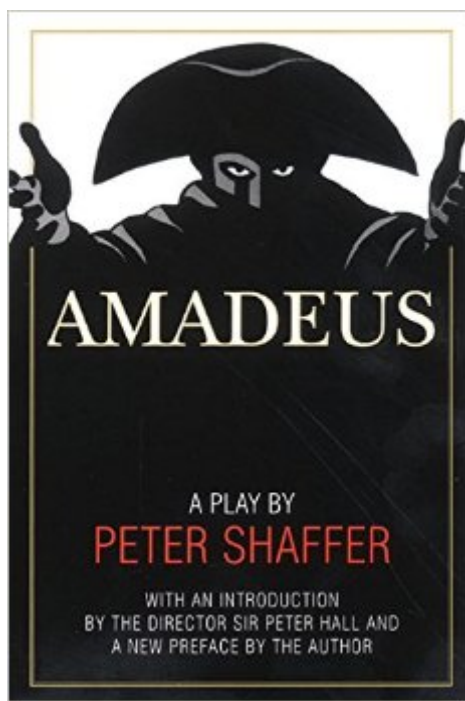


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# Amadeus: A Play By Peter Shaffer



## Synopsis

Originating at the National Theatre of Great Britain, *Amadeus* was the recipient of both the Evening Standard Drama Award and the Theatre Critics Award. In the United States, the play won the coveted Tony Award and went on to become a critically acclaimed major motion picture winning eight Oscars, including Best Picture. Now, this extraordinary work about the life of Wolfgang Amadeus Mozart is available with a new preface by Peter Shaffer and a new introduction by the director of the 1998 Broadway revival, Sir Peter Hall. *Amadeus* is a must-have for classical music buffs, theatre lovers, and aficionados of historical fiction.

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## Customer Reviews

I first became familiar with this story after seeing the movie "Amadeus." The movie made me curious about the facts in the lives of its two main characters, Wolfgang Amadeus Mozart and Antonio Salieri. While not necessarily factual, this play by Peter Shaffer is an intelligent and fascinating examination of two men's suffering: pain in both mediocrity and genius. The play is fast-paced and a relatively easy read. Shaffer paints an elaborate picture of both composer's lives during the time in which they lived. Shaffer's portrait of Salieri is richly written, his thoughts are revealed to the reader/audience through direct speeches and sidebars. Characters act as moving set pieces - their dialogue starting or ending as they carry furniture on and off stage to change scenes. Shaffer's play is an examination into the ruin of both men. Mozart is ruined by his lifestyle and his lack of funding; the citizens and rulers of Vienna find him rude and offensive. They fail to

understand the unfamiliar directions his genius is taking the musical world. Salieri is ruined by his fall into mediocrity and obscurity when Mozart arrives in town, the musician blessed by God, and through his plots that lead to Mozart's downfall. While much about the play is based on speculation, it never rings false because of the strong portrayals of each man. Having just recently seen this version of the play performed, it is obvious why Shaffer struggled with getting the character of Salieri "just right." He finds absolution in his final act - confessing his sins to his created audience, and not to the creator he once yearned to serve.

I first saw this play during its original run on Broadway. I went to see it with my college drama class. I had no idea what to expect. The amazing Ian McKellen played Salieri, and from the moment the play began until the final curtain, I was mesmerized. I skipped the other play we had tickets for and went back to see "Amadeus" again in "standing room". The play is wonderful, yes. But I truly think its ultimate success depends upon the actors playing the roles of Salieri and Mozart. I think the original Broadway cast was a once-in-a-lifetime group, but I'm looking forward to the upcoming Broadway revival. Read the play, and then go see it come to life!

Peter Shaffer's award-winning and highly popular play AMADEUS is in many ways a morality play but seen through the eyes of a complicated postmodern villain. The play is called AMADEUS but the chief character of the story is Antonio Salieri. Salieri is the Court Composer for Emperor Joseph II of Austria during the end of the 18th Century. He is held in esteem not only by the Emperor and Court, but by the masses as well. Then Amadeus Mozart makes his way to the Austrian Court at Salzburg and Salieri recognizes in the young man a musical genius superior to anything musical he has ever heard. He becomes enraged with bitter jealousy. Feeling that God has abandoned him and given the talent that he has trained to develop and possess his entire life, Salieri declares a war against God that he will fight on the battleground that is Amadeus Mozart. AMADEUS is a fantastic play. Author Peter Shaffer has revised the play several times since its first performance in 1979 and this version of the show (written twenty years later in 1999) is in my opinion the best because it is the one that portrays Salieri more than just an evil man, but as a human being that the audience and readers can relate to and actually understand somewhat. A must see play that anyone who enjoys theatre should be familiar with.

Shaffer illustrates an incredible conflict in Amadeus, altogether permeated by the dark themes of jealousy, hatred, and death. Showing the apparent mutual exclusivity between intelligence and

virtue, the true strength of the play lies inextricably in the character of Court Composer Salieri. It is a testament to the skill of Shaffer that I almost thought Salieri's motive as evil, but perhaps justified. In him I saw myself, striking out at God for his cruelty, for his preferential and exclusive love. Not only the writing but the stage directions are done incredibly well. Everything is as it should be, not a song at an inappropriate time, not a note misplaced. The character of Mozart is best embodied in the performance of Don Giovanni, where Shaffer describes him as "quailing" before the dark and demanding figure of his father. This is a masterpiece of pain and jealousy, timeless and impenetrable plagues of humanity.

The book shows the relationship between Salieri, God, and Mozart, the talented musician. Even though the plot is mostly fictional, it shows really nicely how cruel a vow with God can be if one is so grim to get his own success. It's interesting, how this play is connected with true facts, which you only understand knowing a bit of the real history of Mozart. We really liked the play, because it's thrilling and shows some important psychological aspects. Especially the relation between Mozart and his father is quite interesting. It's worth reading, we really do recommend this great play.

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