The Saylor Foundation's Study Guide for Milos Forman's *Amadeus*

Introduction: *Amadeus* is a 1984 drama biopic film directed by Miloš Forman and written by Peter Shaffer. Adapted from Shaffer's stage play *Amadeus*, the story is based loosely on the lives of Wolfgang Amadeus Mozart and Antonio Salieri, two composers who lived in Vienna, Austria during the latter half of the eighteenth century. *Amadeus* tells Mozart's life story in retrospective from the point of view of Salieri. Salieri cannot reconcile Mozart's immature, boorish behavior with the massive genius that God has inexplicably bestowed upon him instead of Salieri. Salieri vows to do everything in his power to destroy Mozart. The story Amadeus tells is fictional. However, the film attempts to accurately represent key events and people in Mozart's life, as well as the conditions under which his music was performed. *Amadeus* was filmed in Prague in locations reflecting the influence of the Italian baroque aesthetic during Mozart's time.

Instructions: Please read the background information provided on each scene, and click on the links to view the scenes via YouTube. Note that Scene 7 is not available on YouTube due to inappropriate content.

It is optional to view the entire film on DVD; you may try to access this DVD as a rental from your local library. In particular, the Director's Cut of *Amadeus*, which includes additional scenes with Mozart and without Salieri, is recommended.

[Amadeus 1](#)* (9:37 minutes)

A priest arrives to hear Salieri's confession but is at first subjected to a musical quiz. Salieri is aggrieved to discover that while the priest does not recognize any of his own tunes, the priest can hum a melody by his rival Mozart, the Serenade No. 13 for strings in G major, K. 525 (more commonly known by the title *Eine kleine Nachtmusik*, in English, A Little Night Music).

[Amadeus 2](#)* (9:23 minutes)

Salieri recalls his early envy of Mozart, celebrated throughout Europe as a musical prodigy, and his own desire to become a great composer. That opportunity comes when Salieri's father dies suddenly. Through perseverance and hard work, Salieri becomes Court Composer to the "musical king," Emperor Joseph II of Austria.

[Amadeus 3](#)* (10:34 minutes)

Emperor Joseph hears rumors about Mozart's genius and expresses interest in "acquiring" him at court to write a German opera. He orders Salieri to compose a welcome piece in Mozart's honor.

[Amadeus 4](#)* (9:05 minutes)

Mozart arrives in Vienna and impresses the court with his variations on

Salieri's march. Mozart presents his idea for a German opera, *Abduction from the Seraglio*. A soprano, Madame Cavalieri, dressed in the latest "Turkish" fashion, appears for her coaching session with Salieri.

Amadeus 5* (9:08 minutes)

Salieri seethes with jealousy as he watches Cavalieri singing a virtuoso aria in a performance of Mozart's *Abduction in Seraglio*. The finale (chorus and ballet) are also performed in this scene. After the opera, the Emperor makes his famous remark that Mozart's music has "too many notes," and the composer responds, "which ones should I leave out, Sire?"

Amadeus 6* (9:51 minutes)

After Archbishop Colloredo dismisses Mozart from his service, Mozart's father Leopold pleads for another chance for his son in Salzburg. Meanwhile, in Vienna, Mozart marries Constanze Weber, his landlady's daughter, against his father's wishes. Applying for a teaching position at court that he hopes will support his family, Mozart fumes that he is required to submit his work for competitive review. Constanze secretly meets with Salieri, hoping to advance her husband's candidacy.

Amadeus 8* (8:20 minutes)

After learning that a less talented rival was chosen for the post, Mozart pleads with Salieri to lend him money. Despite the success of his concerts in Vienna, Mozart and Constanze's lavish lifestyle has brought them to the brink of ruin. Mozart has not yet built up enough of a reputation in Vienna to find students. He piques Salieri's curiosity (and jealousy) by alluding to a new work he is composing that is soon to be a "bombshell in Vienna." Salieri refuses to lend Mozart money but recommends that he contact a certain "distinguished family" in Vienna whose daughter desires piano lessons. The meeting turns out to be a disaster.

Amadeus 9* (9:56 minutes)

When his father visits unexpectedly, Mozart attempts to conceal his shaky financial situation. Constanze and the two Mozarts attend a masked ball in Vienna, where Mozart performs hilariously vulgar parodies of some of his rivals' works, including Salieri's—much to the court composer's humiliation.

Amadeus 10* (10:03 minutes)

While Mozart is performing one of his piano concertos at the Royal Palace, a maid hired by Salieri to spy on Mozart discovers manuscript pages for the *Marriage of Figaro*, Mozart's latest opera, which is based on a banned French revolutionary play. Salieri informs the Emperor, who presses Mozart for an explanation. Mozart is absolutely delighted to describe his "entirely new" approach to writing opera, the appeal of *Figaro*'s everyday characters and the innovative techniques he employs in setting dialog to music. He launches into an attack on the older, Baroque style of opera (represented in Salieri's works): "Why must we go on and on forever writing about all these gods and dead legends? Be honest. Which one of you wouldn't rather listen to his hairdresser than Hercules? Or Horatio or Orpheus? People so lofty they sound as if they sh— marbles!"

[Amadeus 11](#)* (9:49 minutes)

Mozart rehearses the third act of *Marriage of Figaro* as one of the courtiers, following orders from the Emperor, rips out the ballet scenes from the score. "It's not fair that people like that have power over our work!" Mozart protests later to Salieri, whom he believes to be his close friend and protector. Salieri agrees to intercede on Mozart's behalf but does nothing. The Emperor orders that the ballet be restored to the third act.

[Amadeus 12](#)* (10:56 minutes)

The Marriage of Figaro closes after only nine performances in Vienna. Meanwhile, Salieri receives high praise and honors for *his* latest opera, written in the older Baroque style. While watching a performance of Mozart's *Don Giovanni*, Salieri comes up an idea for his plot to destroy Mozart. Salieri sees to it that *Don Giovanni* closes after five performances in Vienna.

[Amadeus 13](#)* (10:20 minutes)

Mozart accepts a commission for a *Requiem*, a Catholic mass for the dead, from a mysterious patron—Salieri himself in disguise. Mozart attends a performance at Emanuel Schikaneder's popular theater in suburban Vienna.

[Amadeus 14](#)* (10 minutes)

Schikaneder offers Mozart half of the receipts if he will agree to write an opera to be performed at his theater. The strain of writing two major works on deadline begins to take its toll on Mozart's sanity and health.

[Amadeus 15](#)* (10 minutes)

The mysterious patron visits Mozart, who has not yet completed the *Requiem*. Constanze harangues Mozart for drinking too much and spending too much time on

Schikaneder's opera, for which he has received no advance. Mozart slips out of the apartment to attend a lively gathering of singers and actors at Schikaneder's house. Mozart returns home to find that Constanze and his young son have departed for the spa.

Amadeus 16* (10:05 minutes)

After a successful performance of *The Magic Flute* at Schikaneder's theater, Mozart resumes work on his Requiem mass. Salieri offers to help Mozart, exhausted from illness or possibly poisoned, finish the work.

Amadeus 17* (9:30 minutes)

Constanze arrives home from her trip to the spa moments before Mozart dies.

Amadeus 18* (8:54 minutes)

Mozart's widow, young son, and friends watch the hearse depart with Mozart's body to an unmarked grave outside the City gates. Salieri, dismissing the priest without completing his confession or accepting the priest's offer of forgiveness from God, proclaims himself the "patron saint of mediocrities everywhere.

* Terms of Use: Please respect the copyright and terms of use displayed on the webpages above.