



Indy's **alternative** voice

## Butler ArtsFest: Once Upon a Dream

by Rita Kohn – April 6, 2014



Presented by Deborah Asante and Tavi Stutz  
April 4 at the Howard L. Schrott Center for the Arts



*Deborah Asante*

Do dreams fuel transformative powers? Storyteller [Deborah Asante's](#) artistry with visualizing words makes us believe. We are in Asante's thrall as she spins the sad tale of a woman whose less-than-smart choices propel her into a life of solitude until dreams, spun out before our eyes by aerialist Tavi Stutz, empower her to move from depression to empowerment.

The ending is the happily-ever-after we long for, but the beginning rightfully signals a challenge, and the middle on the other hand is definitely un-pretty. The tribulations of *Sleeping Beauty* and *Cinderella* seem tame in comparison.

Asante, whose children's theater troupes are known for tackling hard-hitting social and cultural issues, carries this mantra even further with her adult materials. Oh, she knows when to lighten the tension with a touch of ironic wit, but our foibles are held up in clear light and our pretenses can't hide in shadows.

As with [her now iconic blueswoman Suki Lue Ambers](#), Asante's anti-heroine has a hard time coping until she remembers her Mamma's blunt question: "How come it's only boys who slay dragons in our stories."

The power of suggestion and dreams play out as Stutz is subverted in his attempt to cross a river and scale a mountain. It's not until the third dream - three's magical as you know - that Stutz's writhing scaly-ness gives way to, oh yes, redemption through love.

Percussionists Joe Crabiel and Jordy Long round out the program, matching, first the slow, steady plodding through living without enjoying a life, and then the accelerated heartbeat of the alienated self flying through space. The unnamed lighting designer and crew equally earn praise.