

In the "deafening" aftermath of the interactive mystery performance "ELISA" at the Athens Concert Hall

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The editorial team of ertnews.gr



"Friends of Music Society, Hall: Giannis Marinos"

"In the resounding echo of a performance that enchanted us, took us on a journey, made us laugh and moved us, made us play like little children and discover our own secret powers to overcome our difficulties — and above all, showed us a new perspective on education: one that is brighter, more joyful, more inclusive, and doesn't need labels in order to embrace diversity!"

Following two successful sold-out performances at Art 63 Theater, Dr. Haris Karnezi and the team of Cognitive Behavioural Drama (CBD) brought once again, on Sunday, September 24, their interactive mystery performance *ELISA* to the Athens Concert Hall (Megaron), as part of a masterclass on autism.

The **CBD Masterclass** offered us a unique opportunity to walk in the shoes of an autistic person, tracing the path they must navigate in order to survive in a world that often seems irrational and overwhelming.

After Dr. Karnezi's introductory talk—where she presented the main theories for interpreting autism and outlined the structure of her innovative method—we were immersed in the magical journey of *SHE*:

We crossed rickety bridges, faced wild beasts, encountered ferocious tribes, dove into stormy seas, capsized pirate ships, and solved clever riddles by decoding magical phrases... until we finally uncovered the mystery behind *ELISA*'s disappearance.



After the performance concluded, Dr. Haris Karnezi walked us through its design step by step, explaining how each activity was crafted to respond to the needs of children on the autism spectrum. The performance itself served as a model therapy session—one of the many conducted daily by therapists and facilitators at the Centre for Cognitive Behavioural Drama, with groups of children.

The turnout was both large and enthusiastic. We saw people who had traveled from all over Greece—Crete, Thessaloniki, Euboea, Rhodes, Santorini, and even Cyprus—watching the talk with unwavering attention and joining in with joy and excitement, engaging in play with the Cognitive Behavioural Drama team at every opportunity.

Just before the end of the masterclass, there were moving testimonials from therapists and educators. Despite coming from diverse backgrounds, they all echoed one powerful request, best captured in the words of a teacher from Crete:

“This method should be taught to every educator in the country—at all levels and in every specialty—not only to those working in special education but also to those teaching neurotypical children. All children should experience learning like we saw it today: joyfully, through play, thinking freely, and truly wanting to learn.”

At the very end, Dr. Haris Karnezi bade us farewell with a few lines from *The Little Seafarer* by Odysseas Elytis, which, as she said, capture the essence of her vision:

“Whatever I managed to gain in life... I owe to a certain kind of special courage that Poetry gave me: to become the wind for the kite and the kite for the wind—even when there is no sky.”

In a world that can be so harsh to those who are different, the existence of even one small lighthouse of safety, acceptance, and authentic joy is—at the very least—a sign of hope. Let us wish that this light multiplies, with the support of the state. Cognitive Behavioural Drama must be brought into every school. It must become a tool in every educator's hands. Even when there is no sky.



A few words about Cognitive Behavioural Drama (CBD)

What is CBD? It is a novel psycho-educational model grounded in scientific research conducted at Trinity College Dublin. It is specifically designed to address the social and communication challenges commonly faced by children with low self-esteem, high-functioning autism (HFA), and Asperger's syndrome.

CBD combines—for the first time—the art of theatre with principles and techniques from psychological therapies such as cognitive and behavioural approaches.

How does it work in practice?

Children are invited to participate experientially in captivating stories and overcome a series of imaginative trials: discovering lost treasures, finding the magical land of chocolate streams and candy trees, flying on magic carpets, solving the mystery of a missing wizard, or building their own business.

These adventures aim to help children develop social and communication skills while overcoming personal challenges such as phobias, anxiety, rigid routines, resistance to change, and lack of confidence.

About the creator of the method

Dr. Haris Karnezi was born and raised in Athens. She studied acting at the Athens Drama School of Giorgos Theodosiadis and worked professionally as an actress for ten years. She earned an MA in “Theatre in Education” from the University of Central England in Birmingham and completed her PhD with a scholarship at the Department of Psychology, Trinity College Dublin.