

# SOUTHERN FLORIDA

by John Lariiviere

## *Amadeus*

The Maltz Jupiter Theatre presents the play *Amadeus*, based on the lives of composers Wolfgang Amadeus Mozart and Antonio Salieri. Written by Peter Shaffer, *Amadeus* was inspired by a short 1830 play by Alexander Pushkin called *Mozart and Salieri* (which was also used as the libretto for an opera of the same name by Nikolai Rimsky-Korsakov in 1897).

*Amadeus* was first presented at the Royal National Theatre, London, in 1979 and later transferred in modified form to the West End. It premiered on Broadway in 1980, where it ran for 1,181

performances. The original Broadway production received five Tony Awards. The play was revived in 1999 at the Music Box Theatre, where it ran for 173 performances. The revival production received Tony Award nominations for Best Revival and Best Actor in a Play. The play was also adapted by Shaffer for a 1984 film of the same name which won eight Academy Awards.



*Amadeus* is set in Vienna, Austria, in the court of Joseph II, between the years of 1783 and 1825. The aged composer Antonio Salieri looks back on his life via flashbacks as he examines his relationship with Wolfgang Amadeus Mozart. Salieri, who is a devout Catholic, aspired to serve God through his music. When he hears the work of Mozart, he is struck by its beauty and brilliance, seeing the work of God in each note. By comparison he judges his own work painfully mediocre. When he meets Mozart in person he does not find the genius he expected. He finds a coarse and lascivious man lacking in social graces or any discernible love of God. Salieri is bewildered that God could bestow his gifts upon this seemingly unworthy man when he himself has begged to be a vessel for God. He rages against God's inequity by vowing to stand in the way of Mozart's every success. He carefully conducts himself as Mozart's friend, all the while undermining him in every way possible. His acts of vengeance darken his mind and heart in a way that he carries with him to the last days of his life, from which this story is told. In the end he believes he was directly responsible for the death of Mozart.

The account of Mozart and Salieri as told by Shaffer in *Amadeus* is highly fictionalized. While historically there may have been a rivalry between Mozart and Salieri, there is evidence that they enjoyed a relationship marked by mutual respect. Salieri actually conducted some of Mozart's works, both in Mozart's lifetime and afterwards. He also tutored Mozart's son Franz Xavier Wolfgang Mozart in music after Mozart passed away. The idea that Salieri was the instigator of Mozart's demise is not taken seriously by Mozart or Salieri scholars.

The Maltz Jupiter Theatre features interestingly unconventional scenic, projection and lighting design in their production of *Amadeus*. In a show where most productions would capitalize on the ornate architectural and opulent furniture designs of the time period (1783-1825) and the setting (the court of Joseph II), this set is a disintegrated shambles of a once grand court executed in worn shades of gray. Slightly elevated, curved opera boxes look as though their floor might very well fall through if trod upon. The stage is half-raked toward center, and a pianoforte slanted downward toward the audience helps establish the disjointed feel of the setting. The lighting design is reminiscent of the style of film noir, with side lighting casting shadows across faces and spilling across the set. The set is complemented by rear projections on a screen that looks like a sheet up-stage right. Strong silhouettes of bustling peasants, penitents rocking in remorse, nuns, and a limping man lumbering in either pain or anger all provide an unsettling backdrop for this tortured tale told from the troubled mind of an aging Salieri. How much is an honest and clear-sighted recollection, and how much has been altered in his mind by his guilt, is intelligently enhanced by all these technical elements. As Salieri lived in comfortable wealth, the fact that the setting for his flashbacks is portrayed in this way parallels the impoverished state in which his nemesis Mozart lived his last days.

Costumes are nicely done, but rendered somewhat unremarkable by the side lighting and dimness of the set. There is a conspicuous lack of filling out the feel of the production with music of the time period before and after the show, and in scene transitions or climaxes that could have made this show more special. It is odd, considering the volume of music composed by both Mozart and Salieri, that suitable pieces could not have been found.

Naturally, the bulk of the show rests with Salieri (Tom Bloom) and Mozart (Ryan Garbayo). Garbayo captures the spoiled, child-like energy of Mozart as well as his passion. His socially inappropriate outbursts, followed by sincere remorse are completely believable. He balances an almost endearing, guileless impression of the world with libidinous immaturity very well. His last scene is probably the best moment in the show. What is missing in this production is the intensity and passion of Salieri in Bloom's performance. He seems irritated by Mozart and upset with God at the inequity of his lot, but not to the extent that is needed to put this role up and over the top. Salieri should be filled with the bile of envy and self-loathing in a palpable way that continually re-presents itself as his subtext throughout the show. It needs to be in his voice, on his face and in his body over and over again. In Bloom it is just not as strong or frequently as it could be, and the production feels a bit low on energy and focus because of this.

This production of *Amadeus* will be appearing at the Maltz Jupiter Theatre through November 11, 2012. The Maltz Jupiter Theatre is a 550-seat, nonprofit, community-based Equity regional theatre belonging to the League of Resident Theatres, and the Florida Professional Theatre Association. This theatre employs both local and non-local Equity and non-union cast and crew members. The theatre is located at 1001 Indiantown Rd. (just off of A1A) in Jupiter, Florida. For tickets and complete information on the theatre's offerings, contact them by phone at 561/ 575-2223 or 800/ 445-1666, and online at [www.jupitertheatre.org](http://www.jupitertheatre.org).

Cast:

Mozart: Ryan Garbayo\*

Salieri: Tom Bloom\*

Constanze: Alexis Bronkovic\*

Katherina: Traci Bair\*

Emperor Joseph II: Michael Brian Dunn\*

Baron Van Swieten: Richmond Hoxie\*

Count Johan Killian Von Strock: Gannon McHale

Count Orsini Rosenberg: Ric Stoneback\*

Venticelli #1: Stephen Pilkington\*

Venticelli #2: Rowen Meyer\*

Teresa Salieri: Gail Byer  
Kappelmeister Bonno: Jeffrey Bruce  
Servant: Leon Howard  
Servant: Kiel Peterson

Crew:

Director: Michael Gieleta\*\*  
Scenic Design: Philip Witcomb+  
Lighting Design: Keith Parham+  
Sound Design: Steven Cahill+  
Projection Design: Andrzej Goulding+  
Costume Design: Fabio Toblini+  
Wig Design: Gerard Kelly  
Stage Manager: Brandy Demil\*

\*Designates a member of Actors' Equity Association, the Union of Professional Actors and Stage Managers in the United States.

\*\*Designates a member of the Stage Directors and Choreographers Society, an independent national labor union.

+Designates member of the United Scenic Artists, a labor union and professional association of Designers, Artists and Craftspeople.

*Photo: Alicia Donelan*

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