

# The Hungarian Professional Theatre in Greater Romania, 1918–1930

In this article Pompila Burciă traces the work and legal conditions in which Hungarian theatre professionals – company directors and actors – operated as a national minority of middle-class status in Greater Romania after 1918. Their attempts at representing Hungarian culture in the public space, as revealed in their business correspondence with the Romanian state, placed theatre professionals not at the vanguard of a collective action on behalf of a minority and its cultural life, but at the forefront of civic engagement and individual private initiative that led to economic recovery and development, thus illustrating the array of civic choices and economic opportunities for minorities holding Romanian citizenship in a nation state. The article focuses on two issues: the work environment for minorities that helped them adjust professionally and negotiate and exert a civic identity in the new nation state; and the degree to which a cultural field such as theatre was actually treated as an economic enterprise, free of political interference. These civic and economic concerns accounted for the success of these theatre entrepreneurs, operating their businesses under the control of a paternalistic state.

*Key terms:* Hungarian minority, Greater Romania, professional theatre, acting companies.

HUNGARIAN theatre professionals formed a separate middle-class group in Transylvania at the time when this region joined Greater Romania after the Paris Peace Conferences of 1919.<sup>1</sup> Situated between the state's bureaucratic and political control and the decisive power of the viewing public, they were neither active nationalists defending Hungarian interests nor passive observers of the workings of ethnicity among minorities and the Romanian majority. Their work is an interesting case to follow as it reveals the transition of their home region, Transylvania, from pre-war Hungary and the orbit of the Habsburg Empire to the nation state of Greater Romania and the impact that this transition had on their civic and business lives in that state.

Bound by business contacts that reached as far as Czechoslovakia, Hungary, and Yugoslavia, while headquartered in Transylvanian cities, this professional group relied on theatre tours and permanent theatre buildings to mount performances of high quality and business profitability. They provided the only source of professional theatre playing in Hungarian for approximately 330,397 Hun-

garian ethnics living in urban centres, out of a total of 1,353,288 Hungarians living in the whole province in the 1920s.<sup>2</sup> The professionals in question were theatre directors (also called managers, *színigazgató*) – roughly two dozen individuals, who ran their own acting companies, owned a troupe of ten to up to a hundred members, sometimes serving for a year in residence in a Transylvanian city that possessed a theatre building, but more often itinerant across the region; they possessed stagecraft, costumes, a script library, and means of transportation; or they were artists, hired in troupes to perform either on tour or in a company in residence, and who could well decide to form their own private troupe and become directors, if the circumstances were favourable.

In this article I analyze the correspondence that Hungarian middle-class theatre professionals exchanged with the Romanian authorities with the goal of continuing their businesses within the nation state after the end of the First World War.<sup>3</sup> Comprising petitions, requests for authorizations, inspectors' reports, waivers, and fiscal memos, this correspondence enabled theatre companies



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to conduct their business and the Romanian state to mould a civic identity through dialogue and the duties of citizenship.

In response to the departure of almost a quarter of the urban Hungarian population following the war upheaval and the regime change, the Romanian state encouraged the Hungarian artists to return and work in Transylvania, by expanding civic membership, civic rights, and civic participation out of economic interest and because it enhanced Romania's international image abroad. As a result, the artistic profession quickly bounced back in unexpected ways.

The levers that shaped a new civic identity for Hungarians who stayed and those who returned were national and European: the duties and privileges of Romanian citizenship, taxation, and copyright, royalties, and high profitability. The ensuing collaboration between Bucharest and theatre professionals in Transylvania served to validate the state's political legitimacy and the minorities' economic entrepreneurship.

Formerly a province within the nation-state of Hungary, Transylvania with its adja-

cent regions of Crişana and Maramureş, was united with Greater Romania after the First World War. Despite its multi-ethnic and multi-religious character, the province was highly coveted by Hungary for the Hungarian minority who lived for centuries side by side with the Romanian majority, for its economic resources, and for its cultural heritage.

### Theatre Life in Transylvania

Theatre in Transylvania was historically known for its diverse classical, musical, and prose repertory. Theatre buildings existed in Oraviţa (1816–1817), Arad (1820),<sup>4</sup> Cluj (1821), Oradea (1900), Aiud (1828), and Târgu-Mureş,<sup>5</sup> while periodicals like *Ellenzék*, *Keleti Újság*, *Brassói Lapok*, *Temesvári Hírlap*, and *Nagyváradi Napló* regularly printed reviews of the plays mounted by private theatre companies active in the region.

But financial hardships constantly threatened the artists' pay and the existence of their companies, and the Hungarian state had to step in and subsidize theatres. Before

the war, all theatre directors in the region were Hungarian, and no Romanian troupe in Transylvania operated as a private or state-subsidized company. Theatre institutions and troupes were provided with state incentives to represent Hungarian culture. Back then, by forbidding Romanian cultural events, the Hungarian authorities hoped that the non-Hungarian populations (Slovaks, Romanians, and Ruthenians) would embrace Hungarian language and cultural life. Being denied opportunities to organize a cultural life of their own, non-Hungarian ethnic groups were suspected of political crimes and put on trial for subverting the state through their cultural events.

After the war, under the Romanian regime, this small but growing middle-class segment of professional theatre artists of Hungarian descent could make a living in Greater Romania as individuals leading a civic life as Romanian citizens and economic entrepreneurs. Their work shows them not as cultural representatives of a minority collectivity, stressing ethnicity or ethnic rights. Their companies were private investments for profit, and economic gain, arising from the private initiative and the business acumen of individuals, went to benefit the owners and stakeholders, not for the cultural development of an ethnic group.

This might appear paradoxical, given that integrating Transylvania into Greater Romania after 1918 raised the question whether Romanian governments would bring an end to theatre life in the Hungarian language. Historians have considered that the state would pursue aggressive nationalistic politics to make it part of a modern nation-state community, and dominate or suppress minorities, seen as culturally and economically more progressive and experienced.<sup>6</sup>

Instead, in minority theatre life, the Romanian state took steps, mainly civic and economic rather than political and cultural, that actually enhanced the prospects of minority theatre businesses through everyday management policies and the integration of theatre professionals of all ethnicities into the national workforce. Their cultural component and the ethnic aspect were sometimes

furtively mobilized depending on the pressures for profitability and business survival and as dictated by the public.

### Civic Entrepreneurship versus Ethnicity

In allowing a large number of Hungarian theatre troupes to perform (seven to ten official troupes to a minority population of 8.6 per cent Hungarians), state officials did not consider ethnicity in decision making, but a civic identity, which put citizenship rights first and financial issues second.<sup>7</sup> Citizenship enhanced the prospects of a theatre troupe in obtaining perks, benefits, union rights, and guaranteed employment and social status. Romanian citizenship and all the rights appertaining to this status became essential and were openly discussed in the relationship between minorities and the Romanian state, while ethnicity was to be furtively deployed for increasing ticket sales, and away from the eyes of the authorities.

Due to its cultural and political inferences, ethnicity was banned from being openly expressed in theatre venues. While they do not form the object of this article, Hungarian cultural societies for the support of dramatic art, founded in most cities inhabited by Hungarians, were the only theatre-related groups that engaged at great risk in cultural, political, and ethnic activities. By mobilizing to provide support to the Hungarian ethnic group seen as a collectivity and by pursuing cultural and political goals, they fell under the supervision and control of the Romanian Secret Services. For being suspected of playing a political role in the illegal financing of the cultural life of Hungarian minority, their work was constantly thwarted.<sup>8</sup>

Even though politics were every male citizen's free choice in Greater Romania, regardless of ethnicity, politics were banned from theatre life, making cultural propaganda problematic for business operations. The Romanian state required that the theatre businesses of the minorities should allow the state's control and supervision,<sup>9</sup> and forbade any interference of politics in theatre life, or of ethnicity due to its political implications. Thus, politics became a separate rather than

a congruent element to culture and ethnicity.

The Transylvanian case is in a sense the opposite of what Ernest Gellner observed in Western societies as pertaining to the impact of modernity – that is, that nation states sought to make culture, politics, and ethnicity congruent and cohesive.<sup>10</sup> Theatre life shows that this was not the case in Greater Romania, as politics within the cultural field in Transylvania remained solely the province of politicians (deputies and senators), and not that of the civil employees serving in the administration and in charge of cultural life. The latter not only refrained from endorsing political views but – like Theatre Inspector Emil Isac (1886–1954), who served in office from 1920 to 1940, shunned any engagement with politics – were seen with suspicion and distrust by both society at large and the elites, minority and Romanian.

By banning politics from minority theatre life, the Romanian state sought to prevent Hungary from using such a public platform as theatre to stress irredentist messages and offer funding. It also sought to prevent Romanian statesmen and politicians, considered public servants, from having a stake in the lucrative theatre business and thus enriching themselves. Restrictions applied to plays featuring political characters and plots, while those with a historical content were allowed if stage props and uniforms were free of symbols specific to Hungary.<sup>11</sup>

The practice of a prologue preceding the play was also forbidden, due to any political content that might be inserted and so agitate the public.<sup>12</sup> Troupes whose arrival in a location led to street protests and riots were denied authorization, and their shows were rescheduled to a period when the chance of rioting grew less.<sup>13</sup> Romanian officials conditioned the approval of theatre events upon managers' consent to refrain from politics and to avoid triggering inter-ethnic conflicts.

The slightest politically driven initiative, such as the endorsement of a troupe by a Hungarian deputy, or with funding from a bank whose shareholders were Hungarian political figures, or from the Hungarian Ministry of Arts and Culture, could lead to a complete shutdown of the troupe's oper-

ations, though it never led to court proceedings or imprisonment.<sup>14</sup>

Reputation loss could, however have long-term effects.<sup>15</sup> Intellectuals, journalists, businessmen involved in theatre management, priests involved in playwriting or as characters in a play could trigger suspicions of political activity, leading the Romanian authorities to close down theatres, deny the approval of plays, or withdraw current authorizations.<sup>16</sup> Hungarian businessmen could easily be suspected of collaborating with foreign powers to weaken the state rule in Greater Romania. If they used a public forum like theatre to voice political discontent, their activity could stoke public fears.<sup>17</sup> Plays that were previously banned, such as *Tragedia Omului* (*Az Ember Tragédiája*) by Imre Madách, but were now being performed with great success, had authorizations re-issued on the condition that no politicians or wealthy citizens purchased tickets.<sup>18</sup> Once a minority troupe was denied a ministerial authorization to put on plays, it meant bankruptcy or the need to leave the country in order to make a living elsewhere.

With politics banned from theatre life, minority managers employed a set of strategies to advance their businesses: obtaining Romanian citizenship, using the state petitioning system, getting positive references from politicians and local authorities, finding patrons among Romanian officials, and joining artists' unions. Other minorities like the Saxons, a German-speaking population living in historical Transylvania, the Jews, and the Russians, also used these strategies, leading to the most widespread theatre movement in the region, even extending to amateur theatre in villages and towns.<sup>19</sup> Tactics included writing petitions to central authorities, obtaining references from local notables (especially clergy and schoolteachers), joining associations and societies for protecting their revenues, and using ticket sales for covering various needs in their communities. Minority businessmen could continue theatrical work and obtain the state's protection, so long as the state exerted control and supervision over national security, public order, equity, and legality.

## Economic Context of the Theatre Business

As foreign-funded enterprises experienced pressures to close down at the end of the First World War, due to their capital being located in the countries that were defeated, Hungarian acting companies entered the post-war era in full operation, with personnel, equipment, and business plans in place. Other than needing to find new locations, as the Romanian state claimed many buildings as its property,<sup>20</sup> theatre directors could continue their theatrical activities unhindered.

Fundamental alterations, not only in the drawing of new territorial borders but in power politics and the circumstances of economic growth, meant that there could be no continuation of the pre-war economies.<sup>21</sup> Yet, in theatre business, the situation of confusion and economic exhaustion manifested itself to a lesser degree, owing to the social standing of theatre directors. They adjusted their strategies to gain better leverage according to four business principles: funding sources, profit maximization, audience maximization, and managerial discretion.<sup>22</sup>

Traditionally, companies relied on profit maximization and cost cutting, and these remained the primary goals of both management and employees. Managerial discretion – that is the power of a manager to take executive decisions, usually at the expense of the artists' welfare<sup>23</sup> – determined to a large degree the financial success of an acting company, and was thus freely permitted by the government. The Romanian state allowed acting companies to exert the last three principles as they saw fit, but monitored closely funding sources, and even legislated against obtaining theatre sponsorship from either internal or external sources affiliated with political or banking groups.<sup>24</sup>

Theatre businesses remained insulated from inflation, which did not have the destructive effects it had in other countries in the region, even though the obligation to settle debts incurred during the war years, and amounting to six billion francs, reduced the usability of the domestic accumulation of capital.<sup>25</sup> The 1920s recorded a growth in the number of enterprises from 86,000 in 1918 to

273,000 in 1930, which affirms the dynamic recovery that Romania experienced in the 1920s.<sup>26</sup> Liberal governments encouraged the state's intervention in the economy in matters of workforce, the law, and taxation.

Theatre managers were by profession variously literary critics, newspapermen, lawyers, landowners, and politicians. Born in Transylvania, they were active before and after the war.<sup>27</sup> Since touring brought relatively higher returns than journalism, agriculture, or banking, the managers' professional identity was constantly shifting and dependent on economic needs.

Theatre managers were not fresh faces, as most bureaucrats and officials working in the Romanian administration, especially those born and raised in Transylvania, already knew their work, families, rivalries, and personal background from before the war. Jenő Janovics (1872–1945), the director of the sole permanent Hungarian-language theatre in Cluj, the National Hungarian Theatre of Cluj (Nemzeti Magyar Színház), became the main collaborator with Romanian officials in matters of Hungarian professional theatre, in matters of the relations between the state and Hungarian troupes.<sup>28</sup>

Janovics, as president of the Association of Hungarian Artists of Transylvania and Banat (Az Erdélyi és Bánáti Magyar Színészek Egyesülete Kolozsvár), and after its dissolution, the leading theatre manager in the region, left a rich correspondence with other theatre managers, local notables, and the government, in which he showed the extent of his influence, owing primarily to his literary writing skills, business acumen, and powers of persuasion.<sup>29</sup>

His influence and prerogatives were steadily extended: as the Association's president, his vote was decisive in case of an even number of votes; he was responsible for managing the artists' retirement fund; he led the examination commission testing aspiring directors for admission into the Association's ranks; and last, he represented the Association before the Romanian authorities.<sup>30</sup>

What mattered to Bucharest officials, however, was not Janovics's growing influence, which was the internal affair of a

minority ethnic group,<sup>31</sup> but the managers' efforts at providing a law-abiding environment within their territory, in order to stimulate productivity while limiting political contacts to the Romanian state alone.

### The Matter of Citizenship

Theatre managers engaged in business as foreign nationals for several years, because Romanian legislation on minorities failed to be promulgated and did not receive a clear articulation in the Constitution of 1923.<sup>32</sup> But this lack of specific minority laws provided a free work environment, and an impetus for private initiatives in most spheres of life. This sent the message that a free cultural flow between the former imperial provinces could go unhindered only if the Romanian authorities received official notice about these undertakings.

Over time, most theatre managers found Romanian citizenship rather useful while preserving at the same time and even cultivating their international contacts.<sup>33</sup> First, having a current application for Romanian citizenship allowed petitioners to lawfully remain in the country, which meant no work interruption, even when their contracts expired.<sup>34</sup> By 1922, all Hungarian theatre managers and half of their troupes were Romanian citizens.

Co-operation governed the managers' actions because, in the absence of a clear legal framework for the minorities' self-administration after 1918, a dialogue with officialdom could support their needs and help them achieve their goals. Hungarian theatre business was placed under the control of a centralized authority at the Ministry of Arts and Religions in Bucharest, represented by theatre inspectors who were born and trained in Transylvania.

The Ministry encouraged the writing of petitions from 1918 to 1940. This was a modern and effective practice in active citizenship for addressing individual concerns, particularly for upholding constitutional rights to work, make a living, and conduct business as theatre professionals: to request a play permit; to obtain a *circumscripție* (an

area comprised of a number of cities, officially assigned to a theatre troupe through ministerial decision); to defend occupancy rights to theatre venues; claim the much-sought spots in a timetable; maintain steady subsidies (if any) granted in authorizations; and to protect one's reputation among peers against slander.

Ministerial officials requested proposals about *circumscripții*, or renewed existing *circumscripții* and issued the final and approved list of cities for each.<sup>35</sup> Financial guarantees (ability to pay the troupe and expenses) and political guarantees (to collaborate only with the Romanian authorities) were the core requirements for authorizations.<sup>36</sup>

Managers could leverage their own experience and use their assessment of local conditions and opportunities to increase the value of their business. An unwritten rule insisted that a troupe must obtain the prior approval of the entire (multi-ethnic) community in a specific town or city well before putting on a show, therefore paving the way for acting companies to feel accepted at the local level. Making sure that a troupe would not encounter any local opposition could prevent a financial disaster, forcing theatre directors to anticipate the demand for shows and utilize their geographical experience and managerial judgement in the process.

### Community Involvement

Ensuring that the state, communities, and individual entrepreneurs were in full agreement before allowing troupes to play helped facilitate smooth inter-ethnic relations within communities. This agreement was everywhere applicable regardless of whether it was about a Hungarian company putting on shows in towns or communities dominated by a Romanian majority, or a Romanian troupe performing in a Hungarian community. The community's acceptance of a company took precedence over any written ministerial authorization. As individuals in urban communities expressed their own feelings of patriotism and provincialism, they made clear that self-management in a community was an inalienable right, hence

the impulse of a community to get involved whenever a troupe reached their home town. It was also precisely due to this local patriotism that ethnic conflicts could easily flare up, if a company was met with the slightest adverse reaction from residents and forced to leave upon arrival.<sup>37</sup>

Prior to obtaining a troupe authorization, the civic standing of Hungarian businessmen, their trustworthiness, and integrity were verified through references and past work. After the promulgation of a Theatres Law in 1926,<sup>38</sup> managers could make a direct case with the authorities as private citizens, and an artist's reputation and references lost their importance. The civic and self-declared professional status of a manager were good enough for state officials to consider him for the issue of a theatre permit.

To get a permit, a manager had to comply with certain legal conditions: hiring Romanian citizens to work as artists, depositing the necessary sums with the artists' union to guarantee salaries for a year, obtaining the approval of his repertory, and receiving all the agreements necessary to operate from the mayors and prefects that the community had nothing against a company's practice.<sup>39</sup>

In a sense, references came to be replaced with the concrete abilities and skills of individual managers in their direct interactions at the local level. Such skills were used by managers in their encounters with the Secret Service when shows were cancelled if repertories featured nationalist and historical plays by Mihály Jórősmarty and Mór Jókay, known for offending the feelings of other ethnic groups. Through persuasive arguments, managers might demonstrate that the text had already passed the censorship of the ministry.

By law, Romanian troupes were entitled to no more than 25 days from 1 October until 1 April, in the schedule of a minority troupe occupying any theatre building in the country: if Romanian troupes were requesting it,<sup>40</sup> or if managers were asked to make a theatre available to a Romanian troupe, they would comply, but would then schedule performances of superior quality in the same evening, to divert the public from

attending the Romanian show and increase their own ticket sales. Bureaucratic changes like eliminating references helped implement a fairer business environment determined by individual powers of initiative and persuasion skills.<sup>41</sup>

While ministerial authorities in Bucharest and its regional branches saw theatre businesses as civic collaborations, prefects and mayors tended to perceive minority theatre business in ethnic, nationalistic terms. Yet this situation did not deter businessmen from operating, as the environment remained driven by demand and offerings. Even when Romanian mayors gave a special advantage to Romanian theatre managers,<sup>42</sup> declined to rent a venue to Hungarian theatre managers, or rejected a troupe despite having multiple play permits (one from the Ministry of War and another one from the Ministry of Arts and Religions), for many Romanian mayors ethnic motives prevailed over the legal rights granted by Romanian ministerial officials.<sup>43</sup>

Hungarian members of city councils reciprocated with punitive actions against Romanian troupes by voting against the use of a city's theatre building owned by the municipality.<sup>44</sup> Overall, the managers' experience and networking abilities gave them strong negotiating power, making sure their business was in full operation and always growing. Their personal skills proved paramount for the survival of their businesses.

### Workforce Issues and Local Policies

The 1920s witnessed the relocation of more than a thousand Hungarian theatre professionals in Transylvania. On arrival, these individuals were vulnerable, seeking employment, striving to make a living, ready to take the initiative; but gradually they began to negotiate their work potential, and within months joined the artists' union in Bucharest and, eventually, came to enjoy a decent social and material status. Their civic and social transformation was not the deliberate work of Romanian statesmen or a specific programme of cultural politics, but the effect of a modern mindset that prevailed in the theatre world in the region, as a result of

competition and the management of talent among Hungarian theatre professionals.

Given the ruinous capitalist competition and the rivalries between and among theatre managers, the artists' selection was a crucial element in business success. Since 1918, managers had hoped to lower wages and to diversify their company's actors and repertoires by searching for talent in the large pool of artists available for hire in Hungary; so, during tours abroad, they tapped Hungarian ethnics interested in relocation for work purposes.<sup>45</sup> Many artists were refugees, fleeing worsening living conditions and unemployment, after Czechoslovakia and Yugoslavia had incorporated their native regions, formerly parts of Hungary.<sup>46</sup>

In the early 1920s, theatre life in all neighbouring countries was subject to restrictions. In Hungary, for example, restrictions on arts had remained in place since before the war, as the gentry-dominated bureaucracy preserved its position in cultural institutions.<sup>47</sup> By 1927, in Hungary, the government restricted the number of professional theatre troupes from twenty-eight to twenty, due to the high debts incurred by the companies;<sup>48</sup> and, it was rumoured, the public in Hungary did not support theatres as did the public in Transylvania.

In Yugoslavia, the first and only authorization issued to a Hungarian minority theatre troupe was not granted until 1927 – to Arnold Stein, and only for operetta, not including plays in prose.<sup>49</sup> For Czechoslovakia, the Hungarian minority theatre question was still unresolved by 1926, as reported in the newspaper *Reggel (Morning)*.<sup>50</sup> Therefore managers in Transylvania considered attracting artists from Hungary, Austria, Czechoslovakia, and other regions where local Hungarian institutions had been dissolved after 1918.<sup>51</sup>

The workforce strategy of applying for citizenship on behalf of foreign artists was beneficial for refugee artists trying to make a living, while enhancing the material life of the Hungarian minority, and contributing to Romania's economy. By 1921, the Romanian Consulate in Budapest was receiving so many visa applications that instructions

from the Ministry of Foreign Affairs had to be drafted for the first time. The diversity of applicants' nationalities, many being holders of Hungarian passports but born in Transylvania, and the artistic genres in which they performed, complicated matters.<sup>52</sup>

Over the years, all local managers served as contact points for speedier visa processing allowing hundreds of artists from Hungary to perform freely in Transylvania as private individuals.<sup>53</sup> To obtain even more foreign artists for his troupe, Janovics urged the newcomers to obtain citizenship,<sup>54</sup> in order to be considered local, so that other guest-artists could be invited and not go over the legal quota of 10 per cent for his troupe.<sup>55</sup> If a manager filled that entire percentage with foreign artists, he could not qualify for a reduced tax from 32 to 16 per cent.<sup>56</sup>

Established artists willing to work in Transylvania could use their reputation to obtain their visa and perform not only in Transylvania, but even in Bucharest in a system of reciprocity.<sup>57</sup> It is striking that the majority of guest artists were women, who were hired mainly as actors, but also as prima donnas and stage artists.<sup>58</sup>

### Attracting Artists

Interested in the classical traditions of theatre performances, Janovics sought to attract talented artists from the main Budapest theatre institutions who took seriously the opportunities for business available in Romania: the Renaissance Theatre of Pesta planned tours, and many of its artists ended up being hired by Janovics, who, as he claimed in his letters of support, was eager to propose new roles for unforgettable performances.<sup>59</sup> Actors such as Julius Hegedűs from the Vígszínház Theatre, who joined private troupes in Arad, and Artur Bárdos from the Belvárosi Színház were also attracted to Transylvania, in 1921 and 1922 respectively.<sup>60</sup>

The Central Theatre of Budapest also 'lost' its troupe to Transylvania, although it did not receive approval from the Romanian Secret Service on the grounds that Czechoslovakia also declined their tour, due to their irredentism. Yet, in the summer of 1922, they



were actively performing in Cluj on Janovics's stage.<sup>61</sup> Janovics could also play the emotional card with the Romanian authorities, claiming that many citizens in Cluj stopped him on the street to ask about artists, former long-time residents in Cluj who left and moved to Budapest well before the war and would like to see them again performing in Cluj.<sup>62</sup>

Not only artists but stage designers from the Komediehaus, Vienna, relocated to Transylvania to serve in Hungarian theatres. Managers used their skill in persuasive petitions sent to the central authorities in Bucharest, explaining how the foreign work force benefited their businesses as well as Romania's image abroad. Janovics claimed the country could emerge in Europe as famous for encouraging cultural expression and enabling individuals to make a living and working in a nation state without restrictions.<sup>63</sup>

Yet, within a few years the visiting artists arriving in a constant stream started to compete for jobs with local artists, and this created anxiety in all quarters of the theatre world, especially among state officials.<sup>64</sup> By setting quotas for foreign artists to 10 per cent of a company, the ministerial authorities hoped to give foreign artists a means of existence, and, as Inspector Ion Minulescu argued, to enhance a sense of nostalgia for bygone times and to weave new dreams for the Hungarians in the future.

But Minulescu warned that these arguments were not in the spirit of current law and did not comply with the spirit of the treaties signed at the Peace Conference.<sup>65</sup> Hungarian managers, however, went to great lengths to ensure their selected artists had their application approved and made use of their civic and legal privileges as citizens, which explains the readiness of Romanian officials to pool their resources and collaborate with several ministries to accommodate their needs.<sup>66</sup>

Hungarian entrepreneurs and artists living in Greater Romania or abroad could take business decisions not only within Transylvania, but also across the border without significant impediments. They were able to detect the direction of policy change and

harness the right arguments to obtain results to their satisfaction, a sign that, as citizens, they were familiar with their civic rights and civic opportunities. While being in frequent and direct contact with cultural officials in Bucharest and with local administrative officials,<sup>67</sup> Hungarian directors and artists discovered that there was a lack of a clear direction in the foreign policy of the country or any clear blueprint for dealing with minorities at the local decision-making level.<sup>68</sup> Thus, they could easily grasp the moment to influence the opinion of officials, so that they could obtain a response to fit their needs, and deploy a combination of technical, practical, and legal arguments, and their civic rights appertaining to citizenship.

Dealing with their own artists posed a far greater risk for Hungarian directors than dealing with bureaucratic or local factors. Discharged or disgruntled artists often asked the Romanian state for protection and intervention, and a new *circumscripție* was often issued, despite theatre inspectors' reports and managers advising against it,<sup>69</sup> since it meant renewed pressures to offer guarantees, benefits, and contractual obligations to their hired personnel, which usually led to a decrease in profits.

### Union Membership and Social Welfare

Hungarian artists also used the citizenship argument to stand up for themselves within the Association of Hungarian Artists of Transylvania and Banat, during talks of its merging with the SADL (Union of Drama and Lyric Artists of Bucharest). They criticized theatre managers on the grounds that 'the *circumscripții* system tended to infringe on the individual rights granted by the Constitution (*Constituție*)<sup>70</sup> by limiting opportunities to form a troupe to those acting companies granted towns through *circumscripții* issued by the ministerial officials. The overuse of the constitutional argument decided the Romanian authorities to phrase its authorizations for a specific *circumscripție* in terms of 'granting a privilege' to a theatre manager, not granting him a right or exclusivity.<sup>71</sup>

Founded in January 1919, the union of artists (the SADL) helped theatre workers to create a protection net for its members and enforce the responsibilities of employers. Subsidized by the Romanian state to alleviate unemployment and increase the social welfare of all artists, including naturalized minorities, the union took into its ranks all minority artists who were Romanian citizens.<sup>72</sup> The statutes were a constant work-in-progress, as Hungarian union members could drag out debates about formulations in the drafting of SADL statutes for years, if it suited their needs, while guest artists poured over the borders.<sup>73</sup>

The artists' social welfare, covering sickness, funerals, and hospital care remained of great importance to Hungarian artists. Having a strong union and a protective government working on their behalf, minority actors felt a sense of independence and freedom of spirit that could even take them across the borders, in search of better contracts. Local Hungarian artists could still remain independent even though they were SADL union members, and by 1925 official reports stated that numerous artists paid their pension dues to both unions, in Bucharest and Budapest. The explanation was simply that the union in Bucharest was welcoming, but was not yet fully established. The Theatres Law of 1926 required that artists were to be co-opted into the administration of a theatre company, a norm that was unheard of in neighbouring countries as in pre-war Transylvania.<sup>74</sup>

Minority theatre businessmen strategically used to their advantage the Romanian state's claim to guarantee protection to theatre professionals by calling it a civic right. In essence, they practically claimed to be entitled to a special status with the hope of protecting their businesses and jobs. By granting them a special protection, however, the Ministry raised the alarm among other Romanian state institutions that the artists' status in Romania reached a level that unlawfully placed them above other middle-class professional groups.<sup>75</sup>

Some Hungarian managers interested in exerting managerial discretion found the

state's protection to be an interference in their private businesses.<sup>76</sup> By January 1927 all theatre artists became officially public servants if they were active members in a state-sponsored union, like the SADL. Thus, they could be held legally accountable for offences directed against the state or its institutions,<sup>77</sup> proof that they were fully integrated in the professional work force.

### Entertainment Taxes and Theatre Legislation

As taxpayers, Hungarian minority managers had legitimate concerns, knowing that the revenue tax stream from their public shows helped to support the cultural life of all Romanians. Taxes helped fund state-owned or private cultural societies, national theatres, the Opera Română, 'propaganda' tours of national theatres companies, or Romanian private acting troupes.<sup>78</sup>

Unlike the city halls of small communes, municipalities tended to take a direct and active interest in allocating the main theatre building to the most profitable troupes because of the generous budgetary allocation of 25 per cent of the taxes collected from all the entertainment and public shows that were taxable within their jurisdiction.<sup>79</sup> Taxes collected nationwide in 1926 reached Lei 436,474,242<sup>80</sup> and the budgetary surplus of Lei 12,022,630 went to recipients like state institutions, philanthropy, private individuals, the Romanian Academy, music conservatories, museums, and outreach extension educational programmes for the illiterate.<sup>81</sup>

Whenever the Romanian majority failed to pay its fair tax contribution, it triggered a sense of revolt among Hungarian theatre professionals. They accused the Romanian state of using the effervescence of minority theatre life to support other fields that modernized Romanian society and its image abroad. By not taxing athletic displays organized by the Sports' Federation of Romania, and instead heavily taxing theatre shows in foreign languages at 32 per cent,<sup>82</sup> Janovics complained, the state alienated the civic consciousness of contributing citizens such as himself. A frequent critic, Janovics penned letters to the Ministry instead of

sending articles to the press or reaching out abroad to use international pressure to voice his opinions. He gave advice to Romanian statesmen whenever entertainment taxes were raised or whenever the expenses of national theatres reached colossal amounts, which, to a businessman like Janovics, always aware of the mounting costs of a production, ran counter to financial logic and efficiency.

On 17 March 1922, when the Association of Hungarian Artists dissolved itself and merged with the SADL,<sup>83</sup> Janovics complained again of the high taxes charged on entertainment.<sup>84</sup> From a Romanian perspective, live entertainment taxation was a sore point of contention between the state institutions themselves, especially in matters of collection and allocation.<sup>85</sup> Still in their infancy at the national level, taxation and its principles were found inadequate and unfair, especially when minority amateurs began mounting their own shows in large numbers after 1925 and had their taxes waived, while reporting a steadier audience than professional theatres.

When semi-professional theatre troupes sought tax breaks and other advantages, many Hungarian businessmen reacted and stood up for their rights. They urged the authorities to hold accountable for tax all citizens who were active in cultural life, and advocated an efficient taxation system in the country that was fair, transparent, and competitive. Hungarian directors were also successful in obtaining tax waivers from the communal authorities, as well as a 70 per cent reduction on transport costs, and the use of two special train carriages for luggage and stage props, free of charge.<sup>86</sup>

More perks were available only to troupes using the Romanian language in the public sphere, but Hungarian managers chose to dispense with these privileges and refused to use the Romanian language on stage, because the audience they hoped to attract for financial and cultural reasons was Hungarian-speaking. Minority artists witnessed a quick transformation of their status from being foreigners in a new country to being under special protection by the Romanian state as a professional category, to finally becoming

public servants as citizens and theatre artists equal to their Romanian peers.

The actions of Hungarian theatre managers in the working environment of the 1920s appeared as self-determined, showing that, in matters of employment, they acted autonomously. This work environment gradually stimulated semi-professional and amateur theatre groups of all ethnicities and faiths to follow suit.<sup>87</sup>

### **Artistic Standards, Playwrights, and Genres**

One civic responsibility that increased the self-awareness of Hungarian theatre professionals as individuals and citizens rather than members of an ethnic group was providing high-level aesthetic enjoyment to the public. Depending on the educational status of the audience, more often artistic and not ethnic considerations brought audiences to their shows, although ethnic cues in plays (such as criticizing other ethnic groups, usually Romanian, Roma, or Jewish, while praising Hungarian culture) could at times be highly effective in helping a company connect with its public.

Artistic principles mattered a great deal: they overwhelmingly determined a troupe's selection for a regional permit not only in offices in Bucharest, but also in Cluj, where Hungarian managers would meet to decide the fate of one of their own peers based on artistic criteria and then would send a final vote to authorities in Bucharest for validation.<sup>88</sup> Hungarian businessmen consistently put repertory selection and acting talent before ethnic solidarity. 'A good, well-performed play' were attributes that could win a loyal public, and thus lead to soaring profits.

Theatre as a civic, educational, and entertainment forum weighed heavier than the risks of political propaganda through theatre. Entertainment, however, took precedence. Of all the genres, operettas were the favoured choice for tours, since their musical and dance segments and their flexibility in form made it pliable to include political innuendos as marketing tools for a high audience turnout.<sup>89</sup> Inserted with caution,

they were premeditated mainly in cases of anticipated poor ticket sales.<sup>90</sup>

By eliminating, or using caution in displaying conspicuous ethnic connotations on stage, managers and artists tried to abide by Article 57 of the Theatres Law of 1926,<sup>91</sup> which placed responsibility for the offence of wounding ethnic sensibilities on the troupe manager. Mainly foreign artists<sup>92</sup> attracted trouble because they ignored the 'no politics' interdiction and 'no offending other ethnic groups' injunction imposed by the Romanian state as a civic responsibility.

The controversial Hungarian operetta *Countess Marica* (in Hungarian *Maritza Grófnő* or *A Csárdáskirálynő*) by Imre Kálmán (Emerich Kálmán)<sup>93</sup> was written in German by a Hungarian author without offending passages against the Romanians. So when performed in Czechoslovakia in Hungarian, the text had no irredentist themes, but when it reached Transylvania, and was performed by refugee or guest artists from Hungary entering Romania as guest workers, irredentist passages came to be included.

Secret Service agents urged troupes to use local artists, who lacked a history of offending other ethnic groups, but a constant sense of confusion persisted for years among artists and in the ministries as to who had the final say.<sup>94</sup> By 1927, this operetta was finally placed under interdiction in Czechoslovakia as well.<sup>95</sup> Other managers chose repertoires based on folk plays (*népszínmű*), which reflected family values, village traditions, and popular wisdom,<sup>96</sup> and would not have hurt the sensibilities of other ethnic groups.

Widely appealing for their twisting plots and soap opera-like happy endings, these *népszínmű* focused mainly on genuine love or one-sided love, and condemned extramarital affairs or secret relationships. But for bonding with their audiences, sometimes troupes used an altered script of *népszínmű* and provocative stagecraft, such as the colours of the Hungarian flag concealed in costumes or stage props – costumes of the Hungarian nobility, military uniforms used in the Austro-Hungarian army when, by law, only Hungarian folk costumes were allowed.<sup>97</sup> The fear that the ethnic enthusiasm of the

public during a play could spill into the streets and lead to inter-ethnic and political protests made managers and artists wary lest such ethnic cues might not be good for business and employment should the public get out of hand. A civic spirit took hold over time, making managers aware that public order and inter-ethnic peaceful relations were necessary for business.

Another law implementing nationwide monetary unification which withdrew from circulation the Austro-Hungarian currency, also instituted an interdiction of foreign currency like 'pengő' or 'korona'<sup>98</sup> in theatre life by forbidding their use, or the words for postmen, train conductors, or bank personnel from the Hungarian past.<sup>99</sup> It was a time when the Liberal Government (1922–28) sought to extend its economic domination through the National Bank of Romania and economic legislation.<sup>100</sup> Yet reports revealed that Hungarian currency continued to be used in most plays, and scripts continued to disparage Romanian traditions, language, and officials, while pro-Hungarian irredentist elements were amply found.

### Conflicting Interests

These elements kept a public loyal and interested, but endangered a manager's standing with the Romanian state. After all, as a theatre ynspector put it, nothing could be done to stop the propaganda, or 'theatres would be empty, city hall treasuries would also turn empty, and people would be deprived of entertainment.' Also, nationalist rhetoric aside, the theatre inspectors acknowledged that it was the citizens' right to enjoy a repertory with plays from Budapest, written by Hungarian playwrights.<sup>101</sup> This civic respect for the needs of all citizens reflected the mind-set of the state and its officials as it did the theatre professionals themselves.

Professional ethics and civic engagement invited Romanian, Hungarian, and European playwrights to co-operate in a system of economic reciprocity. By requiring that four Romanian plays in Hungarian translation be included in a typical repertory of a theatre

troupe of twenty to twenty-five plays,<sup>102</sup> as a prerequisite for scheduling its shows,<sup>103</sup> Romanian playwrights could obtain a source of profit from Hungarian professional theatre. Moreover, audiences almost always included Romanian theatregoers in most towns and cities.<sup>104</sup> The system of reciprocity implied that Romanian national theatres also included in their repertoires Hungarian drama. The cultural argument according to which it was helpful for both ethnic groups to get to know their national histories was overshadowed by financial incentives.<sup>105</sup>

Due to the theatre's popularity, playwrights and, through them, the theatrical agencies and playwriting societies increased their incomes once the European transformations in matters of copyright regulation reached Bucharest, following the signing in Rome of the Berne Convention for the Protection of Literary and Artistic Works.<sup>106</sup> The Hungarian Authors' Association of Budapest was active in Romania through its hired literary agencies, such as the Pallas Company, to pursue theatre directors and collect overdue royalty payments for plays performed on professional stages. They even complained to the Romanian authorities to intervene in regard to delinquent professional troupes.<sup>107</sup>

Budapest agents claimed that even minority amateurs should pay royalties, although according to the Romanian law the shows of amateur performers, being infrequent, were not required to pay fees or taxes.<sup>108</sup> But generally Hungarian artists and company managers regularly paid royalties directly to the *Országos Színészegyesület Irodalmi és Színészeti Ügyelőrség* in Budapest.<sup>109</sup> The sheer volume of theatrical shows reveals just how much the profitability of the Transylvanian theatre incentivized European theatre offices to reach out and demand their dues by any means possible.

Under the Romanian regime, managers had to walk a fine line between making profits, using ethnicity for keeping an audience loyal, and having their authorizations withdrawn. Their work depended on individual ability and talent, but also on their skills at communicating with the Romanian

statesmen and bureaucrats at all levels of authority, as well as on acceptance by their peers who could vote to reassign a license and exclude them from their influential group. To these pressures, one must add the influence that a local community could exert in supporting or shunning a theatre troupe as well as the power of local boards, which in many cities were Hungarian in structure, but upheld high artistic standards rather than ethnic innuendos.

## Conclusions

With signs of the coming Great Depression emerging as early as 1928, audiences began to shrink and the Hungarian profession witnessed a moral crisis. Society accused theatre managers of unbridled financial gain and of ignoring the Hungarian literary canon and people's education.<sup>110</sup> Affecting all the other professional theatres in the country (Romanian, Saxon, and Jewish), the crisis, however, did not mean a slowdown in theatre playing, since amateurs began to put on plays frequently, inviting professionals to join them. Thus, the first effect of the crisis was a blurring of the line between professionals and amateurs, followed by an increase in numbers of amateurs taking up professional work and a renewed focus on idealism in arts.

Desperate for work opportunities, many professionals joined amateur companies or worked on their own by forming private troupes. Newspapermen and other social groups found it lucrative to form their own companies and seek business opportunities in the arts.<sup>111</sup> As the effects of the economic crisis began to fade after 1934, a vivid cultural life, especially in large cities, regained its strength and even surpassed pre-crisis levels.

A manager and literate person like Janovics continued his theatre business well into the 1940s. As early as 1919 Octavian Gropa, the Minister of Arts, explained in a letter to the ministry that the Hungarian artists and troupes pledged to be ready to live and work in their new country. Looking back at the 1920s, there is ample evidence that the pledge took concrete form in the theatre pro-

professionals' civic engagement as Romanian citizens.<sup>112</sup>

While Janovics's acumen in building relationships infused most of his written discourses, a more sober assessment of the minorities' civic identity has to take into consideration the social and economic impact of theatre businesses, as they became as much a fact of life under the new regime as before the war. The direct contacts between Romanian officials and Hungarian managers coalesced around an important set of issues that pertained to citizenship, reformed business practices, employee benefits, and fiscal policies. First, minority directors were defenders of the principle of fairness in taxation and accountability for public funding, and they took a bold stance in making their views heard by ministerial authorities. Second, the social welfare of artists was a recurring issue that led to a host of reforms, concerning the artists' legal rights and moral status in society, their union membership, and their living and working conditions as Romanian citizens of minority descent.

The state of the Hungarian theatre profession had local, national, and international ramifications. It indirectly came to represent Romania abroad, as its success advertised the opportunities arising from its environment. Managers constantly evaluated legislation with an impact on their business and bent it, altered it, or discussed it in their correspondence with the Ministry. Occasionally, they stressed the Hungarian aspect of their cultural work and vowed to maintain Hungarian language in the public space,<sup>113</sup> but such interventions sought to match the audience's values, not to enter into a contentious dialogue with the Romanian state or to form a separate, ethnic community of Hungarian professionals.

Being integrated in the nationwide union of artists (the SADL), they embraced private initiative and competition, which led to personal gain. As a result, civic and business requirements took precedence over ethnic activism. Last, the artists' mind-set underwent a shift from accepting being at the mercy of capitalist forces to expecting and obtaining the state's protection against the uncertainty

of capitalist developments; hence the Romanian state's paternalism.

Through such involvement, Hungarian theatre professionals demonstrated a strong interest in working in Greater Romania and adjusting to its civic and business environment. The implications were inevitably ethnic for the population at large, but not for the theatre professionals. To the public of Transylvania, theatre in Hungarian created an atmosphere of familiarity that dispelled the notion that Transylvania was now attached to a different country.

This sense of familiarity did enhance ethnic solidarity. Yet, as Janovics argued in his letter to the Minister of Arts, Octavian Goga, 'Theatre is that temple where no nationalism and confession reside. . . . A free theatre and a free press are the most efficient remedies against irredentism.'<sup>114</sup> Rather than using international pressures to obtain specific ethnic rights, Hungarian managers took upon themselves the task of promoting their business interests and seeking success as entrepreneurs, as well as collaborating with the state to pursue their interests directly and successfully through correspondence.

Hungarian artists, either local or refugees escaping unemployment and worsening living conditions in the successor states, could secure maximum economic advantages for themselves by relocating to Transylvania. Artists, forming an elite middle-class social group, moved relatively freely across Romanian frontiers, with the exception of those known for their anti-Romanian political past. Managers, all native to Transylvania, used strategies which continued and expanded on pre-war practices: carrying on a dynamic correspondence with the authorities, deciding matters of regional theatre life in collaboration with the Romanian administration, negotiating agreements with local communities when scheduling shows, and innovating in performance and stagecraft through a constant refreshment of the workforce and by hiring foreign talent.

Adapting their business to the economic and cultural life of the country was essential for the Romanian state as well: tax revenues increased, performances enhanced the value

of theatre as an educational and entertainment tool, and politically theatre served the state's agenda in the international arena. As word of the vibrant theatre market in Romania spread wider, contacts with Europe and a free circulation of artists increased, anchoring the Hungarian theatre business back to the provinces inhabited by Hungarian minorities in the former Austro-Hungary while advertising Transylvania as a province of opportunity for the Hungarians now living in the neighbouring nation states: Yugoslavia, Czechoslovakia, and Austria.<sup>115</sup>

The Hungarian managers' abilities were remarkable and endless, but their success slowed after 1928 in the crisis years, a period when the artists themselves became more powerful than the managers in negotiating better living and working conditions with the government.

Another weakening factor was an increase in the minority amateur companies in small towns and villages, which began a rich correspondence starting in 1927 and provided a strong counter-voice to the well-established professional culture. With the onset of the Great Depression, business revenues for professional troupes drastically fell, as amateurs put on plays with increasing frequency. To them, theatre was a profitable source of funds that rescued ethnic communities from severe material want and reoriented the theatre from a civic, business, and economic framework to a higher platform: religious, ethnic, and local.

## Notes and References

### Archival Sources

- DANIC (Direcția Generală a Arhivelor Naționale Centrale, București)  
 DGA (Direcția Generală a Artelor). Fond Ministerul Arte și Culte  
 EME (Erdélyi Múzeum Egyesülete, Transylvanian Museum Society, the Lăcătușului Street Branch)  
 Fond Ministerul Arte  
 Fond Ministerul Arte și Culte  
 Fond Ministerul Instrucțiunii și Cultelor, Direcția Artelor  
 Papers of Jenő Janovics  
 Papers of Lajos Jordáky

I would like to thank Keith Hitchins, Simon Trussler, and the anonymous reviewers for their valuable comments and suggestions.

1. For an account of Hungary's efforts to keep Transylvania within its borders and negotiate a settlement with the nationalities by promising its Romanian population legal autonomy in order to prevent their secession from Hungary, see Peter Pastor, 'Hungarian Territorial Losses During the Liberal-Democratic Revolution of 1918–1919', in Béla K. Király, Peter Pastor, and Ivan Sanders, ed., *Essays on World War I: Total War and Peacemaking, a Case Study on Trianon*, Social Science Monograph (New York: Columbia University Press), p. 263, 255–95.

2. See Sabin Mănuilă, *Recensământul General al Populației României din 29 Decembrie 1930, Vol. II: Neam, Limbă Maternă, Religie* (București: Imprimeria Națională, 1938), listing a total of 1,425,507 Hungarians living in Romania in 1930.

3. The primary sources used in this article are letters, petitions, enquiries from Hungarian managers written and mailed to local and central authorities in Cluj and Bucharest. They form an extraordinarily rich archive, which is housed at the Central National and Historical Archives of Bucharest. The details about their work, obstacles, opinions are all the voices of Hungarian minority individuals. Even if my sources are not housed in Transylvania but in Bucharest, or in Hungarian, but in Romanian, the entire source base of this article originated in Transylvania.

4. Bela Váli, *Az Aradi Színesztét története* (Budapest, 1889).

5. Sigismund Vita, 'Magyar Színesztét Nagyegeden, 1828ban', *Erdélyi Múzeum*, XL (1940), p. 53–4.

6. Irina Livezeanu, *Cultural Politics in Greater Romania: Regionalism, Nation Building, and Ethnic Struggle, 1918–1930*, (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1995).

7. As one theatre inspector put it, 'We can't leave theatre halls empty and city halls without revenues from play performances. For Hungarian troupes, we must respect their civil rights as citizens.' DANIC București, Fond Ministerul Culte și Arte, DGA, 1920–1929, Dos. 26/1925, Inv. 652, fila 148/Dec. 8, 1925.

8. See the report of actor and theatre inspector Ion Manolescu on the suppression of these cultural societies devoted to support theatrical arts in Arad and Târgu-Secuiesc, due to suspicions of political activity. DANIC București Fond Ministerul Culte și Artelor, Dep. Artelor, Inv. 550, Dos. 704/1921, fila 377/Nov. 30, 1921.

9. Control of and by the Romanian state and the minority managers went both ways. The Romanian state issued warnings (usually a maximum of three before retracting an authorization) to troupes not following the orders in its circulars and who disobeyed authorizations or ordinances. The state used mayors, prefects, and theatre inspectors to report on these troupes. On theatre managers receiving warnings from the Ministry see DANIC București, Fond Ministerul Arte și Culte, Inv. 652, Dos. 28/1921, Fila 20/Jun. 18, 1925. Minority managers also put pressure on the Romanian state and kept its activities in check through the minority press in Oradea, Cluj, Arad, which all featured lengthy columns on theatre and made objections to the manner of issuing authorizations, undermining the selection criteria of minority troupes, or targeting a minority manager who lost confidence among his co-ethnics, hence the reciprocal control. See DANIC București, Fond Ministerul Arte și Culte, Inv. 652, 1920–1929, Dos. 29/1925, fila 47/Dec. 4, 1925.

10. Daniele Conversi, 'Modernity, Globalization, and Nationalism: the Age of Frenzier Boundary-Building', in Jennifer Jackson and Lina Molokotos-Liederman, ed., *Nationalism, Ethnicity, and Boundaries: Conceptualizing and Understanding Identity through Boundary Approaches* (London: Routledge, 2014), p. 58.
11. In most cases productions avoided stage props, uniforms, and hidden symbols reminiscent of Hungary, but, whenever caught by the Secret Service, troupes received warnings, which led to a reduction. DANIC București Fond Ministerul Culte și Artelor, DGA, Inv. 652, Dos. 69/1926, fila 7/Apr. 14, 1925.
12. DANIC București Fond Ministerul Cultelor și Artelor, Inv. 550, Dos. 704/1921, fila 158/Febr 8, 1921.
13. DANIC București, Fond Ministerul Culte și Arte, DGA, Inv. 652, Dos. 12/1927, fila 195/May 26, 1927. This is the case of Jewish companies, whose authorizations were issued for the summer season, when students were not present or in towns lacking a student population.
14. This was valid for Romanian politicians as well. Plays by parliamentary deputies mounted in 1920 and 1921 were cancelled due to poor ticket sales and political clout. DANIC București, Fond Ministerul Culte și Arte, DGA, Inv. 652, Dos. 1/1927, fila 5-6/Mar. 3, 1927. Nicolae Iorga's play *Fatalitatea* in Hungarian translation was a success, attracting both Romanian and Hungarian politicians on 2 Jan. 1925, but the Minister of Arts and Religions, Alexandru Lăpedatu, was conspicuously absent. See DANIC, București, Fond Ministerul Culte și Arte, DGA, Inv. 652, Dos. 27/1925, fila 1/Jan. 3, 1925. Curiously, after this 'political' success, Janovics was able to book theatre halls in Bucharest at Teatrul Popular, owned by Iorga in the name of 'brotherhood of nations, without any intention of material profits'. See fila 2/Jan. 15, 1925, DANIC București, Fond Ministerul Arte, Inv. 550, Dos. 825/1923, fila 126/Jun. 23, 1923.
15. Béla Maurer's enemies used his past presidency of the Hungarian Democratic Party and former deputy in the Hungarian Parliament before 1914 to get rid of just another rival in the theatrical arena of Transylvania. DANIC București, Fond Ministerul Artelor, DG Arte, Inv. 652, 1920-1929, Dos. 84/1926, fila 14/Jun. 14, 1926.
16. Although Inspector Isac reassured ministerial officials that the play *Terike* by Lajos Biró was free of political overtones, the presence of a priest in the play raised concerns when the petitioner was a Hungarian journalist working for *Ellenőr* in Cluj. DANIC București, Fond Ministerul Artelor, Inv. 652, Dos. 5/1928, fila 9/Mar. 1, 1928.
17. DANIC București, Fond Ministerul Culte și Arte, Dir. Ministerul Artelor, Inv. 652, 1920-1929, Dos. 27/1925, fila 12, fila 21-28, fila 24.
18. DANIC București, Fond Ministerul Culte și Arte, DGA, Inv. 652, Dos. 27/1925, fila 6/Febr. 3, 1925.
19. Pompilia Burcă et al., 'Amateur Theatre in Historical Transylvania between the Two World Wars', dissertation (Urbana, Ill: University of Illinois at Urbana-Champaign, 2015), p. 262.
20. Hungarian managers rented theatre venues in Oradea, Timișoara, and wherever cities owned theatre halls and, pending the city hall board's approval, they were allowed to mount plays for a season or two, depending on profitability.
21. Iván T. Berend and György Ránki, *Economic Development in East-Central Europe in the Nineteenth and Twentieth Centuries* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1974), p. 172-3.
22. William S. Hendon, 'Economic Incentives: Theatre and Cultural Programming', *Journal of Cultural Economics*, XI, No 1 (June 1988), p. 79.
23. See the case of the Sümegyi troupe: DANIC București, Fond Ministerul Culte și Arte, DGA, Inv. 652, 1920-1929, Dos. 76/1926, fila 1/Jan. 12, 1926, and fila 3/Jan. 18, 1926.
24. Keith Hitchins, *Romania, 1966-67* Bucuresti. p. 399. The case of Bodor Pál of the Farmers' Bank of Târgu-Mureș, amply covered in newspapers for funding the Society for the Protection of Hungarian Theatre with Lei 20,000 each month, led to the dissolution of the Society. The payments continued to be made through private individuals. The Jewish constituency in this town was most critical of the ministerial decision to close down the Society, showing solidarity with the Hungarian managers who were of Jewish descent. DANIC București, Fond Ministerul Arte și Culte, Inv. 550, Dos. 825/1923, fila 87/Mar. 17, 1923.
25. Iván T. Berend, G. Ránki, *Economic Development*, p. 182, 184.
26. Keith Hitchins, *Romania*, p. 397.
27. Chief among these were Dr Jenő Janovics (Cluj), Miklós Fekete (Timișoara), Ladislau Gróf (Oradea), Miklós Erdélyi (Turda), Dezdő Róna (Arad), Pál Szábó and Miklós Ungvari (Timișoara), Ernest Kraznay (Hunedoara), Imre Kovács (Petroșani), Emerich Fehér (Făgăraș and Târgu-Mureș), József Szabadkay (Satu Mare), Mihály Szabadkay (Arad), Lajos Parlagi (Oradea), Géza Sebetyén (Timișoara), Rudolf Imke (Deva), and Jenő Gáspár (Dej and Brașov). And see József Kötő, *Közhasznú esmeretek tára: Színhátszó személyek Erdélyben, 1919-1940* (Polis: Kolozsvár, 2009), p. 132.
28. Lajos Jordáky, *Jenő Janovics és Lili Poór* (Kolozsvár: Kriterion Könyvkiadó, 1975). He regularly consulted with the Romanian government on the localities to be allocated theatre permits, on the selection system, and on matters of artists' welfare. He believed in the superiority of the theatre director to whom everyone else in a troupe was to be subordinated, and, as a rule, he upheld the managers' material and professional interests. DANIC București, Fond Ministerul Arte și Culte, Inv. 550, Dos. 686/1921, fila 599/15 Nov. 15 1921.
29. The Association enlisted 452 artists and only eight theatre managers. DANIC București, Fond Ministerul Arte și Culte, Inv. 550, Dos. 825/1923, fila 12.
30. Whenever a city was abandoned by a theatre manager, those with an eye on that city would first see Janovics to request it, who would then send to Bucharest authorities the names of those willing to cover it, specifying which manager would be a better fit. DANIC București, Fond Ministerul Arte și Culte, Inv. 550, Dos. 801/1923, fila 15/Apr. 23, 1923.
31. The conflict between Janovics and his opera employees, whom he dismissed due to losses, reached the state offices in Bucharest. When Inspector Isac urged the Minister to intervene to protect the artists, the Minister declined: 'Conflicts among Hungarian artists do not concern this Ministry. They should address their concerns to the Artists' Union - SADL - or to the court system.' DANIC București, Fond Ministerul Arte, inv. 550, Dos. 825/1923, fila 23/Iul. 9, 1925. By 1926, the new Theatres Law created a Special Court to handle conflicts between managers and artists; according to Art. 60 and 61, this Special Court was housed within the National Theatre of Bucharest, but the latter had no jurisdiction or



involvement in the legal procedures. The Special Court convened twice a week to handle cases. See DANIC București, Fond Ministerul Culte și Arte, DGA, Inv. 652, Dos.3/1926, fila 34/Oct. 23, 1926.

32. Vasile Ciobanu, 'Proiecte pentru o lege a minorităților naționale în România interbelică, în Attila Gidó, István Horváth, and Judit Pál, ed., *140 de Ani de Legislație Minoritară în Europa Centrală și de Est* (Cluj-Napoca: Editura Institutului pentru Studiarea Problemelor Minorităților Naționale, Kriterion: 2010), p. 180. The Romanian state did not mention the existence of ethnic minorities in the Constitution of 1923, but acknowledged the equality of all Romanian citizens.

33. In Mihály Fekete's troupe, out of 32 artists 15 had Romanian citizenship, and 17 were in process of obtaining it. DANIC București, Fond Ministerul Arte, inv. 652, 1920-1929, Dos. 28/1925, fila 50/Sept. 25, 1925.

34. DANIC București, Fond Ministerul Arte, inv. 550, Dos. 777/1922, fila 154/Apr. 24, 1922.

35. It was Janovics who provided initial recommendations for the entire region in consultation with other managers, and there were times when these latter recommended their preferred locations by corresponding directly with the Ministry. The practice of *circumscripție* was, in fact, initiated in Vienna in 1848 and, revised through the laws of 1879 and 1884, preserved until 1926. The Ministry of Arts and Cultures in Bucharest abandoned the practice of *circumscripție* starting with the 1926/1927 season, permitting any itinerant company to put on shows and allowing professional private troupes to schedule events anywhere in the province as long as the local city halls and the troupe's director agreed with the local authorities on their set of rules. See BAR București, Monografia – Almanahul Crișanei, Județul Bihor, and Aurel Tripon, ed. *Tipografia Diocesană Oradea* (1936), p. 291.

36. DANIC București Fond Ministerul Artelor, Inv. 550, Dos. 686/1921, fila 599/Nov. 15, 1921.

37. DANIC București, Fond Ministerul Artelor, Dos. 552/1920, Inv. 550, fila 117-118/Dec. 21, 1920, Dec. 24, 1920.

38. Legea Pentru Organizarea și Administrarea Teatrelor Naționale și Controlul Spectacolelor din România, București, 1926, în *Monitorul Oficial*, nr. 67/21 (Martie 1926), 'Regulament pentru Aplicarea Legii Spectacole și Impozite', *Monitorul Oficial*, nr. 137/22 Jun. 1926, *Monitorul Oficial*, Nr. 57, Aug. 16, 1930, p. 2673-6, quoted in Ioan Scurtu ans Liviu Boar, ed., *Minoritățile Naționale din România: Culegere de Documente, Vol II* (București: Editura Arhivele Statului din România, 1995).

39. DANIC București, Fond Ministerul Culte și Arte, Inv. 652, Dos. 39/1927, fila 36/Iun. 1927.

40. DANIC București, Fond Ministerul Arte, Inv. 550, Dos. 777/1922, fila 169/Mar. 9, 1922.

41. DANIC București, Fond Ministerul Artelor și Cultelor, Dep. Artelor, Inv. 550, Dos 704/1921, fila 157.

42. DANIC București, Fond Ministerul Artelor, Inv. 550, Dos. 781/1922, fila 212/Apr. 24, 1922.

43. DANIC, București, Fond Ministerul Arte și Culte, DGA, Inv. 550, Dos. 536/1920, fila 39/Sept. 21, 1920.

44. DANIC București, Fond Ministerul Cultelor și Artelor, Direcția Generală a Artelor, Inv. 652, Dos. 19/1927, fila 188/31 Mar. 1927.

45. Jenő Janovics used his tours of Hungary to make contact with artists abroad who might be interested in performing in Transylvania. His European tours, approved by the Romanian state, crossed only the successor states, Yugoslavia, Hungary, and Czechoslovakia.

DANIC, București, Fond Ministerul Arte și Culte, DGA, Inv. 652 Dos. 87/1926, fila 301/Oct. 25, 1926. Janovics invited artists who could perform in French, German, and Hungarian, as well as dancers. Performances that included all three languages were a tradition in Transylvanian theatres. See Lizica Mihuț, *Mișcarea Teatrală Arădeană până la înfăptuirea Unirii* (București: Editura Eminescu, 1989), p. 26. To obtain approval for hiring foreign artists and entry visas, Janovics confirmed that the artists were never involved in politics. See DANIC București, Fond Ministerul Culte și Arte, DGA, Inv. 652, 1920-1929, Dos. 71/1926, fila 1/Mar. 13, 1926 and fila 2/Apr. 20, 1926. Mihály Fekete, holding an authorization to put on plays in Târgu-Mureș, visited Yugoslavia in order to plan a summer tour in 1923 and requested references from the Romanian state. Fekete stressed in his letter that he thought the Yugoslav government was inclined to approve his tour if shown letters of reference from the Romanian government, but the Romanian officials declined to support Fekete's request, thinking that the Yugoslav regime would feel obliged to approve the tour in the name of good diplomatic relations. Fekete's letter was forwarded to the Ministry of Foreign Affairs. DANIC București, Fond Ministerul Arte, Inv. 550, Dos. 845/1923, fila 35/Febr. 2, 1923.

46. István I. Mócsy, 'Partition of Hungary and the Origins of the Refugee Problem', in Béla K. Király *et al.*, ed., p. 491-507.

47. William Batkay, 'Trianon: Cause or Effect – Hungarian Domestic Politics in the 1920s', in *ibid.*, p. 516.

48. DANIC București, Fond Ministerul Arte și Culte, DGA, Inv. 652, Dos. 19/1927, fila 26/Jan.14, 1927.

49. DANIC București, Fond Ministerul Arte și Culte, DGA, Inv. 652, Dos. 19/1927, fila 134/Mar. 5, 1927.

50. DANIC București, fond Ministerul Culte și Arte, DGA, Inv. 652, dos. 69/1926, fila 1/Jan. 11, 1926. See the newspaper clip attached on fila 21/Dec. 31, 1925.

51. Szarka, p. 30.

52. From a letter of Veta Orvossy, born Țopan, a resident and native of Cluj, one finds that in Czechoslovakia, an ethnic Hungarian living in Košice and her husband were not allowed to leave the country for an indefinite period; thus, the only way to reunite the family was Janovics's positive reference on her husband's behalf to obtain Romanian citizenship as an employee in his theatre. DANIC București, Fond Ministerul Arte, Inv. 550, Dos. 686/1921, fila 580/Dec. 14, 1921.

53. DANIC București, Fond Ministerul Artelor, Inv. 550, Dos. 686/1921, fila 579/Dec. 20, 1921. Janovics made a persuasive case to attract new artists by stating that many local performers visibly lacked talent, and could not have been employed even as chorists in his troupe, a fact confirmed by the artists' union director of the Cluj branch, who declared that the public observed a high discrepancy between the quality of performance of the artists playing the main roles and that of the rest of the troupe. For the theatre troupes in Arad, see DANIC, București, Fond Ministerul Culte și Arte, DGA, Inv. 652, Dos. 23/1925, fila 1-2/Dec. 30, 1924. Guest artists were 'inherited' by managers, whenever a troupe changed its owner. Béla Maurer, a manager from Arad, hoped to keep Kató Auer in his troupe. She was invited to work for his predecessor, Mihály Fekete, several years before. DANIC București, Fond Ministerul Culte și Arte, DGA, Inv. 652 (1920-1929), Dos. 84/1926, fila 2/Jan. 14, 1926. The authorities' reply to the 'inheriting' of guest artists was: 'We don't have any objections!'

54. To obtain citizenship, see the Ministry of Justice's requirements. DANIC București, Fond Ministerul Arte, Inv. 550, Dos. 791/1922, fila 140/Jun. 20, 1922, fila 145/Jun. 15, 1922. Romanian citizenship for guest-artists involved no oath-taking, since they would not work in state employment, yet they would be free to exhibit their professional skills.

55. DANIC București, Fond Ministerul Culte și Arte, Inv. 652, Dos. 16/1925, fila 49/Jun. 16, 1925, fila 17, 27, 35, 44, 45.

56. DANIC București, Fond Ministerul Culte și Arte, Inv. 652, Dos. 18/1925, fila 80/May 12, 1925.

57. DANIC București, Fond Ministerul Artelor, Inv. 550, Dos. 777/1922, fila 1/May 6, 1922. Guest artists from Budapest received employment even in such Romanian acting companies as *Compania Tănase*, from whom Janovics hoped to 'borrow' Hungarian artists for a spectacular debut on his stage in Cluj. DANIC București, Fond Ministerul Culte și Arte, DGA, Inv. 652 (1920-1929), Dos. 71/1926, fila 6/May 11, 1926. Janovics designed a system of reciprocity, with the Grand Opera of Budapest, hiring Romanian opera artists (Traian Grozăvescu, Jean Athanasiu, and Jean Bobescu) and obtaining approval for inviting six guest artists, prima-donnas and dramatic actors. To support invitations of Hungarian artists from Budapest, Hungarian journalists working in Transylvania helped by vouching for the professional integrity of these artists. DANIC București, Fond Ministerul Culte și Arte, DGA, Inv. 652 (1920-1929), Dos. 71/1926, fila 1/Mar. 13, 1926, and fila 4. Besides artists, Janovics needed talented conductors of theatre orchestras. DANIC București, Fond Ministerul Artelor, Inv. 550, Dos. 777/1922, fila 267/29 Apr. 1922.

58. DANIC București, Fond Ministerul Culte și Arte, DGA, Inv. 652 (1920-1929), Dos. 98/1926, fila 37/Febr. 26, 1926. Female artists who relocated to Transylvania formed the subject of a newspaper article in which the author claimed they were treated with brutality and that an investigation was required. The Romanian officials responded by claiming that female artists returned to Budapest with a great deal of income 'cu buzunarele pline' ('with full pockets') and this article served as a diversion from envy that so many Hungarian artists chose to relocate in Transylvania and Bucharest in order to make a living.

59. DANIC București Fond Ministerul Artelor, Inv. 550, Dos. 777/1922, fila 131/Mar. 16, 1922.

60. DANIC București Fond Ministerul Artelor, Inv. 550, Dos. 777/1922, fila 1/May 6, 1922. DANIC București Fond Ministerul Artelor, Inv. 550, Dos. 686/1921, fila 579/Dec. 21, 1921.

61. DANIC București, Fond Ministerul Artelor, Inv. 550, Dos. 794/1922, fila 22/Jun. 12, 1922. For the rejection of the touring request by the Secret Service, see DANIC București, Fond Ministerul Artelor, Inv. 550, Dos. 777/1922, fila 43/Jul. 8, 1922, fila 49/Jul. 15, 1922, and fila 50/Jul. 21, 1922.

62. DANIC București Fond Ministerul Artelor, Inv. 550, Dos. 777/1922, fila 131/Mar. 16, 1922.

63. DANIC București, Fond Ministerul Culte și Arte, DGA, Inv. 652, Dos. 72/1929, fila 7/Mar. 1, 1929.

64. Artists known for their communist leanings or public activities were immediately either arrested or deported at the border, being immediately located and apprehended by the Secret Service officers. Visas for artists such as Lajos Kassák, known for his editorial work in communist newspapers, as an active member of

the Bela Kun's governments, and connections with the Soviet Union for sponsorship and propaganda, were declined. Communist artists or those posing as artists were under the supervision and investigation of police organs and not under the control of the state offices dealing with theatre. DANIC București, Fond Ministerul Culte și Arte, DGA, Inv. 652, Dos. 5/1928, fila 80/Nov. 1, 1928. When caught supporting communist causes, word of mouth could destroy a manager's reputation, as in the case of Mihály Fekete, accused of being Bolshevik. The city hall of Arad raised the rent of its theatre building, making it impossible for Fekete and its troupe to survive. Such a boycott could continue in the newspapers until the manager was forced to relocate to another city. DANIC București, Fond Ministerul Culte și Arte, Inv. 652, Dos. 28/1925, fila 50/Sept. 25, 1925, fila 55/Oct. 1, 1925, fila 74/Oct. 1925, fila 82/Dec. 7, 1925.

65. DANIC București, Fond Ministerul Artelor și Culte, DGA, Inv. 652, Dos. 28/1925, fila 36/Jun. 7, 1927.

66. One strategy was to list the artists from Budapest as official members of a troupe in Transylvania, although they were not physically present on Romanian territory or had not received their visas yet; another strategy was to declare them indispensable to the troupe's activity and in fulfilling its artistic mission. DANIC București, Fond Ministerul Artelor, Inv. 550, Dos. 686/1921, fila 418/Aug. 13, 1921. The police station of Arad found itself in a delicate situation when twenty Romania-born citizens, who worked as artists in Budapest, requested approval to come back to perform in Romania without a permit. DANIC București, Fond Ministerul Arte, Inv. 550, Dos. 777/1922, fila 208/Apr. 29, 1922.

67. Local authorities like the Administrative Inspector for Transylvania, D. Baiulescu, also demanded clarification from the Ministry in regard to whether or not Romania was inimical or friendly towards Hungary in its foreign policy. Without an answer, Baiulescu approved requests, 'just to be on the safe side of things' and argued that, generally, he personally was not opposed to having a Hungarian troupe perform. DANIC București, Fond Ministerul Arte, 1903-1924, Inv. 550, Dos. 686/1921, fila 135/Mar. 28, 1921.

68. To better understand the phenomenon of mass migration among the artists of Hungary, it is interesting to mention that the Prefect of Oradea rejected the approval of the Society for the Protection of Dramatic Art of Oradea, arguing that his office was not certain whether its political line in regard to minorities was being followed by the government in Bucharest. DANIC București, Fond Ministerul Culte și Artelor, Dep. Artelor, Inv. 550, Dos. 777/1922, fila 310/May 21, 1922. Also, when the head of the Romanian Consulate in Budapest, Traian Stircea, asked his superiors in Bucharest whether Romania and Hungary were allies or enemies, he was also unclear about the distinction that should be made among the genres and arts that these artists represented. The artists' motives for travel to Transylvania ranged from visiting relatives (see DANIC București, Fond Ministerul Arte, Inv. 550, Dos. 777/1922, fila 197/Apr. 24, 1922, in which the Minister of Arts and Religions asked Janovics to report his decision whether to allow these artists to visit relatives in Transylvania or not), to visiting their birthplace, leaving their children with grandparents, or hoping to receive medical treatment. But many artists were, in essence, seeking employment in Romania. Due to the large number of visa requests at the Romanian Consulate in Budapest, the border police

forces and the Secret Services were formed as a special team to monitor artists from Hungary. More concerning was that many foreign artists were reported to be proceeding with relocation without even seeking permits or visas from the authorities before heading to Transylvania. DANIC București, Fond Ministerul Artelor, Inv. 550, Dos. 785/1922, fila 6/Jan. 27, 1922.

69. DANIC București, Fond Ministerul Arte, Inv. 652, Dos. 26/1925, fila 123/Sept. 17, 1925.

70. DANIC București, Fond Ministerul Arte, Inv. 550, Dos. 825/1923, fila 1/Aug. 31, 1923.

71. EME, 3 Lăcătușului Street Branch, Fond Janovics, Dos. 81/Aug. 2, 1923.

72. On 5 June 1922, at Jenő Janovics's suggestion, the SADL fused with the Association of Hungarian Artists of Transylvania and Banat, which served as the Union of the Hungarian Drama and Lyrical Artists, the president being Janovics himself. Janovics also made the case as the only way to move forward and collaborate fruitfully for centralizing Hungarian professional theatre management in Bucharest. See DANIC București, Fond Ministerul Arte, Inv. 550, Dos. 825/1923, fila 21/Jul. 22, 1923, handwritten by Janovics himself. But a Ministerial Order (No. 11687/March 11, 1924) stated that the Union of the Hungarian Artists could continue to exist to serve the Hungarian minority only for liquidation purposes, although in practice it meant that this Union continued to operate according to the laws and rules as before 1918 under the Hungarian state. The fusion was also problematic as it was accepted and voted only by the theatre managers and did not comply with the Union's Statutes, leaving in doubt the issue whether it was or was not valid. DANIC București, Fond Ministerul Arte și Culte, Inv. 550, Dos. 914/1924, fila 154/Apr. 8, 1924. For the minutes of the fusion meeting, see DANIC București, Fond Ministerul Arte și Culte, Inv. 550, Dos. 914/1924, fila 142/Apr. 25 1924.

73. Limiting the invitation of foreign artists to those of worldwide fame, who were only to perform in state institutions of drama and opera if there were no artists available in the country for hire, meant that family reunification of artists was affected. DANIC București, Fond Ministerul Arte și Culte, Inv. 652, Dos. 88/1925, Fila 221/Nov. 18, 1925.

74. DANIC București, Fond Ministerul Arte și Culte, DGA, Inv. 652, Dos. 26/1925, fila 123/Sept. 17, 1925.

75. The State Attorney warned that a modern state could not put itself in the situation of guaranteeing employment to a professional category which operated in a free-market economy, but could only exert control and a verification of the existing troupes hiring non-citizens. DANIC București, Fond Ministerul Culte și Arte, Inv. 652, Dos. 26/1925, fila 134/Nov. 5, 1925.

76. DANIC București, Fond Ministerul Culte și Arte, Inv. 652, Dos. 26/1925, fila 123/Sept. 17, 1925, and fila 125/Sept. 22, 1925.

77. DANIC București, Fond Ministerul Culte și Arte, DGA, Inv. 652, Dos. 3/1927, fila 168/Dec.20, 1927.

78. The state tax offices were in charge of stamping all theatre tickets with the taxes applicable according to the Law of Theatres, Article 52 (Leu 1 for the union, Lei 2–3 for the artists' pensions, and Lei 2–3 for cultural and sport associations operating locally). DANIC București, Fond Ministerul Culte și Arte, DGA, Inv. 652, Dos. 13/1929, fila 38/Oct. 10, 1929.

79. DANIC București, Fond Ministerul Culte și Arte, DGA, Inv. 652, Dos. 59/1927, fila 13/Nov. 18, 1924.

80. Another region that was dominated by minority theatre entrepreneurs was Bessarabia, which brought to the state coffers in 1926 almost Lei 7,436,299, and Bucharest alone brought Lei 37,376,462. The overall entertainment taxes for the region of Transylvania alone reached a total of Lei 28,581,197. This revenue came mostly from minority theatres (roughly twenty Hungarian-speaking acting companies and one German-speaking official troupe led by Richard Csáki), which performed operas, ballets, and poetry recitals, since national theatres and Romanian theatre troupes were exempt from taxation because they used state funding. Given that the Hungarian-speaking population was 7.9 per cent of the total and the Germans 4.1 per cent, the tax revenue was a significant financial addition to the state coffers in a region where the theatrical life was dynamic in both large and small towns. DANIC București, Fond Ministerul Culte și Arte, DGA, Inv. 652, fila 10-14/Jan. 1927.

81. DANIC București, Fond Ministerul Culte și Arte, DGA, Inv. 652, Dos. 96/1926, fila 8/1926.

82. EME Lăcătușului Street, Fond J. Janovics, Roman IV.

83. BAR București, Crișana Informativă, Critică Socială, AN I, No. 6, Joi Martie 7, 1929, 1.

84. EME Lăcătușului Street, Fond J. Janovics, Roman II.

85. Two institutions started disagreeing over taxes: the Ministry of Arts and Religions, and the General Office of Theatres (the DGAT) operating with the National Theatre of Bucharest. See Ioan Massoff, *Teatrul Românesc, 1913–1925, Vol. V* (București: Editura Minerva, 1974), p. 344. Since March 1922, the DGAT had been required by law to exert all its authority as a unit subordinated to the directors of the Ministry of Arts and Religions. Historically in charge of theatre life at the national level, the National Theatre of Bucharest considered its powers so wide that it created its own office for collecting taxes from all theatrical performances, including from minorities. See DANIC București, Fond Ministerul Cultelor și Artelor, DGA, Inv. 652, Dos. 3/1920, fila 36/Dec. 30, 1920. To counteract this, the Ministry reasserted its legal control over the DGAT and, on 1 January 1921, it created within the Ministry the Directorate of Shows and Theatrical Taxes to deal exclusively with the taxation of all theatre business. DANIC București, Fond Ministerul Cultelor și Artelor, DGA, Inv. 652, Dos. 3/1920, Fila 36/30 Dec. 1920.

86. DANIC București, Fond Ministerul Instrucțiunii Publice și Cultelor, Direcția Artelor, Dos. 536/1920, Inv. 550, fila 77/Nov. 17, 1920. Minority businessmen eyed perks and state subsidies but, given that subsidies helped mostly those lacking the means to get bank loans or barely making a living as artists, the Romanian artists tended to be the main beneficiaries, since they could easily document their inability to pay.

87. Pompilia Burciacă *et al.*, 'Amateur Theater in Historical Transylvania', op. cit.

88. To exclude one of their own, managers used various arguments, artistic attributes weighing the most when framed alongside evidence such as business agendas overshadowing theatrical art, the manager's deficient cultural knowledge, or the use by the manager of Hungarian theatrical traditions to buttress his own capitalist greed. Regional permits could be retracted by the authorities in Bucharest, and the loss of a permit brought inevitable financial ruin. In such cases, the

documents reveal the stakes of exclusion as described by each participant: Janovics's report invoked the need for defending the sacred interests of the art. Inspector Isac complied with the final decision of Hungarian theatre directors, but empathized with the victimized director by stressing four facts in favour of a disgraced manager: his Romanian citizenship, a lack of complaints from members of his own troupe, official letters from local authorities supporting the artistic and educative quality of the troupe's shows, and their popularity. Even when letters claimed that the manager in question supported Hungarian culture by performing only literary masterpieces, the final vote of Hungarian managers meant that any effort made to reverse their decision was of no avail. See DANIC București, Fond Ministerul Arte, Inv. 550, Dos. 686/1921, fila 186/Apr. 19, 1921.

89. DANIC București, Fond Ministerul Culte și Arte, Inv. 652, DGA, Dos. 19/1927, fila 30/Jun. 22, 1937.

90. The most detailed descriptions of actual performances on stage were provided by Secret Service agents in lengthy reports that urged the Ministry of Arts and Religions to stop a particular play. DANIC București, Fond Ministerul Culte și Arte, DGA, Inv. 652 (1920-1929), Dos. 84/1926, fila 11/May. 20, 1926.

91. Baz Kershaw, 'Oh for Unruly Audiences! Or, Patterns of Participation in Twentieth-Century Theatre', *Modern Drama*, XLIV, No. 2 (2001), p. 135.

92. Legea pentru Organizarea și Administrarea Teatrelor Naționale și Controlul Spectacolelor din România. București, 1926, p. 27 (Art. 57 forbidding the offence of an ethnic group's sensibilities); Legea pentru Organizarea pe Baze Autonome a Teatrelor Naționale și Operelor Române (București, 1930); Legea pentru Organizarea pe Baze Autonome a Teatrelor Naționale și Operelor Române și Casa de Pensii a Personalului (București, 1932), p. 27-31; Legea pentru Organizarea pe Baze Autonome a Teatrelor Naționale și Operelor Române. Modificarea Articolelor 52 and 53 (București, 1934); Legea pentru Organizarea Teatrelor Naționale, Operelor Române și Controlul Spectacolelor (București, 1937), p. 59; Legea pentru Organizarea Teatrelor, Operelor și Filarmonicilor de State precum și pentru Regimul Spectacolelor publice (1947) p. 27.

93. Mócsy, 'Partition', op. cit., p. 492.

94. It was reported that the music of this operetta was performed in bars and coffeehouses, and a shorter German version called *Komm mit nach Varasdin* was sung even in Bucharest, thus disqualifying it from respectable stages. Theatres, it was argued, were representing the prestige of Greater Romania on the international stage. DANIC București, Fond Ministerul Culte și Arte, DGA, Inv. 652, Dos. 26/1925, fila 5/Jan. 5, 1925. Bucharest officials instituted a nationwide ban on its title, its music, dances, and script, so that not even street orchestras could play it without words. See DANIC București, Fond Ministerul Culte și Arte, DGA, Inv. 652, Dos. 138/1926, fila 141/May 8, 1926.

95. For example, General Arts Inspector Ion Minulescu authorized the modified texts of Hungarian plays like the contentious Hungarian operetta *Nótás Kapitány: operetta három felvonásban* (*The Singing Captain*) by Imre Farkas (1879-1976) for Hungarian performances, but the War Department placed it under strict interdiction. Often the local mayor agreed to its performance as part of a large repertory, but the county prefect would not allow the event because of its irredentism. This situation left ample room for professionals and semi-profession-

als to perform it in between the rules.

96. DANIC București, Fond Ministerul Culte și Arte, DGA, Inv. 652, Dos. 25./1925, fila 18/Mar. 23, 1925.

97. Ernő Ember, *A Magyar Népszínház Története: Tóth Ede Fellépésétől a XIX. Század Végéig* (Debrecen: Csáthy Ferenc R. T. Egyetemi Könyvkereskedés, 1934), p. 8.

98. DANIC București, Fond Ministerul Culte și Arte, DGA, Inv. 652, Dos. 15/1927, fila 4/Febr. 4, 1927. DANIC București, Fond Ministerul Culte și Arte, DGA, Inv. 652, 1920-1929, Dos 84/1926, fila 11/May 20, 1926, see the restriction against the play *Ana Bal*.

99. DANIC București, Fond Ministerul Culte, DGA, Inv. 652, Dos. 71/1926, fila 11/Jun.1926, fila 19/Aug. 1926.

100. DANIC București, Fond Ministerul Culte și Arte, DGA, Inv. 652, Dos. 69/1926, fila 7/Apr. 14, 1926, fila 26/Jul. 20, 1926.

101. Costin Murgescu and N. N. Constantinescu, ed., *Contribuții la Istoria Capitalului Străin în România: De la Sfârșitul Primului Război Mondial până la Ieșirea din Criza Economică din 1929-1933* (București: Editura Acad. RPR, 1960), p. 38.

102. DANIC București, Fond Ministerul Culte și Arte, DGA, Inv. 652, 1920-1929, Dos. 26/1925, fila 148/Dec. 8, 1925.

103. DANIC București, Fond Ministerul Culte și Arte, DGA, Inv. 652, Dos. 26/1925, fila 51/Jun. 22, 1925. On average, Theatre Inspector Isac checked four to five hundred plays per season in Hungarian, Saxon dialect, and Yiddish. DANIC București, Fond Ministerul Culte și Arte, DGA, Inv. 652 (1920-1929), Dos. 98/1926, fila 201/Jul. 15, 1926. The Romanian plays most frequently used by Hungarian managers were Victor Eftimiu's *Prometeu*, Nicolae Iorga's *Tatăl*, Ion Luca Caragiale's *O Scrisoare Pierdută*, Jean Valjean's *Ce Știe Satul*, A. Herz's, *Păianjenul*, and M. Sorbu's *Patina Roșie*, which were usually already translated into Hungarian and had high ticket sales for decades in most theatres. Thus, there was no clear political interference through the Romanian repertory to Romanianize Hungarian theatres. See DANIC București, Fond Ministerul Arte și Culte, Inv. 652, Dos. 29/1925, fila 12/Aug. 15, 1925.

104. The Szigligeti Theatre of Oradea, granting the building to the troupe of László Gróf, son-in-law of a famous pre-war manager, N. Erdelyi, did not schedule any Romanian play for the season 1927-1928, and with an entirely Hungarian repertoire, approved by Theatres Inspector Isac, had such low ticket sales that even the fire-protection bill for the building could not be covered. Gróf's troupe received very poor reviews in the local Hungarian press on the grounds that its manager showed very little awareness of the social problems experienced by the broad community. Isac reported to Bucharest that it was the Jewish theatergoers who refrained from attending at the urging of the Oradea Rabbi Office to stay away from theatre halls. This almost bankrupted the Hungarian troupe, who sold only four tickets on 18 January, 1928. DANIC București, DGA, Inv. 652, Dos. 101/1928, fila 6-7/Jan. 25, 1928, Febr. 4, 1928.

105. Prominent writers such as Caton Teodorian, Liviu Rebreanu, Mihail Sorbu, Paul Gusty, and Victor Ion Popa formed a committee and established the SADR in March 1923. They succeeded in breaking free from the Society of Romanian Writers (SSR), although many SADR members were not necessarily SSR members, primarily because of a lack of common standards in dramatic writing. Defending the prestige and role of

Romanian drama was a preoccupation for playwrights, who sent open letters to the press and memos to state institutions to vent grievances. *Enciclopedia 'Cugetares'* (București: Editura Saeculum–Vestala, 1991), p. 791.

106. DANIC București Fond Ministerul Artelor, Inv. 550, Dos. 777/1922, fila 143/Mar. 21, 1922.

107. For instance, the Alexandre Marton Theatrical Agency of Budapest requested the Romanian state to charge with criminal felony two Jewish managers, Emerich Fehér and Jenő Gaspar, using the Romanian Penal Code Article 339 for illegally altering play scripts and to enforce the retroactive payment of royalties to the foreign playwrights they wronged. The Romanian state took no action. DANIC București, Fond Ministerul Culte și Arte, DGA, Inv. 652, Dos. 13/1929, fila 45/Nov. 18, 1929.

108. DANIC București, Fond Dep. Arte, Inv. 817, Dos. 85/1930, Fila 22/Jul. 7, 1930.

109. DANIC București, Fond Dep. Arte, Inv. 817, Dos. 73/1930, fila 30/Mai 22, 1930

110. DANIC București, Fond Ministerul Arte, Inv. 550, Dos. 914/1924, Fila 142/Apr. 25, 1924. Also, see report in Inv. 652, Dos. 22/1925, fila 50/May 2, 1925.

111. DANIC București, Fond Dep. Arte, Inv. 817, Dos. 76/1930, Fila 65/Nov. 24, 1930. The newspapers covering theatre activity in the region were *Irodalom és Művészet* and *Keleti Újság*, but also *Ellenzék* and *Vágóhíd*. DANIC București, Fond Ministerul Arte și Culte, Inv. 550, Dos. 891/1924, fila 3/Aug. 26, 1924.

112. Newspapermen persisted in finding faults with

Hungarian managers, while themselves applying for an acting licence and forming their own troupes. Some even served as intermediaries in bringing Hungarian foreign troupes from Budapest to perform in Transylvania, arguably better than those of the discredited local Hungarian managers. Overall, minority individuals embraced such opportunities, being ready to express opinions and display their organizational spirit even in fields in which they had limited practical experience.

113. EME Lăcătușului Street, Fond Jenő Janovics, Román nyelvű udvölő beredekek és cikk, 1925(1).

114. László Szarka, 'The Trianon Peace Treaty and the Minorities', in László Szarka, ed., *Hungary and the Hungarian Minorities: Trends in the Past and in Our Time* (New York: Columbia University Press, 2004), p. 17, 24.

115. EME 3 Lăcătușului Street, Fond J. Janovics, roman II.

116. Janovics represented Romania when he requested authorization from the Ministry of Arts and Religions in Bucharest to start a tour in the successor countries due to a lack of theatre for the Hungarian minorities living in Czechoslovakia (Bratislava, Kosice, Uzhorod). His tour was to start in Budapest and continue to Czechoslovakia, with a repertory of Hungarian and Romanian plays, and he would represent high interests of state diplomacy, planning to promote close relations between Romania and Czechoslovakia. DANIC București, Fond Ministerul Culte și Arte, DGA, Inv. 652 (1920-1929), Dos. 71/1926, Dos. 87/1926, fila 301/Oct. 25, 1926.