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New York Now

## On-Demand Audio: Hotel Elefant's Politically-Charged Season Premiere

Recorded Live at (Le) Poisson Rouge September 14, 2014

Tuesday, October 28, 2014

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Hotel Elefant performs at (Le) Poisson Rouge September 14, 2014 (Dominica Eriksen)

On September 14, the New York-based ensemble [Hotel Elefant](#) presented "speakOUT:" a program of politically and emotionally charged music ranging in subject from the televised suicide of a Pennsylvania senator to a child photographed during the Iraq war.

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Anchoring the concert was the music of Iranian-born composer Sahba Aminikia, whose three pieces – *She'tābān (In Haste)*, *One Day, Tehran* and *Sooge Sohrab* – provided a snapshots of tensions in modern Iran.

Matt Mark's *This Will Hurt Someone* set the final words of former Pennsylvania senator Robert Budd Dwyer – spoken just before he committed suicide in front of news reporters at a press conference – to a lilting, ukelele-driven pop song. Leahha Maria Villarreal's Piano Trio I was composed in memory of her late mother on the 25-year anniversary of her passing. The driving, repetitive rhythms of the string trio conjure both the intensity of a car crash and the racing heart of the composer in the aftermath of the tragedy.

The evening also featured two world premieres. *Sewing Room Daguerreotype*, by Hannis Brown (assistant producer for Q2 Music), is inspired by the black and white photographs of his ancestors that lined his grandmother's sewing room when he was a child. The music charts their imagined journeys from Eastern Europe to the United States. Mary Kouyoumdjian's *Children of Conflict: Samar's Song* is part of a series of pieces inspired by photographs of children who have lived in war-torn countries. *Samar's Song* is based on a portrait of a child in Iraq taken by the late Pulitzer Prize-winning photographer Chris Hondros.