

# Report from my stay at the Danish Institute at Athens

## 13.April - 11.May 2024

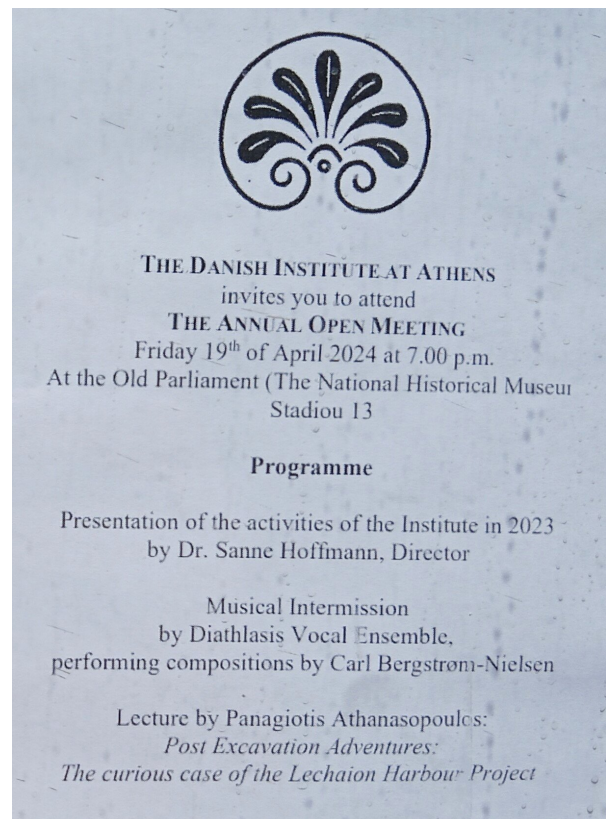
Once again it became possible to be present for a month to collaborate with local Greek musicians - see my previous reports from 2020, 2022 and 2023. This is a list of the main activities, resulting in 3 public concerts and a lecture:

- 15. April Rehearsal with Diathlasis ensemble
- 19.April Supervising and conducting at a mini-concert with four of my compositions and Diathlasis ensemble as part of the Institute's Open Annual Celebration.
- 20.April Meeting with Sea Orchestra (Vassilios Kokkas and Dimitris Talarougas) and discussing the programme of the upcoming concert.
- 21.April Rehearsal WHI ensemble for the upcoming concert.
- 26.April Concert with WHI ensemble at the Institute
- 29.april Lecture at the Institute: Open Scores. Structures for collaboration in experimental music.
- 1.May Sea Orchestra rehearsal.
- 8.May Sea Orchestra, Terrace concert

### The importance of networks and networking

Being involved in art production, it is natural to think of the art from the dynamic side. Traditional artists' individuality notwithstanding, what happens may depend on what circumstances offer, and this is particularly obvious when finances are involved. Funding of travel and of stay like in my case can open doors as well as act as a strong fertiliser, and I am deeply grateful for that.

With the musical intermission of the Annual Open Meeting, my concert activity was taken to a new level, thanks to the confidence shown by DIA. And it met a new kind of audience: attendants at a formal arrangement who did not come especially for the music. This way, the experimental music had the welcome opportunity of reaching and maybe surprising a serious audience outside usual musical and artistic circles. And the reception afterwards facilitated informal talking.



Announcement of the Annual Open Meeting

The Diathlasis performance can be seen and heard here: [https://youtu.be/5Vk\\_GLkcjps](https://youtu.be/5Vk_GLkcjps)

After the WHI concert there was also, a pleasant surprise, a reception. It made it possible among other things to meet a number of music school people and thus broaden my personal acquaintances within the music scene. Social activity after a concert in the form of going to a restaurant or café is of course always possible, but a reception prolongs directly the atmosphere of the concert. It can "shake people together" as we say in the Danish language, that is, it sustains an open, floating state which no obligations, but it can also develop into spontaneously improvised contacts. This way, it can develop the atmosphere of the concert, unfold the interests people may have in each other in a gentle, emerging way.



Audience at the WHI concert 26.April

At the WHI rehearsal I had already met several newcomers to the ensemble, music students who planned to write papers on improvised music, one of them a PhD. In addition to the practical work, this is exciting to me, combining music and thinking ambitiously, and I can assist in further writing together as a practical and bibliographical specialist. Also a form of cultural networking!

The WHI concert is online on Youtube: <https://www.youtube.com/@whiensemble7233>

The *lecture* unfolded my recent theoretical model of how two main historically informed methods contribute to the way scores for open compositions are open. It aims to provide a descriptive vocabulary, instead of just "greater or lesser" openness. Both methods combine that which is composed and which is improvised, but musicians deal differently with them. I was lucky to have an engaged audience before me that included a diversity of both higher education students and their teachers. There was afterwards, according to the program, a 30 minutes questions and discussion session - a nice planning for openness, paralleling the subtitle's notion of "structures for collaboration". This occasion to get feedback from the

outside to my model was highly welcome. A fair number of us went to a cafe/restaurant afterwards, testifying to the interest of participants in the matters discussed.



From the Sea Orchestra Terrace concert 8.May

The Terrace concert in which I was a special guest with the Sea Orchestra had an atmosphere different from that of the WHI concert, even though the core members of the orchestra have a background of music studies roughly within the same academic canon as the WHI founders. Some visitors were, according to our impressions, as much focused on the enjoyment of visiting a cultural and social arrangement as on the strictly musical, even on a Wednesday. A reception was, so to speak, built-in with a buffet of food and drink which could have supported the relaxed attitude. The concert programme became a long one. The last part consisted in playing from proposed keywords from the audience followed by a long free improvisation - the keywords music being one more "structure for collaboration", and it appeared to be welcome among the audience. We got a number of positive comments about the music, once again suggesting that the environmental and social context for concerts are important (compare the remarks in my 2023 report).

The Sea Orchestra works with electronics and advanced sound processing (see also the report from 2023). At this time of writing, audiovisual materials are being shared and worked on – a preliminary version of “5 elements” by Vassilios Kokkas from the concert is behind the link below. Elements are water, wood, fire, earth, metal.

[https://youtu.be/oPqI8Phr\\_8U?si=pwSBRAWL00y-Yog6](https://youtu.be/oPqI8Phr_8U?si=pwSBRAWL00y-Yog6)

## Musical developments

Here is a pick of some special inspirations from this stay pointing to further work and new ideas:

*Four Rules* is a piece for a duet ad libitum. It employs, among other coordination forms, a "ping-pong"-like alternating of fast short figures. Such a texture is not uncommon in improvised music, but it occurred to me that there could be a possibility of extending the game - by changing the way response takes place, along lines of who takes initiative, how much unity or contrast, and more. Thinking this way is a "classic" in experimental music since the sixties, but it has till now being used only now and then by composers. However, it is an exciting alternative to traditional tonality - a possibility to learn from studying our basic human communication behaviour, and a lot remains to be explored.



Dmitri Papavasileou (links) and Niki Krasaki playing *Four Rules* at the WHI concert 26.April

*From the Danish Seasons* is a collection of many pieces, organised into series. In one of these series pieces are explicitly combinable as elements for a varied overall piece. At the WHI performance however, I was surprised that many different pieces from the entire book were put together in a long sequence! And it worked absolutely well - with clearly different sections. For me, a thought-provoking reminder as a composer for improvising musicians that there are cases like this in which many instructions, or should we say offerings for ideas, need not be an obstacle to free playing. Musicians may so to speak have appetite for that, too, including those of WHI who are very familiar with extended improvisation situations.

For the concerts I also acted as sound recording technician, and due to the residence, I had working peace to make the mixing and deliver a final version fast after the performances. Those involved are often keen to review it, and it may evoke reflections and deepen the experience.



Ho-he-ha-hi with vocal ensemble Diathlasis

*Ho-he-ha-hi* is a piece in which I experiment with how conduction can be turned into being more containing of the collaborative dimension. At the Annual Meeting it was the first time I conducted it myself with a small ensemble. The conductor can point to the four compass directions each standing for one of the sounds indicated by the syllables in the title. But with these main features: the conductor is *never* to be followed directly, only after an approx. 10 seconds pause - and obeying the instruction needs only happen for another 10 seconds. This way, the ensemble members "circumvent" the, in my view, too mechanical shift likely to result from coordinating with a downbeat. In order not to influence details I kept eyes closed, an intimate sensation of just being there with the ears in between singular movements. This experience could deserve further contemplation - presence with just the ears as a compositional element, for instance in the (imagined) instruction appearing before individual musicians "close your eyes for [x amount of time] and just listen" ...

### **Conclusion**

Arrangements have been successful in terms of both audiences and the impact one could estimate. Together with the informal being together it resonates on in us who were present. For some of us, who work on in the music field, there will be direct continuations of the processes, as well as inspirations for further work for me. The residence stay of a month made it possible to do this programme and to participate on a full scale, at rehearsals and with informal meetings in between.

*Along to DIA, my sincere thanks also go to organisers Alexis Porfiriadis, Dimitri Papavasileou, Panayotis Terzakis, Vassilios Kokkas and Dimitris Talarougas.*

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