

Intermission Talk

by Tony Vellela

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While the cultural rules were being shattered, from Toulouse Lautrec to the can-can, at the end of the nineteenth century by thousands of Parisians and thousands more tourists from all over the world, it took only two men, four hundred years earlier, to shatter not merely the societal, but also the cultural, scientific, artistic, designer concepts, and even the very foundation of the era's religious tenets. Born slightly more than two decades apart, Leonardo da Vinci [1452 – 1519] and Buonarroti Michelangelo [1475 – 1564, pronounced MIK el angelo, not MIKE el angelo], these two men, rightly called Titans, changed forever nearly every aspect of human life.

But as the subject of a stage play? Answer? Yes.



Formally titled "The Titans Experience," this compelling work is the product of nearly a dozen years of tireless endeavors by Mark Rodgers, who spent hundreds of hours conducting the research that led to "Da Vinci and

Michelangelo: The Titans Experience," a unique combination of visual depictions of these great men's hundreds [yes, hundreds] of creations, accompanied by Rodgers' colorful yet remarkably detailed descriptions of their lives. They are known to most people who made it through their senior year of high school as artists [painters] and sculptors. But Rodgers has amassed hundreds of other examples of their genius, even though they were rivals and often disliked each other personally.

During their lifetimes most people were illiterate, and so the popular method of 'learning' about important events, real [military battles, such as the Battle of Cascina and the Fall of Rome] or the object of religious orthodoxy [the saints and the holy figures from the Bible, such as the Last Judgment] were discovered through the work of these men, some of which took years to complete. Every inch of their paintings was scrutinized to learn about the stories behind the subjects of the art.



Like today's popular political candidates, but not nearly as fascinating, they each have compelling childhood stories that led them down their respective paths to eternal fame. This clever production, situated in the comfortable theater space at St. Luke's Church on west 46th street, brings their accomplishments to life. It makes the

connections between their individual discoveries and inventions, from the lantern style gear and the ball bearing, and the chain link bicycle and the life preserver, to the classic works of art such as the Florentine Pieta, the Mona Lisa, the Last Judgment, the marvelous Sistine Chapel and da Vinci's classic sculpture, the 17 foot tall masterwork, the David.

While both men often competed for the same commissions from rich families, businesses and especially the church, their motivations were not entirely in conflict. They both lived for their work. Da Vinci famously pointed out that 'Artwork is never finished. It is only abandoned.'" And the observation he made that he took a flawed massive slab of stone, abandoned by others, and chipped away until the David appeared, made his point that the art was always already there, and only needed to be freed.

This engrossing performance piece is being presented on an unusual schedule of days and times, so it is advisable to phone ahead to 720-504-9408 for exact details.

TONY VELLELA wrote and produced the PBS series about theatre 'Character Studies.' His play 'Admissions' was performed three separate times in New York, directed by Austin Pendleton, and published by Playscripts. He has written several other plays, books, musicals and newspaper and magazine articles, including for The Christian Science Monitor, Dramatics, the Robb Report, Parade and many others. His work "The Test of Time" was the best documentary award-winner for Lifetime Television. He is a member of the Writers Guild and the Dramatists Guild.