

LEONARDO BARILARO

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'Space pianist' Leonardo Barilaro is both a pianist and aerospace engineer with a PhD in space safety. And he is now designing the first piano concert on Mars. Mentored by Jordan Rudess, Dream Theater's keyboardist, Barilaro performed his compositions in Italy, Malta, Germany, UK, Netherlands, and Turkey. He is a researcher at the University of Malta. His mantra is 'nullo die sine nota' – not a day without a note. He has just released his new EP, BlackShip, a unique blend of contemporary space music

What's the first thing you do when you wake up in the morning?
 Kiss my wife!

What is the best advice you've ever received?
 To be free first you have to build a cage around you, from which you will escape. Real life Michael Scofield from Prison Break basically.

What do you never leave the house without?
 The keys. If I am going out for a free-diving session also my mask and fins.

Pick three words that describe yourself
 Dreamer. Stubborn. Koçumbe – a Turkish expression difficult to translate: to be understood needs to be lived.

What do you consider to be your greatest achievement?
 Creating and building the Kanephorte (an instrument I built, which is a toy piano in the shape of a dog) and becoming the first kanist in the world.

What is your guiltiest pleasure?
 Bronte's pistachio crema.

What is the most important lesson life has taught you?
 That knowledge is like an oil stain on a wooden table. At the beginning the border of the stain is well defined and we feel comfortable, but as the stain expands the border becomes more and more undefined and to find it is more and more challenging, giving a sort of 'horror vacui'. Of course, there is no oil stain at all for the (/geniuses) blabbing and hyperventilating about flat Earth, no vax, chemtrails and so on. Or for people with no IQ for empathy.

Property and cars aside what's the most expensive thing you've ever bought?
 My grand piano that I play in front of the sea!

What is one thing you wish you knew when you were younger?
 That 'adults' do not exist and thus everyone is entitled exactly to nothing, unless you are J.S. Bach, Newton or Kenshiro of course.

Who's your inspiration?
 Isaac Asimov.

What has been your biggest challenge?
 Deciding to leave a known and structured life in Italy and come to live in Malta four years ago, starting from scratch and doing everything by myself. A big challenge that is reaping real rewards.

If you weren't a 'Space Pianist' what would you be doing?
 Most likely building giant robots to fight giant monsters.

Do you believe in God?
 J.S. Bach? Yes, He has truly a great potential for this Universe, in this dimension.

If you could have dinner with any person, dead or alive, who would it be?
 Batman, but only if Alfred cooks.

What's your worst habit?
 I can be very prickly.

What are you like when you're drunk?
 Like Godzilla, but louder and able to play Beethoven anyway.

Who would you have play you in a film?
 Will Smith, in a movie with giant robots, like Pacific Rim. Being a movie, Malta can be placed just on the seaside of Los Angeles, according to usual Hollywood standards.

What is the trait you most deplore in others?
 Being unreliable.

What music would you have played at your funeral?
 Norwegian Reggaeton by Nanowar of Steel... Profanar la tumba al ritmo de la rumba!

What is your most treasured material possession?
 My grand piano, which I play by the sea!

What is your earliest memory?
 I was three years old, disassembling a yellow toy baby grand piano. I guess in that moment I was merging music and engineering for the first time.

When did you last cry, and why?

A mechanical production of tears a couple of days ago cutting onion for a giant omelette, of happiness a couple of months ago, of sadness around one year ago more or less.

Who would you most like to meet?
 Elon Musk, to discuss and plan my first piano concert on Mars.

What's your favourite food?
 I have too many... maybe patatesli gözleme when its past midnight.

Who's your favourite person on social media right now?
 Andrew Huang, stunning musician.

If you could travel in time, where would you go?
 Only in time or also in space? Because due to the different movements of the Earth just few minutes of time travel can lead to serious problems when it comes to the location of my arrival. In the future, by the way, to see how much Isaac Asimov was right, so let's say, roughly 20,000 years from now.

What book are you reading right now?
 'Asiago Auf Wiedersehen Sgranphogemund – The Italian Journey of Reversed Goethe' – reading, as 'beta-tester', the draft copy of a manuscript by a friend of mine, to be published on Amazon at some point.

If you could have any superpower, what would it be?
 I already have a couple. By the way teleportation (locally and in the multi-verse) would be a cool feature to manage.

What's one thing you want to do before you die?
 Interstellar travel.

What music are you listening to at the moment?
 The master of my upcoming BlackShip EP, new music I am working on, some lute works of John Dowland, the new albums of Lamb of God and IGORRR.

In the shower or when you're working out, what do you sing/listen to?
 Silence is the best music when I'm trying to relax.