

Mozart's world comes brilliantly to life

There are many good reasons for seeing "Amadeus."

Music, song, dance, photography, costuming, set decoration, acting, directing and production — put them all together, they spell excellence.

And, indeed, Director Milos Forman and Producer Saul Zaentz (the team whose "Cuckoo's Nest" won all the major 1976 Oscars) have combined the arts of filmmaking with those of ballet, opera and the concert stage to create a memorable film.

Much credit, of course, is due to many others (the credits run eight pages) as "Amadeus" represents superb coordination of all the visual arts and crafts with a number of aural ones.

"Amadeus" is the life story of 18th-century composer-musician Wolfgang Amadeus Mozart told from a particular viewpoint, that of Antonio Salieri. A contemporary of Mozart, Salieri is at one and the same time overwhelmed by Mozart's genius, appalled at Mozart's immaturity and decadence and

terribly jealous of Mozart's immensely beautiful compositions.

MOST IMPORTANT of all, Salieri is consumed with hatred and rage that Mozart's genius serves (in Salieri's mind) to stress his own mediocrity. This is at the heart of the film's dynamic tension.

Even the title, "Amadeus" — Mozart's middle name, which may be translated from the Latin as "beloved by God" — serves to highlight Salieri's jealousy because of his inability to serve God with his music.

Noted British conductor Neville Marriner and his Academy of St. Martin in the Fields orchestra provide the essential ingredient, superb rendition of Mozart's music as a counterpoint to the dynamic action — most particularly that of former Plymouth resident Tom Hulce as Mozart and F. Murray Abraham as Antonio Salieri.

Hulce has a remarkable range as his character ages and matures. There's more of the former than the latter, going from a silly young prodigy to a dying adult overwhelmed by his own creative energies.

One of the film's many fine techniques blends Hulce's acting ability with Marriner's conducting. During several sequences, Mozart's composing is rendered as completed work on the sound track. We hear what Mozart imagines as he writes. This interplay between creation and performance is particularly effective.

IN SOME RESPECTS the movie is less about Mozart than about his impact on Salieri and what we can learn about human motivation, greed, jealousy and behavior.

F. Murray Abraham's characterization of Salieri is superb and the real essence of "Amadeus." That is not to diminish Hulce's contribution. Mozart lived a brief but intense 35 years while Salieri died at 75, providing Abraham with a much greater acting challenge,

one he meets extremely well.

It is difficult to imagine any actor projecting a more compelling portrait of this nearly complete catalog of human emotion. Salieri is awestruck by Mozart's work, frustrated by his own inadequacies and consumed by love. The intermixture of those emotions leads to many others, and Abraham captures their nuances with potent force.

The film is historically authentic, although "Amadeus" may have taken some small liberties for the sake of this particular interpretation of events. Highly convincing 18th-century images are presented.

Filming was done in large part on location in Prague, the city now considered to most closely resemble 18th-century Vienna. "Amadeus" persuades and satisfies us visually with its accuracy and its photography by noted Czech cinematographer Miroslav Ondricek. Use of low-color temperatures, characteristic of the candle-lit era, softens the images and provides the proper historical nostalgia.

AS A MATTER of fact, 27,000 candles were used in filming "Amadeus," 6,000 of which were placed in Prague's Tyl Theater. An authentic locale, the theater is one of the few surviving 18th-century wooden structures. It is the theater in which Mozart conducted the world premiere of "Don Giovanni" on Oct. 29, 1787.

The candlelit theater is just one fine example of Forman and Zaentz's authentic images. Their half-million-dollar budget for 1,500 wigs is another. The film's images are beautiful for their own sake. They provide the proper background for this story of Mozart's struggle to create beauty amidst artistic intrigues for royal patronage, the key to economic survival.

the movies
Dan Greenberg



Tom Hulce is Wolfgang Amadeus Mozart in "Amadeus," story of the struggle between the musical genius and a jealous, rival composer.



F. Murray Abraham is Antonio Salieri, who devotes his life and music to God but loses his religious faith when he sees how Mozart has been creatively blessed.

Fest offers bluegrass music

The Bluegrass Jamboree and Harvest Fest will be Friday-Sunday at the Michigan Expo and Fairgrounds in Detroit.

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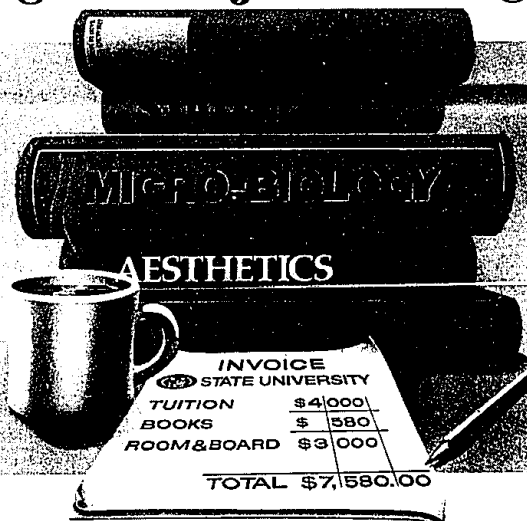
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