

Master of Arts

by Donald Perin / Butler – April 4, 2014

Fairy tales bring to mind images of Little Red Riding Hood, Hansel and Gretel and The Three Little Pigs. The science of physics? Not so much.

But over the next several weeks, central Indiana will have the opportunity to experience Fables, Fairy Tales & Physics, [Butler University's](#) second annual [ArtsFest](#). The 14-day event runs now through Sunday, April 13, with a special encore weekend Friday, April 25 through Sunday, April 27.

Sky Blue Window had the opportunity to sit down with Ron Caltabiano, dean of [Butler's Jordan College of Arts](#), and the following is what the mastermind behind the university's cultural festival of arts had to say.



Photo: Mark Lee. In addition to administering the Jordan College of Arts, [Caltabiano](#) is an accomplished composer in his own right.

Sky Blue Window: How did Fables, Fairy Tales & Physics become this year's theme?

Ron Caltabiano: We wanted to do something that was a little lighter on the surface than our first year, Revolution, and we liked fairy tales and fables because it's superficially light and you can go into any depth you wish. Of course some fairy tales and some fables are very dark, and we're doing both. Then the Indianapolis Symphony [Orchestra] came up with a project on the physics of music, and we thought about that for a while and found that it was so relevant to what we are doing that we decided to embrace that.

SBW: Can you give us an example of how the Jordan College of Arts will pair up with other departments for some of the performances?

RC: We are using the [Holcomb Observatory](#), and this is another way that physics, or at least astrophysics, come together. We are doing an opera called The World on the Moon, which we think will be the world's first science fiction opera. The second act takes place "on the moon." We are staging the opera, for only 35 people at a time, in the Holcomb Observatory planetarium, so that's a collaboration across colleges. The building was built in the 1950s, and the opera is taking place in the '50s. It's a work that has to do with science, at least science fiction ... it really works out beautifully.

SBW: That's a very cool concept. What will it involve?

RC: It's totally re-conceiving this kind of an opera. The World on the Moon is something that's kind of new. The opera was originally three hours long, with a full-sized cast and a full opera, and we're doing it in 75 minutes with a small cast and an ensemble of three, instead of an orchestra. It really is something you can only find at Butler ArtsFest.

SBW: It sounds as if there are a lot of collaborations within the different departments to make some of these performances work. What are some interesting examples of this that we should check out?

RC: On Friday night (April 4) we will have an event called Once Upon a Dream, where Jordan College brings together this terrific storyteller, Deborah Asante, and an aerialist who has worked with Cirque de Soleil and America's Got Talent. We're also doing a piece called The Soldier's Tale, which is an

absolute collaboration between music, dance and theater. If you look at some of the people that are doing lectures for ArtsFest this year, they come from around the university, and so that's especially collaborative as well.



Photo: Brent Smith. The Indianapolis Chamber Orchestra will be performing James Aikman's Triptych: Musical Momentum at the Artsfest on April 11th. It's part of the orchestra's work as the Schrott Center's orchestra in residence.

SBW: What went into the selection of the lineup of events?

RC: We want variety and extremely high levels of everything that we do. So it made great sense for us to bring in say, Angela Brown, one of the great sopranos in the world. Not only is she performing with our kids, but she's rehearsing and giving a master class. That says something

about vocal music at Butler, about all music at Butler -- that we're working at that kind of level. We're also trying to reach new audiences, for example. One focus that we have is African-American stars, such as Angela Brown, Deborah Asante, and the Blind Boys of Alabama who do just sizzling gospel jazz. There's also a group of works related to Russian culture. They include The Two Maples, Stravinsky's The Soldier's Tale, and Cinderella, which is by a Russian composer. Also, this year's ArtFest features a host of events for children -- and by children, including The Two Maples and Cinderella, along with various others. So we're doing particular outreach to some groups, and we've helped focus those communities with particular events.



Photo: Brent Smith. Numerous performances will take place during the 2014 ArtsFest, including Dance Kaleidoscope's "Mother Goose Suite and Other Flights of Fantasy."

SBW: How long did it take to put this all together?

RC: It's a very long process, more than a year certainly. We are working right now on ArtsFest 2015 and 2016.

SBW: The "Encore Weekend" is new this year. How did that come about?

RC: As we began to put the package of events together, we found reason to expand. I don't know if this is going to be an every-year thing, but this year we thought that leaving this special weekend for Cinderella and the Indianapolis Symphony was the way to go.

SBW: What do you see for the future of ArtsFest? And how do you propose it will get you there?

RC: I want it to become the arts festival that Indianapolis needs and wants. We're not going to figure that out in one or two festivals. We'll likely figure it out in five or six. Whether that's a bigger or smaller event, with more local or more international performers, we're going to figure it out as we go along. We will need support from the community; we'll need people to come and enjoy what we've got. And we'll need them show that they appreciate what we're doing.