

The National Theatre of Kolozsvár [Cluj] in the Network of Hungarian Theatre Companies (Mapping Theatre Towns in the Second Half of 19th Century)

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The paper will focus on historical particularities in close connection with spaces described in terms of geospatial mapping, as enduring places (as recognizable dots on maps). At the same time, different dynamics are to be reckoned with; as such, the once existing stone theatre building in Cluj is considered as a stock of functions and forms tied to processes of the past and the present. Thus, as a way of perception for the theatre historian, it certainly presents challenges: what does she/he perceive from the former inhomogeneous construction? On the one hand a geospatial mapping highlights the spatial spreading of Hungarian acting against the backdrop of the ethnically mixed population of the so-called theatre towns in the second half of the 19th century. On the other hand, given the network of theatre scenes established as a consequence of touring companies, the particularity of the theatre in Cluj as it appears, it may be best described by taking into account institutional and artistic perspectives. A parallel between quantitative and qualitative dimensions presents the necessary intertwining of the structural determination (i.e., the theatre as a network element) and artistic career.

The Position of the Hungarian Theatre of Cluj in the Network of Hungarian Theatre Companies

Hungarian professional acting in Cluj dates back to 1792; we can speak of an ongoing practice ever since: while acting performances in the first decades had been taking place in temporary buildings and improvised stage settings, the first building designed and constructed specifically for theatre performances was opened in March 1821, with a strong financial support of aristocrats, as well as political support provided by taxes collected by different Transylvanian counties and donations from the town Kolozsvár.¹ Seeing the economic failure of the

¹ Lázár Káli Nagy, *Az "Erdélyi Nemzeti Játékszinnek," "Magyar Játészótársaságnak" eredete, fennállásának, viszonyosságainak a mai időkig leírása 1821* [The origins of the "Transylvanian National

various entrepreneurial formations of the Hungarian Theatre of Cluj, the Transylvanian Diet of 1841–1843 tried to bring the theatre of Cluj under national patronage, as it had done with the theatre of Pest. Although the financial basis for the organisation of the theatre was not established at that time, the theatre used the name National Theatre from 1841, but continued to operate under the entrepreneur-theatre director system.²

Later, in the period under study, the decades following the Austro-Hungarian Compromise of 1867 were significant moments of the Hungarian theatre culture as well; the theatre as an institution was in line with big-scale political, economic, and societal changes enabled by the dualist state. E.g., the railway system built throughout the empire meant that Transylvania was now connected to the “centre” and also that larger settlements within Transylvania became interconnected; as such, Cluj had been one of the most important railway stations along the Oradea–Braşov railway line. We can briefly mention the population increase within the period: Cluj had a population of 26,638 in 1869; 37,957 in 1890; and 60,808 in 1910.³ Mobility as such may be put in correlation with an increase of artistic expectations (on the part of the public), as theatre companies and actors could travel more easily.

The year of the Compromise, 1867 was significant not only for political reasons,⁴ since earlier the theatre building had welcomed different companies during each theatre season. A certain artistic consolidation may be traced back to the period between 1866 and 1872; during that time the company had been successfully managed by Antal Fehérvári (1824–1901), supported by the Kolozsvár National Theatre Committee.⁵

Acting Society” – “Hungarian Acting Society,” its existence and vicissitudes up to the present day, 1821], ed. Elemér Jancsó (Cluj: Minerva Rt., 1939); Zoltán Ferenczi, *A kolozsvári színház és színház története* [The history of acting and theatre in Cluj] (Kolozsvár: Ajtai K. Albert press, 1897) 264–278; Katalin Ágnes Bartha “Theatre Inauguration Ceremony and Symbolic Representation,” *Studia Universitatis Babeş-Bolyai – Dramatica* 62, no. 2 (2017): 23–50.

² It is from this year onwards that the designation “National” is added on the playbills.

³ According to Elek Csetri, the pace of development of the city after the 1867 Compromise was characterised by the sluggishness of Eastern Europe. The demographic development itself reflected the slow movement, as the population of the town was only 37,957 in 1890, compared to 26,651 in 1869. In fact, it was only between 1890 and 1920 that the population more than doubled. Elek Csetri, “Kolozsvár népessége a középkortól a jelenkorig [The population of Cluj from the Middle Ages to the present],” in *Kolozsvár 1000 éve* [1000 Years of Cluj], ed. Tibor Kálmán Dáné et al. (Kolozsvár: Erélyi Múzeum Egyesület Press, 2001), 5–22.

⁴ On 28th July 1867, Franz Joseph I ratified Article XII of the 1867 Act, which contained the law on the Compromise.

⁵ For the grants he received from the Kolozsvár National Theatre Committee in 1867 see Romanian National Archives, Cluj County Branch, Fond 313: Hungarian Theatre, Act 55, f 116, f 117, f 119.

The call for tenders of the Theatre Committee for the 1866/67 season shows the conditions under which the management of Cluj made the director's work conditional.⁶

The director was obliged to keep a company that met the needs of the city's audiences, to give drama, comedy, volksstück (népszínmű), operetta and opera performances. (Maintaining an opera company consumed much more money, but the need to do so was due to the expectations of the committee and the public.) Only those company directors were considered who could organise a company that could perform opera as well.

The music during this period was provided by the local Civic Orchestra (summer 1867), 24 members of the Alleman Regiment stationed in the town (winter seasons 1867, 1868), 15 members and eight contracted members of the Imperial Royal Orchestra of (winter 1870), and from the winter season 1871, the German-born conductor and composer Jacob Jacobi (1827–1882)⁷ was contracted and an orchestra of 24 members.⁸

As such, a newly renovated theatre building welcomed the opening of the winter season on 20th October 1866, as the building's interior spaces had been rebuilt as a consequence of intensive use.⁹

The western wing of the theatre building was built, with a separate staircase and 16 smaller and larger rooms for offices, workshops, and the library. Dangerous candle lighting was eliminated and replaced by oil lamps. The auditorium and the boxes were also renovated. The front "dry entrance," or small foyer, was completed. In designing the new auditorium, the Kolozsvár National Theatre Board, bearing in mind the building layout of different foreign theatres, aimed

⁶ Romanian National Archives, Cluj County Branch, Fond 313: Hungarian Theatre, Act. 50. 192.

⁷ Jacobi was a member of the National Theatre in Cluj from 1869 to 1881, and in 1873–1874 he also worked in Kassa. In May 1871 he was director of the Music Hall in Cluj. His greatest successes were as an operetta conductor.

⁸ See the list of musicians in the following theater almanacs: Jakab István, Nagy György, eds., *Nemzeti Színházi Búcsúvételi Zsebkönyv 1867-dik évre* (Kolozsvár: Ev. Ref Főtanoda Press, 1867); Jakab István, Nagy György, eds., *Új évi Nemzeti Színházi Zsebkönyv 1868-dik évre* (Kolozsvár: Ev. Ref Főtanoda Press, 1868); Jakab István, Nagy György, eds., *Nemzeti Színházi Zsebkönyv 1869-dik évre* (Kolozsvár: Stein J. Press, 1869); Jakab István, Nagy György, eds., *Búcsúvételi Nemzeti Színházi Zsebkönyv 1869-dik évre* (Kolozsvár: Stein J. Press, 1869); Nagy György, Szabó Ferenc, eds., *Új évi Nemzeti Színházi Zsebkönyv 1871-dik évre*, (Kolozsvár: K. Papp Miklós Press, 1871); Nagy György, ed., *Új évi Nemzeti Színházi Zsebkönyv 1872-dik évre*, (Kolozsvár: K. Papp Miklós Press, 1872); Nemzeti Színház igazgatósága, ed., *A kolozsvári Nemzeti Színházi Zsebkönyv 1874. máj. 1-től-1878. május 1-ig* [The National Theatre Almanac of Cluj, from 1 May 1874 to 1 May 1878] (Kolozsvár: K. Papp Miklós Press, 1878).

⁹ For the architect Antal Kagerbauer's plans and related documents, see the Romanian National Archives, Cluj County Branch, Fond 313: Hungarian Theatre Reg. 7.

to maximise audience capacity, with more standing room, more seats, and four more boxes.¹⁰

Thus, it appears that it was not until the 1870s that Cluj had all the conditions for a permanent theatre institution. From 1861 the Kolozsvár National Theatre Committee that ran the Theatre on a contractor basis, contracting theatre manager entrepreneurs, had the Permanent Theatrical Fund at its disposal to cover its operation, supplemented with an annual sum received from the royal treasury starting from 1870. The renewed building and the financially consolidated theatre company also saw the appearance of regular members amongst the company. Moreover, in order to cut the costs of summer touring, as well as to support the idea of a permanent company that would be able to perform throughout the year, we may also mention another venue intended for use in the warm, summer months; this wood construction was completed in 1874 under the supervision of intendant Bogdán Korbuly (1816–1911).

The theatre company had been continuously performing between 1874 and 1887 in two buildings/at two sites; however, we cannot speak of a fully self-supporting endeavour, as losses were covered in this period by the intendant Korbuly privately.

To get an overview of the peculiar position of the Hungarian theatre of Kolozsvár/Cluj, we should take a look at the network of Hungarian professional theatre companies from the period.

I would like to point out that map visualisations play an important role in the study, thanks to sociologist researcher Ilka Veress, who created them using the data series I have produced. The only existing map regarding the theatre life of the period, with drawings of the theatre buildings, is the map of 1928 entitled *Mit vesztett a magyar színészet Trianon által?* [*What did the Hungarian acting lose because of Trianon?*], which was only partially usable, and is also the source of the map that is included on the inside cover of the *Magyar Színházművészeti Lexikon* [*Hungarian Theatre Encyclopaedia*].¹¹

I considered it inevitable to create new maps, showing the spatial expansion of Hungarian-language theatre with the interethnic relations of theatre cities, so the special position of the Hungarian Theatre from Cluj in the established network of theatre companies could be better seen and understood from institutional and aesthetic-creative point of view.

¹⁰ Ferenczi, *A kolozsvári színészet*, 462–470.

¹¹ Zoltán Abonyi (drawing), Jenő Erődi (compilation), Andor, Kovács B. (plan), *Mit vesztett a magyar színészet Trianon által?* [*What did Hungarian acting lose because of Trianon?*] (Budapest: Országos Színészegyesület és Nyugdíjintézet Propaganda Osztálya, 1928); György Székely, ed., *Magyar Színházművészeti Lexikon* [*Hungarian Theatre Encyclopaedia*] (Budapest: Akadémiai Kiadó, 1994).

By the turn of the 1870s and 1880s, the cities whose use shaped the provincial theatre companies' area of operation had developed at least four typical season lengths and two types of attendance. According to the length of the theatre season, we can differentiate between four types or levels of towns, which functioned as sites for Hungarian language provincial theatre companies,¹² Budapest, the capital city being a notable exception due to the fact that the National Theatre from the Hungarian capital received full state funding.¹³ The population size of the cities and the receptivity of the population to the theatre were major factors in determining how long a season would be.

According to theatre historian Edit Rajnai, in the 1870s and 1880s the cities which were able to support a theatre company for 4–5–6 months represent the first level. These cities constitute the basic cornerstones of the network of the Hungarian professional theatre companies. We can list here the following towns: Arad, Debrecen, Győr, Pécs, Szatmár [Satu-Mare], Kolozsvár [Cluj-Napoca], Kassa [Košice], Miskolc, Szeged, Székesfehérvár, Szabadka [Subotica], Kecskemét. (I should mention here that in Pozsony [Bratislava] and Sopron, where Germans constituted the majority of the population at the end of the 19th century, the long season was shared between the Hungarian and German companies.)¹⁴

The towns where the theatre season lasted for 3 to 4 months represent the second level: Marosvásárhely [Târgu Mureș], Baja (supporting Hungarian speaking theatre companies), Nyitra [Nitra], Besztercebánya [Banská Bystrica] (supporting German and Hungarian speaking companies), Zombor [Sombor] (supporting Serbian and Hungarian speaking companies), Újvidék [Novi Sad] (for Serbian speaking companies), Nagyszeben-Brassó [Sibiu-Brașov], Temesvár [Timișoara] (for German companies in the long winter season).¹⁵

The cities where the theatre season lasted for 4 to 8 weeks represent the third level: Eperjes [Prešov], Lőcse [Levoča], Nagyszombat [Trnava] (supporting German and Hungarian speaking companies), Nagybecskerek [Zrenjanin], Nagyikinda [Kikinda], Versec [Vršac], Óbecse [Bečej], Zenta [Senta] (supporting Hungarian and Serbian speaking companies). Towns hosting only Hungarian speaking professional companies in the period: Balassagyarmat, Balatonfüred,

¹² Edit Rajnai, "A színi kerületi rendszer kialakulása (1879–1905) [The emergence of the theatre district system (1879–1905)]" (PhD diss., Eötvös Loránt University, Faculty of Letters National Széchényi Library, Theater and Music Department, MS 711, 2010), 62–64.

¹³ The map lists not only towns where stone theatre buildings had been operating but also settlements where amateur acting performances had been regularly presented, or where stage halls had existed for staging theatre performances throughout the 1870s and 1880s. See the map annex for *Cities with theatre season lengths, levels 1, 2, 3, 4*.

¹⁴ See the map annex for the ethnic breakdown of cities.

¹⁵ See the map annex for the ethnic breakdown of cities.

Békéscsaba, Békésgyula, Beregszász [Berehove], Cegléd, Csíkszereda [Miercurea Ciuc], Dés [Dej], Déva [Deva], Dicsőszentmárton [Târnăveni], Dunaföldvár, Eger, Érsekújvár, Erzsébetváros [Dumbrăveni], Esztergom, Fogaras [Făgăraș], Gyöngyös, Gyulafehérvár [Alba-Iulia], Hódmezővásárhely, Kaposvár, Keszthely, Kézdivásárhely [Târgu Secuiesc], Kiskunfélegyháza, Kisvárd, Komárom [Komárno], Körmend, Lippa [Lipova], Losonc [Lučenec], Lugos [Lugoj], Makó, Máramarossziget [Sighetu-Marmației], Mezőtúr, Mohács, Munkács [Mukachevo], Nagybánya [Baia Mare], Nagykanizsa, Nagykőrös, Nagyszalonta [Salonta], Nyíregyháza, Orosháza, Pápa, Rimaszombat [Rimavská Sobota], Rozsnyó [Rožňava], Sárospatak, Sátoraljaújhely, Sepsiszentgyörgy [Sfântu Gheorghe], Sümeg, Székelyudvarhely [Odorheiu Secuiesc], Szekszárd, Szentes, Szolnok, Szombathely, Torda [Turda], Ungvár [Uzhorod], Vác, Veszprém, Zalaegerszeg, Zilah [Zalău].

According to documents concerning the period between 1875–1885, there were smaller settlements which occasionally gave home to theatre companies. The inhabitants of these Hungarian towns or villages saw theatre performances when the settlement happened to be on the way to a theatre company and hosted a theatre company for a shorter period, rather than on an annual basis. These towns constitute the fourth level.¹⁶

Beginning with the 1870s, Cluj was the only town where Hungarian theatre performances took place so often that we can speak of a twelve-months theatre season. Therefore, it represented a unique node within the network of the twelve Hungarian provincial theatre towns with long seasons (Arad, Debrecen, Győr, Pécs, Szatmár [Satu-Mare], Kolozsvár [Cluj], Kassa [Košice], Miskolc, Szeged, Székesfehérvár, Szabadka [Subotica] and Kecskemét).¹⁷

The management of Bogdán Korbuly between 1874 and 1878 marked a certain well-being for members of the acting company, as it enabled actors and actresses to settle in Cluj for longer periods. Consequently, the members of the company spent more time together, which certainly enabled common work and a polishing of the overall ensemble play. While one-year contracts had been common throughout the period, Bogdán Korbuly made efforts to close contracts for three years.¹⁸ Accordingly, mobility decreased, so that the company which consisted of sixty or even seventy members saw mostly the coming and going of singers and choir members (in other words, core members, or actors and actresses, did not leave the company during this period).

¹⁶ See the map annex. The map shows 79 such localities.

¹⁷ See the map annex.

¹⁸ Katalin Ágnes Bartha, "Színházi professzió és presztízs Kolozsváron a 19. Század utolsó harmadában [Theatrical profession and prestige in the last decades of the 19th century in Cluj]," *Erdélyi Múzeum* 77, no. 3 (2015): 57–62.

A kolozsvári Nemzeti Színházi Zsebkönyv 1874. máj. 1-től–1878. május 1-ig [*The National Theatre Almanac of Cluj, from 1st May 1874 to 1st May 1878*] provides a summary balance sheet of the Korbuly era. The composition of the company clearly shows that the theatre wanted to continue to operate by strengthening the opera, and therefore the number of the performing staff increased considerably. Including the choristers and dancers, the company had 73 members in the first season of 1874/75 and 74 in 1876/77.

In the theatre season from 2nd May 1875 to 4th May 1875, the artistic directors were Béla Betegh Mátray and Antal Fehérváry. During this period, 354 performances were given. In the following season (from 4th May 1875 to 30th April 1876), Gyula E. Kovács became the artistic director, and 327 performances were given. The 1876–1877 season (from 1st May 1876 to 7th May 1877) saw 358 performances under the artistic direction of Gyula E. Kovács. The 1877–1878 season (from 9th May 1877 to 1st May 1878) had 335 performances. Guest artists included Kornélia Prielle, József Tamási, Mari Jászai, Blaha Lujza, Lilla von Buloyovszky, József Bokor and his children's theatre company, Mariska Komáromi, József Szigeti, Gyula Vízvári, musicians, and sometimes magicians and fog-hangers.

The regulars are Vidor Kassai, Béla Földényi, István Szentgyörgyi, Imre Szacsavay, Béla Hetényi, Mihály Krasznay, Mór Ditrói, Károly Török; the actresses are Emma D. Boér, Etel Baloghné, Mari Eibenschütz, Mrs. E. Kovács, E. Kovács, Rózsa Pataki, Géza Marcell, Elemér Zajonghy, Béni Dalnoki, Pietro Caravatti (from 1877), Ilka Csáthyné Medgyasszai, Sarolta Krecsányi, Mrs. Gerecs.

According to another leading theatre director, Mór Ditrói's recollection of his time as director in Cluj, the new company was founded and organised in 1887 together with intendant and landowner József Bölöny, and his charming wife, Ferike Nedeczky, who were excellent in theatrical matters and had a good sense of who was a good actor.¹⁹

The regular members were represented by Gyula E. Kovács, István Szentgyörgyi, Dezső Megyeri, Miklós Váradi, János Kápolnay, Károly Török, Miksa Krasznay, Margit Hunyady, Lina K. Gerő, Mrs. Krasznay, Sarolta Serédi, and Etel Láng. Among the newly contracted, Árpád Szathmári and Mátyás Nyilasi were considered established actors. The others were all promising actors. Emma Delli, Laura Réthi, Klára Küry, Gizella Szerémy, Margit Maróthy, Mari Eibenschütz Ditróiné, Teréz Solti.

In the process of forming the company, new sets were ordered, the wardrobe was refreshed, and new plays were acquired. Ditrói used a new rehearsal style

¹⁹ Mór Ditrói, *Komédiások* [*Comedians*] (Budapest: Közlekedési Presss, 1929), 90.

and dynamic management, resulting in a cohesive ensemble performance, good reviews, and satisfied audiences.

The period of Ditrói's leadership (1887–1897) was a period of valuable artistic impetus. In addition to the popular genres, he organised a Hungarian play series from 1st January to 19th February 1891. For 48 days the company performed 48 Hungarian plays by 42 authors. He also organised a Jókai series and a Gergely Csíky series from their dramatic works, and staged several Madách plays, culminating in the premiere of *The Tragedy of Man* (Cluj, 15th February 1887, Oradea 23rd September 1890). As part of the first Hungarian Shakespeare performance series, a total of 17 Shakespeare plays were performed over 20 evenings during the 1894/95 theatre season. Operas were also performed each year during the main winter season. The opera programme included the *Traviata*, *Masquerade Ball*, *Ernani*, *La Juive*, *László Hunyadi*, and *Der Freischütz*, and after the premiere in Pest, the operas *Cavalleria Rusticana* by Mascagni and *Bajazzo* by Leoncavallo.

Among the guest artists, Mari Jászai, Kornélia Prielle, Emilia Márkus, Teréz Csillag, József Szigeti, Ferenc Náday, and Ede Újházi performed several times on the stage of Cluj. According to Zoltán Ferenczi, Ditrói was able to create a quality repertoire by increasing the financial turnover of the theatre year after year.²⁰

How Did Other Theatre Companies Compare?

As of 1873, we can list 32 Hungarian acting companies, with around 850 actors and actresses.²¹ We can further differentiate according to company size: small companies with less than 20 members; mid-size companies, with between 20 to 40 members, and large companies, the latter having usually more than 50 members.²² Two and a half decades later, we have 40 theatre companies, and a huge increase in actors' number, as we counted approximately 1419 actors and actresses as being active in 1897, toward the end of the 19th century.²³ Among the factors responsible, we can certainly list the enlargement of the network with new performance locations (a steady increase in theatre buildings: 31 stone theatres in 1885, and 54 in 1912), as well as the professionalisation of acting.²⁴ Accordingly,

²⁰ Ferenczi, *A kolozsvári színészet*, 502.

²¹ According to the *Magyar Színészet Évkönyve. Névtár 1873-dik évre* [The 1873 Yearbook of Hungarian Theatre], there were 25 theatre companies (including the National Theatre in Pest and the National Theatre in Cluj). At that time there were 850 actors in the Hungarian theatre industry, 479 men and 371 women.

²² Rajnai, *A színi kerületi rendszer*, 119.

²³ The number includes the company members from the four Budapest theatres (Nemzeti Színház, Népszínház, Vígszínház, Budapesti Városligeti Nyári Színkör) and the Hungarian Royal Opera as well. See also data from the National Association of Actors: Rajnai, *A színi kerületi rendszer*, 251; Bartha, *Színházi professzió*, 69.

²⁴ Rajnai, *A színi kerületi rendszer*, 165.

actors have become a group of professionals in a modern understanding, in the sense that group identity as such has intertwined with specific institutions and the role these played in forming and representing actors; we can list here the Acting School in Budapest, which had been functioning since 1865; the Theatre Agency, since 1869, and the Hungarian Association of Actors, safeguarding their interests since 1871.

According to theatre historian Edit Rajnai, the Hungarian travelling acting companies had performed in 120 settlements during 1870; three decades later, they reached 237 settlements.²⁵ (Our map shows 167 settlements in total, as it focuses on the main theatre locations during the 70s, 80s, and 90s.)

Many significant theatre creators had activities connected to the Hungarian theatre of Cluj; in other words, few Hungarian speaking actors had not stepped onto the stage of this theatre. However, we should not arrive to the simple conclusion that actors travelled from Pest to Cluj for guest performances; there were actors who had started their careers in Cluj, then moved to Pest, or even to Western Europe. E.g., the actress Lilla Buloyovszkyné Szilágyi (1833–1909), was born in Cluj and became famous on both Hungarian and German stages. Moreover, the company did not attract only graduates from the Acting School, from Budapest but sought to contract actors from other provinces as well: Mari Jászai (between 1868 and 1872), Gyula E. Kovács (also from 1868 and until his retirement), Béla Mátray Betegh (between 1870 and 1884), Emma Boér (1865–1867 and 1871–1884), Mór Ditrói (1874–1880, 1887–1996), Imre Szacs-vay (1874–1884), István Szentgyörgyi (1871–1931), Klára Küry (1890–1892), as well as Jenő Janovics, who started his acting career here in 1896 and later became theatre manager between 1905 and 1930, and silent film maker.

Some of these actors and actresses remained in Cluj, while others moved to theatre companies in the Hungarian capital.

To get a sense of the effort involved in organising a company from a fairly wide range of offerings, it is worth modelling the correspondence of Secretary József Sándor spatially.²⁶

Of course, priority was given to the actors who had already appeared on the stage of the National Theatre from Pest, or to members of the more distinguished provincial companies. In addition to correspondence, the essential channel for the exchange of information between the members of the theatre company travelling around the country was provided by the journal *A Színpad* [*The Stage*], the

²⁵ Ibid., 81.

²⁶ During the period of Korbuly's administration, it was mainly József Sándor, the secretary, who corresponded; occasionally, Antal Fehérváry also took care of the correspondence.

magazine of the First Hungarian Theatre Agency, which was launched in the 1870s and from the end of 1871 was the official journal of the association.²⁷

According to the 1874 correspondence of the Theatre Secretary, letters to recruit actors were sent to 35 different towns;²⁸ the company maintained continuous relations with the Theatre Agency, and also paid attention to actors in terms of the various role types; accordingly, they contacted not only actors, singers, and dancers who were working at other companies, but also artists unemployed at that time. E.g., in 1874 the company had welcomed a few actors from Kassa [Košice] and letters were sent to Nyitra [Nitra], Komárom [Komárno], Sopron, Győr, Nagykanizsa, Székesfehérvár, Pécs, Budapest, Miskolc, Abony, Nagykőrös, Debrecen, Máramarosziget [Sighetu Marmăției], Zilah [Zalău], Nagyváradi [Oradea], Arad, Hátaszeg [Hațeg], Déva [Deva], Nagyenyed [Aiud], Torda [Turda], Kolozsvár [Cluj-Napoca], Dés [Dej], Marosvásárhely [Târgu Mureș], Nagyszében [Sibiu], Szabadka [Subotica], Zenta [Senta], Szombathely, Balatonfüred, Vác, Balassagyarmat, Szamosújvár [Gherla], and Székelyhíd [Săcueni]; it also corresponded with companies from the big, metropolitan cities of Vienna and Berlin in order to contract actors. The map shows the spatial coverage of the hiring policy of the Hungarian Theatre of Cluj.²⁹

The Acting Tours of Kornélia Prielle (Between 1868–1902)

At this point, the inquiry brings up the relationship and relevance of the structural (the theatre-network condition of the Hungarian theatre company from Cluj) vis-a-vis acting careers. In what follows, I will point only to some aspects of a well-known career of an actress.

Kornélia Prielle (1823–1906), had become member of the acting company in Cluj first in 1846, then also throughout the 1848–1849 season. Had been the prima donna of travelling theatre companies for almost two decades, until she was contracted by the National Theatre in Pest in 1859. In 1881 she was the first to receive an everlasting contract from the Budapest National Theatre (perennial membership) with an annual salary of 6,000 forints, later on, in 1891 she received the golden cross distinction from emperor Franz Joseph, her acting talents thus gained official recognition as well.³⁰ Coming from a petit bourgeois background and having had half German, and half Hungarian origins, Kornélia

²⁷ Edit Rajnai, “Kísérletek a vidéki színházrendezésére [Attempts on managing the provincial acting, 1873–1890],” in *Magyar színháztörténet. 1873–1920* [Hungarian Theatre History. 1873–1920], ed. Tamás Gajdó (Budapest: Magyar Könyvklub-Országos Színháztörténeti Múzeum és Intézet, 2001), 229.

²⁸ Romanian National Archives, Cluj County Branch, Fond 313: Reg 10.

²⁹ See the map for the spatial coverage of the hiring policy in 1874.

³⁰ In 1870 she went on a study trip to Paris, where she attended performances at several theatres.

Prielle (1823–1906) opted for a French-spelling of her family name, which was significant in terms of her image-building by connecting it to many roles she performed, for e.g., as la marquise de Menneville in *Les doigts de fée*, a popular comedy written by Scribe and Legouvé, première in 1859; then, as Marguerite Gauthier in *La Dame aux camélias* by Alexandre Dumas fils, put on stage in 1857; or as Madame Fourchambeault in *Les Fourchambault* by Émile Augier, staged in 1878.

Her career overlaps with the widespread of the modern social drama as theatre genre. Throughout her long career encompassing six and a half decades she had played almost 300 different roles and she toured a lot in the country; she performed in almost each stage of historical Hungary, and she became well-known across the country. She kept record of her guest performances starting from 1868;³¹ the register includes 784 performances in 65 settlements across the territories of historical Hungary; and it may be viewed as a valuable source concerning the travelling companies and their ways of functioning. Especially, if we consider the fact that her guest performances were a good way of attracting attention to the local acting company's activity and were also a welcome way of charging increased fees for performances.³²

Her guest performances in Cluj are the most spectacular: she had a series of performances here in 14 different years between 1868 and 1902. Her frequent visits to Cluj may be explained by her various social relationships with local personalities related to the theatre, relationships which she maintained since her first contract in Cluj. Her performances together with her first husband, actor Kálmán Szerdahelyi, whom she later remarried and remained together until he passed in 1872 – enjoyed great success in almost each fashionable French play that was put on stage as well as in Hungarian plays that had been inspired by the former. It was noted that they built their dialogue scenes with such ease that even their actor colleagues were overwhelmed.

Her frequent guest performances in the provinces are telling also in terms of the spreading of a specific acting style embodied by her, while a spatial representation shows a significant overlap with the network of Hungarian acting as developed across the Hungarian-speaking regions.

³¹ Prielle vidéki fellépéseinek összesítése csak 1868-tól ismert. *Csak 1868-tól kezdve tudok rendben számot adni vidéki vendég szerepléseim jegyzékéről*. The exact dates and totals of Prielle's guest performances in the provinces is known only from 1868. See Kornélia Prielle, *Csak 1868-tól kezdve tudok rendben számot adni vidéki vendég szerepléseim jegyzékéről* [Only from 1868 onwards can I give an orderly account of my appearances in the provinces], National Széchényi Library, Manuscript Collection, An 4942/26, 6.

³² See the map showing the towns where actresse Kornélia Prielle performed.

At the same time, the manner and style of her performances may be connected to larger issues in the sense that, through the themes, characters of these plays, we can detect an/the organizing of the interests of the audience along the conscious and unconscious, as well the individual and collective becomings on both sides of the stage.

An important moment in her career relates to her role as Cora in the social drama *L'article 47* by Adolph Belot,³³ which she played 21 times on the stage of the National Theatre in Pest, and 54 times in various provincial towns between 1878–1892.³⁴

Acted by Prielle, the character of Cora was a passionate and attractive Creole from North America/ the colonies, and thus the backdrop of the social norms as prescribed by masculine authorities was “translated” so as to condense the erotic dimension inherent in the plot, the passion of love, as well as addiction to it, submissiveness and desire to power; therefore, including a great deal of suppression, the acting performance of the Hungarian actress was recorded as the best example of modern manifestation of passion on stage.³⁵ Her guest performances across the Hungarian provinces were important steps with regard to her career-building; the Hungarian Theatre in Cluj as well as its public and its mediating possibilities were crucial as provided a continuous validation of acting performances.

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³³ The première was on 24th May, 1878.

³⁴ Prielle, *Only from 1868*.

³⁵ Several critics have highlighted this performance in his career. See Katalin Ágnes Bartha, “Szenvedély által vezérelt kor- és kórkép a 19. századi színpadon [Passion on the 19th Century Stage],” *Certamen* 9 (2022): 109–132.

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The National Theatre of Kolozsvár [Cluj] in the Network of Hungarian Theatre Companies (Mapping Theatre Towns in the Second Half of 19th Century)

Abstract

The paper is focusing on historical particularities in close connection with spaces described in terms of geospatial mapping, as enduring places (as recognizable dots on maps). At the same time, different dynamics are to be reckoned with; as such, the once existing stone theatre building in Cluj is considered as a stock of functions and forms tied to processes of the past and the present. On the one hand a geospatial mapping highlights the spatial spreading of Hungarian acting against the backdrop of the ethnically mixed population of the so-called theatre towns in the second half of the 19th century. On the other hand, given the network of theatre scenes established as a consequence of touring companies, the particularity of the theatre in Cluj as it appears, it may be best described by taking into account institutional and artistic perspectives. A parallel between quantitative and qualitative dimensions presents the necessary intertwining of the structural determination (i.e., the theatre as a network element) and artistic career.

Národní divadlo v Kolozsváru [Kluž] v síti uherských divadelních společností (Mapování „divadelních“ měst v druhé polovině 19. století)

Abstrakt

Príspevok sa zameriava na historické zvláštnosti v úzkém spojení s prostory popisovanými z hlediska geoprostorového mapování, jako trvalými místy (jako rozpoznatelnými body na mapách). Zároveň je třeba počítat s různými dynamikami; kdysi existující kamenná budova divadla v Kluži je tak považována za zásobárnu funkcí a forem spjatých s procesy minulosti a současnosti. Na jedné straně geoprostorové mapování poukazuje na prostorové šíření maďarského herectví na pozadí etnicky smíšeného obyvatelstva tzv. divadelních měst ve druhé polovině 19. století. Na druhé straně, vzhledem k síti divadelních scén vzniklých v důsledku zájezdových souborů, lze zvláštnost divadla v Kluži, jak se jeví, nejlépe popsat s přihlédnutím k institucionální a umělecké perspektivě. Paralelu mezi kvantitativním a kvalitativním rozměrem představuje nezbytné prolínání strukturální determinace (tj. divadla jako síťového prvku) a umělecké kariéry.

Keywords

Hungarian acting; map; 19th century; provincial theatre companies; Kornélia Prielle

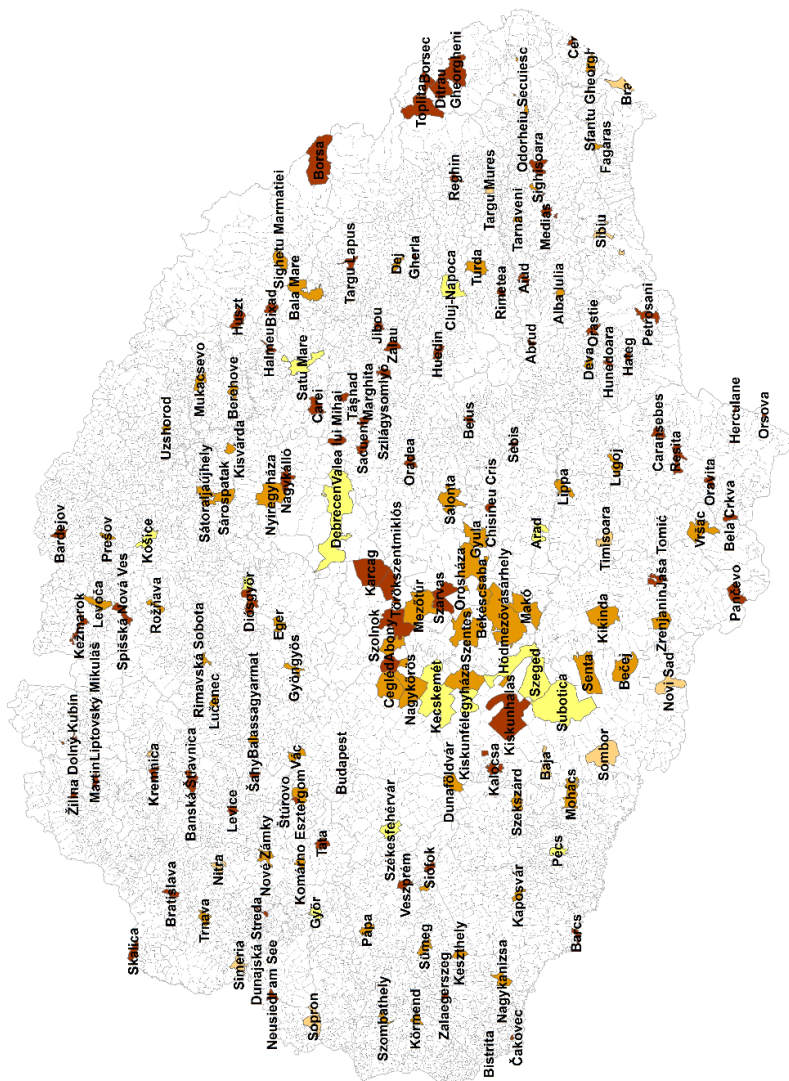
Klíčová slova

maďarské herectví; mapa; 19. století; provinční divadelní společnosti; Kornélia Prielle

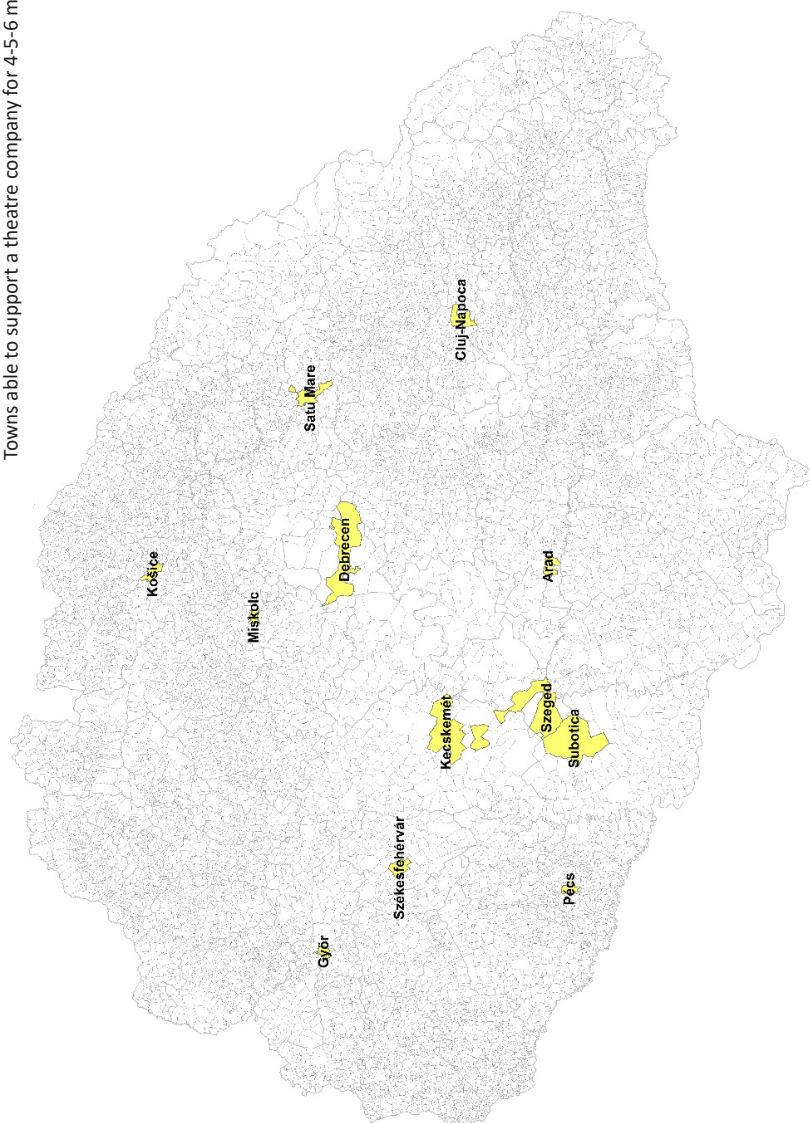
The research was funded by the Hungarian Academy of Sciences, “János Bolyai Research Scholarship.”

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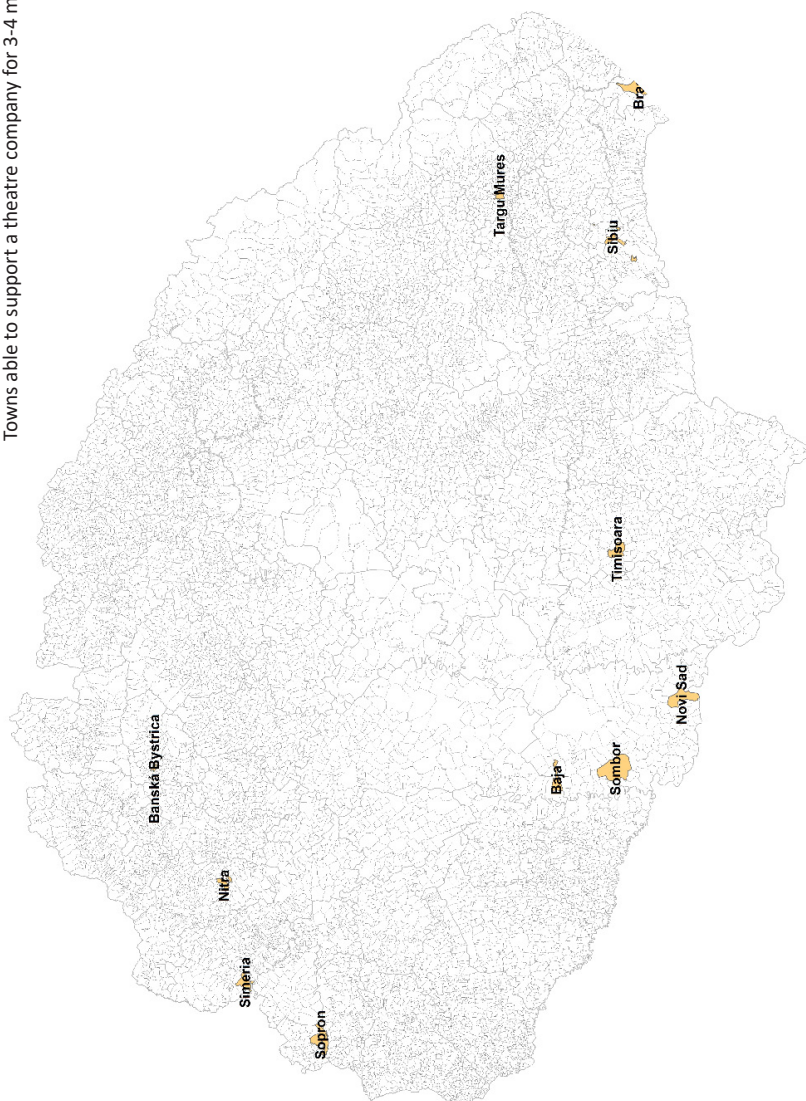
Cities with theatre season lengths, levels 1, 2, 3, 4



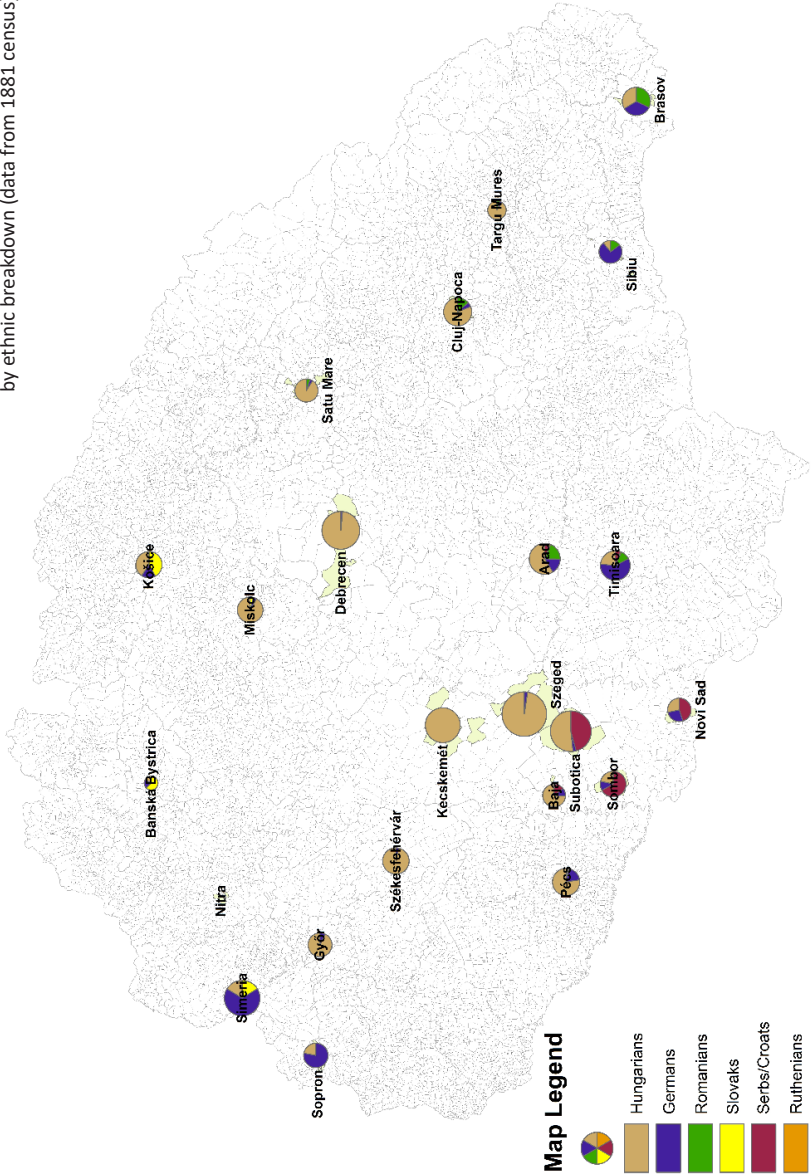
Theatre season length (1).
Towns able to support a theatre company for 4-5-6 months



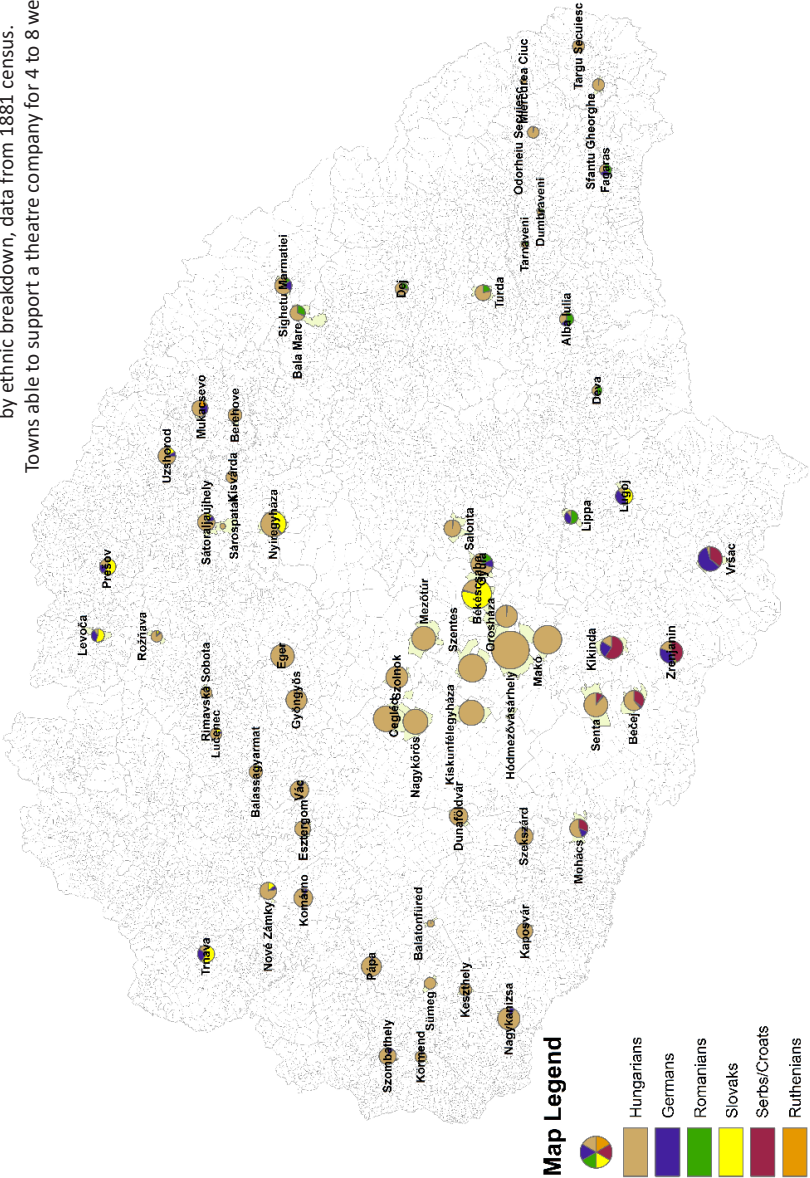
Theatre season length (2).
Towns able to support a theatre company for 3-4 months



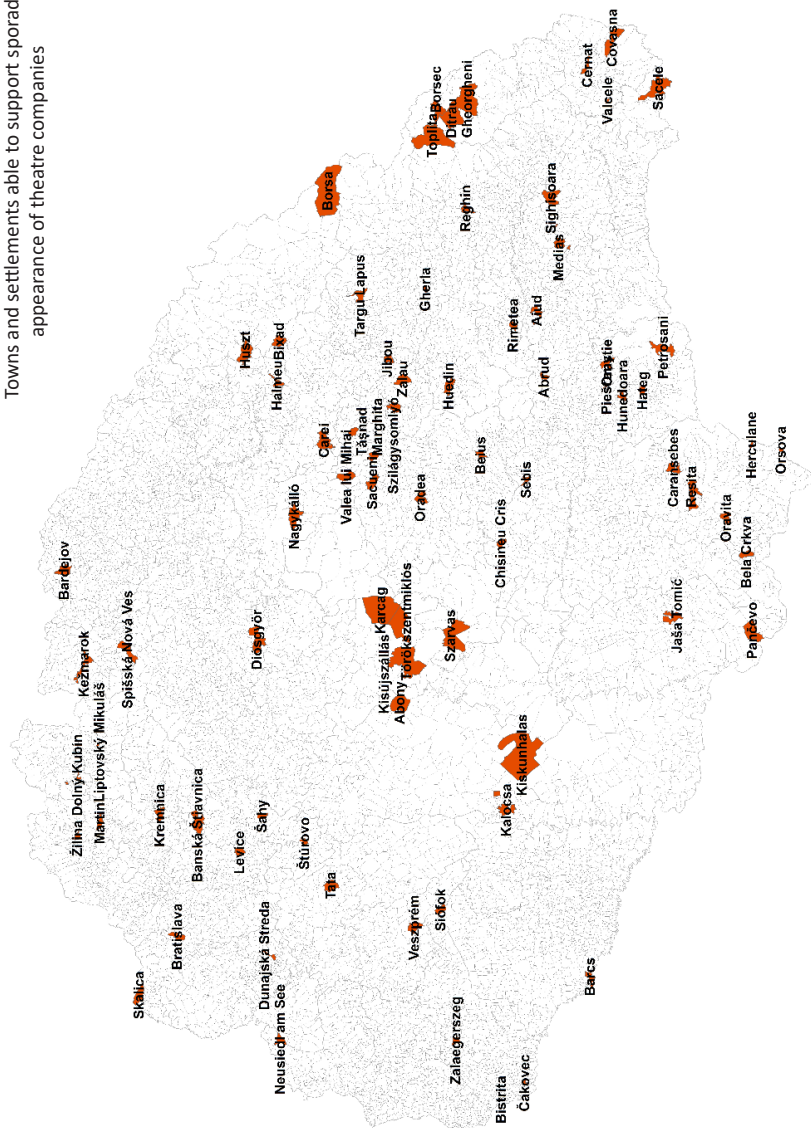
Theatre season length (1, 2) and town population by ethnic breakdown (data from 1881 census)



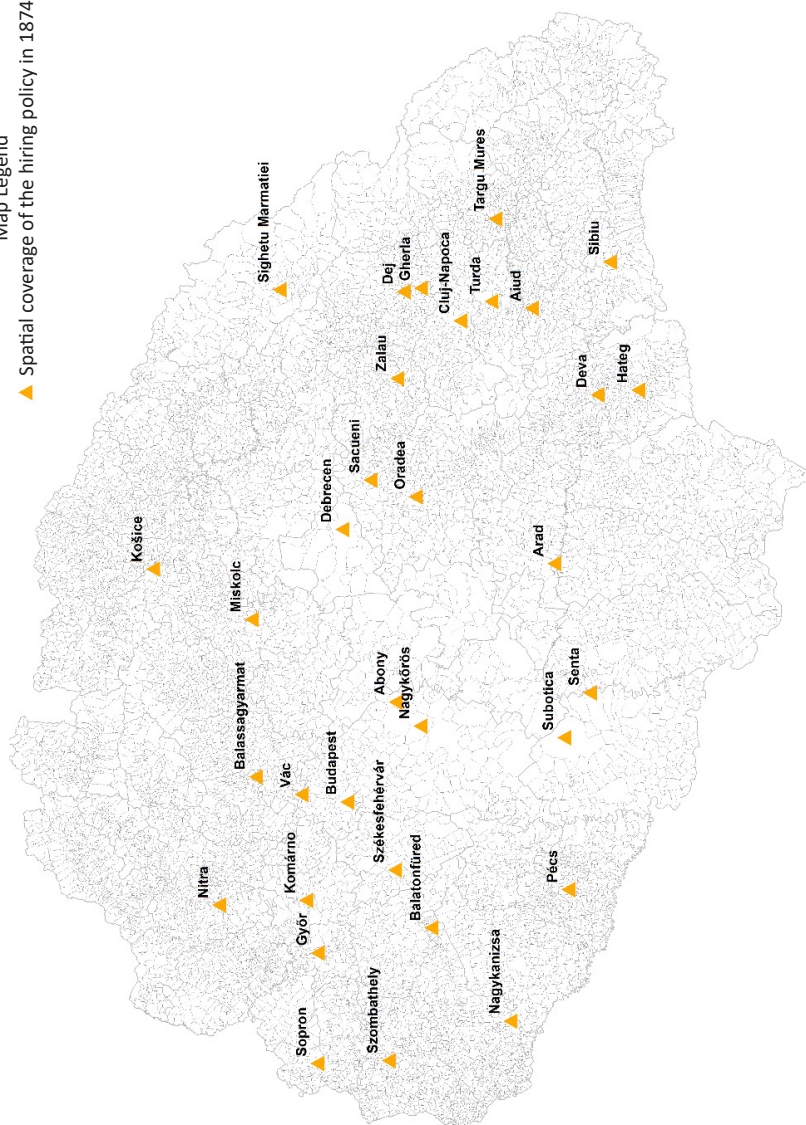
Theatre season length (3) and town population
by ethnic breakdown, data from 1881 census.
Towns able to support a theatre company for 4 to 8 weeks



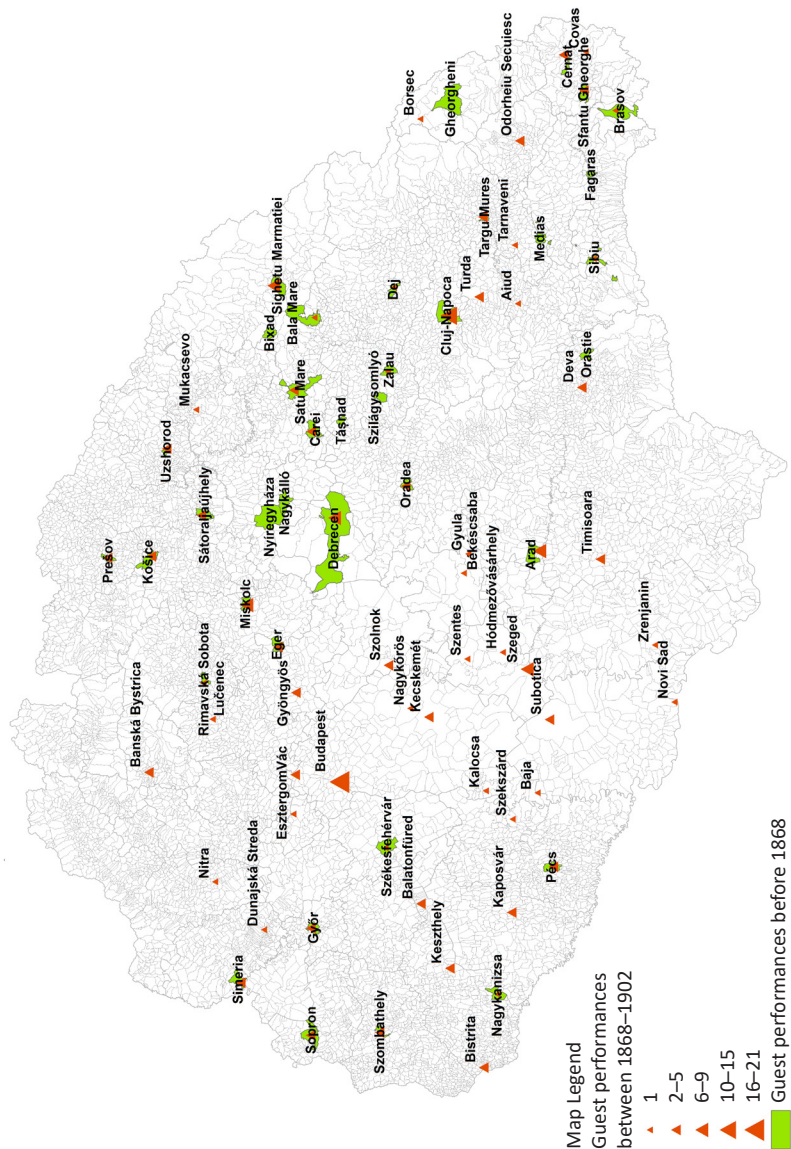
Theatre season length (4).
Towns and settlements able to support sporadic
appearance of theatre companies



Map Legend
 ▲ Spatial coverage of the hiring policy in 1874



Towns where Kornélia Prielle performed



Towns where Kornélia Priele performed
the role Cora in the Article 47 by A. Belot

