

BUTLER *ArtsFest* HIGHLIGHTS INDY'S CULTURAL SCENE

Writer / Nathan Lamb

Butler University is looking to showcase cultural talent — both local and national — with its 14-day ArtsFest in April.

The ArtsFest will feature music ranging from classical to indie rock, along with dance, drama and other art mediums. Many of the events are free of charge, and festival founder Ron Caltabiano described it as a unique experience that has something for everybody.

“There are performances for adults and children, events for classical art lovers and popular art fans,” he said. “There are some events that can be seen nowhere but at Butler ArtsFest.”

One example is a special collaboration with the Indianapolis Symphony Orchestra, which is being billed as a unique “multimedia mash-up of art and science.” Caltabiano anticipated that would be a centerpiece performance, adding that themes from that show were a factor in developing the festival’s overarching theme of “Fables, Fairy Tales and Physics.”

Among the many other events are the Grammy Award-winning contemporary roots music group Blind Boys of Alabama and a collaboration between award-winning storyteller Deborah Asante and Cirque du Soleil aerialist Tavi Stutz, which is called “Once Upon a Dream.”

Now in its second year, ArtsFest was conceived shortly after Caltabiano became dean of the Jordan College of the Arts at Butler in 2011. He said the college hosts roughly 200 cultural performances annually — ranging from 19th century ballet to contemporary theater — and that the festival seemed like a great way to promote that vibrant cultural scene.

“Butler ArtsFest brings together some of the best of what Indianapolis arts have to offer and some of the best talent from across America and puts a spotlight on some of the best of what Butler produces.”

Caltabiano said another key goal was to provide a platform for the university’s various departments to collaborate on special projects. He cited the festival’s upcoming production of Haydn’s science fiction opera “The World on the Moon” as one example, saying that the restaged presentation at the school’s Holcomb



The Grammy winning contemporary roots group Blind Boys of Alabama will perform at Butler ArtsFest on Sunday, April 13. The group has won five Grammys and four gospel music awards since 2000.



Cirque du Soleil aerialist Tavi Stutz (shown) will partner with storyteller Deborah Asante to perform Once Upon a Dream on Friday, April 4 at Butler ArtsFest.

Observatory is a partnership of the school’s music, theater and science departments.

“Going into its second year, Butler ArtsFest is finding its voice,” he said. “We’re becoming an incubator for new concepts and highlighting the diversity of talent in Indianapolis, across the country and on Butler’s campus.”

The first ArtsFest opened last April, around the same time as the school’s new Howard L. Schrott Center for the Arts. Caltabiano described the 450-seat venue as crucial to making the new festival possible.

Beyond performances, Caltabiano said the festival provides a wide variety of educational opportunities, noting that the school’s Arts Administration Program is involved with running venues that host performances.

Overall, Caltabiano said the first ArtsFest was a hit, and he is optimistic about this year.

“The inaugural event was highly successful by any measure,” he said. “It accomplished all the goals, and we managed to end in the black, thanks to our generous sponsors and to Butler’s willingness to invest in an innovative project.” ■

APRIL 3-13 (25-27)

BUTLER ARTSFEST 2014

Runs April 3-13, encore performances 25-27

Open to the public

Roughly half the events are free of charge. Discounts are available for guests buying tickets to three or more performances

A full listing of events is at blogs.butler.edu/artsfest2014