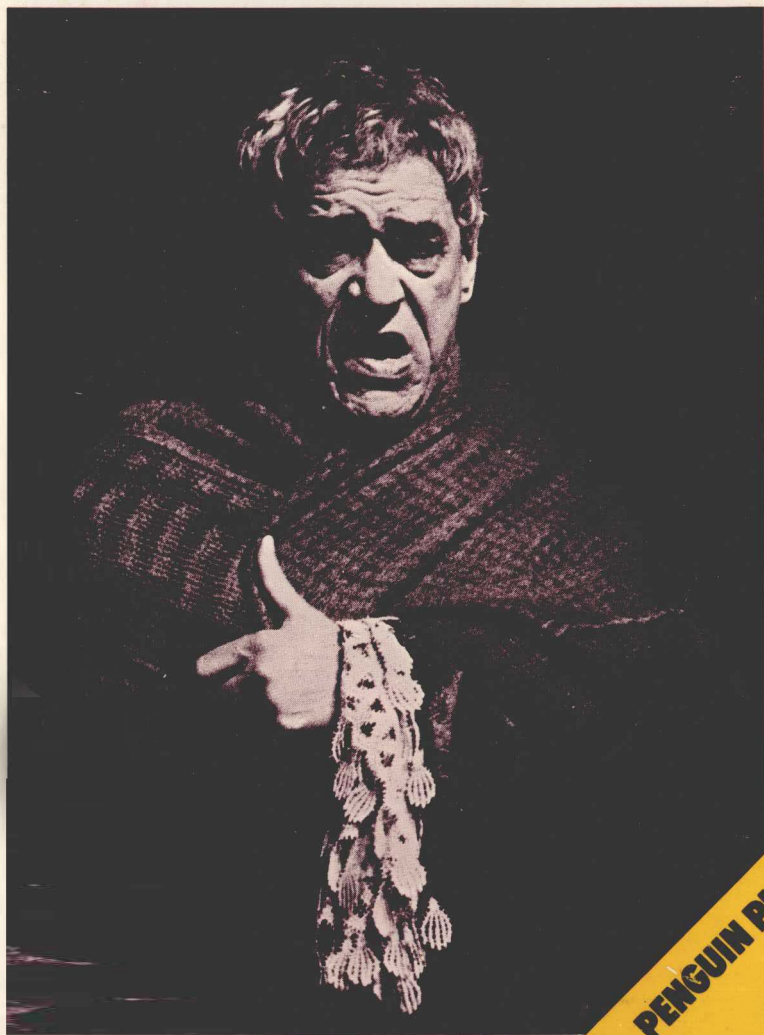


PETER
SHAFFER

AMADEUS



PENGUIN PLAYS





A PLAY BY
PETER SHAFFER



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AUTHOR'S NOTES

THE SET

Amadeus can and should be played in a variety of settings. What is described in this text is to a large extent based on the exquisite formulation found for the play by the designer John Bury, conjured into being by the director, Peter Hall. I was of course in enthusiastic agreement with his formulation, and set it down here with their permission as a tribute to their exquisite work.

The set consisted basically of a handsome rectangle of patterned wood, its longest sides leading away from the viewer, set into a stage of ice-blue plastic. This surface shifted beguilingly under various lights played upon it, to show gunmetal grey, or azure, or emerald green, and reflected the actors standing upon it. The entire design was undeniably modern, yet it suggested without self-consciousness the age of the Rococo. Costumes and objects were sumptuously of the period, and should always be so wherever the play is produced.

The rectangle largely represented interiors: especially those of Salieri's salon; Mozart's last apartment; assorted reception rooms, and opera houses. At the back stood a grand proscenium sporting gilded cherubs blowing huge trumpets, and supporting grand curtains of sky blue, which could rise and part to reveal an enclosed space almost the width of the area downstage. Into this space superb backdrops were flown, and superb projections thrown, to show the scarlet boxes of theatres, the black shape of the guillotine, or a charming white Masonic Lodge copied from a china plate. In it the audience could see an eighteenth-century street at night (cunningly enlarged from the lid of Mozart's own curious snuff-box) or a vast wall of gold

AMADEUS

mirrors with an immense golden fireplace, representing the encrusted Palace of Schönbrunn. In it also appeared silhouettes of scandal-mongering citizens of Vienna, or the formal figures of the Emperor Joseph II of Austria and his brocaded courtiers. This wonderful up-stage space, which was in effect an immense Rococo peepshow, will be referred to throughout this text as the Light Box.

On stage, before the lights are lowered in the theatre, four objects are to be seen by the audience. To the left, on the wooden rectangle, stands a small table, bearing an empty cake-stand and a small handbell. In the centre, further upstage and also on the wood, stands an empty wheelchair of the eighteenth century, with its back to us. To the right, on the reflecting plastic, stands a beautiful fortepiano in a marquetry case. Above the stage is suspended a large chandelier showing many globes of opaque glass.

All directions will be given from the viewpoint of the audience.

Changes of time and place are indicated throughout by changes of light.

In reading the text it must be remembered that the action is wholly continuous. Its fluidity is ensured by the use of servants played by actors in eighteenth-century livery, whose role it is to move the furniture and carry on props with ease and correctness, while the action proceeds around them. Through a pleasant paradox of theatre their constant coming and going, bearing tables, chairs or cloaks, should render them virtually invisible, and certainly unremarkable. This will aid the play to be acted throughout in its proper manner: with the sprung line, gracefulness and energy for which Mozart is so especially celebrated.

The asterisks which now and then divide the page indicate changes of scene: but there is to be no interruption. The scenes must flow into one another without pause from the beginning to the end of the play.

P.S.

Amadeus was first presented by the National Theatre in London on 2 November 1979 with the following cast:

THE 'VENTICELLI'	Dermot Crowley
	Donald Gee
VALET TO SALIERI	Philip Locke
ANTONIO SALIERI	Paul Scofield
JOHANN KILIAN VON STRACK	Basil Henson
COUNT ORSINI-ROSENBERG	Andrew Cruickshank
BARON VAN SWIETEN	Nicholas Selby
CONSTANZE WEBER	Felicity Kendal
WOLFGANG AMADEUS MOZART	Simon Callow
MAJOR-DOMO	William Sleigh
JOSEPH II, EMPEROR OF AUSTRIA	John Normington
SERVANTS	Nik Forster, David Morris, Louis Selwyn, Steven Slater
CITIZENS OF VIENNA	Glyn Baker, Nigel Bellairs, Leo Dove, Jane Evers, Susan Gilmore, Robin McDonald, Peggy Marshall, Robin Meredith, Ann Sedgwick, Glenn Williams

Director: Peter Hall
Design and Lighting: John Bury
Assistant Designer: Sue Jenkinson
Music by Mozart and Salieri
Music Direction: Harrison Birtwistle
Fortepiano played by Christopher Kite

This is a revised version of *Amadeus* first produced at the Broadhurst Theater, New York City, on 17 December 1980. It starred Ian McKellen as Salieri, Tim Curry as Mozart, and Jane Seymour as Constanze. The Director was Peter Hall.

CHARACTERS

ANTONIO SALIERI	
WOLFGANG AMADEUS	
MOZART	
CONSTANZE WEBER	Wife to Mozart
JOSEPH II	Emperor of Austria
COUNT JOHANN KILIAN	
VON STRACK	Groom of the Imperial Chamber
COUNT FRANZ	
ORSINI-ROSENBERG	Director of the Imperial Opera
BARON GOTTFRIED VAN	
SWIETEN	Prefect of the Imperial Library
TWO 'VENTICELLI'	'Little Winds': purveyors of information, gossip and rumour
MAJOR-DOMO	
SALIERI'S VALET	(Silent part)
SALIERI'S COOK	(Silent part)
TERESA SALIERI	Wife of Salieri (silent part)
KATHERINA CAVALIERI	Salieri's pupil (silent part)
KAPELLMEISTER BONNO	(Silent part)
CITIZENS OF VIENNA	

The CITIZENS OF VIENNA also play the SERVANTS who move furniture and bring on props as required, and TERESA SALIERI and KATHERINA CAVALIERI, neither of whom have any lines to speak. The action of the play takes place in Vienna in November 1823, and, in recall, the decade 1781-1791.

ACT I

VIENNA

Darkness.

Savage whispers fill the theatre. We can distinguish nothing at first from this snake-like hissing save the word Salieri! repeated here, there and everywhere around the theatre.

Also, the barely distinguishable word Assassin!

The whispers overlap and increase in volume, slashing the air with wicked intensity. Then the light grows upstage to reveal the silhouettes of men and women dressed in the top hats and skirts of the early nineteenth century – CITIZENS OF VIENNA, all crowded together in the Light Box, and uttering their scandal.

WHISPERERS: *Salieri! ... Salieri! ... Salieri!*

[Downstage in the wheelchair, with his back to us, sits an old man. We can just see, as the light grows a little brighter, the top of his head encased in an old cap, and perhaps the shawl wrapped around his shoulders.]

Salieri! ... Salieri! ... Salieri!

[Two middle-aged gentlemen hurry in from either side, also wearing the long cloaks and tall hats of the period. These are the TWO VENTICELLI: purveyors of fact, rumour and gossip throughout the play. They speak rapidly – in this first appearance extremely rapidly – so that the scene has the air of a fast and dreadful Overture. Sometimes they speak to each other; sometimes to us – but always with the urgency of men who have ever been first with the news.]

AMADEUS

VENTICELLO 1: I don't believe it.

VENTICELLO 2: I don't believe it.

VENTICELLO 1: I don't believe it.

VENTICELLO 2: I don't believe it.

WHISPERERS: *Salieri!*

VENTICELLO 1: They say.

VENTICELLO 2: I hear.

VENTICELLO 1: I hear.

VENTICELLO 2: They say.

VENTICELLO 1 and VENTICELLO 2: *I don't believe it!*

WHISPERERS: *Salieri!*

VENTICELLO 1: The whole city is talking.

VENTICELLO 2: You hear it all over.

VENTICELLO 1: The cafés.

VENTICELLO 2: The Opera.

VENTICELLO 1: The Prater.

VENTICELLO 2: The gutter.

VENTICELLO 1: They say even Metternich repeats it.

VENTICELLO 2: They say even Beethoven, his old pupil.

VENTICELLO 1: But why now?

VENTICELLO 2: After so long?

VENTICELLO 1: Thirty-two years!

VENTICELLO 1 and VENTICELLO 2: *I don't believe it!*

WHISPERERS: SALIERI!

VENTICELLO 1: They say he shouts it out all day!

VENTICELLO 2: I hear he cries it out all night!

VENTICELLO 1: Stays in his apartments.

VENTICELLO 2: Never goes out.

VENTICELLO 1: Not for a year now.

VENTICELLO 2: Longer. Longer.

VENTICELLO 1: Must be seventy.

VENTICELLO 2: Older. Older.

VENTICELLO 1: Antonio Salieri –

VENTICELLO 2: The famous musician –

ACT I

VENTICELLO 1: Shouting it aloud!

VENTICELLO 2: Crying it aloud!

VENTICELLO 1: Impossible.

VENTICELLO 2: Incredible.

VENTICELLO 1: I don't believe it!

VENTICELLO 2: I don't believe it!

WHISPERERS: SALIERI!

VENTICELLO 1: I know who *started* the tale!

VENTICELLO 2: I know who started the tale!

[Two old men – one thin and dry, one very fat – detach themselves from the crowd at the back, and walk downstage, on either side: Salieri's

VALET and PASTRY COOK.]

VENTICELLO 1 *[indicating him]*: The old man's valet!

VENTICELLO 2 *[indicating him]*: The old man's cook!

VENTICELLO 1: The valet hears him shouting!

VENTICELLO 2: The cook hears him crying!

VENTICELLO 1: What a story!

VENTICELLO 2: What a scandal!

[The VENTICELLI move quickly upstage, one on either side, and each collects a silent informant. VENTICELLO 1 walks down eagerly with the VALET; VENTICELLO 2 walks down eagerly with the COOK.]

VENTICELLO 1 *[to VALET]*: What does he say, your master?

VENTICELLO 2 *[to COOK]*: What *exactly* does he cry, the Kapellmeister?

VENTICELLO 1: Alone in his house –

VENTICELLO 2: All day and all night –

VENTICELLO 1: What sins does he shout?

VENTICELLO 2: The old fellow –

VENTICELLO 1: The recluse –

VENTICELLO 2: What horrors have you heard?

VENTICELLO 1 and VENTICELLO 2: Tell us! Tell us! Tell us at once!

What does he cry? What does he cry? *What does he cry?*

[VALET and COOK gesture towards SALIERI.]

SALIERI *[in a great cry]*: MOZART!!!

[Silence.]

AMADEUS

VENTICELLO 1 [*whispering*]: Mozart!

VENTICELLO 2 [*whispering*]: Mozart!

SALIERI: *Perdonami, Mozart! Il tuo assassino ti chiede perdono!*

VENTICELLO 1 [*in disbelief*]: Pardon, Mozart!

VENTICELLO 2 [*in disbelief*]: Pardon your assassin!

VENTICELLO 1 and VENTICELLO 2: *God preserve us!*

SALIERI: *Pietà, Mozart. Mozart, pietà!*

VENTICELLO 1: Mercy, Mozart!

VENTICELLO 2: Mozart, have mercy!

VENTICELLO 1: He speaks in Italian when excited!

VENTICELLO 2: German when not!

VENTICELLO 1: *Perdonami, Mozart!*

VENTICELLO 2: Pardon your assassin!

[*The VALET and the COOK walk to either side of the stage, and stand still. Pause. The VENTICELLI cross themselves, deeply shocked.*]

VENTICELLO 1: There was talk once before, you know.

VENTICELLO 2: Thirty-two years ago.

VENTICELLO 1: When Mozart was dying.

VENTICELLO 2: He claimed he'd been poisoned.

VENTICELLO 1: Some said he accused a man.

VENTICELLO 2: Some said that man was Salieri.

VENTICELLO 1: But no one believed it.

VENTICELLO 2: They *knew* what he died of!

VENTICELLO 1: Syphilis, surely.

VENTICELLO 2: Like everybody else.

[*Pause.*]

VENTICELLO 1 [*slyly*]: But what if Mozart was right?

VENTICELLO 2: If he really *was* murdered?

VENTICELLO 1: And by him. Our First Kapellmeister!

VENTICELLO 2: Antonio Salieri!

VENTICELLO 1: It can't possibly be true.

VENTICELLO 2: It's not actually credible.

VENTICELLO 1: Because *why*?

VENTICELLO 2: Because *why*?

ACT I

VENTICELLO 1 and VENTICELLO 2: *Why on earth would he do it?*

VENTICELLO 1: Our First Royal Kapellmeister –

VENTICELLO 2: Murder his inferior?

VENTICELLO 1: And why confess now?

VENTICELLO 2: After thirty-two years!

WHISPERERS: SALIERI!

SALIERI: *Mozart! Mozart! Perdonami! ... Il tuo assassino ti chiede perdono!*

[*Pause. They look at him – then at each other.*]

VENTICELLO 1: What do you think?

VENTICELLO 2: What do you think?

VENTICELLO 1: I don't believe it!

VENTICELLO 2: I don't believe it!

VENTICELLO 1: All the same ...

VENTICELLO 2: Is it just possible?

VENTICELLO 1 and VENTICELLO 2 [*whispering*]: *Did he do it after all?!*

WHISPERERS: SALIERI!

[*The VENTICELLI go off. The VALET and the COOK remain, on either side of the stage. SALIERI swivels his wheelchair around and stares at us. We see a man of seventy in an old stained dressing-robe, shawled. He rises and squints at the audience as if trying to see it.*]

★ ★ ★

SALIERI'S APARTMENTS

NOVEMBER 1823. THE SMALL HOURS

SALIERI [*calling to audience*]: *Vi Saluto! Ombri del Futuro! Antonio Salieri – a vostro servizio!*

[*A clock outside in the street strikes three.*]

I can almost see you in your ranks – waiting for your turn to live. Ghosts of the Future! Be visible. I beg you. Be visible. Come

to this dusty old room – this time, the smallest hours of dark November, eighteen hundred and twenty-three – and be my Confessors! Will you not enter this place and stay with me till dawn? Just till dawn – till six o'clock!

WHISPERERS: *Salieri! ... Salieri! ...*

[The curtains slowly descend on the CITIZENS OF VIENNA. Faint images of long windows are projected on the silk.]

SALIERI: Can you hear them? Vienna is a City of Slander. Everyone tells tales here: even my servants. I keep only two now – *[He indicates them]* – they've been with me ever since I came here, fifty years ago. The Keeper of the Razor: the Maker of the Cakes. One keeps me tidy, the other keeps me full. Tonight, I gave them instructions they never heard before. *[To them]* 'Leave me, both of you! Tonight I do not go to bed at all!'

[They react in surprise.]

'Return here tomorrow morning at six precisely – to shave, to feed your capricious master!' *[He smiles at them both and claps his hands in gentle dismissal.]* Via. Via, via, via! Grazie!

[They bow, bewildered, and leave the stage.]

How surprised they were! ... They'll be even more surprised tomorrow: indeed they will! *[He peers hard at the audience, trying to see it.]* Oh, won't you appear? I need you – desperately! This is now the last hour of my life. Those about to die implore you! What must I do to make you visible? Raise you up in the flesh to be my last, last audience? ... Does it take an Invocation? That's how it's always done in opera! Ah yes, of course: that's it. An Invocation! The only way *[He rises.]* Let me try to conjure you now – Ghosts of the distant Future – so that I can see you.

[He gets out of the wheelchair and huddles over to the fortepiano. He stands at the instrument and begins to sing in a high cracked voice, interrupting himself at the end of each sentence with figurations on the keyboard in the manner of a recitativo secco. During this the house lights slowly come up to illuminate the audience.]

[Singing]

Ghosts of the Future!

ACT I

Shades of Time to come!

So much more unavoidable than those of Time gone by!

Appear with what sympathy Incarnation may endow you!

Appear You –

The yet-to-be-born!

The yet-to-hate!

The yet-to-kill!

Appear – Posterity!

[The light on the audience reaches its maximum. It stays like this during all of the following.]

[Speaking again] There. It worked. I can see you! That is the result of proper training. I was taught invocation by Chevalier Gluck, who was a true master at it. He had to be. In his day that is what people went to the opera for: the raising of Gods, and Ghosts . . . Nowadays, since Rossini became the rage, they prefer to watch the escapades of hairdressers.

[Pause.]

Scusate. Invocation is an exhausting business! I need refreshment.

[He goes to the cake-stand.] It's a little repellent, I admit – but actually the first sin I have to confess to you is Gluttony. Sticky gluttony at that. Infantine – Italian gluttony! The truth is that all my life I have never been able to conquer a lust for the sweetmeats of northern Italy where I was born. From the ages of three to seventy-three my entire career has been conducted to the taste of almonds sprinkled with sifted sugar. *[Lustfully]* Veronese biscuits! Milanese macaroons! Snow dumplings with pistachio sauce! *[Pause]* Do not judge me too harshly for this. All men harbour patriotic feelings of some kind . . . Of course I was born in 1750, when no man of sophistication would have dreamed of talking about Love of Country, or Native Earth. We were men of Europe, and that was enough. My parents were provincial subjects of the Austrian Empire, and perfectly happy to be so. A Lombardy merchant and his Lombardy wife. Their notion of Place was the tiny town of Legnago – which I could not wait to leave. Their notion of God was a superior Hapsburg emperor inhabiting a heaven only slightly

further off than Vienna. All they required of Him was to protect commerce and keep them forever unnoticed – preserved in mediocrity. My own requirements were very different.

[Pause.]

I wanted Fame. Not to deceive you. I wanted to *blaze*, like a comet, across the firmament of Europe. Yet only in one especial way. Music. Absolute music! A note of music is either right or wrong – *absolutely*! Not even Time can alter that: music is God's art. [Excited by the recollection] Already when I was ten a spray of sounded notes would make me dizzy almost to falling! By twelve I was humming my arias and anthems to the Lord. My one desire was to join all the composers who had celebrated His glory through the long Italian past! . . . Every Sunday I saw Him in church, painted on the flaking wall. I don't mean Christ. The Christs of Lombardy are simpering sillies with lambkins on their sleeves. No: I mean an old candle-smoked God in a mulberry robe, staring at the world with dealer's eyes. Tradesmen had put him up there. Those eyes made bargains, real and irreversible. 'You give me so – I'll give you so! No more. No less!' [He eats a sweet biscuit in his excitement.] The night before I left Legnago for ever I went to see Him and made a bargain with Him myself! I was a sober sixteen, filled with a desperate sense of right. I knelt before the God of Bargains, and I prayed through the mouldering plaster with all my soul.

[He kneels. The house lights go down.]

'Signore, let me be a composer! Grant me sufficient fame to enjoy it. In return I will live with virtue. I will strive to better the lot of my fellows. And I will honour You with much music all the days of my life!' As I said Amen, I saw his eyes flare. [As 'God'] 'Bene. Go forth Antonio. Serve Me and Mankind – and you will be blessed!' . . . 'Grazie!' I called back. 'I am Your servant for life!'

[He gets to his feet again.]

The very next day, a family friend suddenly appeared – out of the blue – took me off to Vienna, and paid for me to study music!

[Pause.]