

Part Two

2.1 The appropriation of foreign cultural models in the reception to Henrik Ibsen in Romania

The foreign language Ibsen tours on the Romanian stage

Who brought Ibsen to Romania? When and where did Ibsen arrive? What plays by Ibsen were performed on the Romanian stage and who was in the audience that attended these performances?

To answer these questions, we must consider the fluidity of both the Romanian cultural space and of its national theatre life in relation to foreign cultural influences. We must look at the spatial and temporal intercrossings of the foreign cultures travelling *through* the Romanian theatre culture.

Ibsen's emergence on the Romanian stage was characterised by fluidity, which is evident from the various acting traditions introduced through foreign tours. The cartographic visualisations by language in IbsenStage indicate the utmost importance of the foreign performances marking Ibsen's early Romanian staging (Figure 8). The complexity of the 1894–1947 period emerges immediately, with Ibsen being performed in six languages: Romanian, German, French, Italian, Hungarian and Yiddish. Besides, in no later period was he staged in so many languages.

The chronology of the foreign-language performances on the Romanian map reveals that most productions were staged mainly between 1890 and 1920 (Figure 3, Figure 4). A look at the global Ibsen production indicates that this is not necessarily late, given that the first Ibsen performance in the United Kingdom took place in 1889, whereas the first Ibsen performance in France took place in 1890. This means that Ibsen's plays started to reach audiences outside Scandinavia and the German-speaking theatre world in the 1890s. Thus, the presence of the foreign Ibsen tours in Romania is connected to his early reception on the European stages. For example, the majority of the German performances took place between 1900 and 1917, the French performances are registered between 1906 and 1911, whereas most Italian performances were staged between 1907 and 1910. The number of Hungarian-speaking events in IbsenStage reveals also a high frequency of performances between 1890 and 1912.

This landscape reveals the numerous national foreign models influencing the Romanian theatre and points at their unstable interactions. Besides, the foreign traditions were not stable either, bringing different, even conflicting local Ibsen traditions to Romania. The intersection of foreign theatre cultures embodied in the Ibsen tours is both spatial and temporal, hence any investigation has to be approached diachronically and synchronically at the same time because their intercrossings do not emerge with a clear point of departure or arrival. They neither embody a diachronic post-colonial transmission process, nor entail a comparison between two coexisting cultural models. The interaction between the national and the foreign theatre cultures, as well as the interaction between the foreign theatre cultures themselves on the Romanian stage is best diagnosed through their intersections. The concept of *histoire croisée* opens up the possibility of investigating the foreign tours through the diachronic and synchronic intercrossings of the traditions they brought into the Romanian theatre, thus influencing Ibsen's local reception. In other words, the mapping of the Ibsen theatre traditions crossing Romania is not stable, as elements of these intercrossings can either stay the same or change, whereas others appear or disappear in time. In fact, the temporal and spatial frameworks of these tours are as fluid and mobile as the spatial and temporal framework of the Romanian state and national theatre, requiring a constant readjusting of the analysing frame.

The interrelationship between the Romanian theatre and the various Ibsen theatre traditions was dependent on the foreign model used in each of the tours. The fluidity of the Romanian cultural space and of the Romanian Ibsen tradition was enhanced by the intercrossings of both *major* and *minor* foreign models. Their impact and intertwining are suggested by the IbsenStage visualisation of foreign tours by language as performed on the early Romanian stage. In addition, I have created maps of the tours associated with the various foreign models. They are inherently marked by spatial and temporal overlappings, while preserving a high level of autonomy.

Each model has its own story marked by multiple layers, as well as different levels of permeability when it comes to their interaction with other models. IbsenStage points at five such models that have the French, Italian, German, Hungarian and Yiddish touring performances at their core. These foreign-language performances had not only different motivations for travelling to Romania, but also different impact on the audiences. On the one hand, the French, German and Italian theatre practitioners were mainly motivated by financial gains. On the other hand, the Hungarian performances, and the German performances that took place in Bucharest during World War One, highlight the political contexts of the time, whereas the presence of Yiddish and Hungarian productions is connected to presence of the respective ethnic groups in the Romanian cultural space.

The three major foreign models marking Ibsen's appropriation in the national theatre until 1947 are enacted by the French, German¹ and Italian tours; the Hungarian and the

¹ An objection might arise here, if one considers the presence of a German minority group in Romania. This would lead to the analysis of the German model as a minor, instead of a major one. I agree that Germans, Hungarians and Jews belong as minority groups to the domestic foreign heritage of the Romanian cultural space and are among the elements proving its fluidity. However, for the purpose of our topic, I preserve the German model as a major one for at least one reason. The presence of German natives in Romania and the proximity with the Habsburg/Austro-Hungarian

Yiddish tours are minor models. The term “minor” here refers to the minority groups of Romania, of which the Transylvanian Hungarians were the strongest quantitatively, whereas the Jews were a smaller group mostly tied to Bucharest and Iași.

My analysis of the foreign performances addresses the fluidity of intersection by looking at major contributors and tracing the network of events. The purpose is not only to illustrate the theatre traditions that came into the country, but also to analyse how they spread internationally through the key-artists who included Romania in their touring circuits. Finally, I consider how the influences of these theatre traditions expanded beyond the touring circuits both spatially and temporally.

The staging of foreign productions also suggests that the audiences in Bucharest and Iași knew several foreign languages and, thus, could attend theatre performances in French, Italian and German.² Nevertheless, if the stagings in French and Italian were not always connected to the presence of the respective minority groups, the stagings in Hungarian and Yiddish were predominantly associated with the respective ethnic groups that have been part of the Romanian society. Finally, the German stagings reveals a combination of both aspects. In Sibiu and Timișoara, Germans were a powerful minority group, so ethnicity clearly influenced attendance at performances, yet in cities such as Bucharest or Iași, it was mainly the local audience who participated at the German performances.

In the following, I analyse separately each foreign model and its contribution to Ibsen’s emergence on the Romanian stage, always keeping in mind their temporal and spatial intersections.

2.2 The French model

The French model influenced Romanian culture at the political, educational, legislative, artistic, linguistic, architectural and social level to such an extent that it became a topic both positively and negatively assessed by Romanian historians. For example, Pompiliu Eliade (1982: 1–8) and Eugen Lovinescu (1992) supported the French model and its contribution to Romania’s modernisation. On the other hand, Titu Maiorescu criticised the superficial appropriation of the foreign models (1868: 301–307), while he supported the German model instead (1882a; 1882b; Alterescu 1971: 447–451). Moreover, the fascination for Paris as *centrum mundi* in politics, arts and social life was enhanced by the Latin kinship between the French and the Romanians.

The French model represented one of the most powerful influences upon the Romanian theatre. A relevant example is the first Romanian theatre law issued on April 6, 1877 (Lege pentru organizarea și administrarea teatrelor din România 1877: 2313–2315). The law took inspiration from the French system of the Comédie-Française in order to establish how the Romanian “Dramatic Society” would be organised (Massoff 1969: 12–14). The

Empire must have also encouraged foreign companies to visit the country. Therefore, the German influence exceeded the mere national boundaries pointing at this model as a major one.

² The overviews of the foreign language tours that visited Romania before communism given by Massoff (1969; 1972; 1974; 1976; 1978) in each chapter of his books on the Romanian theatre history support this statement.