

# The Diaries of Ignaz Siege. Nineteenth-Century Theatre Practice in the Habsburg Monarchy from the Perspective of a Main Protagonist<sup>1</sup>

*Patrick Aprent*

## *I. Introduction*

The Siege family and their theatre company provide an exceptional example of German-speaking provincial-theatre practice in the Habsburg monarchy of the nineteenth century. The family's theatre business lasted over four generations, covering 120 years and operating in more than eighty locations across Central Europe. The beginning of the family dynasty was marked by Josef Siege's (1790–1863?) establishment of a travelling theatre troupe in the 1810s, which was eventually taken over by his son Ignaz Siege (1818–1887) in the middle of the century. Being accustomed to this role from an early age, Ignaz consolidated a consistent and successful theatre business, which was continued into its third and fourth generation by Adolf (1856–1925) and Gustav Siege (1881–1947).

Among the variety of mostly unexplored sources documenting their theatre practice, the preserved diaries of the second-generation theatre director and manager Ignaz Siege are of particular interest as they represent a unique kind of source material. Consisting of seven volumes with entries starting in the 1840s, the diaries give first-hand insight into more than forty years of theatre management in the provinces of the Habsburg Empire and beyond. They comprise valuable information on general administration, ensemble composition, staging practice, audience perception, revenue, repertoire and programmes while also containing intimate notes regarding the Siege family relations and personal events.

These diaries constitute a substantial contribution to nineteenth-century theatre-history research, and a closer investigation of this remarkable source may prove worthwhile for several reasons. Firstly, it accounts for the marginalised practice of 'provincial theatres', historically and today vaguely understood as professional theatre operations *in* the provinces and *outside* the major cultural and political centres. Starting as an itinerant theatre company in their formative years, the Siege family operated in peripheral regions of the Habsburg monarchy, from small villages to middle-sized cities such as Laibach/Ljubljana (SI), Innsbruck (AT) and Budweis/České Budějovice (CZ). Under Ignaz Siege, they later

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<sup>1</sup> This article presents preliminary results of my PhD research, which I am currently working on at the Institute of Culture Studies and Theatre History (IKT) at the Austrian Academy of Sciences (OeAW).

‘settled’, leasing permanent theatres, so-called ‘feste/stehende Theater’, from the 1850s onwards. However, even then different forms of mobility remained to be key aspects of their theatre operation, as this article will show in more detail. Therefore, the Siege’s practice exemplifies in many respects what constituted common practice for most theatre professionals at the time<sup>2</sup> and helps to address several research gaps: while provincial theatres ever since held a peripheral position within theatre historiography, the continued existence of itinerant theatre throughout the century as well as an in-depth examination of theatre-mobilities are specific subjects which invite a more thorough investigation too. Secondly, Siege’s diaries are thus all the more important especially since they offer detailed information about the life and work of theatre professionals that is not contained in other sources or literature. These personal testimonials – written on a daily basis and without the apparent intention of being revealed to the public – capture everyday practices that were not considered noteworthy in the process of normative knowledge production on theatre. Thereby, the diaries partially preserve what theatre historian Stefan Hulfeld describes as an essential form of theatre, one that was transferred orally or via practical work within theatre families but remained – in contrast to scholarly work – excluded from theatre literature.<sup>3</sup> Finally, the diaries also provide a change of perspective as they present a view of the theatrical landscape from the angle of a main protagonist. The predominant form of history writing about nineteenth-century provincial theatres largely circles around specific places and buildings and is therefore confined by local historic and geographical contexts and interests.<sup>4</sup> In the diaries of Ignaz Siege, however, one is introduced to a protagonist in constant motion. His experiences reveal various forms of mobility, networks and exchange processes that have thus far been rarely considered in this context, including the intricate processes of cultural interaction (e.g. between cultural centre and the periphery; between theatre makers and local audiences, etc.), the itinerant lives of theatre professionals and

<sup>2</sup> Peter Schmitt, *Schauspieler und Theaterbetrieb. Studien zur Sozialgeschichte des Schauspielersstandes im deutschsprachigen Raum 1700–1900*, Tübingen 1990 (Theatron, Vol. 5), pp. 4, 19f.

<sup>3</sup> Stefan Hulfeld, *Theatergeschichtsschreibung als kulturelle Praxis. Wie Wissen über Theater entsteht*, Zürich 2007, p. 337. On the potential of diaries as sources for exploring marginalised practices, see Li Gerhalter, *Tagebücher als Quellen. Forschungsfelder und Sammlungen seit 1800*, Wien 2021; and Li Gerhalter/Georg Schinko, Musik machen – hören – schreiben. Musikulturelle Praktiken als Themen in auto/biografischen Dokumenten von Frauen in der ersten Hälfte des 20. Jahrhunderts, in *Komponistinnen in Luxemburg. Helen Buchholtz (1877–1953) und Lou Koster (1889–1973)*, ed. by Danielle Roster/Melanie Unsel, Köln/Weimar/Wien 2014, pp. 219–237.

<sup>4</sup> For instance, a vast variety of isolated studies exists for the area of today’s Lower Austria, e.g. Alois Haider, *Die Geschichte des Stadttheaters St. Pölten von 1820–1975*, dissertation: Universität Wien 1978; Reinhold Schaffrath, *Die Geschichte des Badener Stadttheaters im 19. Jahrhundert – unter besonderer Berücksichtigung der Direktoren und Stückgattungen*, dissertation: Universität Wien 1987; Hermine Grafe, *Theater in Mödling*, dissertation: Universität Wien 1988; Manfred Lechner, *Das Wr. Neustädter Stadttheater 1860–1918*, dissertation: Universität Wien 1991; Gerhard Baumgartner: *Thalia, weine! Theatertradition in Bad Vöslau*, Bad Vöslau 1994.

the social implications of their constant movement. Focusing on these mobilities, I attempt to further explore and make visible these essential aspects of provincial-theatre practice, intending to deepen and enrich the current understanding of the theatre landscape in the nineteenth century.

Aiming to critically re-evaluate histories that are based on fixed or static perspectives, in this paper I will focus on three forms of (cultural) mobility: i) movement as an essential part of the lives of theatre professionals and in the particular case of Siegel's existence; ii) programming and constant adaption of the repertoire when transferring new plays and trends from centre (Vienna) to periphery (the provinces); and iii) the process of forming an ensemble, characterised by a high rate of fluctuation among the acting personnel.

This enquiry will be based on the diary records of the 1855/56 season when Ignaz Siegel was leasing the theatres in Tyrnau/Trnava (SK) and Raab/Győr (HU), both about 120 km away from Vienna. First, I will briefly introduce the diaries, the Siegel family's history and their academic reception.

## *II. The diaries as source material: condition, collection history and utilisation*

The Siegel diaries are part of an extensive collection about the Siegel family held today by the Theatermuseum in Vienna, Austria. After he ended his career in theatre to work in the film industry, the last active theatre manager in the family, Gustav Siegel (fourth generation), compiled a vast array of materials from the family archive, including primarily historical documents such as personal letters, contracts, certificates, deeds or tax records. In the 1930s, he then handed over the collection – labelled today as the *Sammlung Gustav Siegel*<sup>5</sup> – to the Austrian National Library, prompting an exhibition of the collection in 1932, curated by theatre historian and director of the Austrian National Library's theatre archives Joseph Gregor (1888–1960).<sup>6</sup> The media attention regarding the exhibition's opening<sup>7</sup> as well as the prominent pictorial placement of three Siegel objects in Gregor's book *Das Theater des Volkes in der Ostmark* (1943)<sup>8</sup> indicate that for some years,

<sup>5</sup> Sammlung Gustav Siegel, Handschriften, Theatermuseum Wien, see [www.theatermuseum.at/fileadmin/content/tm/nachlaesse/S-Siegel.pdf](http://www.theatermuseum.at/fileadmin/content/tm/nachlaesse/S-Siegel.pdf) (12.10.2022).

<sup>6</sup> Oskar Pausch, Ambulantes Theater durch vier Generationen. Die Familie Siegel, in *Nestroyana. Blätter der Internationalen Nestroy-Gesellschaft*, 34, 1/2, 2014, pp. 141–159, here pp. 151–153.

<sup>7</sup> B., 120 Jahre österreichisches Provinztheater, in *Neues Wiener Journal*, 8 June 1932, p. 9, see <https://anno.onb.ac.at/cgi-content/anno?aid=nwj&datum=19320608&seite=9> (12.10.2022); P. Stf., Die Festwochen. Eine Ausstellung Provinztheater, in *Die Stunde*, 9 June 1932, p. 4, see <https://anno.onb.ac.at/cgi-content/anno?aid=std&datum=19320609&seite=4> (12.10.2022); [Anon.], Hundert Jahre österreichische Provinzbühne, in *Neue freie Presse*, 12 June 1932, p. 14, see <https://anno.onb.ac.at/cgi-content/anno?aid=nfp&datum=19320612&seite=14> (12.10.2022).

<sup>8</sup> Joseph Gregor: *Das Theater des Volkes in der Ostmark*, Wien 1943. The author's dedication of the publication to Vienna's NS-Gauleiter and Reichsstatthalter Baldur von Schirach as well as the publisher and the thematic focus has fuelled ongoing discussions about Gregor's

the practice of the Sieges must have had at least minor visibility in Austria's theatre-research landscape. After World War II, however, interest in and access to the materials as well as awareness of the Siege family largely declined. Only in the 1980s was the collection rediscovered by theatre historian and former director of the Theatermuseum Oskar Pausch (1937–2013), who thoroughly described its content and re-introduced them to the theatre-research community.<sup>9</sup>

Since then, the Siege collection was used only seldom, reflecting the peripheral position of provincial theatre within theatre historiography. Recently, short biographical sketches on Ignaz and Josef Siege have referenced the collection.<sup>10</sup> Beyond that, however – and being seemingly unaware of the collection – the Sieges are featured extensively only in Walter Taufar's dissertation *Das deutschsprachige Theater in Marburg an der Drau: Typologie eines Provinztheaters* (1982),<sup>11</sup> one of the few studies on German-speaking provincial theatre in a broader context.

Through my previous research on actress and theatre manager Anna Blumlacher (1823–1907),<sup>12</sup> I became aware of the Siege family and their importance as an institution within the fluctuating, interconnected theatre landscape of the nineteenth century. Ignaz Siege's and Blumlacher's paths intersected on many occasions, especially in the season of 1855/56 in which both Anna as well as her brother Josef became part of Siege's ensemble. As starting points, these foundational researches on Blumlacher have set the stage for a wider contextualisation and in-depth analysis of the Siege collection, which currently constitutes the main source material for my PhD research on theatre and mobility in the nineteenth century.

### *Formal structure and content of the diaries*

The diaries of Ignaz Siege encompass seven volumes in German *Kurrent* handwriting that document his life and work from 1843 to 1887. As Figure 1 illustrates,

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inclination towards the NS regime and ideology. The Siege family, however, is not mentioned in the text but is featured only in three graphical depictions.

<sup>9</sup> Pausch, *Ambulantes Theater durch vier Generationen. Die Familie Siege*, pp. 141–159.

<sup>10</sup> Hubert Reitterer, *Siege, Josef*, in *Tschechische Theaterenzklopädie. Deutschsprachiges Schauspiel in den böhmischen Ländern im 19. Jahrhundert*, ed. by Berenika Zemanová Urbanová, [Prague] 2015, online under <http://encyklopedie.idu.cz/index.php?view=article&id=5204&lang=de> (25.10.2022); Berenika Zemanová Urbanová/Hubert Reitterer, *Siege, Ignaz*, *ibid.*, online under <http://encyklopedie.idu.cz/index.php?view=article&id=5202&lang=de> (25.10.2022); Christian Fastl, *Siege, Ignaz*, in *Österreichisches Biographisches Lexikon, 1815–1950*, Vol. 12, Wien 2002, p. 234, see <https://biographien.ac.at/ID-0.3050940-1> (25.10.2022).

<sup>11</sup> Walter Taufar, *Das deutschsprachige Theater in Marburg an der Drau. Typologie eines Provinztheaters*, dissertation: Universität Wien 1982.

<sup>12</sup> Patrick Aprent, *Anna Blumlacher. Ein Beitrag zur Theatertopographie im 19. Jahrhundert*, Diplomarbeit: Universität Wien 2015; Patrick Aprent/Claudia Mayerhofer: *Theaterunternehmerinnen im 19. Jahrhundert*, in *fernetzt* (Junges Forschungsnetzwerk Frauen- und Geschlechtergeschichte) [blog], Vienna 2020, online under [www.univie.ac.at/fernetzt/20200615/](http://www.univie.ac.at/fernetzt/20200615/) (25.10.2022).



the overall structure of the diaries follows the programme listed on the left page, chronologically recording performance days, including the title of the show, the respective role of Siege on this occasion, and the revenue of the day. Assigned to a specific date, the right page mostly displays notes containing information about the general administration, ensemble management or staging practice, audience reception, travel itineraries, operating details, or correspondence.

For the most part, the diaries – which Siege himself termed ‘Tagebücher’ – may be understood as working journals focusing on administrative and operational issues. However, a large proportion of the books also provides glimpses beyond the theatre business, recording Siege’s impressions of (local) historic events as well as his personal life and self-reflective thoughts.<sup>13</sup> While the format of the diaries remains consistent for more than four decades, the density of information, content and emphasis changed over this period. The early years (1843–ca. 1854: Si301, Si302)<sup>14</sup> are comprehensively documented as turbulent years of travel (‘Wanderjahre’) under precarious personal and professional conditions. The following decade (ca. 1854–1862: Si306) – Ignaz Siege now being the director of the family business – is still marked by an extensive documentation yet contentwise indicates a distinct shift towards more stable professional conditions and a bourgeois lifestyle. In the last three volumes (1862–1887: Si303–Si305), the records of both theatre practice and personal information decrease substantially while the formal structure, listing the programme on the left page, is still upheld. The death of Ignaz Siege in 1887 is preceded by the sudden stop of diary-writing and an annotation next to his last record on 3 July 1887 indicating his poor health: “Vater krank” (Si305-47). Most likely, this comment was made by his son Adolf Siege, who – having already been co-manager for several years – fully took over both the management duties of his father as well as the diary, which he continued until the end of the season.

### *III. Short introduction to the Siege family history and their theatre practice*

The Siege family’s theatre business is a paradigmatic example of nineteenth-century provincial-theatre practice in the Habsburg Empire. Starting out as a travelling troupe in the beginning of the century,<sup>15</sup> they were active in dozens of far-flung yet mostly German-speaking places in the Habsburg provinces, including

<sup>13</sup> Reflecting on definitions, the Siege diaries feature four key characteristics as formulated by Li Gerhalter: Diary records i) are structured along days, ii) have temporal proximity to documented events, iii) are written with regularity, and iv) show the subjective viewpoint of the author. Li Gerhalter, *Tagebücher als Quellen*, p. 13.

<sup>14</sup> Notations such as Si301 refer to the general initials of the source materials within the *Sammlung Gustav Siege* of the Theatermuseum Wien. The number that follows (for example Si305-47) is a reference to the page number of the digital version I use for my PhD-project.

<sup>15</sup> The earliest reference in written sources dates back to 1811, see Pausch, *Ambulantes Theater durch vier Generationen*, p. 142.

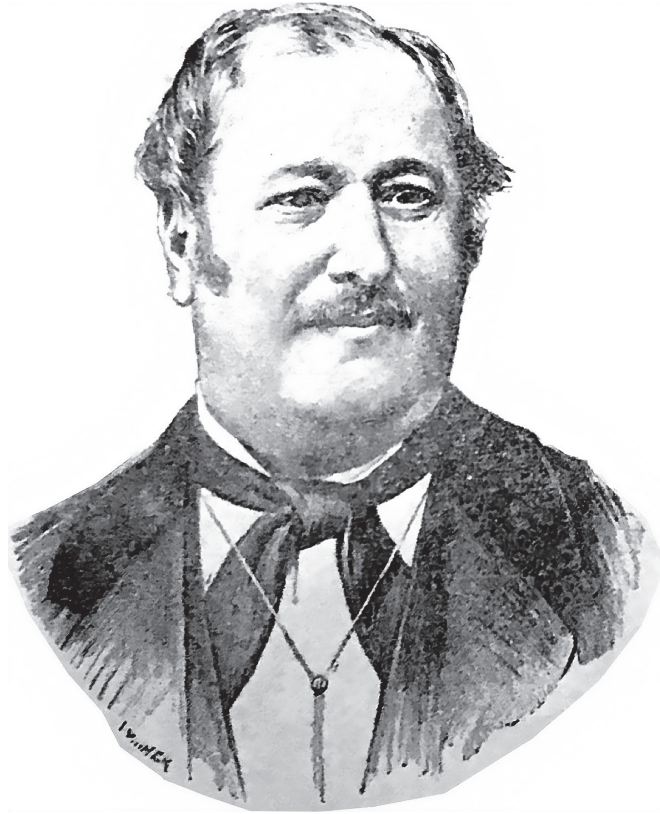


Figure 2. A portrait of Ignaz Siege. An image detail from the object “Erinnerungsblatt des Iglauer Stadt-Theaters”, copyright Theatermuseum Wien (Sammlung Gustav Siege)

today’s Czech Republic, Slovakia, Hungary, Austria, Croatia, Slovenia and also Germany. Organised around the ‘Prinzipal’ Josef Siege, who held all artistic and administrative responsibilities, the entire family – comprising him, his wife and four children – was heavily engaged with all forms of theatre-practical tasks. His eldest son, Ignaz Siege, was accustomed to the profession already as a child and, according to Ignaz’s earliest diaries, was involved in directing and managing the business as early as the 1840s. After a period of conflict in which leadership roles alternated between father and son, Ignaz finally took the sole lead around 1853.<sup>16</sup> In this decade, the Sieges transitioned from a travelling company to one that regularly leased permanent theatre buildings in medium- or small-sized towns of the monarchy, with their practice stabilising and gaining consistency as a result.<sup>17</sup>

<sup>16</sup> Ibid., pp. 142f.

<sup>17</sup> This coincides with the start of a period of immense growth in theatre construction in Europe, the era of the ‘Stadttheater’. See Tobias Becker/Kedar A. Kulkarni, Editorial. Beyond the Playhouse. Travelling Theatre in the Long Nineteenth Century, in *Nineteenth Century Theatre and*

Between 1852 (Si302-78) and 1858, the Sieges stayed in Tyrnau during the regular season while also playing in the surrounding area – most notably in Raab – in the spring and summer (Si302, Si306). In this period, which marks the focal point of this paper, Ignaz's first wife Julie Leopoldine Czerwenka (1816–1854) died (Si302-90) and he married ensemble member Betty (Barbara) Weiss (1818/1819–1888) shortly after (Si306-11). In 1855, their son Adolf Siege (1855–1925) was born in Lundenburg/Břeclav (CZ); he would become the next in line to take over the family business (Si306-19). With Betty and Adolf soon integrated in the theatre operations, the subsequent years were characterised by secure social and financial conditions.

After stays in Budweis, Bruck, Leoben, Krumau/Český Krumlov (CZ), Tyrnau, Znaim/Znojmo (CZ), Krems, Iglau/Jihlava (CZ), Trentschin-Teplitz/Trenčianske Teplice (SK), among many others, co-managers Ignaz and Adolf Siege leased the 'Stadttheater' in Marburg/Maribor (SI) in 1885. After Ignaz's death in 1887, Adolf took over all management duties and continued the traditional theatre practice, playing all over the Habsburg provinces with the assistance of his family. His wife Leopoldine Siege as well as his second son, Gustav Siege (1881–1947), were then also part of the ensemble. In this period, today's Slovenia was of particular importance to Adolf as he leased theatres in Marburg, Laibach, and Cilli/Celje (SI) for several years.<sup>18</sup>

After pursuing a theatre career outside of the family sphere, Gustav Siege returned in 1913 to assist his father in the theatre management, thus taking the business into its fourth generation. Having had a successful spell at the Stadttheater Marburg in the year preceding the outbreak of World War I, Gustav Siege continued to play in Marburg after one year of disruption due to the war. Now managing the business without his father, an even more prosperous time ensued until the German-speaking theatre in Marburg came to a sudden halt in 1919, forcing Gustav to relocate to Vienna and switch to work in the film industry.<sup>19</sup> In the post-war years and after the dissolution of the Habsburg Empire, the far-reaching network of German-speaking provincial theatres diminished considerably, also marking the end of the 120-year-old theatre tradition of the Siege family.

While the Siege family's practice is a prime example of nineteenth-century provincial theatre, they are also exceptional in regard to their continuity and rich documentation of events. Moreover, a few aspects of their practice stand out and may be considered the pillars of their long-term success.

i) The effective transfer of theatre knowledge to the next generation as well as the involvement of all family members in theatre tasks may be understood as one key element that ensured the continuity of their existence. Useful knowledge was passed on via collective, everyday practice, best demonstrated by the shared

*Film 44/1*, 2017, pp. 3–7, here p. 3; Hans-Christoph Hoffmann, *Die Theaterbauten von Fellner und Helmer*, München 1966, p. 9; Schmitt, *Schauspieler und Theaterbetrieb*, p. 34.

<sup>18</sup> Pausch, *Ambulantes Theater durch vier Generationen*, pp. 146f., 150.

<sup>19</sup> Taufar, *Das deutschsprachige Theater in Marburg an der Drau*, pp. 133–136.



management duties between father and son that accompanied every handover of the business to the next generation.

ii) The diaries illustrate how tense and conflictual the family relations were at times, especially when leadership roles were shared. To the outside world, however, the Sieges maintained an image of bourgeois decency and good relations with the authorities. Several of Ignaz Siege's diary entries make clear just how eagerly he strived to comply with the moral and cultural conventions of a middle-class society,<sup>20</sup> trying to dissociate himself from any activity that would evoke the image of a morally depraved theatre.<sup>21</sup> In 1855 he notes an encounter in town with two of his actors who were apparently begging, which would bring shame upon him, harm his reputation and diminish his chances for a successful theatre season (Si306-20). Good relations with the authorities as well as the influential middle-class had presumably also already helped Ignaz Siege's father Josef in the first half of the century. Numerous sources such as certificates (e.g., 1815 in Klosterneuburg [AT], 1833 in Iglau [CZ], 1834 in Hietzing [AT]) officially confirm the nobility of their behaviour and pleasing performances.<sup>22</sup> This continues throughout the century, covering all generations. Ignaz Siege's son Adolf even received a special honour from the city of Marburg when he was presented with the 'Bürgerrecht' of the city.<sup>23</sup>

iii) Their extensive theatre equipment, including the collection of plays (the 'Bibliothek'), wardrobe and costumes, props but also financial capital, were of crucial importance to ensuring successful theatre operations.<sup>24</sup> Especially in later years, the Siege family was perfectly equipped, which was a decisive factor in their ability to consistently lease theatres and return to former places.<sup>25</sup> In an article from 1929, briefly summarising the family history, the author Roda Roda states that shortly before World War I, he could still find furniture and uniforms from the time of Napoleon in the Siege costume and prop repository.<sup>26</sup> It is also documented that Ignaz Siege leased the family repository to the German theatre in

<sup>20</sup> This corresponds with the research findings of theatre historian Katharina Wessely, who analysed autobiographies of actors in the late nineteenth century and illustrated their bourgeois self-representation while leaving out contradictory elements, such as their itinerant way of life. See Katharina Wessely, *Schauspielerei als bürgerlicher Beruf? Die Darstellung von Arbeit in Autobiographien von Schauspielerinnen und Schauspielern im 19. Jahrhundert*, in *Opus und labor. Arbeit in autobiographischen und biographischen Erzählungen*, ed. by Iuditha Balint/Katharina Lammers/Kerstin Wilhelms/Thomas Wortmann, Essen 2018, pp. 55–66.

<sup>21</sup> Taufar, *Das deutschsprachige Theater in Marburg an der Drau*, p. 90.

<sup>22</sup> Pausch, *Ambulantes Theater durch vier Generationen*, p. 142.

<sup>23</sup> 120 Jahre österreichisches Provinztheater, in *Neues Wiener Journal*, 8 June 1932, p. 9; Taufar, *Das deutschsprachige Theater in Marburg an der Drau*, p. 91.

<sup>24</sup> *Ibid.*, pp. 31–33.

<sup>25</sup> Among these places were Tyrnau, Trentschin-Teplitz, Iglau, Znaim, Budweis and Marburg.

<sup>26</sup> Roda Roda, *Die Familie Siege. Ein Beitrag zur Theatergeschichte*, in *Prager Tagblatt*, 11 June 1929, p. 7, see <https://anno.onb.ac.at/cgi-content/anno?aid=ptb&datum=19290611&seite=7&zoom=33> (29.10.2022).

Budapest in 1878/79 while Ignaz was manager there (Si85, Si92).<sup>27</sup> The vast extent of Ignaz Siege's repertoire and collection of plays will become evident in the following chapters focussing on the theatre season of 1855/56, in which he staged as many as 142 different plays.

Apart from the beneficial aspects listed above, the Sieges' practice undoubtedly also reflected the general core competencies of theatre practice at that time. They were skilful actors and directors and knew how to stage plays and manage their business economically. Surely it was also their appealing programmes and competent ensemble management that further contributed to their overall success.

#### IV. Provincial theatre practice and its mobilities

Although this view has been criticised, formative canonical representations of theatre relations in the nineteenth century often emphasise the processes of stabilisation and the theatre's 'becoming-sedentary' as a bourgeois institution.<sup>28</sup> The Siege history, too, could be told as such a story of 'progress', considering their advancement from a travelling troupe to apparent sedentariness, managing permanent theatres in a period when the 'Stadttheater' began to emerge in large numbers.<sup>29</sup> It is my intention, however, to focus on the different forms of cultural, spatial and social mobilities that become quite distinct when following Ignaz Siege through his diaries.

Besides the fact that itinerant theatre continued to exist throughout the nineteenth century, expanding to new spaces inland<sup>30</sup> and globally,<sup>31</sup> permanent theatres were just as much connected to the movement of people, information and ideas. The young field of mobility studies<sup>32</sup> offers definitions and means of address-

<sup>27</sup> Pausch, *Ambulantes Theater durch vier Generationen*, p. 149.

<sup>28</sup> See, for example, Hulfeld, *Theatergeschichte als kulturelle Praxis*, p. 226; Schmitt, *Schauspieler und Theaterbetrieb*, pp. 1, 187; Birgit Peter, *Mobilität & Vorurteil. Das Stigma des 'Umherziehens'*, in *politix, Mobilität. Zeitschrift des Instituts für Politikwissenschaft an der Universität Wien* 39, 2016, pp. 13–15.

<sup>29</sup> See note 17.

<sup>30</sup> Patrick Aprent/Magret Berger, *Ambulantes Theater in den Habsburgischen Provinzen. Die Reisende Gesellschaft der Anna Blumlacher in der Steiermark*, in *Nestroyana. Blätter der Internationalen Nestroy-Gesellschaft* 40, 3/4, 2020, pp. 222–245.

<sup>31</sup> Nic Leonhardt, *Theater über Ozeane. Vermittler transatlantischen Austauschs (1890–1925)*, Göttingen 2018; Christopher Balme, *The Bandmann Circuit. Theatrical Networks in the First Age of Globalization*, in *Theatre Research International* 40/1, 2015, pp. 19–36.

<sup>32</sup> Among others, the following selection of literature is considered essential in the development of the "mobility paradigm" in the last two decades: Mimi Sheller/John Urry, *The New Mobilities Paradigm*, in *Environment and Planning A. Economy and Space* 38, 2006, pp. 207–226; Tim Cresswell, *On the Move. Mobility in the Modern Western World*, London/New York 2006; Stephen Greenblatt, *A Mobility Studies Manifesto*, in *Cultural Mobility. A Manifesto*, ed. by Stephen Greenblatt, Cambridge 2010, pp. 250–253; Noel B. Salazar/Nina Glick Schiller (eds.), *Regimes of Mobility. Imaginaries and Relationalities of Power*, London/New York 2014.

ing and understanding these mobilities, and in this paper I will predominately draw on these perspectives<sup>33</sup> to explore key elements of Siege's theatre practice.

In the present example of the 1855/56 theatre season, Siege was leasing the theatres of Tyrnau and Raab, yet continuous travel activities were still an important part of his work and life. In the following, I will first examine the organisation and development of these activities in detail. I will then look at Siege's repertoire and how he adapted his programme when transferring new plays from the centre (Vienna) to the provincial theatre stage (Tyrnau/Raab). Finally, the focus will be on Siege's ensemble composition and management, characterised by the typical coming and going of actors and Siege's frequent exchanges with agents in Vienna.

### *a) Mobility 1: Ignaz Siege travelling*

Just weeks before Ignaz Siege moved into his office in the theatre he leased for the 1855/56 season in Tyrnau, he was still travelling the surrounding area. On a summer tour, his theatre operation first moved to nearby Skalitz/Skalica (SK) in April (Si306-17), to Göding/Hodonín (CZ) in May (Si306-18) and to Lundenburg/Břeclav (CZ) in June (Si306-19). Notes on separate pieces of paper found in the diary offer additional insights on the costs and organisation of these operations. For example, construction material was bought and transported, most likely to set up temporary stages (Si306-07). Another piece of paper lists travelling expenses (Si306-05), including the carriage to the train station, the allowance for workers loading the shipment and transfer costs of Siege, his family, personnel and cargo on the train journey between Göding and Lundenburg. From Skalitz to Göding they had to travel exclusively by horse carriages of various types and costs, with Siege accounting for a "Pagagewagen 3fl", a "Personenwagen 2fl" and an additional "Einspanner 1fl 24" (Si306-04). Even though Siege moved into the 'stationary' theatre building in Tyrnau soon after, mobility remained an essential part of their theatre practice, reflected in travelogues continuing to constitute a large part of the diary.

The most extensively documented travel activity was the moving of the entire theatre operation from one place to another, such as during the summer tour through Göding, Lundenburg and Skalitz. The following year, Siege spent the summer season in the bigger city of Raab. He first travelled to Raab in January to meet with the municipal authorities (Si306-26), which was followed by written correspondence (Si306-27). When the regular season eventually ended in mid-March 1856, Siege dedicated almost a whole page of his diary to the week of relocating to Raab (Si306-29). After packing and dispatching all cargo in Tyrnau on Monday, 17 March 1856, he travelled to Pressburg/Bratislava (SK) by train,

<sup>33</sup> Of particular relevance to my research is the work of human geographer Tim Cresswell, providing an analytical framework that approaches mobility along the three aspects 'movement', 'practice' and 'representation', see Tim Cresswell, *Towards a Politics of Mobility*, in *Environment and Planning D. Society and Space* 28/1, 2010, pp. 17–31.

embarking on a four-hour steamship trip to Raab the next morning. Arriving there, he took a horse-carriage to bring his wife Betty to the tavern *Gasthof zum weißen Lamm*. In the following days, Siege welcomed his ensemble members in Raab before undertaking a day trip to Vienna by train on Friday, 21 March. In the metropole he attended a meeting, purchased a new play and drove back the same day to sleep in their new accommodation. In August, near the end of the summer season, Siege organised guest appearances in *Ungarisch-Altenburg/Mosonmagyaróvár* (HU) on two occasions and again diligently documented which actors were present, further stating that he compensated the latter for their travelling, lunch, dinner and overnight stay but no drinks: “nur den Trunk nicht” (Si306-35).

Apart from moving the entire theatre, many shorter journeys were undertaken for operational purposes. Siege acquired additional plays for his repertoire whenever he was in Vienna and often exclusively went there to purchase theatrical novelties (Si306-21, -26, -29). Personnel matters also presented a reason for travelling, with Siege meeting his agent in Vienna in September 1855 (Si306-21) as well as in July 1856 (Si306-34). Furthermore, to clarify all affairs concerning the next location for his theatre operations, Siege often went to those places beforehand. These “Pärmissionsreisen”, as they are termed in the diary, allowed Siege to gather all necessary permissions in advance (Si306-03–05).

Ignaz Siege’s journeys were undertaken for various reasons, during which private and professional matters often intersected, as his diary records from 10 to 14 September exemplify. Already on his way from Tyrnau to Vienna, Siege stopped in transit to visit “Frau Koch” in Pressburg before meeting up with three acquaintances directly upon arrival in Vienna. Staying at the well-known taverns *Russischer Hof* and *Drei Hufeisen*, during the following days, Siege bought glasses, had an appointment with his agent and seized various opportunities to acquire new plays to extend his repertoire. Certainly many professional contacts or acquaintances from the theatre world were among the people he met during his stay. However, Vienna was also an important personal anchor point for the Siege family; almost every time, Ignaz Siege visited relatives such as his half-sister Therese, who also temporarily took care of Ignaz’s children from his first marriage. At his visit in September, she introduced her new partner to Siege, Major Janos (“Zur Therese gegangen, ihren Liebhaber Major Janos kennen gelernt.”), with whom he went to the well-known *Brandstätte* near Vienna’s St. Stephen’s Cathedral two days later, to drink “Regensburger Bier” (Si306-21).

Another interesting perspective is Siege’s social mobility. There is a clear shift from the years in which they operated as a travelling troupe under precarious social conditions to the more bourgeois lifestyle reflected in where and how Siege travelled later on. Diary records from the 1840s indicate the difficulty of travelling, often hampered by incidents such as the breaking of a carriage spring (Si302-54) and the carriage getting stuck when crossing a river (Si302-26). Often, a transport vehicle was unaffordable or could not be organised, leading to hours-long walks on foot (Si301-29). Additionally, the rigorous regulations for the movement of people

in the first half of the nineteenth century especially targeted mobile artists.<sup>34</sup> The importance of having a ‘pass’ is apparent in the diary entries of that time: several actors in the Siege ensemble encountered severe problems and were even arrested because they had no valid passport (Si301-21, -24). By the 1855/56 season, Siege’s mobility had significantly changed, providing evidence of his social rise to a middle-class lifestyle. Leisure activities are frequently recorded in the diary, such as a day trip to Vienna, where Siege and his wife Betty met Therese and Major Janos at Schönbrunn Palace (Si306-30). On another occasion in August, the whole family travelled to Martinsberg/Pannonhalma (HU) with its famous Benedictine monastery, not far from Raab. In the diary, Siege writes about his impressions of the magnificent library, the beautiful paintings and antiquities and Stefan’s chapel, which he described as uplifting and divine in its simplicity (Si306-35). In addition to what can be learned from Siege’s destinations, it is also instructive *how* he travelled. Rather than merely covering a distance under huge exertion as in previous years, he could now afford the fastest and most comfortable means of transport available. This example shows that an in-depth examination of mobility may potentially give revealing insights into the social stratification of theatre professionals, among which the rank and stardom of famous actors is represented by specific modes of mobility, while a by far larger group was forced to reach their next destination by any means, oftentimes roaming by foot and thereby possibly fitting the narrative of the itinerant, morally depraved ‘Komödiant’ that still prevailed at the time.<sup>35</sup>

The detailed information in Siege’s diary concerning transport vehicles, routes, cargo, travelling durations and costs highlight the entanglement of theatre practice with developments in transport technology while also reflecting the mobility habits of his time on a broader scale. In the already highly mobile and interconnected world of the nineteenth century, Siege’s diary records illustrate a well-functioning transport network encompassing the whole region around Vienna.<sup>36</sup> The Danube River was an important route for steamships, but the train infrastructure was also well-developed in the area. Horse-drawn carriages complemented this network, bridging the gaps between other forms of transport. Siege’s travels exemplify how people managed to move within this network quickly despite the necessity of changing means of transport for certain stretches along the way. The

<sup>34</sup> Hannelore Burger, Paßwesen und Staatsbürgerschaft, in *Grenze und Staat. Paßwesen, Staatsbürgerschaft, Heimatrecht und Fremden gesetzgebung in der österreichischen Monarchie 1750–1867*, ed. by Waltraud Heindl/Edith Saurer, Wien 2000, pp. 1–172, here p. 87; Patrick Aprent, Von Kronstadt bis Reichenberg. Mobilität im Kontext des deutschsprachigen (ambulanten) Theaters im 19. Jahrhundert, in *Das deutschsprachige Theater im Kontext europäischer Kulturgeschichte. Traditionen – Wechselbeziehungen – Perspektiven*, ed. by Christian Neuherber/Gabriella-Nóra Tar/Paul S. Ulrich, Münster 2022, pp. 105–139, here pp. 117–122.

<sup>35</sup> Taufar, *Das deutschsprachige Theater in Marburg an der Drau*, p. 90; Schmitt, *Schauspieler und Theaterbetrieb*, p. 1; Aprent, *Von Kronstadt bis Reichenberg*, pp. 125–129.

<sup>36</sup> On the transport infrastructure around Vienna, see *Special-Karte der Eisenbahn-Post-u[nd] Dampfschiff-Verbindungen Mittel-Europa’s* (1858), ed. by Christian Johann Carl Raab, see [www.oldmapsonline.org/map/cuni/1131403](http://www.oldmapsonline.org/map/cuni/1131403) (25.10.2022).

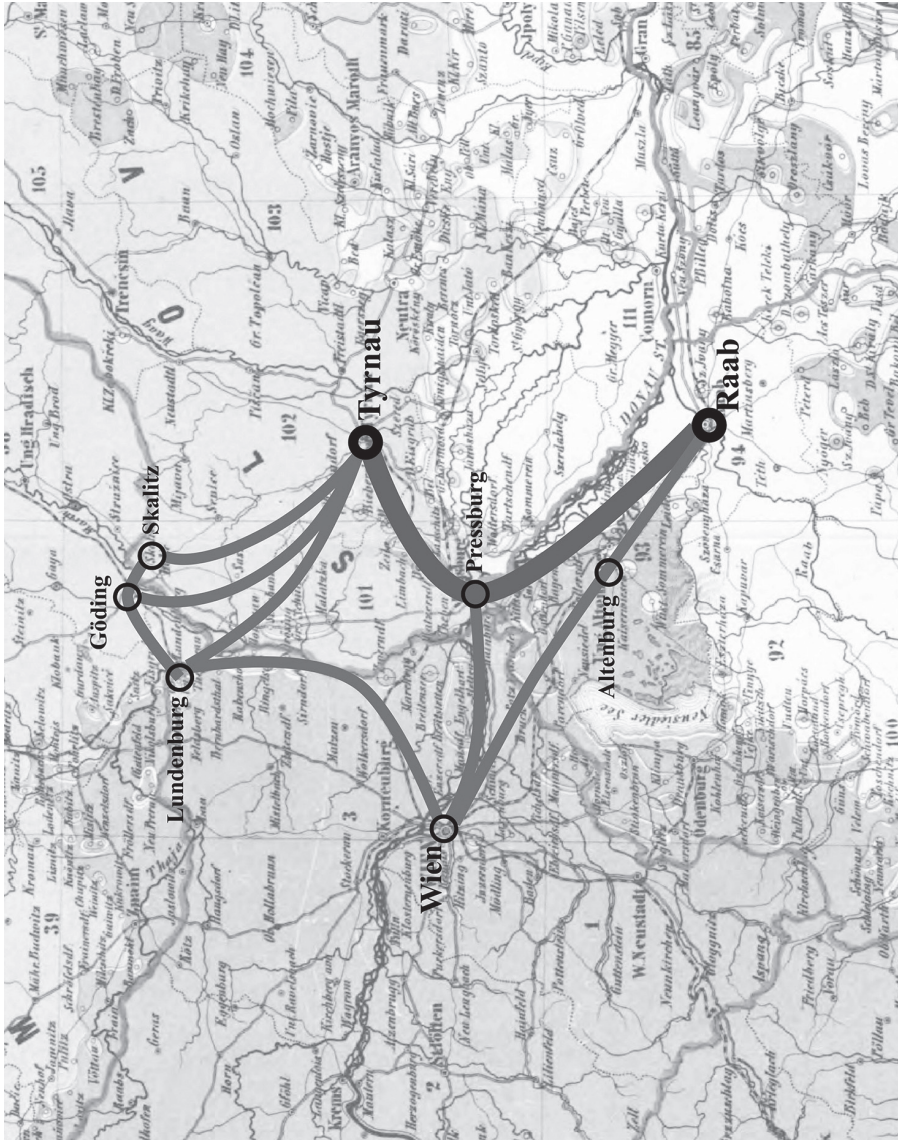


Figure 3: Network of places relevant to Iganx Siege in 1855/56, copyright Patrick Aprent

postal service was also part of this wider network and enabled swift information exchange, especially with Vienna, which was not only an important personal and professional anchor point for Ignaz Siege but a main hub for theatre operations of the Habsburg provinces generally.

*b) Mobility 2: programme and repertoire*

On a Friday morning in March 1856, Ignaz Siege travelled to Vienna by train; among other things, he purchased the new play *Die Frau Wirthin* by Friedrich Kaiser there for 16 fl. The play had premiered two months earlier at the Carltheater in Leopoldstadt (Vienna), starring Johann Nestroy in one of the roles.<sup>37</sup> Two days after Siege's day trip to the metropole, he rehearsed it for the first time with his own ensemble and staged it in Raab already on the following day, where it became the most successful play of the season, generating earnings of 256 fl. on that very evening (Si306-29).

The diaries covering this time illustrate paradigmatic theatre practices. They document the fast-paced cycles of premiering new and hardly rehearsed pieces almost every evening, which fulfilled the audience's need for 'Novitäten'.<sup>38</sup> This enormous consumption of plays was facilitated by standardised and interchangeable dramatic plots and character figures, the latter being cast via the system of so-called 'Rollenfächer'.<sup>39</sup> Likewise, the repertoire was constantly modified by quickly adapting new plays and incorporating general trends. The acquisition of the above-mentioned play *Die Frau Wirthin* and others such as *Sennora Pepita, mein Name ist Meyer!* (1855) by Rudolf Hain (Si306-22) and *Ein Judas von Anno Neune* (1856) by Anton Langer (Si306-26) highlight the quick cultural exchange occurring between the centre (Vienna) and the periphery (provincial theatres). Siege's diaries thoroughly depict this process as Siege documents the whole programme of the season as well as purchases. Using his records of the exact revenue for each play, the success of his programmes can be statistically evaluated.

During the season of 1855/56 (09/1855–03/1856 in Tyrnau; 04/1856–08/1856 in Raab; Si306), Siege staged 142 different plays, most of them being performed only once. Among the most important playwrights in Siege's repertoire were Charlotte Birch-Pfeiffer (1800–1868) and Johann Nestroy (1801–1862), who represent the most frequently performed authors of the 1855/56 season. With sixteen shows each – ten pieces from Birch-Pfeiffer and nine from Nestroy – they proved to be repertoire pieces rather than novelties as the majority of those had been released many years before and were well known on German-speaking stages. Third comes Anton Langer (1824–1879), whose five plays were staged on nine

<sup>37</sup> Walter Obermaier, *Nestroy-Stadt Bad Ischl*, Wien 2010, p. 28; [Anon.], *Kunstnotizen*, in *Morgen-Post*, 4 January 1856, p. 2.

<sup>38</sup> E.g. Taufar: *Das deutschsprachige Theater in Marburg an der Drau*, p. 39.

<sup>39</sup> Schmitt, *Schauspieler und Theaterbetrieb*, p. 53; Taufar, *Das deutschsprachige Theater in Marburg an der Drau*, pp. 39f., 94–97.

occasions but were all published within the preceding two years and by contrast were probably new for the audience in Tyrnau. Siege went to Vienna on 17 January to purchase Langer's newest play, *Ein Judas von Anno Neune* (Si306-26), after its premiere at the Theater an der Wien a month earlier.<sup>40</sup> He performed it in Tyrnau on 17 February for the first time, followed by a second performance a few days later and twice in Raab on another occasion. As was true for all of Langer's works, *Ein Judas von Anno Neune* proved quite successful and averaged earnings of 97 fl. per evening, with all five of his plays earning 91 fl. on average. This is more than double of the amount generated from the plays of Birch-Pfeiffer and Nestroy, which only came to around 43 fl. per show. These authors still ensured solid income, however, and may therefore be considered important cornerstones for Siege's repertoire over many years. Nevertheless, the most successful plays – and those more likely to be repeated – were the newest or newer plays like *Die Frau Wirthin*.

By taking a broader look at the programme, it becomes apparent that Siege staged some form of entertainment on 228 days of the season. He usually played five times a week: on Mondays or Tuesdays, Wednesdays, Thursdays, Saturdays and Sundays, leaving Friday the only free day, albeit with exceptions. He first stayed at the theatre of Tyrnau from September 1855 until Easter in March 1856, playing from then onwards at the theatre of Raab or at the open air 'Arena' there, depending on the weather conditions. Siege effectively catered to two sets of audiences therefore staging most pieces from Tyrnau in Raab again but with numerous modifications such as scheduling them in a different order, replacing many of the less successful plays and constantly adding new acquisitions.

As mentioned above, 142 plays had been performed that season, most of them only once. While those singular performances make up the majority of the 228 shows, it should be noted that Siege also staged other forms of entertainment. He organised several masquerade balls, for example, which were very popular and realised large profits. Furthermore, he organised concerts and pantomime shows as well as other forms of showmanship. Overall, the diaries record sixteen shows of entertainments other than professional theatre.

In general, German-speaking provincial theatres were never backed by substantial subsidies and relied solely on regular intake from performances.<sup>41</sup> Therefore, the economical relevance of providing appealing programmes was also decisive for Siege. To attract a reservoir of frequent spectators, it was beneficial – if not necessary – to quickly adopt new dramatic genres, aesthetics and plays. Vienna and other metropolises are rightly considered to be the origin of innovative theatrical trends. Especially when plays were successful with censorship boards and audiences there, they would become a model and reference point for theatre

<sup>40</sup> Anton Langer: *Ein Judas von Anno Neune, Original-Charakter-Gemälde in 3 Akten und einem Nachspiele in 1 Akt*, Wien 1855, see [http://digital.onb.ac.at/OnbViewer/viewer.faces?doc=ABO\\_%2BZ257987907](http://digital.onb.ac.at/OnbViewer/viewer.faces?doc=ABO_%2BZ257987907) (29.10.2022).

<sup>41</sup> Schmitt, *Schauspieler und Theaterbetrieb*, p. 33.



programmes all over the provinces. This does not mean, however, that provincial stages just re-played what was en vogue in Vienna in a one-directional transfer process. In contrast, the movement of information, ideas and people from cultural centre to periphery always involved intricate processes of exchange and negotiations of local identities, influencing what was played and how. Not only was Siege regularly travelling to Vienna and engaged in correspondence about the latest trends and interests, but so were parts of his audience. The ongoing need for new and specific plays can only be understood in the context of a highly fluid and interconnected world in which people and information were in constant motion and in which informed audiences demanded a certain repertoire as a result.<sup>42</sup>

Another aspect that certainly influenced Siege's programming was his interaction with the local population or local contexts in general. The organisation of popular festivities and masquerade balls was such an exchange between Siege and the local community. The reference to local contexts in plays – evident in titles such as *Reise nach Tyrnau* (Si306-27) and *Ein Raaber Bürger* (Si306-34) – certainly animated local audiences and raised their interest too. However, further analyses are required to determine if these were indeed local pieces or if they had been thoroughly modified by Ignaz Siege in an act of 'localisation'<sup>43</sup> that went beyond merely altering the title.

### c) *Mobility 3: ensemble management and fluctuation*

As theatre historian Peter Schmitt states by using empirical data, actors of the most renowned stages of the nineteenth-century German-speaking theatre landscape, such as Berlin's Königliche Theater, Vienna's Burgtheater and Darmstadt's Hoftheater, were engaged for only one to three seasons on average. Apart from this actor-elite, at middle-sized or smaller theatres, the duration of appointment was even shorter and seldom lasted longer than one season.<sup>44</sup> These mobile lives of theatre professionals as well as the high degree of fluctuation within ensembles due to perpetual replacements are also reflected in Siege's assemblage of personnel for the autumn season in 1855. How the season unfolded and which challenges

<sup>42</sup> Taufar, *Das deutschsprachige Theater in Marburg an der Drau*, pp. 29f. Theatre manager Carl Joseph von Bertalan (1833–1912) felt obliged to discuss the demands of the provincial theatre's audience in a short volume published in 1870. He claimed that especially the expectation to stage the increasingly popular operetta within the limited production capabilities (personnel, material, technical) of the smallest provincial theatres would inevitably lead to severe difficulties and crisis. See Carl Joseph von Bertalan, *Das Provinz-Theater. Skizzen über die kleineren (halbjährigen) Bühnen in Österreich*, Klagenfurt 1870, pp. 4, 27.

<sup>43</sup> Milena Cesnaková-Michalcová also writes about such adaptations when Adolf Bäuerle's piece *Aline, oder Wien in einem anderen Weltteil* was staged in Tyrnau with the title *Aline, oder Tyrnau in einem anderen Weltteil*. Moreover, a potentially local piece with the title *Bürger von Tyrnau* is documented, although from much earlier times. See Milena Cesnaková-Michalcová, *Geschichte des deutschsprachigen Theaters in der Slowakei*, Köln 1997, pp. 70, 117.

<sup>44</sup> Schmitt, *Schauspieler und Theaterbetrieb*, pp. 190–194.

were faced by a theatre manager shall now be traced in further detail based on Siege's diary records.

Siege's ensemble for the season included around ten men and ten women and was therefore only marginally larger than the travelling troupe of earlier years. From the previous season, only four actors remained, with key roles being occupied by family members Ignaz Siege, his wife Betty and his father Josef Siege, as was common practice. Some actors joined the ensemble after Siege directly contacted them by letter and others after they travelled to Tyrnau for a personal audition with the director. The theatre agents in Vienna, however, played a key role in this process. Theatre managers as well as actors relied heavily on their mediating work, leaving agents in a powerful position with all threads converging at their desks. On one side, actors from all over the Habsburg provinces and beyond would usually contact them or audition in their offices after their last engagement had ended. On the other side, theatre managers often located far from Vienna were in constant need of actors to fill roles in their ensemble on short notice, especially when preparing for the upcoming season. Agents could therefore broker lucrative contracts with both parties.<sup>45</sup>

Siege, too, worked with an agent in Vienna called "Hr. Schmid". As documented in the diaries, most of their business was carried out via written correspondence, and it was not uncommon for vacant positions to be filled within just a few days, including the drafting, signing and sending of valid contracts to all parties concerned. Siege's preparation began already in mid-July of 1855 in Tyrnau, when letters between Schmid, Siege's father Josef and many other contacts were sent and received daily. In September, when Siege officially moved into the theatre and the first actors arrived in Tyrnau, efforts to complete his ensemble intensified. The close proximity as well as the by then well-developed transport infrastructure allowed Siege to also meet his agent personally in Vienna. On such an occasion on 11 September, Siege laid out 108 fl. for advance payments and travel money ("Vorschüße und Reisegelder") that should be passed on to his actors before they were travelling to Tyrnau (Si306-21). Siege himself handled these contractual payments to some of his actors while Schmid handled the rest; however, Schmid was suspected of withholding payments from several actors.

One week after Siege met Schmid in Vienna, the actor Wauer, who was already engaged in August (Si306-21), complained to Siege on 18 September that no payment had been transferred by the agent. This led Siege to contact Schmid concerning this matter (Si306-22). When Siege contacted Wauer again a week later, the actor, who at this time still resided in Brünn/Brno (CZ), repeated his claim. With the start of the season approaching fast, Siege himself eventually sent the money to Brünn to settle the dispute. This situation led Siege to believe he might possibly be a victim of fraud, as he reflected in a diary note ("Ich fürchte Schmid handelt als Betrüger an mir" – Si306-22). At this point in time, however, the

<sup>45</sup> Taufar, *Das deutschsprachige Theater in Marburg an der Drau*, pp. 40f., 67.

manager heavily relied on Schmid and could not take any severe measures. Just days before the season opening, Siege still had to appoint a prompter and also acquired the new play *Sennora Pepita, mein Name ist Meyer!* via Schmid, which was then one of the first pieces performed in Tyrnau (Si306-22). All these examples provide an impression of the dynamics of ensemble management at a provincial theatre, which would also not come to a halt in the following months.

For the beginning of the season on 4 October in Tyrnau, Siege listed an ensemble of nine men and ten women. Soon, however, the first adjustments to the personnel were required due to a series of deaths: Siege's prompter died just days before the first show (Si306-22), and it was only a few days into the season when actor Hr. Karmarsch passed away (Si306-23). His role was filled by actor Rohfeld around one and a half months later (Si306-25), who then also died shortly after (Si306-26).

The first six weeks of engagement were particularly crucial on the actors' side as theatre managers could terminate the contract unilaterally without giving reasons. This legal convention originated from the founding of the German Stage Association (Deutscher Bühnenverein) in 1846 and was thought to provide a protective measure for theatre managers against actors breaching their contract.<sup>46</sup> While the theatre managers – empowered by this advantage – indeed took risks by often appointing ensemble members without knowing or having seen them on stage, they utilised the rule in other ways, too. To avoid being stuck with an unsuitable actor and being able to choose the best candidate among several, managers would appoint multiple actors for the same role, eventually picking their favourite and releasing the others after the season was already ongoing. It seems that Siege applied this strategy too, releasing three actresses – Wallner, Schwarz and Wilhelmi – within the first two months of the season (Si306-24–26). One note in the diary demonstrates the potential for conflict in these precarious circumstances: Siege's note on dismissing Frl. Wilhelmi is amended on the same day, detailing how the actress instantly sued him at the district court for a minor payment disagreement (Si306-26).

Due to expiring contracts as well as the changes of personnel mentioned above, when the regular season came to an end and preparations for the spring/summer season started in March, only around half of the ensemble persisted and eight previously contracted actors were no longer present. In the weeks before relocating to Raab, the process of refilling these roles accelerated with Siege contacting several actors himself and no further mention of the agent Hr. Schmid after this point. Among the new members were siblings Anna and Josef Blumlacher, who – as I have found out during my extensive research on the family – would frequently work under Ignaz Siege's direction. Eventually, Siege lists an almost entirely new ensemble for the summer season in his diary (Si306-29), minus eight actors from the previous months but with fourteen new ones added to his ensemble. Just a few

<sup>46</sup> Taufar, *Das deutschsprachige Theater in Marburg an der Drau*, pp. 42–44, 68f.

days later, however, he would make use of the contract clauses again, releasing five ensemble members within weeks (Si306-30f.). In the case of actor Hr. Fröhlich, he even states that he was chasing him away (“Fröhlich fortgejagt”). Another aspect of theatre practices impacting the personnel were guest performers who would act in major roles for a few shows only. Examples of such temporary additions to the ensemble were actress Fr. Alt in early December and Carl Otto from Pest in July (Si306-25, -33). Towards the end of the season and resulting from his distrust for Schmid, Siege finally replaced him with the agent Hr. Schreiber in Vienna (Si306-34). On the same diary page on which Siege lists the ensemble for the following season, he does mention yet another agent he visited in Vienna (Si306-36), reflecting the highly dynamic theatre operations at the time.

The mobility of actors within Ignaz Siege’s ensemble resembles Peter Schmitt’s observations mentioned at the beginning of this section. The detailed investigation of Siege’s diary demonstrates that the ensemble was hardly ever a fixed group of actors working together for the duration of a whole season but a rather open conglomerate characterised by constant changes. Although Siege’s lists of personnel in the diary as well as the theatre almanacs imply a form of stability, they may be instead considered snapshots of a particular time and context with the constellation of actors named therein most likely never having shared the same stage. Besides the network for employment services comprising agents, theatre managers and actors, the basis for sustaining such fluctuations was the system of so-called ‘Rollenfächer’ – standardised and interchangeable roles in plays in which actors specialised.<sup>47</sup> Comparing the ensemble listings between 1854 and 1857, including the Siege diary (Si306) and three editions of theatre almanacs,<sup>48</sup> it is indeed hard to find continuity. Only seven actors appear as part of the ensemble in three consecutive seasons, with around half of them being part of the family. Over the whole course of the 1855/56 season, Siege employed thirty-eight different actors, but only seven of these were still listed as part of his ensemble one year later in September 1856 (Si306-36), implying that most actors stayed for no longer than one season.

Even though ever more theatre buildings were being constructed, theatre historian Reinhart Meyer makes an apt remark about nineteenth-century theatre practice: “Stationary was just the stage space and its administration, the actors went from place to place”.<sup>49</sup> The case of Anna Blumlacher, who joined in March 1856, provides the complementary perspective, namely that of an actor constantly travelling and joining new ensembles almost every year. Like the Sieges, Blumlacher

<sup>47</sup> See note 39.

<sup>48</sup> *Deutscher Bühnen-Almanach*, ed. by Alois Heinrich, Vol. 19, Berlin 1855, pp. 344f.; *Deutscher Bühnen-Almanach*, ed. by Alois Heinrich, Vol. 20, Berlin 1856, pp. 384f.; *Deutscher Bühnen-Almanach*, ed. by Alois Heinrich, Vol. 21, Berlin 1857, pp. 302f.

<sup>49</sup> “Fest war nur der Bühnenraum und dessen Verwaltung organisiert, die Schauspieler gingen je nach Engagement von Ort zu Ort”. Reinhart Meyer, Theaterpraxis, in *Hansers Sozialgeschichte der deutschen Literatur vom 16. Jahrhundert bis zur Gegenwart. Zwischen Restauration und Revolution*, ed. by Gert Sautermeister/Ulrich Schmid, München 1998, Vol. 5, p. 370; my translation.

and her family were present throughout the network of provincial theatres in the Habsburg monarchy, and their paths intersected on several occasions. The season examined in this paper marks their first encounter, when Ignaz Siege appointed Anna and her brother Josef in March 1856 for his ensemble in Raab. In the eight years prior to arriving in Raab, Anna Blumlacher was engaged with eight different theatres all over Central Europe – in Landshut (DE), Passau (DE), Innsbruck (AT), Bozen/Bolzano (IT), Laibach (SI), Triest/Trieste (IT), Görz/Gorizia (SI), and Krems (AT). She then continued for another season under Siege in Tyrnau and Raab before moving on to work at the theatre of Iglau in today's Czech Republic.<sup>50</sup>

Blumlacher's itinerary exemplifies the mobile lives of actors. Although this was – and remains – a normal prerequisite of the profession, the impact of the actors' constant mobility on their social life and status at the time is often overlooked. There are several extant passport applications and police records for Blumlacher and her family, illustrating a variety of obstacles theatre professionals faced when attempting to travel in the first half of the nineteenth century.<sup>51</sup> Furthermore, being mobile and countering the state's understanding of sedentariness as the 'normal' behaviour of people also resulted in being excluded from social and political participation, which was then bound to the so-called 'Heimatrecht'.<sup>52</sup> These further difficulties for actors added to the challenge of moving place several times a year, having to withstand periods of no employment and income at all and being at the mercy of theatre managers like Siege, who were legally allowed to terminate contracts within a certain period of time for no reason, as demonstrated above. Actors might then struggle to find engagement in the already ongoing season or could even be stuck in a remote town in destitution. While travel expenses were paid to every actor in advance to get to specific locations, their way back often entailed a long journey by foot under severe conditions.<sup>53</sup> Consequently, their precarious situation and mobility in turn negatively affected the common opinion about theatre professionals in society held at the time.

## V. Summary and outlook

The Siege family is a particularly good example for illustrating nineteenth-century theatre practice due to their extensive family archive and the diaries of Ignaz Siege. These shed light on provincial theatres, which were not only a place of employment for many theatre professionals but also an important form of

<sup>50</sup> Aprent, *Anna Blumlacher*.

<sup>51</sup> *Ibid.*, pp. 16–27; Aprent, *Von Kronstadt bis Reichenberg*, pp. 117–122.

<sup>52</sup> Wolfgang Göderle, Migration, in *Habsburg neu denken. Vielfalt und Ambivalenz in Zentral-europa. 30 kulturwissenschaftliche Stichworte*, ed. by Johannes Feichtinger/Heidemarie Uhl, Wien/Köln/Weimar 2016, pp. 140–147, here pp. 142f.; Harald Wendelin, Schub und Heimatrecht, in *Grenze und Staat. Paßwesen, Staatsbürgerschaft, Heimatrecht und Fremden-gesetzgebung in der österreichischen Monarchie 1750–1867*, ed. by Waltraud Heindl/Edith Saurer, Wien 2000, pp. 173–347.

<sup>53</sup> Taufar, *Das deutschsprachige Theater in Marburg an der Drau*, pp. 69, 95f.

everyday culture and entertainment. They also played a significant socio-cultural role for their regions and local communities, an aspect still under-explored in theatre research thus far.

By following theatre manager Ignaz Siege via his diary, I was able to examine the provincial-theatre landscape from the unique perspective of a main protagonist in the theatre scene, analysing the dynamic processes of Siege's theatre practice during the 1855/56 season in Tyrnau and Raab as well as specific forms of mobility associated with his operations.

One main part focussed on Siege's regular travel activities. Although he had leased the 'stationary' theatre of Tyrnau and Raab, the diary extensively documents the different journeys Siege undertook in this period, such as short trips to acquire new plays in Vienna and the organisation of moving the whole theatre operation to another place for the summer season. Looking at his diary records from the 1840s, which illustrate the various difficulties of travelling, a clear shift in his mobility practice becomes apparent. By 1855, he moved rather fast and comfortably and went on leisure trips with his family ever more often, signifying his social mobility and transition to a more bourgeois lifestyle. Siege's detailed records also reflect the general mobility habits and developments in transport technology of the time. A well-developed transport network surrounding Vienna connected Tyrnau and Raab with the metropole and was of great significance to Siege, who was in constant exchange with the city not only for theatre operational purposes but also because of his family ties.

When Siege was in Vienna, he often purchased new plays to expand his repertoire or acquired novelties as highlights for his programme. This indicates a second form of cultural mobility: the process of creating programmes for a provincial theatre stage influenced by theatre makers and their audiences, by general trends adopted from the metropolises as well as specific local contexts and identities. Siege's detailed recordings – a persistent feature in his diary-writing for over forty years – allow for an in-depth examination of his extensive programme in the 1855/56 season, covering 142 different plays and 228 performances. Moreover, it demonstrates how quickly provincial theatres adopted new plays and trends and how extensively Siege interacted with the local population in the process of programming. This becomes evident in his organisation of local cultural events and acts of 'localisation', such as changing place names in titles of plays.

In the third and final section, I discussed Siege's ensemble management and the mobile lives of actors. During the 1855/56 season, thirty-eight actors worked under Siege, yet only a handful were still listed as part of the ensemble in the following year. The diary gives insight into these frequent fluctuations of personnel and documents the developments over the course of a season. Managing an ensemble under such circumstances was possible due to the system of interchangeable 'Rollenfächer', which allowed the replacement of an actor from one day to the next, as well as due to supply networks comprised of theatre managers, actors and agents, with the latter's mediation work often being overlooked. Furthermore, the

diary entries expose the implications of mid-nineteenth-century provincial-theatre practice for actors, whose precarious social conditions were complicated by their structural disadvantages within the legal framework, with all power usually remaining in the hands of theatre managers such as Ignaz Siegel.

Siegel's practice, as demonstrated in this article, highlights the different forms of mobility that are essential elements of theatre operations, and further investigation of these aspects may significantly contribute to theatre-history research. Despite the emphasis on mobilities in the present article, it is not my intention to exaggerate the importance of or romanticise mobilities. I was instead aiming at introducing a new perspective on nineteenth-century theatre by providing insights into the life and work of theatre professionals that would otherwise remain hidden when employing more static and location-centred research perspectives. The investigation of all seven volumes of Ignaz Siegel's diaries, as proposed by my current PhD research project, will certainly enhance this practitioner-centred approach and add further details to the findings presented in this article. Although the season of 1855/56 in Tyrnau and Raab has already been thoroughly examined in this article, the diaries utilised as source materials still offer content for further exploration. Ignaz Siegel's various social interactions with friends, family, and professional contacts have been mentioned on several occasions throughout the article, and many of these relationships are covered in remarkable detail in the diary, which contains intimate notes of family relations and personal events that could only be partially considered in this text. These diary entries reveal rare information about these people's lives, experiences and the social dynamics of a provincial theatre, thus representing a valuable source of data for future research.

I would like to end with a quote that provides a glimpse beyond the stage. On his name day in July 1856, Ignaz Siegel was surprised by his ensemble with an 'illumination' after the show, as he wrote in a diary note:

30 July 1856 in Raab: After the theatre, the company prepared an illumination for me. "To his name day: I. S., good fortune, cheerfulness, and a long life, the ensemble to their honoured director." This caught fire, and I burnt my whole hand while putting it out and will spend fourteen days healing it. At half past twelve in the night, the company serenaded me.<sup>54</sup>

<sup>54</sup> Original text in German: "30. Juli 1856 in Raab: Nach dem Theater hat mir die Gesellschaft eine Illumination gemacht. 'Zum Namensfest: I. S. Glück, Frohsinn, langes Leben, die Mitglieder ihrem geehrten Direktor' Diese ist in Brand gerathen, wobei ich beim löschen die ganze Hand verbrannte und 14 Tage mit Heilung derselben zubringen werde. Um ½ 1 Uhr Nachts hat mir die Gesellschaft ein Ständchen gebracht." (Si306-34).

