

Reviews of earlier productions

"A tightly written play that whisks you away into the contradictory world of Italian Renaissance; a world that takes you from the groveling bawdy moments of youth and passion and spirals you up to the summits of a great moment of illumination and sacrifice."

-- CBC RADIO ONE

"*Vinci* is an elegant, finely designed play. Each scene is meticulously shaped and paced. The play's visual and spatial dimensions are a feast for the senses. The playwright gracefully leads us into a romantic world of forest and garden, mist and storm, light and shadow. Vinci can be admired on many counts. If it falters, the cause lies in the drama itself."

-- Dale Lakevold, *Prairie Fire Review of Books*

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From the Page to the Stage

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Vinci

by Maureen Hunter

a playgoer's guide



***Vinci* – The Play**

Maureen Hunter's *Vinci* centers on the circumstances surrounding the conception of one of history's most prolific figures, Leonardo da Vinci. While audiences may be surprised to that Leonardo does not actually appear in this work, his presence can be felt from the opening scene in which the story's narrator, Bartolomeo, stands admiring Leonardo's painting of the last supper. Bartolomeo proceeds, through a series of flashbacks, to give an account of the relationship between Leonardo's parents, Piero and Caterina, as well as his own part in the events as the town of Vinci's priest. Lifelong friends Piero and Bartolomeo are at crossroads in their lives. Bartolomeo has entered the priesthood after a vision he had of Saint Francis, and Piero is fulfilling his obligations as a first born son by educating himself as a lawyer with the knowledge that he must also consent to an arranged marriage. Piero, however, proves to be extremely unhappy with his obligations and eventually becomes

romantically involved with Caterina, his father Antonio's servant. Their liaison results in Caterina's pregnancy and she is fired in order that the da Vinci family keep up appearances and Caterina carves a life for herself and her forthcoming son by herself. Years pass and Caterina and her son, Leonardo, live a life of peace in the mountains above Vinci while Piero has since married Alberia, who is barren. Alberia's infertility causes Antonio to demand that Caterina turn over the obviously gifted Leonardo to the da Vinci family and enlists Bartolomeo to aid in this purpose. Piero, however, objects to these tactics until a desperately unhappy Alberia poisons herself only to learn she was with child all along. This prompts Piero to concede his father's wishes and demand Leonardo be turned over; however, the sympathetic Bartolomeo warns her so that she may flee. In the end, the attempts to get custody of the child, Caterina, Bartolomeo, and Piero all learn what it means to truly love someone. This final action brings the play full circle to the opening sequence of *The Last Supper* and affirms Caterina's sacrifice.

Leonardo Da Vinci – The Man



Leonardo da Vinci was born on April 15th, 1452, in Anchiano, Italy. He spent the first five years of his life there, and then moved to Vinci. He was born an illegitimate child to Ser Piero da Vinci, and a woman named Caterina, who is thought to have been a farmer's daughter. Since da Vinci's parents didn't marry, we don't know much today of his mother. Ser Piero and his wife, Albiera, never had any children, so it is thought that this is the reason Leonardo joined their family. He lived in Vinci until 1466, at the age of 14, and then Leonardo da Vinci moved to Florence, to start an apprenticeship in the workshop of Andrea

del Verrocchio, a very talented artist during his time. He was impressed by young Leonardo's drawings, and made a place for him in his workshop. This apprenticeship had great influence on Leonardo da Vinci, where he worked with many famous artists. In June, 1472, Leonardo became a member of the corporation of painters. On the joining of the

corporation, da Vinci's apprenticeship ended, but he didn't leave the workshop just yet. Leonardo da Vinci's first recorded work is a drawing of the Arno valley, which he drew on August 5th, 1473. He continued to produce drawings and paintings with Verrocchio, in his workshop until about 1482 when Leonardo da Vinci offered his services to the Duke Lodovico il Moro as an engineer and architect. He stayed here for a few years, and then in 1502, Caesar Borgia hired da Vinci as a military engineer. In 1507, King Louis XII of France named da Vinci his court painter. In 1516, da Vinci landed in Rome, where he became of service to King Francis I, and continued there until his death, May 2, 1515.

Fun Facts about Leonardo da Vinci

- ! Did you know that Leonardo da Vinci invented scissors?
- ! Leonardo was a vegetarian throughout his life.
- ! Leonardo wrote in Italian using a special kind of shorthand that he invented himself. He usually used "mirror writing", starting at the right side of the page and moving to the left. Only when he was writing something intended for other people did he write in the normal direction.

Maureen Hunter – The Playwright

Maureen Hunter is a Winnipeg playwright who has written seven full length plays, her latest being *Vinci* (2002). The CBC and BBC radio have also produced her work. In her writing career she has been short listed (basically in the final cuts) four times and has won the Labatt Award for Best Canadian Play in 1995 for *Footprints on the Moon*. Maureen Hunter knew she wanted to write a play about Leonardo da Vinci, so she immersed herself in biographies and histories, and even took a trip to Tuscany all before figuring out what the play would be about. "I wanted to see the place where Leonardo was born," she says, "and even though you have to wipe away 500 years, and eliminate the motorcycles and the telephone poles, you really do get a sense of how beautiful it must have been, and what inspired him."

