



Indy's **alternative** voice

Butler ArtsFest: Soldier's Tale/Lines from Poetry

by Rita Kohn – April 14, 2014



April 10, 2014 at the Schrott Center for the Arts



Photos of *The Soldier's Tale* provided by Brent Smith, Butler University.

Albert Einstein is quoted as remarking, "A table, a chair, a bowl of fruit and a violin; what else does a man need to be happy?" The violin features in folk and fairy tales around the world, and violin poetry is a genre unto its own. Who doesn't recognize the image of "The Fiddler on the Roof?"

And so it was with keen interest that I attended this dual program on April 10. With *Lines from Poetry*, a composition for solo violin, [Ronald Caltabiano](#) engages with emotions culled from the works of nine poets. The performance became a journey lifting me skyward, skimming me earthward and back upward.

Caltabiano gave us impressions alternately airy, earthy, frivolous, thoughtful. Violinist [Davis Brooks](#) met the challenge and delivered with assurance and delight. Video artist Jordan Munson created gloriously hued visuals with the feel of a lava lamp in search of context. Though engrossing, I admit to closing my eyes to allow my imagination to roam with the music.

The Soldier in Igor Stravinsky's musical tale obviously was not of Einstein's mind. He trades his companionable violin for a supposedly magical red covered book that promised wealth in monetary terms. In time, The Soldier becomes disillusioned with the solitariness of wealth. "What's the matter," he asks, "I have everything and nothing." Observing poor peasants enjoying each other's company, he remarks, "They have nothing yet they have it all. How can it be?" Within this fabulist text by C. F. Ramuz, the story spins itself across a vast terrain to the saddest of conclusions. The Devil is ever ready to nab you, body and soul.



Owen Schaub directed and Derek Reid choreographed with an outstanding ensemble of actors and dancers who bring us into their world with a mix of spoken lines, mime and dance, interwoven within and around seven players conducted by Stanley DeRusha. Wendy Meaden's costumes delighted the eye. This boldly imaginative rendering of The Soldier's Tale offered us a memorable slice of reality masquerading as a folk tale.

(Though created as a work for musicians, actors and dancer, The Soldier's Tale most often is presented as an orchestral suite. Ronen Chamber Ensemble has [interpreted the work](#) as an arrangement for violin, clarinet and piano. About a decade ago, the Indianapolis Chamber Orchestra featured music and words with Bernard Wurger as narrator.)