

OTTERBEIN  
COLLEGE

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GENERAL ENTERTAINMENT

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

Otterbein College Theatre will open its current season with the Tony and Oscar award-winning "Amadeus," a riveting tragi-comedy that explores the result of mediocrity's collision with genius and a man's disappointment in God. Author Peter Shaffer offers his audience a historical interpretation of the complex relationship that could have existed in the Vienna of the 1780s between Wolfgang Amadeus Mozart, the greatest musical genius of his time, and Austrian court composer Antonio Salieri.

Directed by Dr. Charles W. Dodrill, chairman of the department of theatre and dance at Otterbein, the play will be presented at 8 p.m., Oct. 16-18, in the Cowan Hall Theatre on campus. A 2 p.m. matinee performance will be held Sunday, Oct. 19.

Motivated by intense jealousy of Mozart's musical ability, legend has it that Salieri may have poisoned the younger musician, cutting short his genius and his life at age 35. This premise was the basis for both a short story by Pushkin and mini-opera by Rimsky-Korakov before Shaffer formulated his own theories in "Amadeus."

"Amadeus" (meaning loved by God) portrays the buffoon-like Mozart (characterization based on the less-than-flattering letters and descriptions found in Schaffer's research) as indeed the victim of Salieri. If Mozart did not succumb to the poison of Salieri's wine, the play proposes, then certainly he did suffer a poisoning of reputation and career by Salieri's discrediting schemes and words to persons of wealth and influence. But reducing Mozart to poverty and madness is justifiable from Salieri's point of view, and Salieri's window on the world is the one through which the audience views "Amadeus."

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How can the devoutly religious Salieri, who promised God a life of virtue in his boyhood in return for musical brilliance, be expected to abide the clownish, obscene and revolting boy-man who effortlessly produces musical scores far superior to his own? Shaffer depicts Salieri, the most influential musician during that time, as finding the injustice unbearable.

Salieri, who in 1788 became Imperial Kapellmeister in Joseph II's Viennese Court, included such noteables as Beethoven and Schubert among his pupils. Although higher than Mozart in terms of success, "Amadeus" proposes that Salieri considered his own musical compositions ordinary and lacking in harmonic imagination and modulations in comparison with the younger artist. Surviving his rival by more than 30 years; Salieri lived long enough to see history agree.

The critically acclaimed "Amadeus" won a Tony award for best Broadway play of 1981 along with an Evening Standard in 1979, the London critics award for best play of the year. In 1985, the screen play grabbed eight Oscars. Shaffer also is author of other outstanding plays including "Five Finger Exercises," "Royal Hunt of the Sun" and "Equus."

History says Salieri's dying words were mumblings of Mozart. Shaffer says with the plot of "Amadeus" -- something like this must have happened.

Otterbein senior Tim Gregory, winner of the national Irene Ryan award for excellence in acting in 1985, will play the lead role of Salieri. Gregory, a native of Cincinnati, Ohio, also has been featured in other Otterbein productions such as "Arsenic and Old Lace," "Baby," "Terra Nova," "The Diary of Anne Frank," and "Peter Pan."

Cast as Wolfgang Amadeus Mozart is theatre major Kevin Carty of Findlay, a junior, who performed as a member of the recent college Summer Theatre. Constanze Weber, wife of Mozart, will be portrayed by senior Charlotte Dougherty. Originally from North Canton, Ohio, Dougherty appeared in the title role of OC Theatre's "Agnes of God," along with other roles in "Come Back to the Five and Dime, Jimmy Dean, Jimmy Dean," "Equus" and "A Midsummer Night's Dream."

Additional cast members for the exciting comedy-drama include Tim St. John and Steve Geyer who play the "venticelli" (gossip mongers). Salieri's valet and cook will be acted respectively by Marc Foster and Jeff Offenberger.

Joseph II, emperor of Austria will be played by Ralph Scott, Johann Kilian Von Strack by Scott Willis, Count Orsini-Rosenberg, Todd Kreps; Baron Von Swieten, Duff Woodside; Giuseppe

Bonno, Craig Summers; Teresa Salieri, Gina Grogg; Katherina Cavalieri, Lori Schubeler and citizens and servants by Chris Clapp, Lisa Davidson, Kyle Moore, Brent Ries and Robert Witherow.

"Amadeus" tickets are available at the Cowan Hall box office, 890-3028, 1-4:30 p.m. weekdays, and at the door for one hour prior to each performance.