

# CurtainUp



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## *A CurtainUp Review* *Da Vinci & Michelangelo: The Titans Experience* By [Dan Rubins](#)

*"Art is never finished, only abandoned."* — Leonardo Da Vinci

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Mark Rodgers (Photo: Joan Marcus)

He clutches his heart, choking back tears. He clenches his fists, then spreads his arms wide. His voice catches on a plaintive note, then crescendos to peals of laughter. Is this Lear? Is this Hamlet?

No, it's just Mark Rodgers, Director of the Da Vinci Machines Exhibitions (most recently shown in Colorado), delivering a 2-hour lecture performance entitled *Da Vinci & Michelangelo: The Titans*

*Experience* at the St. Luke's Theatre.

When it comes to the unfathomable ingenuity of these Renaissance innovators (plus also rock-n'-roller Les Paul, in an off-topic riff), Rodgers conveys a childlike sense of wonder, which is appealing. His emotive antics also frequently suggest a willingness to upstage these iconic figures, which is not.

It's not that Rodgers' exhausting enthusiasm (exemplified by his catchphrase, "How cool is that?!") is in itself distracting. Surely a college professor with such high energy (and a proclivity for quizzing the audience on tangential trivia) could successfully keep students from dozing off. The problem is that Rodgers' persona sometimes wants to be the lecture's center of gravity, in place of whatever it is he wants to say about Michelangelo and Da Vinci.

A more autobiographical tale of how he came to love these artists so

deeply might illuminate what makes them so, uh, cool. But the self-references center around his in-the-moment veneration, inspiring the opposite effect: we end up watching Rodgers watch Da Vinci, rather than connecting with the artwork ourselves.

The visual production also does not inspire tremendous confidence. The projections signal beginner PowerPoint skills with margins sometimes cutting off crucial text, for example. However, a series of projected 3-D renderings do help Da Vinci's astoundingly ahead-of-his-time sketches stand out. And Rodgers' jokiness lands well when he tells a story about Michelangelo's clever solution to complaints about the proportions of the statue of David's nose.

The actual factual content of the lecture seems like bread-and-butter biography and art history, a greatest hits of these great artists' lives and works. Rodgers makes a lot of the historic nature of his positioning these artists side by side (supposedly no exhibition before his has "ever dared to compare and contrast these two monumental Titans"), but Da Vinci seems to emerge the clear victor, at least in terms of how much each discussion time each legend receives. Not to mention that only one artist shows up in Rodgers' big mantra, which he makes the audience chant with him at the lecture's close: "Discover the Da Vinci in You!"

As Rodgers sees it, "the next Da Vinci can be right here in this room." I wonder if he has anyone in mind.