

The Reception of the *Vilna Troupe* in the French and Romanian Press (1920s and 1930s)

Camelia Crăciun¹, Chiara Lastraioli²

¹University of Bucharest

²Maison des Sciences sociales et des Humanités Val-de-Loire (MSH VdL) / CESR - University of Tours - FR

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Fellow: Assoc. Prof. Camelia Crăciun

From University of Bucharest
Host laboratory in region Centre-Val de Loire: Maison des Sciences sociales et des Humanités Val de Loire (MSH VdL) / CESR - University of Tours - FR

Host scientist: Prof. Chiara Lastraioli

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ABSTRACT

Originally created in the Tsarist Empire, the Yiddish-language company the Vilna Troupe received international recognition due to its large national appeal to worldwide Jewish (especially Yiddish-speaking) communities and to its innovative performances for the non-Jewish audience. Aside from its strong ideological impact for the Jewish public, the company succeeded in transferring cultural trends and theatrical practices across Europe, becoming an international brand and a facilitator of crosscultural cooperation. While the importance of the company for the history of Yiddish theatre and for the Jewish cultural life in general has been recently documented (I. Bercovici, D. Caplan, A. Chiriac, Camelia Crăciun, N. Underwood), the impact of the Vilna Troupe beyond the Jewish community has been neglected, despite being remarkable. Therefore, my research focused on the impact that the Vilna Troupe had on the non-Jewish audience across Europe in terms of cultural transfer and political reception using mainly the mainstream press (but also archival sources and memoirs).

1- Introduction

The fellowship period was particularly useful for exploring the comparative framework of my research, namely the case of the Vilna Troupe tours in France and their respective reception.

2- Research details

While at LE STUDIUM-MSH Val de Loire, I investigated comparatively the distinct grounds of the success that the company enjoyed in France (1922, then 1920s and sporadically 1930s) and Romania (1923-1927 and sporadically 1930s), taking into consideration the different situations of the Yiddish-speaking communities, the reception of the Jewish culture among the non-Jewish public and the level of awareness regarding the avantgardist

theatre practices disseminated by the theatre company.

3- Results and discussion

During my two-and-a-half-month residence at Le Studium/MSH/CESR, I researched the French press which was relevant for the theatrical life in the early 1920s, as well as the secondary literature concerning the activity of Yiddish theatre in interwar France.

While a Research Fellow at Le Studium/MSH/CESR, I also had the initiative of organizing a workshop around the question “Why do we (still) need literary studies today?”, the event taking place on the 20th of November 2025 at Maison des Sciences de l’Homme Val de Loire & Université de Tours (CESR) with the support of Le Studium Institute for Advanced Studies & Université d’Orléans. The purpose of

the workshop was 1) to bring together scholars specialised on literary and theatre studies in the region, 2) to promote our research projects within the academic community in order to identify potential collaboration, as well as 3) to foster connections and collaboration between the current fellows at Le Studium. The participants were colleagues **Nancy Calomarde** (Le Studium Visiting Researcher/Faculty of Philosophy and Humanities, National University of Cordoba, Argentina and REMELICE, University of Orleans); **Liudmyla Harmash** (Le Studium Visiting Researcher/H.S. Skovoroda National Pedagogical University Kharkiv, Ukraine and ICD, University of Tours) and myself. While Nancy Calomarde spoke about *Avant-garde and migration in Latin American literature* and Liudmyla Harmash on *Literature as a Space of Recovery: Ukrainian War Writing and Cultural Memory*, I took the opportunity of presenting my work to an interested audience, *Researching Yiddish Theatre between challenges and opportunities*.

4- Perspectives of future collaborations with the host laboratory

Due to the fact that the workshop gathered colleagues from ICD, REMELICE, POLLEN, CESR and MSH labs who attended our event together with our Le Studium Fellows, we benefitted from the discussions and suggestions following our individual lectures.

While working on my project, I also used the opportunity of attending academic events in both Orleans (REMELICE and POLLEN) and Tours Universities (ICD and CESR), therefore supporting the creation of a growing network of colleagues and potential collaborators.

Due to these contacts already established, new projects on theatre history and reception studies are planned to emerge.

5- Articles published in the framework of the fellowship

The research results concerning the French case of the reception of the Vilna Troupe represent an organic part of the comparative framework of the monograph I am currently preparing on the activity of Vilna Troupe in interwar Romania.

6- Acknowledgements

During the writing process of the monograph, I received the research support of Le Studium Institute for Advanced Study, which will be acknowledged in the final version of the manuscript of the book. Special thanks to Dr. Aurelien Montague, who secured the organization and the logistics of the workshop, as well as facilitating a series of professional meetings with potential collaborators, speeding up the process tremendously due to my specific time constraints. Also, I am really grateful to MSH (to Prof. Xavier Rodier and Ms. Lydia Seabra) and to CESR, where Prof. Chiara Lastraioli, my host at the University of Tours, made my whole academic experience and integration extremely productive.