

Forum

Modernes Theater

Schriftenreihe | Band 53

Jens-Morten Hanssen

# Ibsen on the German Stage 1876–1918

A Quantitative Study



narr  
ranck  
ette  
mpto

Ibsen on the German Stage 1876-1918

Forum

# Modernes Theater

Schriftenreihe | Band 53

---

begründet von Günter Ahrends (Bochum)

herausgegeben von Christopher Balme (München)

Jens-Morten Hanssen

# **Ibsen on the German Stage 1876-1918**

A Quantitative Study

narr\f  
ranck  
e\atte  
mpto

Bibliografische Information der Deutschen Nationalbibliothek.

Die Deutsche Nationalbibliothek verzeichnet diese Publikation in der Deutschen Nationalbibliografie; detaillierte bibliografische Daten sind im Internet über <http://dnb.dnb.de> abrufbar

© 2018 · Narr Francke Attempto Verlag GmbH + Co. KG  
Dischingerweg 5 · D-72070 Tübingen

Das Werk einschließlich aller seiner Teile ist urheberrechtlich geschützt. Jede Verwertung außerhalb der engen Grenzen des Urheberrechtsgesetzes ist ohne Zustimmung des Verlages unzulässig und strafbar. Das gilt insbesondere für Vervielfältigungen, Übersetzungen, Mikroverfilmungen und die Einspeicherung und Verarbeitung in elektronischen Systemen.

Internet: [www.narr.de](http://www.narr.de)  
E-Mail: [info@narr.de](mailto:info@narr.de)

CPI books GmbH, Leck

ISSN 0935-0012  
ISBN 978-3-8233-8271-3

# Table of Contents

Acknowledgements .....	9
Chapter 1: Introduction .....	13
1.1 IbsenStage: the database as a research tool .....	16
1.2 The quantitative approach .....	19
1.3 From literary to theatre studies .....	22
1.4 From textual analysis to data analysis .....	24
1.5 The dataset of German events 1876–1918 .....	26
Chapter 2: The first major success on the German stage: <i>Pillars of Society</i> ...	31
2.1 The introduction of Ibsen on the German stage 1876–1881 .....	31
2.2 <i>Pillars of Society</i> on the German stage 1878–1880 .....	33
2.2.1 The scope of Ibsen’s success with <i>Pillars of Society</i> on the German stage .....	33
2.2.2 Hypotheses about the success of <i>Pillars of Society</i> .....	35
2.2.3 The role of the theatre agencies .....	47
2.2.4 The spatial distribution of <i>Pillars of Society</i> on the German stage .....	50
2.3 Conclusion .....	60
Chapter 3: The failure of <i>A Doll’s House</i> and the ‘silence’ of 1882–1884 .....	63
3.1 The network of German stage artists producing Ibsen 1876–1881 ..	64
3.2 <i>A Doll’s House</i> on the German stage 1880–1881 .....	73
3.2.1 The two variants of <i>Nora</i> .....	73
3.2.2 The critical reception of <i>A Doll’s House</i> on the German stage 1880–1881 .....	78
3.3 The ‘silence’ of the years 1882 through 1884 .....	84
3.4 Conclusion .....	87
Chapter 4: Ibsen’s real breakthrough .....	91
4.1 <i>Ghosts</i> and the independent theatre movement .....	93

4.2	German Ibsen events 1885–1889: <i>A Doll's House</i> and the <i>Pillars</i> trajectory .....	102
4.3	Conclusion .....	107
Chapter 5: The making of a world dramatist .....		109
5.1	Ibsen's 1890s plays .....	111
5.2	The network of German stage artists producing Ibsen 1885–1899 ..	113
5.3	<i>A Doll's House</i> and the star system .....	115
5.4	Ibsen and the modernist movement .....	125
5.5	Ibsen and the Volksbühne movement .....	131
5.6	German as source language in relay translations .....	136
5.6.1	The tradition of domesticating names and titles in Ibsen's plays .....	140
5.6.2	German theatre agencies marketing Ibsen abroad .....	147
5.7	Conclusion .....	151
Chapter 6: In command of the German stage .....		153
6.1	The stage success of <i>When We Dead Awaken</i> .....	154
6.1.1	Consecration, canonization, naturalization: Ibsen the German dramatist .....	154
6.1.2	Publication in book form and theatrical distribution of <i>When We Dead Awaken</i> .....	156
6.1.3	The spatial distribution of <i>When We Dead Awaken</i> in 1900 ..	158
6.1.4	The theatrical context of <i>When We Dead Awaken</i> on the German stage in 1900 .....	160
6.2	Ibsen's symbolist dramas .....	167
6.3	The advent of the Ibsen ensembles .....	169
6.4	The Ibsen cycles .....	176
6.5	The German hubs .....	185
6.5.1	Ensemble clusters .....	185
6.5.2	Solo versus ensemble acting: social implications .....	190
6.6	Conclusion .....	194
Chapter 7: Negotiations over the Ibsen legacy: <i>Peer Gynt</i> enters the stage ..		197
7.1	<i>Peer Gynt's</i> late arrival .....	197
7.2	The death of a father figure .....	206
7.2.1	Brahm's Ibsen legacy and beyond: a generational perspective	206
7.2.2	Brahm vs. Reinhardt .....	210
7.2.3	Brahm vs. Barnowsky, Jessner, Lindemann, and Bruck .....	212

7.3 The ‘other’ Ibsen: changes in the critical perception and reception of Ibsen .....	218
7.4 Ibsen performances during World War I .....	225
7.5 Conclusion .....	226
Chapter 8: Concluding remarks .....	229
Bibliography .....	239
Appendix: Archival sources .....	251
Physical collections .....	251
Digital sources I: playbills, theatre programmes, performance data .....	252
Digital sources II: newspapers .....	253
Performance data in printed form .....	254
List of tables and figures .....	255





## Acknowledgements

Scholarly work is social and collaborative by its very nature. I have had the privilege of pursuing my interest in Ibsen in multiple projects both in and outside academia ever since 1998, and I cannot conceive of any of these projects without the people with whom I had the pleasure of collaborating. I shall take this opportunity to express my gratitude to a few of these.

First of all I need to thank Kathrin Heyng and Valeska Lembke at the Narr Francke Attempto Verlag and Christopher Balme, the main editor of their series “Forum Modernes Theater”, for offering me the opportunity of publishing my dissertation as a book. Together with Jonathan Bollen and Ellen Rees, Balme also served as member of the committee that evaluated my doctoral thesis on behalf of the Faculty of Humanities at the University of Oslo. Their criticisms, comments and suggestions, put forward in the committee report as well as during the public defence in February 2018, proved extremely valuable in the process of revising my dissertation for publication. It was a true privilege to have them as my examiners.

My sincere thanks go to my brilliant supervisors Frode Helland and Julie Holledge not only for guiding me so carefully through the process of writing the dissertation, but also for inspiring and encouraging me to develop the doctoral project in the first place. Through two periods of my career (1998–2004 and 2014–2018) the Centre for Ibsen Studies at the University of Oslo has been like a home for me. I owe a great thanks to former as well as present colleagues of mine at the centre: Astrid Sæther, Knut Brynhildsvoll, Vigdis Ystad, Jon Nygaard, Randi Meyer, Mária Fáskerti, Laila Henriksen, Chengzhou He, Sabiha Huq, Ahmed Ahsanuzzaman, Ellen Rees, Liyang Xia, Kamaluddin Nilu, Giuliano D’Amico, Ruth Schor, Nina Marie Evensen, Torhild Aas, Thomas Rasmussen, Martin Kroglund Persson, Ragnhild Schea, and last but not least my PhD colleagues Svein Henrik Nyhus, Thor Holt, Solace Sefakor Anku, and Gianina Dru-ta. Special thanks go to Erika Fischer-Lichte for her mid-way evaluation of my thesis. I must also thank the Centre for Ibsen Studies for granting me financial support to cover the printing costs.

I thank a number of colleagues at other departments of the University of Oslo: Christian Janss, for making useful comments on an early draft of the project outline and for our ongoing dialogue related to the earliest productions of *A Doll’s House* on the German stage; Ståle Dingstad, for reading and sharing with me his thoughts on an early draft of chapter 2; Jakob Lothe, who served

as the head of the PhD programme for the better part of my doctoral period, for stimulating seminars; Annika Rockenberger, for her infectious enthusiasm for digital humanities and for co-presenting a paper at DHN's first conference in Oslo in 2016; Iris Muñiz, for sharing with me her research findings related to the appropriation of *A Doll's House* during Silver Age Spain; and the DMLF team, especially Asgeir Nesøen, for invaluable technical support related to the use of IbsenStage as a research tool. I am grateful to the University of Oslo for granting me the PhD scholarship.

In 2001, when I was hired as an editor of the website formerly known as Ibsen.net, I could not anticipate that I would eventually be basing a doctoral project on data gathered as part of the Repertoire Database project. As it turned out, I owe a huge debt of gratitude to Liv Sundby and Benedikte Berntzen, my closest collaborators during the Ibsen.net years (2001–2014). I am truly proud of what we accomplished together and look back with joy on our years of collaboration. I would like to express my sincere gratitude to Bjørg Harvey, May-Brit Akerholt, and Sabine Richter for their contributions to the website. On several occasions during my doctoral period, Sabine Richter has also carried out archival research on my behalf. I do not know how to thank her enough for this, and I am proud to call her my friend. Ibsen.net was initially set up during the planning period of the centennial commemoration of Ibsen's death in 2006. I am grateful to the National Ibsen Committee of Norway, headed by the late Lars Roar Langslet, for trusting me with the task of developing the website. In this regard, I am particularly thankful for the support of Helge Rønning, who was both a committee member and the chairman of the Ibsen Centre's board during my initial years as an employee at the centre.

In 2007, the editorial office of the website was transferred to the National Library of Norway, which agreed to host Ibsen.net on a permanent basis. I am thankful for the generosity of Vigdis Moe Skarstein, who made this possible, and the efforts of Marit Vestli, Therese Manus, Kristin Bakken, Jon Arild Olsen, and Hege Høsøien to ensure that I, among other things, was able to continue the work of gathering performance data for inclusion in the Repertoire Database.

Needless to say, the AusStage team of researchers – above all Julie Holledge, Jonathan Bollen, and Joanne Tompkins – cannot be thanked enough for pioneering the research methodologies that I am applying in the present study. I would also like to thank the IFTR Digital Humanities in Theatre Research working group chaired by Nic Leonhardt and Franklin J. Hildy for stimulating sessions and memorable conference days in Hyderabad in 2015 and in Stockholm in 2016, and my fellow members of the board of the Norwegian Literature and Language Association (NSL) – Aasta Marie Bjorvand Bjørkøy, Hilde Bøe, Nina

Marie Evensen, Ellen Wiger, Arnfinn Aaslund, and Jon Haarberg – for exploring the field of digital humanities from yet a different angle.

Having spent a substantial part of my career building research infrastructure, I have learned to appreciate the value of user-friendly, well-organized, and well-maintained databases, archives, museums, and library collections, and I take this opportunity to pay homage to all those who are involved in building infrastructure for research and to express my special gratitude to all those archivists and librarians whom I have contacted ever since 2001 – there have been hundreds of hundreds of them. Their work constitutes the backbone of my research.

Finally and most importantly, I need to thank my family – Tone, Jonatan, Julia, and Thea – for their love and for bringing joy and happiness into my life. A special thank goes to Jonatan for coming to my rescue with his computer skills on a number of occasions.



## Chapter 1: Introduction

On 1 June 1891, *Der Zeitgeist*, a weekly supplement to the *Berliner Tageblatt*, printed a stage song under the title “Das Lied vom Ibsen”, whose first stanza went as follows:

Ibsen, Ibsen, everywhere! There’s nothing like it! Over the whole globe Ibsen fever rages. The whole world is Ibsen-mad, [...] for the entire air is full of Ibsen-germs! No salvation! Fashions and advertisements everywhere proclaim Ibsen’s name, trumpet his praise! On cigars, ladies’ trinkets, pastries, bodices, ties is flaunted the word in letters of gold: Ibsen! A la Ibsen!<sup>1</sup>

Written by Maximilian Krämer, the editor of the *Lustige Blätter*, clearly to be used as part of an act at one of Berlin’s cabaret clubs – the details of the performance are not known – the lyrics suggest that Ibsen pervades all facets of human life. Modern existence itself is entirely inconceivable without him. He is idolized, ideologized, fetishized, merchandised, and capitalized on, and appears as the measure of all things. Only the closing lines of the final stanza call for sobriety. The Ibsen vogue is profound and all-pervasive, but prevails only ‘until God lets Ibsen succumb to new trends’.<sup>2</sup>

Krämer applies genre devices well known to the cabaret song: satire, ridicule, exaggeration, irony. Yet the general observation that informs the contents and in all likelihood inspired him to write the song in the first place does not seem far from the truth: At the close of the nineteenth century, Ibsen had only two rivals in respect of world-wide renown, Tolstoy and Zola (Archer 1901, 182); in Germany, no dramatist earned as much attention, recognition, and fame as Ibsen. Here, “Das Lied vom Ibsen” serves first and foremost as an appetizer, as a testimony of something else. The song in itself does not interest me as much as the context that conceived it and the fact that it was written for the stage. The present thesis is intended as an investigation of Ibsen from the point of view

---

1 Ibsen, Ibsen überall! / Da geht nichts mehr drüber! / Auf dem ganzen Erdenball / Herrscht das Ibsen-Fieber! / Alle Welt wird Ibsen-toll, / Wenn auch wider Willen, / Denn die ganze Luft ist voll / Ibsen-Ruhm-Bacillen! / Keine Rettung! Ueberall / Künden Ibsens Namen, / Preisend mit Posaunenschall, / Moden und Reklamen. / Auf Cigarren, Damenschmuck, / Torten, Miedern, Schlipfen. / Prangt das Wort in gold’nem Druck: / „Ibsen! A la Ibsen!” Quoted and translated in McFarlane 1991, 112.

2 “Bis Gott Ibsen unterliegt / Einer – neuen Mode!” *Der Zeitgeist. Beiblatt zum Berliner Tageblatt*, 1 June 1891.

of the German stage. How was he introduced? How did his plays fare on the German stage? Who were the people that produced them? What characterizes the German Ibsen tradition when seen from the perspective of the stage?

My approach is quantitative, historical, transnational, and guided by research methodologies from the field of digital humanities. I will examine the German stage history of Ibsen's plays over a period of forty-two years. 1918 is chosen as the end point for two main reasons: First of all, that year marked the end of two empires, the German Empire and the Austro-Hungarian Empire.<sup>3</sup> The political structure of these two empires is crucial to an understanding of the events put under scrutiny in this thesis. Second, as will be shown, the volume of German Ibsen performances increase constantly from the mid-1880s until World War I, from when the numbers decrease until the 1950s. Measured in volume of theatrical events, the period of the German Empire was marked by growth and advancement whereas the Weimar Republic and the Third Reich saw recession.

By 1918, Ibsen was produced on stage in German at venues all over the Western world, from Moscow in the east to San Francisco in the west. Previous research on the German Ibsen tradition was predominantly carried out within the framework of the nation as a basic knowledge category (cf. Stein 1901; Eller 1918; George 1968; Bernhardt 1989). By contrast, I propose the application of a consistent methodological transnationalism known from migration studies to unravel the transnational entanglements of Ibsen's German stage history (Manz 2014, 2–7). German Ibsen performances transcended the borders of the German Empire, Austria-Hungary, and Switzerland both through the German diaspora and through the international touring circuit. Scholarship has failed to take into account the impact of migration on the spread of Ibsen. Likewise, not enough attention has been paid to the role of transnational and international touring in the stage history of his plays.

Throughout its six stanzas, "Das Lied vom Ibsen" leaps back and forth between the local and the global. It contains references in abundance to the prosaic reality of Berlinese consumer culture, yet claims that the Ibsen craze applies to the world at large and closes by introducing the otherworldly perspective of a merciful God bringing Ibsen hysteria to an end. In parts of my thesis, the German perspective and the global perspective will go hand in hand in a similar manner. The German introduction of Ibsen paved the way for him being introduced into other language areas and cultural markets. Polish audiences first

---

3 To avoid confusion with today's Germany and Austria – and as a reminder of the fact that the political map of Europe was quite different from today – I will systematically use the German Empire and the Austro-Hungarian Empire or simply Austria-Hungary to refer to the 'Deutsches Kaiserreich' that existed between 1871 and 1918 and the 'Österreichisch-Ungarische Monarchie' that existed from 1867 to 1918.

encountered Ibsen in Wawrzyńiec Engeström's small monograph *Henryk Ibsen: Poeta norwegijski* (1875). In large parts, this booklet is a loose translation of the chapter on Ibsen in Adolf Strodtmann's book *Das geistige Leben in Dänemark* (1873, 223–258, cf. Kłańska 2006, 180–181). Ibsen's first major success on the European continent, *Pillars of Society*, which was soon published in three different German translations and staged by more than sixty theatre companies in the German-speaking areas of Central Europe in the late 1870s, spread out over several language areas. The very first Hungarian, Serbian, Czech, and Dutch performances of *Pillars of Society* used translations based on German translations, thereby constituting specific side effects of Ibsen's German success. In the further course of events, German translations led to the introduction of Ibsen's works in languages like Russian, Italian, Latvian, Bulgarian, Slovenian, and Romanian.

This has made scholars assume that Ibsen's German breakthrough led to his subsequent international breakthrough (Reich 1908, 193). However, as will be shown, the matter is more complex. The above-mentioned offshoots of Ibsen's German success with *Pillars of Society* left no lasting impact. More importantly, instead of following up on the success of the preceding play, *A Doll's House* initially failed both critically and financially on the German stage. In this thesis, I will revisit the assertion that Ibsen's German breakthrough led to his international breakthrough and treat it as a hypothesis still to be tested. Undeniably, the German stage was key in introducing Ibsen's plays to performance venues across the entire Western world, but German Ibsen performances did not necessarily contribute to the making of Ibsen the world dramatist.

The stage history of Ibsen's plays in the period of the German Empire is not unknown territory, far from it. I rely on numerous volumes of Ibsen scholarship carried out by scholars and non-scholars before me. At the same time, in terms of methodology I deviate radically from traditional Ibsen research, first and foremost as a consequence of my use of the performance database IbsenStage as a research tool and e-research methodologies pioneered by the AusStage team. The particularities of my methodological approach are best described through the following shifts:

- the shift from traditional to digital humanities,
- the shift from qualitative to quantitative approach,
- the shift from literary to theatre studies,
- the shift from textual analysis to data analysis.



## 1.1 IbsenStage: the database as a research tool

Our combined knowledge of Ibsen resides not only in documents and items (books, articles, manuscripts, etc.) in libraries, archives, and museums across the globe, not only in the minds and bodies of all those who have read Ibsen, written about him, or portrayed his characters. It also resides in digital resources independent both of print media and the human mind: digital repositories, databases, collections of files in multiple formats, and so forth. These resources represent new and still largely unexplored modes of knowledge formation and production that the emerging field of digital humanities has taken into consideration.

The pool of digital resources generated on the basis of Ibsen's life and works is relatively rich and manifold. The Ibsen Concordance, available online since 1993, was the first of its kind. It facilitated search for words in Ibsen's complete works. Over the years, digital Ibsen resources proliferated. Simple research questions that only twenty-five years ago required days and weeks or even months and years of work to determine are now potentially solved in a matter of seconds thanks to resources like the International Ibsen Bibliography, the digital edition of *Henrik Ibsen Skrifter*, the National Library of Norway's Ibsen site (formerly known as Ibsen.net), and IbsenStage.<sup>4</sup>

Set up by the Ibsen Centre at the University of Oslo in collaboration with the National Library of Norway and the Australian live performance database AusStage, IbsenStage is an event-based, relational performance database currently holding more than 23,000 records with data from Ibsen performances from 1850 until the present day.

Burdick et al. claim that

[d]igital humanities is born of the encounter between traditional humanities and computational methods. With the migration of cultural materials into networked environments, questions regarding the production, availability, validity, and stewardship of these materials present new challenges and opportunities for humanists. In contrast with most traditional forms of scholarship, digital approaches are conspicuously collaborative and generative. (Burdick 2012, 3)

The story behind IbsenStage is a striking illustration of this point. In its essentials, IbsenStage is a combination of four things: a collection of data, a way to organize the data, a set of procedures to facilitate interaction between data and users, and a set of research methodologies to enable scholars to use the database for research purposes. The collection itself stems from countless volumes

---

4 See [www.nb.no/bibliografi/ibsen/](http://www.nb.no/bibliografi/ibsen/); <http://ibsen.uio.no/>; <http://ibsen.nb.no/>.

of Ibsen scholarship and from more than seventeen years of gathering performance data from archives, libraries, and museums. The Repertoire Database of the website formerly known as Ibsen.net became “the first ever attempt to map exactly to what extent, by whom, when and where Ibsen’s plays have been staged in theatres all over the world” (Hanssen 2014). Ibsen.net was initiated by the National Ibsen Committee, appointed by the Norwegian Ministry of Culture to coordinate the plans for the Ibsen Year 2006 to commemorate the centennial of Ibsen’s death. In 2007, the editorial office of Ibsen.net moved to the National Library of Norway and eventually changed to its current domain name, Ibsen.nb.no. By March 2014, the Repertoire Database consisted of 9,670 records.<sup>5</sup>

AusStage was instigated by the Australasian Drama Studies Association in 1999, setting out to “address the need for research information in Australian theatre, drama and performance studies by building an index of performing arts events in Australia, and a directory of research resources on the performing arts”.<sup>6</sup> An online database was established. Around 2008, initiatives were taken to establish a tripartite collaboration. Initially, Ibsen.net’s contribution was to share all the data on *A Doll’s House* from the Repertoire Database with the AusStage team. A research project on the global production history of *A Doll’s House* conducted by Julie Holledge applied e-research methodologies developed by the AusStage team on the dataset (Bollen et al. 2009; Bollen and Holledge 2011; Holledge et al. 2016). The project was part of the international research project “Ibsen between Cultures” at the Ibsen Centre (Helland and Holledge 2013). In 2012, the three institutions came to a mutual agreement to expand the collaboration. The National Library agreed to share the total dataset of 9,670 records from the Repertoire Database. The Ibsen Centre at the University of Oslo agreed to set up and run IbsenStage, and AusStage agreed to share their database model and research methodologies. IbsenStage was launched in March 2014.

IbsenStage differs from the Repertoire Database in a number of ways. There are three main differences. First of all, the Repertoire Database is a production database, whereas IbsenStage is an event database. In IbsenStage, the event is specified as a

---

5 For the record, as the editor of Ibsen.net from the start in 2001 until 2014, I was myself in charge of the Repertoire Database. The database has not been updated since March 2014.

6 [www.ausstage.edu.au/pages/learn/about/project-history.html](http://www.ausstage.edu.au/pages/learn/about/project-history.html), accessed 7 March 2017.

distinct happening defined by title, date/s and venue; typically, a performance or series of performances at a venue. [...] Multiple presentations of the same production at different venues (e.g. touring productions) are recorded as separate events.<sup>7</sup>

Take as an example a theatre production performed over three consecutive seasons at a local venue, which, in addition, tours venues in ten cities. The Repertoire Database would record this production in one single record. In IbsenStage, on the other hand, the example would give altogether thirteen (associated) event records, one for each of the ten touring performances, plus three records for the consecutive seasonal runs. A theatre production is likely to change as a function of time and space. Instead of collapsing the production data into one single record, IbsenStage structures the data in a way which provides greater flexibility and accuracy.

Second, IbsenStage is a relational database, while the Repertoire Database is a hierarchal database. Like AusStage, IbsenStage has been developed on the basis of the relational model of data which means that data are organized into tables (or ‘relations’) of columns and rows. Each table represents one entity type, the rows represent instances of that entity type, and the corresponding columns represent values attributed to that instance. IbsenStage consists of six core tables: events, contributor, organization, venue, resource, and work. At the front end, an event record typically displays a combination of data from multiple tables. Take the event record of *Ghosts* at the Kammerspiele Berlin as an example.<sup>8</sup> The event name (Gespenster) and the date of the first performance (8 November 1906) are derived from the event table; the venue name (Kammerspiele) and the corresponding street address (Schumannstraße 13A, Berlin) are derived from the venue table; the name of the organization, that is the theatre institution in charge of the production (Deutsches Theater) is derived from the organization table; and finally, the contributors, here twelve fully named individuals, including the director Max Reinhardt, the designer Edvard Munch, and the leading cast members Agnes Sorma and Alexander Moissi, are derived from the contributors table. Every event is associated with one or (occasionally) more works, in IbsenStage defined as “the abstract conception of an event, typically (though not always) expressed as a material resource, such as a script or score”.<sup>9</sup> Here, the event in question is associated with one of Ibsen’s dramatic works,

---

7 <https://ibsenstage.hf.uio.no/learn/show/category/About/content/Data+Models>, accessed 7 March 2017.

8 <https://ibsenstage.hf.uio.no/pages/event/79324>, accessed 7 March 2017.

9 <https://ibsenstage.hf.uio.no/learn/show/category/About/content/Data+Models#work>, accessed 7 March 2017.

*Ghosts*. At the back end, SQL (Structured Query Language) is used to maintain the database and to perform queries according to specific research questions.

Third, IbsenStage is a research tool. Although the intention of the Repertoire Database was to build research infrastructure and facilitate research, the database gradually faced shortcomings due to the choice of database model. The Repertoire Database was developed as an integral part of the Ibsen.net website, which in its overall design was more targeted at the general public than the research community. IbsenStage is a research tool first and foremost because of a set of e-research methodologies and techniques inherited from the AusStage project. Every venue is georeferenced by using latitude and longitude coordinates according to the GPS system. A map interface applying Google Earth/Google Maps provides a tool to study the geographical distribution of events from the point of view of cartography. The contributor dataset, holding data on every individual who has contributed “in some capacity to the conception, production or presentation” of an Ibsen event, enables users to undertake analyses of artistic networks of contact and collaboration across time and space.<sup>10</sup>

Furthermore, IbsenStage is a research-driven project. Data exported from the Repertoire Database have been supplemented through research work, and new data are continuously being added as a result of individual research projects and collaborative projects involving cooperating institutions.

## 1.2 The quantitative approach

A shift from qualitative to quantitative approach implies a shift of focus from the particular to the general, from the extraordinary to the ordinary, from the atypical to the common. Instead of drawing general conclusions on the basis of analysis of a presumed representative sample of particulars, one starts with the general and raises new issues and problems and poses new questions on that basis. In quantitatively driven hard sciences, there are long traditions and more or less standardized procedures on how to carry out quantity research. In the humanities – historically “the province of close analysis of limited data

---

10 By way of cross-linking tables, IbsenStage creates a web of links which lends itself to relational analysis. The contributor-event table links each contributor with each event in which s/he participated; the contributor-function table joins contributor data with data about the function(s) the contributors had in the events (actor, director, designer, dramaturge, composer, translator, etc.); the contributor-contributor table links each contributor with all other contributors featured in the events in which s/he participated. To see how data retrieved from multiple tables are displayed online, see for example the contributor page of Max Reinhardt: <https://ibsenstage.hf.uio.no/pages/contributor/427222>.

sets” (Burdick 2012, 37) – quantitative research methods have been a case of experimentation only since the turn of the millennium.

One of the pioneers in using quantitative research methods in humanistic studies is Franco Moretti, who coined the term ‘distant reading’ in opposition to the established concept of close reading. The trouble with close reading, Moretti argues, is “that it necessarily depends on an extremely small canon”. At its core, close reading is “a theological exercise – very solemn treatment of very few texts taken very seriously” (Moretti 2013a, 48). Moretti’s alternative is distant reading – “where distance [...] *is a condition of knowledge*: it allows you to focus on units that are much smaller or much larger than the texts: devices, themes, tropes – or genres and systems” (Moretti 2013a, 48–49, italics in original).

Close reading would normally fit into the category of qualitative research methods, while distant reading as a procedure would point in the direction of quantitative research methods. Moretti’s term has indeed inspired my thesis in that I intend to perform a kind of distant reading of German Ibsen performances in the period 1876–1918.

In his article “Conjectures on World Literature”, originally published in 2000,<sup>11</sup> Moretti applies distant reading as a procedure of synthesizing research findings from a long list of scholars in order to analyse world literature as a system, his hypothesis being a possible law of literary evolution:

[I]n cultures that belong to the periphery of the literary system [...], the modern novel first arises not as an autonomous development but as a compromise between a western formal influence (usually French or English) and local materials. (Moretti 2013a, 50)

He finds support for the hypothesis, but also “that the compromise itself was taking rather different forms” and that “world literature was indeed a system – but a system of *variations*. The system was one, not uniform. The pressure from the Anglo-French core *tried* to make it uniform, but it could never fully erase the reality of difference” (Moretti 2013a, 54, 56, italics in original).

In his 2005 book *Graphs, Maps, Trees: Abstract Models for a Literary History*, Moretti applies distant reading in a slightly different fashion, more in line with how the term is understood today. Less focus is given to the synthesizing technique, and instead distant reading is now an approach

in which the reality of the text undergoes a process of deliberate reduction and abstraction. ‘Distant reading’, I have once called this type of approach; where distance is however not an obstacle, but *a specific form of knowledge*: fewer elements, hence

---

11 *New Left Review* 1 January – February 2000, 54–68; re-printed in Moretti 2013a, 43–62.

a sharper sense of their overall interconnection. Shapes, relations, structures. Forms. Models. (Moretti 2005, 1, italics in original)

As outlined by the book's title, Moretti uses models drawn innovatively from quantitative history (graphs), geography (maps), and evolutionary theory (trees) in order to study the rise of the novel in Britain, France, Japan, Denmark, Italy, Spain, India, and Nigeria, literary maps in village stories, clues as a device in British detective fiction, and stylistic variations in the use of free indirect speech in novels across time and space.

Moretti's preferred object of study is the modern novel, and his preferred discipline is book history. To what extent is Moretti's methodological approach applicable to the field of theatre studies? First of all, there are parallels between the synthesizing technique in Moretti's "Conjectures on World Literature" and the process of gathering and recording performance data undertaken since 2001. IbsenStage does indeed represent an instance of what Moretti (2013a, 48) describes as "a patchwork of other people's research". Since the vast majority of the records in IbsenStage are based on data from the Repertoire Database, it is a patchwork of work and research carried out by the staff of Ibsen.net. Their work in turn was based on information gathered from thousands and thousands of sources of various kinds (theatre programmes, playbills, theatre reviews, theatre ads, repertoire lists, research articles, monographs, databases, online resources, etc.) synthesized into a database.<sup>12</sup>

Second, a parallel could be drawn between Moretti's "process of deliberate reduction and abstraction" and the design of IbsenStage. When studying the geographical distribution of Ibsen performances on a map, the performances are represented by identical-looking drops. Individual traits are erased. Moreover, IbsenStage presents a careful selection of events data while remaining silent about data left out. By primarily focusing on metadata like names and dates, the database reveals next to nothing about the artistic qualities and the individual characteristics of the performances as such. The general idea, however, is that the volume of events leaves us no other choice. The quantitative approach requires a selective procedure.

The shift from qualitative to quantitative approach is not a radical break, but a shift of emphasis. In two regards I depart from Moretti's line of reasoning. "Quantitative research provides a type of data which is ideally independent of interpretations", he claims at the beginning of his book *Graphs, Maps, Trees*, adding that "that is of course also its limit: it provides *data*, not interpretation" (Moretti 2005, 9, italics in original). Here, Moretti is at odds with one of the ten-

---

12 Cf. the appendix for a survey of archival sources used in the process of building up the database.

ets of hermeneutics, that there is no escape from interpretation. Selecting data for analysis is not value-neutral activity. Designing a data model involves making judgments according to a set of criteria for inclusion and exclusion. These judgments are not necessarily devoid of interpretation. In IbsenStage, artistic functions are emphasized at the expense of technical functions: set designers, costume designers, lighting designers, and sound designers are recorded, but set constructors, costume makers, light board operators, and sound operators are not. Thus, the interplay between art and craft is intentionally left out of consideration. The database presents the stage history of Ibsen's plays first and foremost through the lens of artists.

Moretti also does not address the fact that it is hard to draw a sharp line between quantitative and qualitative research. My point of departure is quantitative. To begin with, all German events covering the period 1876–1918 – the sum of which constitutes the initial forty-two years of the German stage history of Ibsen's plays – are regarded as equally significant. Yet on that basis new questions are posed, and new problems raised. In the further process of interrogating the dataset, quantitative and qualitative considerations are likely to walk hand in hand.

### 1.3 From literary to theatre studies

The question of whether Ibsen wrote literary works or theatre plays represents an age-old debate in Ibsen scholarship. At the opening of his biography, Michael Meyer declares that he considers Ibsen “as a man writing for the theatre rather than for the printed page, and it is primarily from that viewpoint that I have written this book” (1971, xvii). By contrast, Jon Nygaard claims that Ibsen “insisted on writing books for readers, not scripts for the theatre”, that his dramas are “literature, not theatre” – they “are literary texts pretending to be, and by many misunderstood or misinterpreted to be, theatre” (1997, 97). There are at least two ways to solve this conundrum, either by acknowledging that Ibsen wrote his dramatic works with a double audience in mind, readers *and* spectators, as Egil Törnqvist (1997) does, or, simply, by leaving the question of authorial intent aside.

Bourdieu's model of the field of cultural production implies a break with “the narcissistic relationship inscribed in the representation of intellectual work as a ‘creation’” (1993, 192). His proposition is a non-essentialist, generic, and sociological approach to works of art and literature. Bourdieu claims that

[t]he ideology of the inexhaustible work of art, or of ‘reading’ as re-creation, masks [...] the fact that the work is in fact made not twice, but hundreds of times, thousands of times, by all those who have an interest in it, who find a material or symbolic profit in reading it, classifying it, decoding it, commenting on it, reproducing it, criticizing it, combating it, knowing it, possessing it. (Bourdieu 1996, 171)

On the theoretical level, my thesis is informed by Bourdieu’s model. It resists any temptation to lend supremacy to the textual side of Ibsen’s oeuvre. Instead, Ibsen’s works (and the author himself) will be studied within the framework of the field of cultural production.

Theatre and literature represent different subfields, operating according to a distinctly different set of mechanisms. IbsenStage reads Ibsen’s oeuvre as an endless chain of theatrical events scattered in time and space. To get a proper sense of these events, they must be viewed in the context of theatre and performance culture. Schechner distinguishes between drama, theatre, script, and performance. Drama is a “written text, score, scenario, instruction, plan, or map” and belongs to “the domain of the author, the composer, scenarist, shaman”; script is “the basic code of the events” and belongs to “the domain of the teacher, guru, master”; theatre signifies “the event enacted by a specific group of performers [...]”. Usually, the theater is the manifestation or representation of the drama and/or script”, theatre is “the domain of the performers”; performance, finally, is “the whole constellation of events [...] that takes place in both performers and audience from the time the first spectator enters the field of performance [...] to the time the last spectator leaves”, the performance is “the domain of the audience” (Schechner 2003, 70–71).

Schechner’s taxonomy is fruitful, all the more since Bourdieu does not pay any attention to these concepts.<sup>13</sup> Schechner admits that the boundaries vary greatly from culture to culture and situation to situation (ibid.). To make his model applicable for the purpose of the present study, awareness is required of social groups operating at the intersection between the domains. In the case of the German stage, drama was the domain not only of the author, Ibsen, but also of his German translators. For a drama by Ibsen to materialize in the eyes of the German public, it had to be translated. In the hands of the theatrical agencies, responsible for distributing Ibsen’s works to the theatres, his dramas transformed into playtexts. However, as will be detailed below, more often than

---

13 Bourdieu writes about theatre as a genre next to novel and poetry, i.e. he uses ‘theatre’ where strictly speaking ‘drama’ would be the more appropriate term (cf. e.g. Bourdieu 1996, 114). Yet more than Bourdieu himself his English translator, Susan Emanuel, is to blame for this inaccuracy, as *théâtre* in French may indeed refer to the dramatic genre as such or even a specific set of dramatic works (as in *le théâtre de Molière*).



not the editions printed by the publishing houses were distributed to book shops as well as theatres. Hence, not only theatrical agents but also printers, editors, and publishers were acting as mediating bodies within the distribution system of the theatre industry.

Any theatre studies approach to Ibsen rests on the basic premise that performance and dramatic text are to be separated from one another and that a performance constitutes a work of art in its own right, to be studied on its own terms irrespective of any material representation of the dramatic text as such, whether in the form of a manuscript, book, script, or score. By implication, this means that the relationship between a drama and its performance is non-symbiotic and abstract.

IbsenStage has inherited its data model – specifically designed for recording information about the performing arts – from AusStage. In this model, the drama or the dramatic text is subsumed under the work category, whereas performance is subsumed under the event category. Leaning on the AusStage model, Jonathan Bollen and Julie Holledge define work as

an abstract concept which defines the identity of a collection of texts and events: the play script in its various versions and translations, and productions of the play live on stage or recorded for dissemination by film, radio, television, Internet and so on. (Bollen and Holledge 2011, 228)

In other words, as Bollen says elsewhere, Ibsen's *A Doll's House* is the “overarching” work that encompasses a whole collection of texts and events: the original manuscript, the first edition, the premiere production in 1879, the Wilhelm Lange translation, and “all publications, translations, productions, and adaptations since” (Bollen 2016, 626). Work is an abstract entity, whereas the event invariably refers to a specific happening, defined by date and venue. Unless otherwise noted, I shall in what follows use the terms ‘event’ and ‘work’ as defined in the AusStage/IbsenStage model.

## 1.4 From textual analysis to data analysis

The present study is written in the age of information and big data. My investigations are rooted in data analysis and not within the framework of textual analysis. The primary object of study is a dataset of event records stored in a relational database. A standard procedure for preparing a dataset for analysis is to transform the data into visual form. The graphs, maps, charts, and tables of this study have been generated on the basis of the IbsenStage dataset according to a two-step process. The first step involved making queries written in compliance

with SQL – a formalized language enabling users to engage in a ‘dialogue’ with the relational database. As queries return only raw data in the form of a result set (a set of rows from the database), the second step entailed transforming the result sets into visualizations using software tools of various kind. Visualizations have a long prehistory as a procedure to make data “speak to the eyes” (Friendly 2008, 22). The obviously greater reward lies in making them ‘speak to the mind’. With the advent of digital humanities, visualizations have assumed new functions. Rather than serving as mere illustrations, they begin to act as arguments in their own right. Accordingly, my visualizations will tend to appear at the beginning and not the end of a line of reasoning. They are not inserted to illustrate arguments or underline conclusions, but to initiate the process of questioning conventional assumptions and testing new hypotheses. Since I am adopting methodologies pioneered by the AusStage team, I should add that my use of visualization techniques and data interrogation as a research methodology is indebted to collaborative research carried out by scholars affiliated with the AusStage project and the Centre for Ibsen Studies (cf. Bollen and Holledge 2011; Helland and Holledge 2013; Holledge et al. 2016).

A relational database is not an object one would normally set out to ‘read’ as if it were a text. As a cultural form, the database complies with its own ‘language’, distinctly different from the language of the linearly structured narrative. As the object of study changes from textual entities to data, the shift has theoretical and methodological implications that must be kept in mind. First, data analysis inevitably rests on the quality of the dataset. More often than not, the data analyst cannot necessarily take for granted that his or her dataset is complete. IbsenStage clearly represents the largest knowledge base of performance data in the history of Ibsen scholarship, and the sheer process of gathering performance data has already expanded our knowledge, but it needs to be stressed that it is inconceivable that the database will ever reach completion.

Second, unlike literary texts that create fictional universes, a database is generally considered to stand in a more straightforward relationship to the ‘real’ world. Dates and names are either correct or not, they are not subjected to interpretation. Yet Johanna Drucker maintains that data do not “pre-exist their parameterization” and are “taken not given, constructed as an interpretation of the phenomenal world, not inherent in it” (2014, 128). Neither do data visualizations in themselves provide privileged access to matters of fact above other modes of representation. “Visualizations are always interpretations”, Drucker writes, adding that “data does not have an inherent visual form that merely gives rise to a graphic expression” (ibid., 7). Visualizations are an effective means to identify patterns in datasets, to form hypotheses and develop research questions on their basis, but above all they provide a point of departure for further data interrogation.