

**SUNDAYARTS**

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## Histoire du Soldat: Stravinsky, Cabaret-Style

by Susan Yung



Histoire du Soldat (*The Soldier's Tale*). Pictured L-R: Brian Ellingsen (double bass), Tim Fain (violin), Attila Joey Csiki, Nicole Corea, Reid Bartelme. Photo by Steven Schreiber.

*Histoire du Soldat* (*The Soldier's Tale*, from 1918), a two-performance, one-evening event at [Galapagos](#) in Dumbo last week, was one of those only-in-New-York performances that restores one's faith in humanity, even on a wicked sleety night. This hour-long work by Stravinsky was assembled into a cabaret-scaled production by conductor Ransom Wilson, with an orchestra of seven (the excellent new ensemble [Le Train Bleu](#)), three actors, and choreography by [Lar Lubovitch](#) for Reid Bartelme, Nicole Corea, and Attila Joey Csiki. *Soldat* recounts the story of a soldier who, returning home, makes a deal with the devil, resulting in amusing consequences and solemn regrets.

The musicians were arranged as tightly as chess pieces on half of the small stage, overlooking islands of tables floating above a moat; the mezzanine holds additional tables. In the hour-long show, orchestral and narrated sections alternated with too-brief ballets full of humor and empathy. Lubovitch is renowned as an accomplished concert dance and full-length ballet choreographer, but his skills work perfectly in *Soldat* when applied to concise characterizations and furthering the narrative. His seamless style kept energy flowing, in contrast to a countervailing tendency to make phrases that started and stopped in poses or hyperextended legs. His lyrical phrasing that usually moves horizontally here, by necessity, pushed upward due to the small stage, resulting in looping vertical lifts, plus space-saving marches including some nifty moonwalk-style backsliding.

Lubovitch's genial sense of humor emerged when soldier Bartelme broke into a happy jig, his long legs wobbling and rubbery. As the devil, wearing sleek black velvet and tiny red horns, Csiki moved boldly, bounding high in bent leg leaps. And Corea, with her springy locks and corseted muslin romper, made for a delightful princess. As he mentions in this [interview](#), Wilson put together the work as a terrific example of how classical music can thrive in smaller spaces, on tighter budgets, and have relevance to contemporary audiences. While there are no concrete plans for a return engagement, when there are, don't miss it.