

Education & Theatre

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Editorial

Nassia Choleva, Αντώνης Λενακάκης, Μπέττυ Γιαννούλη, Μαίρη Καλδή, Χαρά Τσουκαλά, Κατερίνα Αλεξιάδη, Ηρώ Ποταμούση

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a Note from
the Editorial
board



Dear friends,

2024 has been a year of productive work in theatre/drama in education at the practical, theoretical and research levels. But it has also been a year of significant losses for the international theatre/drama in education community. In February we said goodbye to Hans-Wolfgang Nickel, an iconic figure in the field of theatre pedagogy in Germany. A month later we were saddened by the loss of our own John Somers, an influential figure in drama education and applied theatre in the UK. At the end of August, Lakis Kouretzis, the man who introduced drama games to Greece, passed away. All three put students at the centre of their practice and spoke of inclusive processes that empower, inspire and give voice. Their approaches, albeit from different starting points and approaches, had strong social and political perspectives. They have been an inspiration to us as teachers and will be a compass for the rest of our journey. Their visions and voices remind us that in every age, the sounds of art and education echo the need to face humanity's challenges with strength, respect and solidarity.

For many years, such a perspective has helped to prioritise our choices and organise the way we read and interpret reality. And in these circumstances, we can only turn our thoughts to the people of Palestine and acknowledge their inhuman, unjust, long and exhausting ordeal. We are deeply moved by the following words of the poet Rafeef Ziadah:

*If my words could stop this
I would create a rhythm
Louder than the speed to too familiar
I would learn the lyrics to every freedom song
And write it on every building still standing in Razda
If my words could stop this
If they could stand in the way
Of a bomb, a drone or a single bullet
I would lay them at the feet of every child in Razda
I would offer them like prayer
Recite them over, and over, and over*

*Like the Holy Names of God
I would write them endlessly
Until all language breaks
But words can't stop this
So I offer you this silence and a poem
And tell you are not to worry
We are holding our ground
We are holding our ground
We are holding our ground
We are holding our ground.**

Convinced that humanity, justice and solidarity are not only moral values but also the basis for building a just and peaceful society, we are challenged to reflect on our responsibility as artists and educators to inspire understanding and hope, in whatever field of formal, non-formal or informal education we are active.

The research and projects presented in this issue of *Education & Theatre* demonstrate such wider social reflection and focus.

The research articles section begins with **Maria Koltsida**, who presents the historically shaped dimensions of art involving people with disabilities and the Greek cultural context. The relationship and engagement of disabled people with the arts is a constantly changing and evolving field, reflected in both practical artistic applications and theoretical framing. In the first part of this study, the author explores the different artistic practices involving disabled people and artists through specific, historically shaped dimensions. The second part discusses the relevant research in the field and the artistic practice and education of disabled people in the Greek cultural field. Through the theoretical analysis of the above data, the study attempts to discuss the ways in which the historically shaped dimensions in art involving disabled people and artists are intertwined with the artistic practice and education of disabled people in Greece.

* "If My Words", a poem by Rafeef Ziadah. Available at: http://www.rafeefziadah.net/js_videos/if-my-words/



Roumpini Dafni presents her research with adult students at the School of 18 Ano, a school unit within the Addiction Rehabilitation Unit of the Psychiatric Hospital of Attica. She applied and studied the impact of educational drama techniques in the form of documentary theatre on the cultivation of citizenship. The results of the quantitative research showed an improvement in the citizenship of the experimental group, but no statistically significant differences were found. On the contrary, analysis of the qualitative data indicated an improvement in civic skills and attitudes towards diversity, as well as an increased interest in social and political issues, accompanied by personal involvement.

The use of new technologies and digital media in the development and delivery of drama activities in an educational context has become an increasingly important area of research, study and experimentation in recent years. **Emilia Karantzouli** shows how digital drama can be used to enhance the role of today's students in an educational context, facilitating communication and collaboration. In this way, young people who, more than ever, need intense experience, play, action and interaction, while living, speaking and growing up in a world dominated by technology, will have opportunities for a more meaningful understanding of the complex concept of self in the modern technological world.

In the section on innovative programmes, **Georgina Kakoudaki** highlights the importance of theatre in education and the efforts to bridge the gap between artistic and pedagogical skills through innovative initiatives. The article presents "Creating Space In-Between Cultures", a programme that promotes experiential education by fostering intercultural exchange between Greece and the UK and offering participants the opportunity to engage with social and political issues through theatre. Supported by the Hellenic Theatre/Drama & Education Network (TENet-Gr), this 10-year initiative aims to pave the way for the integration of drama and applied theatre into society, ensuring that the actor of the future will be able to respond to the needs of the community on stage, and that theatre educators will be equipped with high quality artistic tools when offering their services to the community.

Throughout 2024 there have been a number of very important international meetings. In the conference report section, **Miao Bin** outlines the work and themes of the 10th IDEA World Congress, held in Beijing in July. **Betty Giannouli** and **Nassia Choleva** present the scope and key ideas of the World Alliance for Arts in Education Summit, held in Athens in October and attended by a UNESCO representative for education, arts and culture. This important international conference was followed by the annual meeting of IDEA Europe representatives, also covered in this issue.

In the dissertation synopsis section, **Konstantinos Mastrothanasis** explains how he attempted to evaluate the effectiveness of theatre pedagogical methodologies for the language education and literacy of bilingual student populations, aged 10–12, in times of socio-health restrictions. The impact of urgent distance and in-person language immersion interventions based on applied theatre and drama for teaching reading in Modern Greek as a second language was investigated.

This issue concludes with a special tribute to our beloved teacher and mentor John Somers. It includes an introductory note by the editors, a viewpoint text by **Yi-Man Au**, conversations between several of his colleagues and students and Eirini Marna, and a republished version of his seminal article on the “compound stimulus”. Senior members of TENet-Gr remember John with memories and photos, and **Nikos Govas** prepares a list of all the writings (research, viewpoints, autobiographical, workshop descriptions and presentations) that John has generously offered over the years to support the association’s publishing work.

We wish you an enjoyable read!

Sincerely,
The Editorial Board

