

Lyto Triantafyllidou Talks to TNH about Her Latest Theatrical Project

By Eleni Sakellis

NEW YORK – Call Elsewhere is a theatrical audio experience created by Lyto Triantafyllidou, based on the play Elsewhere: a play for an audience of one by Stav Palti Negev. The play invites audience members to head to a private voyage into the lives of refugees from different times and places. The audience members are invited to call a mysterious phone number using their personal mobile phones, in order to reach “Elsewhere – a calling center for the displaced.”

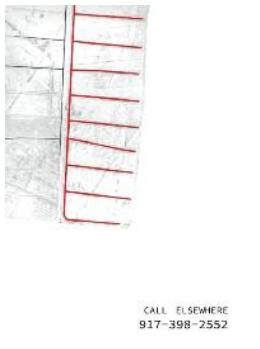
At this point, a recorded play begins. They are welcomed by an operating system that informs them that all of the representatives are too busy to take their call at this time. They are asked to hold on the line, and after a few minutes are offered to talk to other people waiting in line. There are four extensions for the audience to choose from and each one leads to a different story. The performance includes four stories of Syrian, Sudanese, Venezuelan, and Bosnian refugees.

Triantafyllidou spoke to The National Herald about the project and her upcoming work.

TNH: What inspired this project?

Lyto Triantafyllidou: I first experienced the play Elsewhere: a play for an audience of one by Stav Palti Negev few years ago at the Public Theater as a reading directed by Taz Lagakid. I really loved this script, and when I met Stav months later I knew I wanted to work with her. In 2019, we had the opportunity to collaborate on two projects. The first one was a production of her play An Evening on River Styx, presented at the 14th St.

Our second project together was the theatrical audio experience Call Elsewhere. This project was originally developed as a performance piece for the exhibition Multiversant, featuring the works of 22 artists from 15 countries and four continents that met through the New York



CALL ELSEWHERE
917-398-2552



Images from Call Elsewhere.



COURTESY OF LYTO TRIANTAFYLLOIDOU

Foundation for the Arts (NYFA) 2018 Immigrant Artist Mentoring Program: Visual & Multidisciplinary Arts, presented at Chashama. I thought that this was a perfect opportunity to work on Stav's play.

The idea of a phone call performance came as a solution to the gallery space, as we wanted to have a one-to-one relationship between the piece and the audience. However, through this experimental performance, I discovered a very personal relationship that people have with

their phone devices. I think that it's a very powerful medium to speak to someone, directly to their ears. Thus, every mono-

logue of Stav's play becomes a private conversation between two people who have never met before. I would love to keep exploring this medium as a performance tool.

Call Elsewhere was presented again October 19 at New York Live Arts, as part of the show case In/Between, co-curated by Yanira Castro and Marita Abiri. I am truly happy that more people had the opportunity to interact with this performance. I was even happier to get some voicemail reviews from members of our audience!

TNH: How long did the project take from idea to realization?

LT: Stav and I were working on the piece only for few months. The most difficult aspect of the project was to figure out the technology behind our calling center. I spent hours and hours in Evdokia Ragkous's living room, sound designer and

collaborate with amazing actors who had to do everything with the success of the piece. It wasn't the first time I directed Alexandra Gellner and Jak Watson, and I certainly hope to work with them again, as I consider them very valuable collaborators. Ino Badanjak gave an excellent performance as the Venezuelan refugee. Finally, I was extremely humbled and flattered that the English Syrian actor Lath Nakli (Ramy Orange in the New Black) gave his voice to the Syrian refugees.

TNH: Tell us about your upcoming project in Athens.

LT: I am currently in Athens for the opera Powder Her Face by the Grammy and Laurence Olivier award-winner Thomas Adès, and masterfully directed by Alexandros Eldididis, the Artistic Director of the Alternative Stage of Greek National Opera. The work is based on the scandalous life of Margaret Campbell, Duchess of Argyll, who in 1963 shocked the English audience with her sexual excesses. The opera is presented in Greece for the first time by the Alternative Stage of the Greek National Opera.

I am extremely proud to serve the production as the Associate Director. After seven years in New York, it was an amazing opportunity for me to return to Greece for a few months and work at the Greek National Opera. In addition, I feel I have learned so much through my collaboration with Mr. Eldididis.

TNH: Did you always want to go into theater?

LT: Theater more than anything to me is a journey. For all my adult life, I have immersed myself in exploring new ideas, colorful stories, and cultures unfamiliar to me, through directing and supporting in any capacity theater works that expand an audience's moral imagination. I feel very fortunate following this path and I can't imagine my professional life any other way.

Cyprus NY Productions' Kalinichta Margarita Impresses the Audience

By Eleni Sakellis

NEW YORK – For three performances only, Cyprus New York Productions presented Kalinichta Margarita (Goodnight Margarita) November 1-3 at St. George and St. Demetrios Church in Manhattan.

The play by Gerassimos Stavrou, directed by Theodoros Petropoulos and Phytos Stratis, tells the harrowing true story of teacher Margarita Perdikari from Ioannina, Greece, and her life during the occupation in World War II. The production is under the auspices of the Consulate General of Greece in New York in collaboration with the Greek Division of Ronald McDonald House and was perfectly timed to follow the commemoration of Oct Day, October 28, as well as the 80th anniversary of the start of WWII.

The production featured a stellar cast: Anna Tsoukala, Theodora Loukas, Stavros Markalas, Theodoros Petropoulos, Diodoros Pagoudis, Christina Kandilioti, Chrysti Sylvaiki, Tasos Karydis, Ariadne Panagopoulou, Angelo Niakas, Chrisanthos Petsilas, Phytos Stratis, Evangelina Zoulas, Demetris Michael, and Angela Tsamasirou in the title role of Margarita Perdikari.

The staging, breaking the fourth wall, allowed the audience to be immersed completely in the drama from the moment they entered the space of the church hall. The actors, in costume and in character, greeted the audience members as they came in. One actor went up to various people just as they



THELENI SAKELLIS

ABOVE: A scene from Kalinichta Margarita with Anna Tsoukala and Angela Tsamasirou. RIGHT: The plaque commemorating the community's World War II veterans at St. Demetrios Church in Manhattan.

walked in and asked if anyone had seen his niece.

Powerful performances by the entire cast brought to life this true story and the time period as well. Life during the occupation was vividly depicted from the early sort of denial/optimism to the gradual wearing down of the niceties of civilization as the fascist oppression grinds up the spirit of many people. And yet, the courage to

stand up for what is right and to stand up even when the odds are against you persists.

Director Theodoros Petropoulos, a skilled actor in his own right and in this production as well, allows the actors and the text to shine with his keen understanding of stagecraft.

The historic church, one of the early Greek Orthodox communities in New York City, also

provided a unique atmosphere with its historic black and white photos on display on one wall and a plaque commemorating the parishioners who fought for the preservation of freedom in World War II.

The audience applauded enthusiastically at the conclusion of the play and gave a standing ovation for the talented performers, including the dynamic actresses Tsoukala, Loukas,



Kandilioti, and Tsamasirou in her first starring role. The chemistry between Tsamasirou and Tasos Karydis was impressive in their scenes together which added a poignancy to their dramatic parting and to the conclusion of the play. Stavros Markalas also gave a fine performance in the thankless role of Periklis.

Following the performance Stratis, who is Cyprus New York Production's president, thanked all those present for their support, particularly Consul Generals of Greece and Cyprus, Konstantinos Koutras and Alexis Phedonos-Vadet, respectively.

Consul of Greece Lana Zochiou, Maria Markou, the President of the Parish Council of St. George and St. Demetrios Church Athos Zakou, the Greek Division of Ronald McDonald House, Panos and Sylvia Adamopoulos, Anna and Elias Neofotistos, Ismini Michaels, and the cast and crew of the production. Many members of the Pancreptian Choir also attended, showing their support for Stratis who also happens to be the Choir's Artistic and Music Director, and for the entire production which included many performers who are also Choir members.

Phedonos-Vadet congratulated all those involved in the production for their excellent work, and also thanked all those present for their support. Koutras also offered his congrat-

ulations and said there were no words to describe the moving production. Consul of Greece Lana Zochiou said that Stratis and his efforts have elevated the community's events and that everyone is looking forward to the next production.

Maria Markou noted firstly that she was very moved by the play and when Stratis had mentioned to her that the team needed help, she did not hesitate since this is "the omogenia's team and Stratis Phytos contributes so much to the community."

Stratis then asked all those present to go upstairs into the church and light a candle for those like Margarita Perdikari and those listed on the plaque in the church hall, whose courage and bravery must never be forgotten. As Stratis noted, the subject of the play is the modern history of Greece, and that everyone knows how important historical memory is especially for the Greeks of America and their children.

The beauty of the historic church, its iconography and iconostasis impressed all who went to pay their respects. An added bonus was when cast member Demetris Michael, still in his German officer's costume, granted in the church. Besides being a performer and music teacher, Michael is also a Byzantine Chantier at Holy Cross in Whitestone.

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