

Eindhoven, 20 October 2017

We feel we need to respond to the statement of HELINA which was written in reaction to The Guardian article on our research, performed in three Greek theaters.

The label HELINA puts on our research ('a quick way to gain five minutes of fame') does not match the facts nor our intentions. We did an elaborate study with close to 11.000 measurements. The acoustics of the three theaters we investigated, was never before scrutinized this thoroughly. We were able to do so much measurements because of new, faster and more accurate measuring techniques, which were not available yet in previous studies. This enabled us to find results that previous studies did not.

The measurements were done early in Greece in spring 2015. It took us one year to analyse the large amount of data. We presented our results for the first time in the acoustic conference ICSV 2016 in Athens and later on the Acoustics '17 Conference in Boston, in June this year. It was only in this month, October 2017, that we reached out to the press, which led to the Guardian article. All this shows that we had no hurry, and that we were not chasing 'quick fame'.

Contrary to what HELINA states, we have done elaborate literature research in the field of acoustics, and we are aware of the fact that previous studies found other results than we did. The difference in findings may be due to the fact that we had newer, more accurate techniques available which enabled us to come to a more valid conclusion.

One of the findings of our research presented in 2016 is that the acoustic quality of the theaters is good but not excellent, and only very loud voices can be understood throughout the whole theater. HELINA seems to have overlooked this result and mentions that we focused on weak voices, which is only the case for the results presented in July 2017.

We agree with the HELINA statement that the acoustics likely was different in the past. In our research we do not make any statements about the acoustic quality in ancient times. We researched the present day acoustic quality only and all conclusions refer to the current condition and use of theatres.

Although it was not the core of our study, we elaborated it such that we can verify the omnipresent claims about the present acoustic quality of the theaters. This includes claims such as 'one can hear on stage whispering even on the last seating row'. This was an effort to make the research results more accessible.

We hope that we will once again discuss our findings with our Greek HELINA colleagues, as we reached out before by presenting our first findings in Athens, so we can advance acoustics science together.

We want to stress that we admire and very much respect the ancient Greek theaters. They are very special buildings, unique in their history and atmosphere, and an absolute must-see for everyone.

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