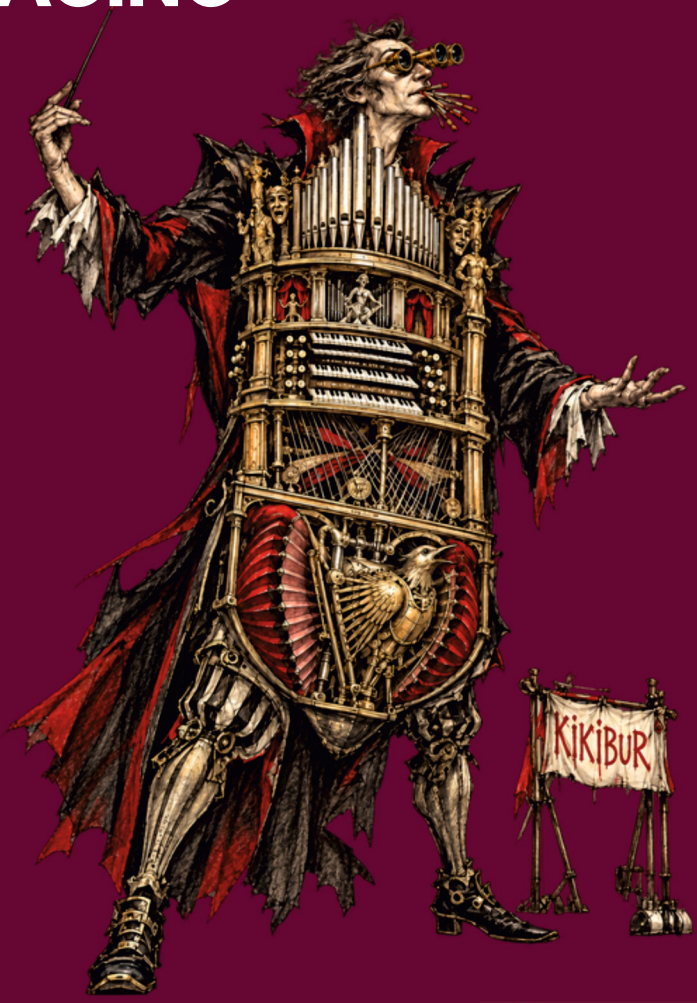
LONG THEATRE'S JOURNEY INTO STAGING



ALEX TEODORESCU

ARHIVA REGIZORALĂ

Presa Universitară Clujeană

Alex Teodorescu

•

Long Theatres's Journey into Staging

Alex Teodorescu

Long Theatre's Journey into Staging

Presa Universitară Clujeană
2026

Reviewers:

Associate Professor Gelu Badea, PhD
Associate Professor Mihai Constantin, PhD

ISBN 978-606-37-3172-3

© 2026 The Author. All rights reserved. No part of this publication may be reproduced or transmitted, in any form or by any means, without prior written permission of the author.

Universitatea Babeş-Bolyai
Presa Universitară Clujeană
Director: Codruţa Săcelean
Str. Hasdeu nr. 45-51
400371 Cluj-Napoca, România
Tel./fax: (+40)-264-597.401
E-mail: editura@ubbcluj.ro
http://www.editura.ubbcluj.ro/

Contents

Introduction 13
I.1. Arhiva regizorală – What We Did 13
I.2. The Aims of This Book 19
I.3. The Route through the Book 24

A Note on Method 27
N.1. The Corpus and the Protocol 27
N.2. Transcription, Quotation, Verification 31
N.3. The Limits of the Corpus 33

1. Preparing a Production and Authorship 39
1.1. The Director
between Author and Coordinator 39
1.2. Approaches in Europe and Beyond 50
1.3. The Historical Arc: The Performer,
the Large Stage, the Return 65
1.4. AI and the Sole Author 78
1.5. Ethical Limits:
Exploitation, Extraction, Colonialism 104

2. Where the Journey Begins 111
2.1. A Map of the First Answers. 111
2.2. The Table and the Stage 131

3. Preparation That Erases Itself 141
3.1. The Paradox of the Denied Method 141
3.2. Countervoices: Preparation That Liberates ..161

4. Discreet Authority 169
4.1. Authority Recognised, Not Imposed 169
4.2. Other Masks of Power 184
4.3. P.S. — The Sole Author and the Cost..... 191

5. The Trace as Evidence..... 195
5.1. Ephemerality and the 'Vain' Attempt..... 195
5.2. Perceptions of Archives 204
5.3. Pedagogy as Archive..... 213
5.4. Sava's Trace. A Small Tribute. 220

Conclusion..... 223

Appendix

Appendix 1. Interview Protocol
Arhiva Regizorală..... 231
Interviews on the Creative Process
and Preparing a Production 231
Indicative Questions. Preparation
and Analysis of the Production..... 233
Collaboration and Structuring Rehearsals. 233
Training, Pedagogy and Influences..... 234
Artistic Practice
and the Future of Directing 235

Appendix 2. List of Interviews 236

Appendix 3. Extracts from Director's Notebooks in Arhiva Regizorală 237

Bibliography 257
Academic and Specialist Works 257
Legal Documents, Reports and Online Resources 262
Sources Cited Indirectly 263

Acknowledgements

As with everything I write, I dedicate this book to Adnana and Codruța, who put up with me and support me in my professional life.

I would like to offer special thanks to all the directors who gave interviews and contributed materials to Arhiva Regizorală, for taking time out of their work and for placing their trust in a project just starting out.

I would also particularly like to thank my colleagues at Arhiva Regizorală, who helped deliver this project in a much shorter time than anticipated. To Mihai Gligan in particular, I wish a smooth path through his own research into the teaching of directing in Romania.

Last but not least, I thank the project's partners, particularly the University of Arts in Târgu Mureș and Radu Olăreanu, for their willingness to respond to every request for collaboration.

Epigraph:

'True art is only that which does not reveal itself; and there is nothing in which one must take greater pains than in concealing it: for if it is revealed, one immediately loses the trust and esteem of others.'

Baldassare Castiglione, *Curteanul* (Book I, ch. XXVI)

Introduction

I.1. Arhiva regizorală – What We Did

There is an increasing discussion in academia of *practice as research* as a scientifically valid research method, particularly in the performing arts. In theatre, since Peter Brook, the emphasis seems to have shifted from the product to the process. Imagine my surprise when, in 2021, I began my doctoral research on the director's notebook, with all the enthusiasm of a first-year doctoral student, ready to visit archives, investigate primary materials and, ultimately, learn 'how it's done': there were no archives, no primary materials and not much of a guide to 'how to do' artistic research on this subject.

The reality is that preparing a production leaves few public traces. Axel Schmidt and Arnulf Deppermann argue that most research in sociology, theatre and *performance* studies focuses on the product, while rehearsal processes are rarely studied systematically.[1] In Romania, director's notebooks are

[1] Axel Schmidt and Arnulf Deppermann, "Editorial: Social Interaction and the Theater Rehearsal," Human Studies 46 (2023): 192, https://doi.org/10.1007/s10746-023-09678-2.

not consistently archived; there is no systematic practice of filing the materials a director leaves behind on leaving a theatre or after their death. Apart from a very recently established research centre at Babeș-Bolyai University (UBB), I found virtually no archive or library in the country where director's notebooks could be consulted: neither at specialist universities, nor at theatres (except the Hungarian State Theatre in Cluj), nor among the Romanian Academy's holdings.

In 2025, I set out at much greater length[2] why I firmly believe in the importance of archiving director's notebooks. I will only briefly revisit the arguments. First, the director's notebook constitutes an element of intangible cultural heritage, an indisputable element with a historical value of its own. Second, it is a repository of the director's initial intention, an intention for the production that will always be distorted/changed/perhaps-even-lost on the way to the stage, because of the shortcomings of the theatrical process and the creative interventions of the other team members. How can we know what the director wanted to construct without examining source material, seeing only the finished construction? Timmy De Laet also supports this argument in *Inside the Rehearsal Room*, stating: 'director's notebooks are

[2] TEODORESCU, Alex, „Caietul de regie românesc sau Antespectacole de teatru in România", Cluj-Napoca, Presa Universitară Clujeană, 2025.

tangible documents in which annotative strategies are visualized and become perceptible [...] These have yielded up insights into the meaningmaking processes directors undertake in their pre-rehearsal period.'[3]

Third, the director's notebook is the basis of the director's (related) rights and a record of their working technique. With so few directors writing publicly about their understanding of their own art or the techniques they use, an archive of director's notebooks can and will provide particularly valuable material for the younger generation of directors, who can encounter their predecessors' *modus operandi* through these documents.

Starting from this identified need, I created *Arhiva Regizorală* (the Directing Archive), a project to research and archive intangible cultural heritage in Romania, delivered by Asociația Învață de mic and co-funded by the Administration of the National Cultural Fund (AFCN). The project aims to create an online platform bringing together director's notebooks, filmed interviews with Romanian directors and university teaching materials, such as curricula and course models, to preserve ways of constructing director's notebooks. We managed to conduct 20 interviews with Romanian directors. If we estimate the number of directors currently

[3] Timmy De Laet et al., quoted in Robert Marsden, Inside the Rehearsal Room (London: Bloomsbury Methuen Drama, 2021).

working actively in Romania at 100—even a generous estimate—this means that we obtained accounts of working and preparatory processes from a fifth of the profession. We write this not to boast, but as a form of real scholarly validation of the research undertaken.

The model we believe could be developed further - a Romanian theatre archive, as envisaged by Matthew Reason:

> *Instead of containing the original thing itself, therefore, the performing arts archive represents the formal collecting, cataloguing, preserving and consecrating of traces of past performances, but crucially not the performances themselves. Such performance archives can consist of almost anything, including but not limited to theatre programmes, brochures, leaflets, photographs, videos and sound recordings, press releases and press cuttings, details of marketing strategies, figures of ticket sales, contracts with performers and confidential budgets, correspondence, descriptions of sponsorship arrangements, venue plans, set and costume designs, stage and lighting plans, production notes, playscripts (sometimes annotated), interviews with directors or actors, actual costumes and examples of stage properties and so on.*[4]

[4] Matthew Reason, Documentation, Disappearance and the Representation of Live Performance (Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan, 2006), 37.

Until we can create such an archive, however, we have the present one. This book is a direct outcome of the research conducted this year, research rushed by delays in signing cultural funding contracts and already under pressure from the extremely short time-scales AFCN funding allows. The book draws on 20 interviews with contemporary directors, available in full on the project website: www.arhivaregizorala.ro The interviews follow a shared protocol to ensure thematic consistency, not to compare directors, but to demonstrate the real variety of working methods in Romanian theatre and theatre education. The book is to be launched at six workshop-style promotional events in six university centres in Romania.

This is certainly not the first book of interviews with directors. In Romania, alongside the lengthy contributions in Revista Teatrul, Miruna Runcan and C.C. Buricea-Mlinarcic's *Cinci Divane Ad-Hoc* (1994) stands out. Internationally, perhaps the most relevant title is Giannachi and Luckhurst's *On directing* (1999), in whose footsteps Arhiva Regizorală attempts to follow. I have consistently said that Arhiva Regizorală is a project made by directors (myself and Mihai Gligan, whom I take this opportunity to thank) for directors. The interviews are not intended as a set of anecdotes, a collection of collaborators and names or a constant exercise in *dropping production titles*.

They seek to offer real reflection on the techniques and working processes each director employs. This kind of investigation addresses a gap in contemporary theatre research.

Last but not least, to address possible concerns: *Theatre's Long Road to the Stage* and Arhiva Regizorală are not monuments to the autocratic director or the dictatorship of the director. We are not developing an argument against improvisation, collective creation or collaborators contributions to theatre. Arhiva Regizorală seeks to recover techniques, but also a history of ways of working, within the directing profession. In this respect, perhaps it is time to stop treating the history of Romanian theatre as 'something' that is naturally lost because, after all, theatre is 'something' ephemeral: "If we consider performance as 'of' disappearance, if we think of the ephemeral as that which 'vanishes,' and if we think of performance as the antithesis of preservation, do we limit ourselves to an understanding of performance predetermined by a cultural habituation to the patrilineal, West-identified (arguably whitecultural) logic of the archive?"[5]

[5] Rebecca Schneider, „Performance Remains Again," in Archaeologies of Presence: Art, Performance, and the Persistence of Being, ed. Gabriella Giannachi, Nick Kaye and Michael Shanks (London: Routledge, 2012), 65.

I.2. The Aims of This Book

There is a paradox I have noticed in almost all the interviews we conducted. The directors we interviewed tend to deny having a working method. Yet those same interviews reveal that they have a very clear method (or at least a set of techniques), which they either apply consistently or change deliberately and knowingly. Mihai Ranin told us: 'I haven't said anything about my working techniques, because they're my own and, how shall I put it? I haven't formalised them so that I can articulate them as such.'[6] There is, then, an inherent contradiction between how some directors define their own work and how that work unfolds. My hypothesis is that this stems from a characteristic of theatrical work: it is work that disappears.

When we watch a production, its rehearsals are hidden from us. The failures, the searching, the techniques are hidden from us (even when, as in post-dramatic theatre, those techniques are shown to us). We never see the actor trying to remember their lines; we do not see the technical team's efforts; we see nothing beyond what we are meant to see. This is not a matter of style, but of theatre's need to control its own meanings by limiting the spectator's perception.

[6] Interview with director Mihai Ranin, Arhiva Regizorală, July 2026.

We find that directors retain the same reflex of concealing their own preparatory work. Rehearsal is where the director plays their role. It is normal, then, for directors to conceal the work they do to prepare for rehearsal. Perhaps not normal, but at least customary. Moreover, whereas theatre rehearsals leave concrete traces—from technical elements to rehearsal sheets, notes and jottings, rehearsal reports and much else—a director's method and preparation can sometimes be very easy to conceal, as Eugen Gyemant attests: 'I mean, actually, at the same time I'm also doing a kind of analysis in my head of what's going to happen. For me, that's the most important stage. […] Usually, at the start of the preparation, I always have this burst of diligence and I start writing all sorts of things down... But I make the notes in my head.'[7]

This book seeks to make the work of preparing a production visible in all its forms, including improvisational and collaborative practices. I do not wish to claim that 'all productions are prepared by the director before the first rehearsal' or that 'THIS is what preparing a production looks like'. Eugenio Barba wrote that every head is a different jungle, and that he did not wish to establish a school or a method to share with others. He could, however, recall his

[7] Interview with director Eugen Gyemant, Arhiva Regizorală, June 2026.

experiences.[8] We believe that the work of preparing a production is becoming increasingly relevant today, at a time when we do not know what the limits of artificial intelligence in theatre and art are, or what they will be.

With current models from major AI companies, creating a production project that is usable and artistically valid may cost only a few hundred euros; perhaps it is time for the director's work to cease being concealed. With the US Copyright Office having concluded in a report that using generative technologies to assist creative work does not in any way affect that person's intellectual property rights,[9] and with Romania granting theatre directors only related, interpretative rights rather than copyright over the production, preserving the method and work that go into a production may soon become a matter of survival.

Art seems to distinguish itself from the other available forms of generative creation precisely through its human quality. People (still) hang paintings made by humans on the walls of their homes and galleries because they are made by humans,

---

[8] Eugenio Barba, On Directing and Dramaturgy: Burning the House (London: Routledge, 2010), *passim.*

[9] U.S. Copyright Office, Copyright and Artificial Intelligence, Part 2: Copyrightability (Washington, DC: U.S. Copyright Office, January 2025), Executive Summary, https://www.copyright.gov/ai/Copyright-and-Artificial-Intelligence-

even if they promote their gallery online using AI-generated elements. Can directors today still afford to maintain the image of a production that 'happens', seemingly without effort on their part? I predict that making the trace of this working process visible will become a production's mark of value in the near future. Yet we cannot help wondering whether writing is the best form in which to elaborate and preserve this work.

Arhiva Regizorală and this book are intended as a comparative map of practices for students and young directors, rather than a book of recipes. The research corpus itself contains an inherent contradiction: some directors affirm the need for a clear methodology, while others consider method a danger. The contradiction is visible not only in this research, but across the whole field of books on directing written over the last hundred years. Theatre is an art of tension, and the young director reading these pages will have to find their own way among these contradictions. Although, on the basis of the interviews, we might invite directors to find their own ways, because the decision is never final.

Beyond its educational purpose, the book also addresses theatre researchers, who have so far lacked a research ecosystem concerning the art of directing in Romania. Unfortunately, Romanian theatre history has focused much more on preserving productions than on preserving the techniques used in them. We

all know famous productions, such as David Esrig's Nepotul lui Rameau. We know very little about how that production was actually made. And this preparatory work and the sum of the techniques present in Romanian theatre today, passed from director to director through teaching and productions, are even less accessible to researchers abroad. This is why the book and the Archive seek to be as accessible as possible to international researchers, in the hope of promoting Romanian directing. We hope that those who use the Archive's materials will also travel what David Esrig called the *path from information to inspiration*:

> *The theatre I have made and built through a methodical journey begins with my conviction that art is, first and foremost, a lived journey, and much less a finished commodity offered up for sale. This quality was captured perfectly by [Florin Vidamski's doctoral thesis], and for that reason it documents with what I would call pedagogical precision the path I also call "from Information to Inspiration".*[10]

This book deliberately begins with this justification of my position as its author. Unfortunately or fortunately, the position from which I write is perhaps not quite as academic as it ought to be. I am a director. I coordinate Arhiva Regizorală. I work with students in academia. In other words: I am

[10] David Esrig, „Cuvânt înainte", in Florin Vidamski, Metoda David Esrig – de la informație la inspirație (Cluj-Napoca: Eikon, 2018), 25.

subjective. I invite others to consult Arhiva Regizorală and write objective studies based on its contents, and leave them to do so. I have written that the difference between conventional textual analysis and a director's analysis is that the latter always carries an intention on the director's part, which guides the act of analysis and automatically makes it profoundly subjective. In the same way, my analysis of the research corpus underlying this book is guided by my own beliefs as a director and educator.

Academic works most often aspire to be like a photograph. I cannot be a photographer of Romanian directing, but at most a witness. A witness in Adam Ledger's sense: a participant who moves away from the passivity of observation and takes part in what they observe. This participation leads to a subjective account that mentions only certain aspects of what has been seen and presents its own interpretation and understanding of the phenomenon observed.[11]

I.3. The Route through the Book

The book follows a simple structure. This introduction is followed by a note on method: an indictment, in fact, of my subjectivity, but one that must be acknowledged academically. The first chapter

[11] Adam J. Ledger, The Director and Directing: Craft, Process and Aesthetic in Contemporary Theatre (Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan, 2019), 110.

defines my position on the book's main arguments. There follows a chapter on the starting points of a theatre production, a section on the director's *sprezzatura*, a chapter on authority and a final part on archiving the director's work.

At the end of the book is a selection of visual archival materials, with extracts from the director's notebooks documented through Arhiva Regizorală. The interviews and archival materials are available entirely free of charge at www.arhivaregizorala.ro, both in the interests of complete transparency concerning the research corpus and to make the intangible cultural heritage of Romanian directing accessible to all interested users.

This book is the result of research based on 20 interviews with theatre directors from Romania. It does not seek to offer a comprehensive portrait of Romanian theatre directing, but rather to take a first step towards using the Directorial Archive for the systematic study of Romanian directing and the preservation of the work of theatre directors in Romania. In an increasingly precarious cultural landscape, in a world where patterns of consumption are drifting ever further away from theatre, in a world where AI is replacing so many professions, the time has come for directors to protect their craft.

Alex Teodorescu directs productions, writes plays, leads workshops, and listens to stories. He believes that theatre begins where certainty ends and questioning begins. He works with children, actors, people with disabilities, and emerging directors. For him, archiving the work of theatre directors is not a matter of pride, but an act of responsibility towards the profession and its ability to safeguard the means through which performances are created.

The Long Road of Theatre to the Stage was published as part of the Directorial Archive project, implemented by Asociația Învață de Mic and co-funded by the Administration of the National Cultural Fund (AFCN). The project does not necessarily reflect the views of the Administration of the National Cultural Fund. AFCN bears no responsibility for the content of the project or for how its results may be used. These remain entirely the responsibility of the funding beneficiary.



ISBN 978-606-37-3172-3