas occupied by Germans such as Romania, by contrast to the French, Italian and English plays that were constantly troubled by censorship. But this also created an association between his plays and the occupiers' political dominance. Although one might expect to find that, as a consequence, Ibsen disappeared from the repertory of the Romanian theatres both during and after the war, he was a stable presence. *A Doll's House* was performed at the National Theatre of Iași in 1918, when the Germans were also performing Ibsen in Bucharest. Immediately after the war in 1919, the National Theatre of Bucharest staged *John Gabriel Borkman*, the National Theatre of Iași staged *The Master Builder*, and there was an independent performance of *A Doll's House* too. Thus, instead of leading to rejection, Ibsen's naturalisation as German dramatist paved the way for his canonisation as a "modern classic" (Hanssen 2018: 154) in the Romanian theatre during the interwar period. Hanssen summarises the privileged position of Ibsen as canonic playwright during World War One:

He had the advantage of being a canonized dramatist from a small neutral nation with strong cultural bonds to Germany. His controversial plays had long since stopped running afoul of censors, and there were neither political, nor moral reasons to ban his plays. [...] The level of naturalization he had achieved further privileged him. [...] the wartime event numbers testify to Ibsen's enduring position on the German stage. (ibid: 225)

While the reviews of the German performances at the National Theatre of Bucharest may be biased, they do contain valuable information about the industrial and acting aspects of the productions. At the industrial level, the focus on the stage design highlights the directors' prominent role, and points towards an ensemble-based production: "D.Reusch,

41 A few examples of the repertory of the German ensemble which was almost exclusively performing plays of German origin are: *Cyges und Sein Ring*, *Iphigenie auf Tauris*, *Eine Wiener Abend*, *Der Raub der Sabinerinnen*, *Die Versunkene Glocke*, *Vater und Sohn*, *Jugend*, *Wiebteufel*, *Maria Stuart* (Massoff 1974: 138–140, 155).

directorul artistic al ansamblului german, a condus repetițiile *Norei*.” (Mr. Reusch, the artistic director of the German ensemble, led the rehearsals of *Nora*; my translation.) (Spor 1917: 2) In addition, both Adolf de Herz and Rebreanu discuss the symbolic details of the mise-en-scene. For instance, Rebreanu focuses on “the atmosphere in which Ibsen’s symbolism floats heavily, reveals souls, arouses issues, agitates and ascends” (Rebreanu quoted in Muthu 2006: 106). With regard to the acting, both Liviu Rebreanu and Adolf de Herz use adjectives and substantives such as “o Noră dulce, gîngășă, zburdalnică” (sweet, delicate, frolic [Nora]; my translation), “will”, “calm”, “temperance”, “symbols”, “truth” (De Herz 1917: 2), “sincerity”, “sobriety”, “intelligence” (Rebreanu 1917: 2) suggest a combination of symbolistic and realist elements. Adolf de Herz applauds the symbolic interpretation of *A Doll’s House* when referring to Ibsen’s entire dramatic work: “La Ibsen toate gesturile sunt simboluri și toate amănunțele au importanța lor.” (In Ibsen’s work, all the gestures are symbols and all the details have [symbolic] importance; my translation.) (De Herz 1917:2) Yet these mentions of the symbolic dimension are not sufficient to identify how the “symbols” appeared on the stage. The critics’ choice of the word “symbolism” itself is misleading as it applies to the literary dimension of Ibsen’s late plays and does not describe how symbolist and realist production elements were combined in the performance. At the time in German theatre, the literary combination of “realism” and “symbolism” was achieved on stage through the transition from naturalism to Expressionism in both the acting and directing. For this reason, the symbolist description of the stage design and atmosphere above can be interpreted as an example of an expressionist approach mixed with stylised realist elements inspired by Reinhardt’s “festive play” (Fischer-Lichte 2007: 68–69). The likelihood that these productions used this combination of realism and Expressionism elements is supported by the probable influence on the actors in the German ensemble in Bucharest of Agnes Sorma and Gustav Lindemann’s Ibsen productions at the turn of the century. Their stagings of Ibsen’s symbolist plays had already started to move beyond naturalism, and in the case of Sorma, were incorporating expressionist elements. Expressionism entered the Ibsen theatre field before the outburst of the war, when Max Reinhardt achieved recognition as an eclectic director of his plays, mixing expressionist elements with realist elements, and leaving naturalism behind.

The role of the director, the focus on the ensemble, and the mix of expressionist and realist elements in these German productions anticipate the next directions in the Romanian Ibsen production. They can be viewed as a transition between the pre-war and interwar Romanian Ibsen, and prefigured the performances of Alexander Moissi.

2.4.4 Alexander Moissi: a “public order disturber” Oswald

The last significant Ibsen production in the German language on the Romanian map starred Alexander Moissi as Oswald in *Ghosts*. His tour took place in December 1921,⁴²

42 “Nach dieser flauen Spielzeit in Berlin verbringt Moissi den Rest des Jahres 1921 auf Tournee durch Europa: mit den *Gespensstern*, *Romeo und Julia*, *Hamlet*, dem Lebenden Leichnam und anderen Rollen bereist er Kopenhagen, Oslo, Stockholm, Prag und Wien, wo er zusätzlich unter der Regie von Josef Danegger als Othello debütiert. Im Sommer spielt er den Jedermann, zur Jahres-

with a repertoire that included *Oedipus Rex*, *Hamlet*, *Othello* and *The Living Corpse* (Alterescu 1973: 113, 582). The audience was enthusiastic about his performances, so that he came back to Romania in 1930⁴³ with the Volksteater from Vienna and in 1932⁴⁴ with Kammer-spiele from Berlin. The only play he performed in subsequent visits that was presented in the first tour was *The Living Corpse*, that is, he never presented another Ibsen production. All his tours, especially the first one in 1921, were popular. His arrival was preceded by a “publicitate zgomotoasă” (noisy advertising; my translation) (ibid: 113), and his behaviour ensured that he was liked by Romanians:

Neinteresat să realizeze mari câștiguri bănești (spre deosebire de majoritatea ‘stelelor’ ce cutreierau lumea), Moissi obișnuia să dea reprezentații gratuite, îndeosebi pentru studenți și muncitori; la București a început prin a da un spectacol cu invitații pentru intelectuali (scriitori, actori, studenți), ceea ce i-a creat o atmosferă de simpatie, exprimată și prin manifestații de stradă. (He was not interested in great financial gains (unlike the majority of the ‘stars’ travelling worldwide). Moissi used to give free performances, especially for students and workers; in Bucharest, for his opening performance, he offered invitations to intellectuals (writers, actors, students). This created an atmosphere of sympathy around him, which was also expressed by means of street demonstrations; my translation.) (Massoff 1974: 326)

Before analysing Moissi’s *Ghosts* performance in Romania, it is important to consider his place in the German and international reception of Ibsen. According to IbsenStage, 34 of the 36 events in which Alexander Moissi is registered between 1906 and 1934 indicate *Ghosts* as the strongest Ibsen play in the actor’s repertoire. The IbsenStage map of these events point at the varied theatre environments that Moissi brought his Ibsen approach to, as well as his success and wide influence as Osvald.

His career has similarities with that of Sorma because of his star profile marked by international tours and guest performances. In Thomas F. Connolly’s words, Alexander Moissi was a “cosmopolitan nationalist” (2010: 83). He was born in the Italian city of Trieste, and since his parents were Albanian, he learned both Italian and Albanian as a child. He was trained in the purest Austrian theatre environment of Burgtheater, which made him eventually one of the most prominent actors in the German theatre world (ibid: 87–88). It is as a German star – “one of the last of this type” (ibid: 89) – that he appears in the international history of Ibsen and this is how the Romanian audience remembered him too.

Which kind of acting techniques did Moissi use on the Romanian stage and how were his performances – particularly *Ghosts* – received? Historians agree that he received a positive reception with only a few negative reservations: “Spectacolele lui Moissi [...] au entuziasmat și au uimit.” (The performances of Moissi [...] generated enthusiasm and awe; my translation) (Massoff 1974: 327) or, in Alex Călin’s words, Moissi “a entuziasmat

wende tritt er in Rumänien auf, um dann erneut nach Oslo und Kopenhagen zu reisen” (Heininger 2005: 84).

43 His repertory included plays by Leo Tolstoy and Luigi Pirandello (Massoff 1976: 320).

44 His repertory included plays by Hugo von Hoffmanstahl, G.B.Shaw and Leo Tolstoy (Massoff 1978: 44).

sala arhiplină” (generated the enthusiasm of an overcrowded theatre hall; my translation) (Călin 1921: 5).

Alex Călin wrote the most significant critical text on Moissi’s Oswald. He suggests that the actor’s naturalist approach marked by a pathological acting disturbed the audience:

În prezența spectatorilor îngroziți, torturați, demoralizați, Moissi redă treptat, etapă cu etapă, progresele îngrozitoare și distrugătoare, pe cari le face paralizia generală. (In front of the terrified, tortured and disheartened spectators, Moissi renders, step by step, the frightening and destructive progression of a general paralysis; my translation.) (ibid: 5)

Călin’s depiction reminds of the “terror” that actors like Ermete Zacconi caused among the spectators because of the pathological interpretation of Oswald. Călin found that his “reducțiune de mijloace și de efecte care uluiește, prin concentrarea interiorizată a jocului său” (reduction of means and effects, through the introspective absorption of his play, was astonishing; my translation) (ibid: 5) and described his “gesturi strânse, grimase puține, mișcări sacadate, o infinită variațiune de tonuri și o expresie continuu schimbată în ochi” (concentrated gestures, subtle grimaces, abrupt movements, an infinite variation of nuances and a continuous change of expression in the eyes; my translation) (ibid: 5). These remarks suggest a deviation from a *verismo* interpretation, highlighting instead an expressionist interpretation of Oswald. Yet there was an ambiguity between these two genres in his performance as Ioan Massoff indicates:

Au surprins simplitatea mijloacelor sale de exprimare, fața sa de o mobilitate uimitoare, îndeosebi vocea miraculoasă [...], care urca nebănuite culmi, capabilă fără efort de infinite nuanțări și variații – voce ce era în stare să străbată întreaga gamă a simțirii umane. Având darul de transfigurare, propriu marilor inspirați, Moissi dădea impresia că improvizează. (The simplicity of his expressive means was surprising, his face had an overwhelming mobility, and his miraculous voice [...] that was rising above unsuspected heights, effortlessly capable of infinite nuances and variations. This voice could go through the entire range of human feelings. Since he had a gift for transfiguration that was specific of the great inspired [actors], Moissi gave the impression that he was improvising; my translation.) (Massoff 1974: 327)

Ion Marin Sadoveanu adds further evidence in favour of an expressionist tendency in the acting:

Cum frământă pictorul culorile, muzicantul sunetele, poetul vorbele, tot așa Moissi își frământă gestul, privirea și glasul. Și virtuozitatea amalgamului acestuia ajunge să ne îmbete simțurile. (The turmoil of Moissi’s gesture, look and voice resembles the turmoil in the painter’s colours, in the musician’s sound and in the poet’s words. The virtuosity of this amalgam inebriates our senses; my translation.) (1921 quoted in Alterescu 1973: 113)

Finally, Ioan Massoff focuses on the “o simplificare, o stilizare a jocului, în care privirile, tăcerile își aveau înțelesul lor” (simplification, the stylisation of the acting style, in which

the glances, the silences had their own meaning; my translation) (Massoff 1974: 327) and on the “*simplu, dar cu nuanțe infinite*” (simple, but infinitely nuanced; my translation) (ibid: 327) performance, all of which indicate that Moissi was more of an expressionist than a *verismo* actor in his embodiment of Oswald.

This performance of *Ghosts* starring Moissi illustrates the differences between the romantic, *verismo* and expressionist acting, as well the transitions between these genres. Moissi’s reputation as a star actor, and his training at Burgtheater in Vienna under the supervision of the romantic-naturalist actor Josef Kainz (Heininger 2005: 10–15; Connolly 2010: 8), suggest that he was inspired by the Italian *mattatore*’s approach to Ibsen, with its pathological and exaggerated physiological interpretation, combining romantic and *verismo* acting. Yet his career as an Ibsen contributor developed in collaboration with Max Reinhardt: his first performance as Oswald was in the famous *Ghosts* performance of 1906 at the Kammerspiele in Berlin (Heininger 2005: 24–29). His history places him within the transition from Romanticism and realism (*verismo*) that leads to expressionist acting. The expressionist re-iteration of both the romantic codification of beauty and the universal codification of passion was entangled with the *verismo*’s physical codification of passion, which in turn gave birth to new physical archetypes on the stage. Reinhardt’s *Ghosts* production from 1906 was echoed in Moissi’s Romanian performance:

The artist presented an Oswald, whose inner confusion, whose permanent ups and downs, tremours, fits of fear, impotent raging—whose pathetic despair and total mental derangement appeared as frighteningly truthful. Moissi prepared the outbreak of madness in an intelligent and economical manner. Certain distortions of the mouth muscles, a playing of a finger, the groping of someone being harassed, sufficed to justify the catastrophe” (G.L. 1906 quoted in Fischer-Lichte 2007: 73)

or

In certain moments, when the last remainder of self-control dissolves, he suggests the suffering of the paralytic through his characteristic walk, his eye play and the distortion of his facial expression; but he needed to work on such nuances less than others, because such a characterization was ensured by his overall habitus... (Klaar 1906 quoted in Fischer-Lichte 2007: 73)

Moissi distanced himself from both the Italian *verismo* and the French and German naturalist *Ghosts* interpretations:

S-ar fi putut spune că noutatea artei lui Moissi consta în folosirea unor mijloace de expresie, altele decât cele “tradiționale”, ale marilor actori italieni și francezi. (One could say that the novelty of Moissi’s art consisted of the use of means other than the traditional expressive used by the great Italian and French actors; my translation.) (Massoff 1974: 327)

Moissi brought Reinhardt’s “festive plays” to Romania, moving the “nerves” of the spectators and bringing the focus on the theatrical event’s beauty back on stage while depicting a symbolic instead of a realist “slice of life” in his performances. He drew on the classicisa-

tion of the romantic, the *verismo* and naturalist interpretations of Ibsen. By the end of the century, these “traditional” approaches had established realist-naturalist acting as the preferred technique for the performance of Ibsen plays on the major European stages. The subsequent canonisation of Ibsen opened the door to experimental productions of his plays; and as Erika Fischer-Lichte has argued, “as a classic, *Ghosts* could become a cornerstone of Reinhardt’s new theatre” (2007: 76).

Alex Călin’s description of the audience response to Moissi’s *Osvald* is highly charged. He writes that the spectators empathised so much with the actor that “ni se sfredelește în creier întrebarea dacă nu suntem și noi asemuitori lui Osvald” (the question of our similarity to Osvald penetrates our brains; my translation) (Călin 1921: 5). His review contains a lively, picturesque and “epic-grotesque” (Vartic 1995: 172) description of both Moissi and the audience, imbued with parodic overtones:

Oameni cari se cunoșteau foarte bine de atâta vreme, de o viață întreagă, cari erau prieteni, cari se stimau, se iubeau, se admirau, fugeau aseară unii de alții, ca dracul de tămâie. Fiecare bănuia în celălalt un strigoi. Și era tragic să vezi cum, după sfârșitul reprezentației, oamenii în loc să se ducă veseli și bine-dispuși în localurile de noapte, aprindeau lumânările, își făceau cruce [...] doar doar or scăpa de groaza strigoilor cari roiau în jurul lor. [...] Dar tragedia nu s-a oprit aici. Odată ajunși acasă, fiecare presupus strigoi a început să-și caute obârșia. S-au petrecut scene înfrorătoare. [...] Date fiind aceste perturbări, s-a luat hotărârea ca Moissi să fie expulzat, ca turburător al liniștei publice. I s-au mai îngăduit doar câteva zile de ședere în București, atâta cât îi trebuie ca să-și mai dea celelalte reprezentații. Reclama fiind sufletul comerțului, cine nu l-a văzut încă, să se grăbească. (People who had known each other very well for so much time, for a lifetime, [people] who were friends, esteemed and admired each other, were running last night one from the other just as the devil runs away from incense. Each suspected that there was a ghost in the other. And it was tragic to see after the end of the performance how people, instead of going cheerfully and in a good mood to the night clubs, they were lighting candles, were making the sign of the cross [...] only to escape the dread of the ghosts swarming around them. [...] But the tragedy did not end here. Once they arrived at home, each supposed ghost started to investigate its origin. Terrifying scenes occurred. [...] Given these perturbances, it was decided for Moissi to be expelled as disturber of the public order. He was allowed to stay in Bucharest for a couple of days only, enough for him to give the other performances. Since the advertising is the very soul of commerce, whoever has not seen him yet must hurry; my translation.) (Les deux masques 1921: 5)

The audience’s dread, its sensuous reactions, and the identification with the character, coupled with the obsessive reactions of the actor, and the concluding remark about Moissi’s expulsion from Bucharest as a “turburător al liniștei publice” (disturber of the public order; my translation) (ibid: 5) might suggest the same “terror” as stimulated by Zacconi’s performance. Yet, the refined mockery of an audience assuming a literal interpretation of the actor’s performance is just further proof of Moissi’s expressionist interpretation. The actor substituted the literal naturalist portrayal of terror with an

expressionist depiction of emotions, as Erika Fischer-Lichte indicates in her analysis of the performance that took place in 1906:

Proceeding from the naturalistic acting style as elaborated and advocated by Brahm, but transgressing it, the performance developed a style that was characterized by the most subtle nuances, like the play of the eyes, the cheek muscles, the mouth and by the tiniest gestures and movements. (Fischer-Lichte 2007: 74–75)

One of the critics who felt negatively about Moissi's performance was Nicolae Iorga, who "mărturisește că s-a simțit jignit de performanța scenică a lui Moissi" (confessed that he felt offended by Moissi's stage performance; my translation) (Alterescu 1973: 113). The *verismo* actor Petre Sturdza also rejected Moissi's interpretation, stating that he "îl va prefera pe Paul Wegener" (would prefer Paul Wegener; my translation) (ibid.: 113). These assessments seem to be tied to the intimacy of expressionist acting, which encouraged the spectator to observe the performer's body in close surroundings, thus generating "a feeling of embarrassment, of indiscretion, of perceiving what should not be displayed and perceived in public" (Fischer-Lichte 2007: 75). This aspect of the audience's experience was especially important to Reinhardt. He encouraged the spectator's close participation in the performance within a context of "intimate theatre". Erika Fischer-Lichte gives a comprehensive description of Reinhardt's aims:

This art of acting demanded a new art of spectatorship: while the spectator, sitting rather far away from the stage in an ordinary theatre, was able to imagine what was going on in the dramatic figures and to feel empathy for them, the acting in the Kammerspiele space brought forth a situation of intimacy – out of place, in a way, in a public space like a theatre. [...] by thoroughly investigating the means by which a scene is able to bring forth a particular atmosphere, the performance worked on the senses of the spectators, who could sense this atmosphere physically and were thus drawn into it. [...] This triggered physiological, affective and energetic responses in them. The spectators felt the actors as well as themselves present in an unusually intense way, so that they became uncertain how to behave. (ibid.: 75–76)

This theatrical experiment was first practiced in the *Ghosts* performance at Kammerspiele in Berlin, in 1906, when Moissi performed *Osvald*. It was not until 1921 that the Romanian audience encountered these techniques for the first time in the *Ghosts* performance of Alexander Moissi. We can glimpse echoes of Erika Fischer-Lichte's description of the audience in Reinhardt's theatre in Alex Călin's account of the response to Moissi's *Osvald*. The actor brought to Romania not only another way of interpreting Ibsen, but also another way of interacting with spectators and making them participate so fully in the performance that they became acting entities off-stage.

In the landscape of the German Ibsen performances, Alexander Moissi's *Ghosts* was the best received productions and it had the most powerful effect upon its Romanian audience. Moissi followed the tradition of internationally renowned star performers touring Romania with Ibsen productions, but in contrast to the early naturalist productions of Ibsen, Moissi used an expressionist approach inspired by Max Reinhardt. Moissi showed that there was a new way to perform Ibsen, which implied a new kind

of spectator with a stronger sense of participation in the performance. His impact exceeded that of the previous German Ibsen productions, and the Romanian practice of acting benefitted not only by learning from Moissi's performance, but also from the new expressionist approach inspired by Reinhardt. Moissi's performance as Oswald marked, on the one hand, Ibsen's classicisation and canonisation in the German theatre, and on the other, one of the last foreign Ibsen performances visiting Romania. Eventually, it also helped to cement Ibsen's canonisation within Romanian theatre during the interwar period.

2.4.5 Final remarks

The German Ibsen performances on Romanian territory are the most consistent statistically of the foreign language tours; they are also characterised by temporal and spatial intercrossing. The German ensemble of Lindemann and of Agnes Sorma were in Bucharest in 1901; Rehoff and Stärk's ensembles both performed in Sibiu in 1905. The geographical overlapping reveals further diversity: Bucharest presented the highest number of German performances regardless of genre, industrial approach or political context; Sibiu was only visited by the Ibsen ensembles; Botoşani and Iaşi were occasional destinations. The German performances overlapped the French and Italian tours spatially in Bucharest and Iaşi, and the audiences compared their productions. The German tours also reveal a heterogenous, intertwined spatial dynamics between periphery and centre. The Romanian cities were at the frontier of the German theatre world, especially in the cases of Oraviţa and Sibiu, which were at the geographical border of the Empire; and Botoşani, which is on the border of Romania. While Bucharest and Iaşi were on the periphery of the German touring circuits, they had a central role in Romanian Ibsen productions. They were also major sites in a network connecting German, French and Italian Ibsenite artists. Even this centre-periphery dynamic is entangled because of the importance that the German independent Ibsen ensembles gave to touring Romania and minor venues. They were not tied to a cultural centre such as Berlin, not even when their activity originated in a major city. The German-speaking acting ensemble performing at the National Theatre of Bucharest during the German occupation illustrates a different periphery-centre entanglement: the ensemble was a symbol of the political occupier, but its members came from different parts of Germany and thus reflected the decentralisation rather than the coagulation of the German-speaking theatre. In this unstable landscape, Burgtheater was the only stable institution in an unstable theatrical landscape, yet paradoxically, it had only a minimum impact within the Romanian theatre.

Complex interactions link all the German language performances at the level of acting and staging. Together they show Ibsen's passage from being perceived as a marginal historical playwright performed using Romantic acting techniques, to a controversial, ground-breaking naturalist. The further passage to Expressionism was distilled through realism from Lindemann to the German ensemble performing at the National Theatre of Bucharest. These genre mutations were accompanied by a shift from the star system to the ensemble system. Agnes Sorma belonged to the European star-actor tradition, following in the footsteps of Gabrielle Réjane, Ermete Zacconi and Suzanne Dépres. Gustav Lindemann, Maria Rehoff and Ludwig Stärk brought to Romania the ensemble-based

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

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

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

2.5.1 The Transylvanian Henrik Ibsen (1879–1945)

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

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