

THE SEER

VISIONS OF LEONARDO. A multimedia project for a solo performer and video images

by **Andrea Centazzo**

"Leonardo da Vinci was like a man who awoke too early in the darkness, while the others were all still asleep"

Sigmund Freud

There has never been an artist who was more fittingly, and without qualification, described as a Genius.

Neither artist nor scientist remained unaffected by his genius and artistry: Leonardo was for centuries (and still is) one of the main inspiration for painters, musicians, scientists, and literates.

Some scholar theorized that he was a seer, envisioning the future as no contemporaries could do. Certainly Leonardo capacity to imagine 500 years ago things that just last century were born, looks like something supernatural.

After being inspired by contemporary artists and later by the Far East culture, I found in this subject new lymph for my multimedia concept.

This multimedia show is meant to be homage at one of the greatest geniuses of the mankind through a blend of images created upon his drawing and painting mixed with shots from Tuscany, Renaissance artifacts and fictional scenes.

The music while retaining his contemporary flavor is widely open to all influences, namely the Renaissance music here presented in samples and re-orchestrations thank the use of the computer core of the compositional and performing process.

The show is divided in 6 parts each inspired by a different subject of Leonardo da Vinci genius.

LIFE OF THE SEER. The performance starts with a composition inspired by Vinci, the genius hometown. Images of his first home and his village are mixed with his most famous paintings and drawing, celebrating the birth and the death of Leonardo.

AQUA MAGIC. We have to recall that at Leonardo times, nobody had harnessed electricity yet, so water was at that point the ultimate source for power. Leonardo studied all forms of water – liquid, steam, and ice – and he had all sorts of swell ideas of what to do with it. He cooked up designed a device to measure humidity, a steam-powered cannon, many different waterwheels, and oodles of useful industrial machines powered by flowing water. Images of water in all forms are shown here blended with the original Leonardo animated drawing.

THE ANATOMY OF THE SKULL. Leonardo the scientist bridged the gap between the shockingly unscientific medieval methods and our own trusty modern approach. His experiments in anatomy and the study of

fluids, for example, absolutely blew away the accomplishments of his predecessors. The music here is based almost entirely on drums, underlining the basic background heart beat and improvising on it. In the video for the first time appears the mysterious character: Leonardo?

THE DRUM. Leonardo was an accomplished musician and he designed and invented many futuristic music instruments: this section features the sound and the images of the original Leonardo mechanical drum, made by the Italian artisans in Pistoia, Tuscany upon the original Genius drawing.

SHADOWS OF WAR – SYMPHONY OF THE MACHINES. Leonardo was actually really talented as an engineer. Good illustrators were a dime a dozen in Renaissance Italy, but Leonardo had the brains and the diligence to break new ground, usually leaving his contemporaries in the dust. Like many crackpot geniuses, Leonardo wanted to create “new machines” for a “new world”. Throughout his life he had brilliant and far-out ideas, ranging from the practical to the prophetic. As military engineer and architect to Cesare Borgia, Leonardo proposed creating stunning war machines. Military machines are presented here on a background of war images, while the civilian machines are inserted in a futuristic background. The music uses the real machines noise to create a bridge between past and future.

DREAMS OF FLIGHT. Almost an obsession for Leonardo was to find the possibility to have the man fly like the birds that he was studying carefully for years.

He finally learned imitating the way birds glide rather than human powered wing motion was the way to go if any sustained flight for any extended period was expected. His next step would be not imitating nature at all but designing and building winged gliders exclusively by and for human use in mind.

Video images here will take the audience in a ballet of computer animated Leonardo drawing with his machine made flying in music.

THE MUSIC

The crossing of musical messages coming through vast mass-media networks from the variety of musical and cultural spheres active in the world today has made the contemporary music a kaleidoscope of continuous movement and relentless transformation. Superimposition of musical languages, stratifications of forms, and enormously disparate musical ideas aim now for a synthesis, now for a plurality of communication in a musical bedlam. In this bedlam only the definitive classification of information channels helps the music consumer to unravel a tangle of sound, which has become just too intricate.

Those who produce music have therefore resorted to a comforting and functional division of music into types: classical, jazz and pop are now the established and reassuring terms of the day-to-day relationship between people who buy and sell things musical.

But the creative novelty of this project lies right at the confluence of many tributaries of the great musical river.

An experience from those depths surface various types of musical fragments, instrumental memories from different worlds, the tainting of one type of music with another, all straining for a single form of expressivity: sound.

THE LIVE VIDEO

The high definition videos are the main core of the live show; I conceived a stage where the big back screen is the center of the action surrounded by more than 150 percussion instruments and digital keyboards.

All the inter-action between stage and screen will be balanced musically and sonically with a sound system integrating the video soundtrack into the live sound and controlled by a double computer.

Leonardo remains the center of the action: the narration on screen will cover the mentioned aspects of his genius syncing the live music on stage

Visions of dreamy Tuscany, rich Renaissance costumes, clips from historical footage and animated painting and drawing will be blended harmonically to integrate music and narration in a unique visual and sonic experience. Lighting will provide another emotional contribution to the project, simple but effective.

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