

The Avenue

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Hotel Elefant - New Music NYC



By Arts Avenue



Could you tell us about yourself and Hotel Elefant?

Leaha: I'm a composer and an arts administrator. I am also a co-founder and the Artistic Director for Hotel Elefant, which is a contemporary music ensemble based in New York dedicated innovative, living composers. I'm originally from Los Angeles but I now live in New York.

About Hotel Elefant:

Hotel Elefant is the brain-child of myself and my friend Mary Kouyoumdjian. She is the other co-founder and the Executive Director of the group. We have been working together since our undergraduate days at the University of California San Diego. Then we joined forces here in New York. So this idea of Hotel Elefant came to be in 2011. It's a fairly fresh and new initiative.



What is some of the recent work you've been doing at Hotel Elefant?

Hotel Elefant held its inaugural concert here in New York this spring. It featured a piece for violin and electronics that was a commission from Andie Springer, who is our incredible contemporary violinist with the ensemble. Coming up, we are preparing our fall concert and moving forward with our season.

What inspires you and how do you keep yourself motivated?

Well, my friends definitely keep me motivated, they are just amazing people and go-getters! Seeing my peers and my mentors moving ahead pushing themselves really motivates me a lot.

Are there any inspirations or people you look up to when it comes to the arts?

My teachers have been very influential: people like Roger Reynolds back in California, Steven Takasugi who's at Harvard...I am also working very closely with Michael Gordon and Julia Wolfe through the Master's program at NYU. I feel so blessed having such great teachers, composers and performers to look up to and encourage me.

What's New York city life like for you?

It's fast! It's definitely fast paced; I see the difference when I head back to California to visit. You feel the pace slow down a lot.

New York really makes you get out there and try to pursue your craft. It's also really open and friendly. The new music scene is remarkably small, which is incredible for a city with 8 million plus people. But you go to these events and you get to walk away from each concert with a few more friends. It's an encouraging and inspiring feeling.



Could you describe yourself and Hotel Elefant in five words each?

Myself:

composer, woman, person, friend, daydreamer

Hotel Elefant:

innovation, collaboration, experimentation, surprising, dedicated

Do you have any last words of advice for artists out there?

Whatever your craft is, never give up. There's always a way to realize your goals and your dreams. Support all your colleagues and friends along the way!