



**Susanne & John Cleworth**  
Danske Institut i Athen  
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Having arrived on the 22nd of December, the morning after, we were woken up to what seemed at first like an extremely loud morning alarm. We slowly woke up enough to realise the sound was church bells directly outside of our window. This continued each day of Christmas, all the way up to New Year's Eve, then returned each Sunday thereafter.

Upon first listening, we were intrigued by the harsh tone of the bells and slight dissonance - more dissonant than the church bells either of us were familiar with. This timbral quality of the bells bore a peculiar resemblance to the tonality and repetition of Greek-French composer Iannis Xenakis' self-designed instrument called 'sixxen'. While we were lying there listening to these peculiar bells, the short church bell tune repeated on and on, and we found out some days later they repeated exactly 33 times. Interestingly, 33, not 32, as 32 times would make more musical sense (from classical western music's perspective), as 32 repetitions, or bars, is a perfect ending of the phrase.  $4 \times 4 = 16$ , and repeated once, therefore 32. But there was one bar extra, equalling 33.

This could represent many things, and one can only guess, but our interpretation of this amount of repetitions was that having that one extra bar, the 33rd, implied rather than representing an end, it represents moving onwards to more - a new beginning, and what is to come next? This feeling of what will come next, and new beginnings, was the perfect theme for our fruitful residency, as we took each day as it came, and each day came with a lot! Oddly, while writing this report in the sun on our beautiful balcony, the priest from the bell-ridden Orthodox church was strolling its courtyard, and received a call, and the ringtone was, fittingly, church bells!

"The 'Kourdhouni' (bell) known to ancient civilizations was originally suspended from the necks of animals to protect them from evil spirits. The bell also calls the faithful to the church or announces the arrival of a visitor". Bells have served many spiritual, practical, and musical purposes throughout millennia of human culture. This may explain our love for the beautiful sound, and why we incorporated bells into our compositions during our residency. The piece we composed during our residency was a requiem for Susanne's late brother, Jonas. The bell as an instrument continues its spiritual and historical journey through our composition.

Artists typically look to the past for inspiration, and that is not only what we have experienced personally with our own art while living in Athens but also something we have observed on numerous occasions, for example, modern sculpture referencing Cycladic figures, and modern painters, like Picasso, referencing ancient Greek shapes and figures.

We were lucky to have visited numerous museums and archaeological sites like Mycenae and Delphi, where we were filled with knowledge of how ancient and modern Greeks lived. One notable museum was the Museum Of Greek Folk Musical Instruments, where we studied the interesting array of instruments on display. It was also a chance for us to delve further into one of our personal fascinations: the ancient Greek modes - the system of scales that later developed into the modern western tonal system, i.e., major and minor keys.

To conclude this report, we would like to paraphrase a quote from The Museum Of Greek Folk Musical Instruments:

"Since the primitive area, humans, in order to express themselves and to communicate, "invent" different sounds using their own bodies or different physical materials properly adapted. The social "organisation" of these sounds represents music. Instruments consist of the "material" dimension of this "intangible" culture. They traverse time and space, associated with myths and rites, uses and techniques, and reveal symbols, aesthetics, and the inventiveness of musicians. Through musical instruments, we don't only listen to music but we "see" its people!"

We would like to thank the Danish Institute of Athens for having us and enabling us to create our music in a non-constrictive environment. We had an amazing time and enjoyed every moment with our kind and lovely roommates. We will cherish this time for the rest of our lives and consider ourselves extremely lucky! It's been inspiring, fruitful, productive, explorative, and warm :)