

Massimiliano Finazzer Flory: Bringing Leonardo to Life

Natasha Lardera (May 07, 2015)



"Being Leonardo da Vinci," written by and starring Massimiliano Finazzer Flory, depicts the Renaissance Man in all his glory as he is interviewed by a modern day journalist. The format is rather unique: old Leonardo sits across a reporter who asks him about anything, partly in English, partly in Renaissance Italian and partly in dance.

One of the Italian "stars" America loves the most was a Tuscan genius who died in 1519: Leonardo da Vinci. The painter, sculptor, architect, musician, mathematician, engineer, inventor, anatomist, geologist, botanist and writer has been brought to the stage and given a voice by Italian actor and playwright Massimiliano Finazzer Flory.

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him about anything, partly in English, partly in Renaissance Italian and partly in dance.

Sponsored by Acqua di Parma, "Being Leonardo da Vinci" begins with a contemporary choreography by Michela Lucenti that is inspired by Leonardo's famous drawing "the Vitruvian Man." "With this tribute we try, with absolute rigor and lightness, to look at tradition from a contemporary point of view, keeping "the man figure" as a reference point while looking at the future," she said in the past. Leonardo and the journalist watch the dance carefully before the questioning starts.

And then they touch all different issues: Leonardo's childhood, his activities in the civil and military field, but also how to be a good artist, on the relationship between painting and science, painting and sculpture, painting and music...

After a glorious performance held at The Morgan Library which was part of a tour that Finazzer is having in Italy and in the US, we had a chance to ask the author and actor, who physically became Leonardo for the performance, a few questions ourselves.

How did you get the idea to do something on Leonardo and in this format?

The idea was not mine, it was Leonardo's. It is pretty obvious all through his work that men are made to be connected and linked within a harmonious whole. His universal science asks at least three questions:

what is life? What is man? And what is sanity? There are answers to these questions within this project. I first got the idea back in 2010 and it finally came to life in January 2012, in London, with a reading titled Trattato della pittura (Treatise on Painting).

How did you bring Leonardo to life?

I pictured him in my mind and thought of his legacy. In other words I pictured giving a voice to many different Leonardos: as if they were sitting at a roundtable. There is the inventor, the botanist, the engineer, the art critic, the scientist, the geologist, the painter, the doctor, the architect... Leonardo is all this. But this is not all. Because most of all he is a dissatisfied man who is looking to find out what unifies all of us. In his own words "the desire to know comes naturally to the good man."

If you had the opportunity to meet Leonardo and ask him a question, what would you ask?

I've already done so. I have asked him 67 questions, one for each year of his life. I put those questions and his answers in this play. Actually now that I think about it, I would ask him where could he find, today, an enlightened patron capable of ensuring him the independence to work on his research and, at the same time, to guarantee him the adequate funding to its development.

In the show, there is a mention of social media. What would Leonardo think of it?

He would only think good of it. As long as they do not spread lies about dreams but only provide empirical truth. According to Leonardo communication is a human dimension. The Vitruvian Man does not represent only harmony, order and proportion through nature but is, most of all, a symbol of man's desire and need for communication. The calling into question of time and space that today happens through the digital, the world wide web and social media is none other than an extension of biotechnology that Leonardo himself had foreseen.

In Italy "Being Leonardo da Vinci" will be playing every Saturday starting on May 9th at the Museo



della Tecnica e della Scienza in Milan. It will also be held on July 1st at the historical Teatro La Fenice in Venice. On October 13th Finazzer and his Leonardo will be in Houston and then back in NYC.

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