

Entertainment

Ethel Simmons editor/644-1100



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'Amadeus' star

Actor describes the challenge of playing Mozart

By Ethel Simmons
staff writer

READING BOOKS ABOUT Mozart, along with letters written by the famous composer, was one of the steps 29-year-old actor Tom Hulce took in preparing to play the lead role in the movie version of "Amadeus."

Hulce, who is originally from Plymouth, stars as Wolfgang Amadeus Mozart, in the film directed by Milos Forman, with screenplay by the stage play's author Peter Shaffer.

In an recent interview over the phone from Chicago, Hulce talked enthusiastically about the filming of this production. Since September, the young performer has been touring to promote "Amadeus."

"I'm going to hop up to Milwaukee to visit my grandmother," he said. After that, he is on his

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— Tom Hulce

way to Europe, for more promotions tied in with premieres of the film. "They've really scattered it," he said of the premieres, which have been taking place at different times and places all over the world.

"AMADEUS" (PG) has been playing an exclusive engagement in metropolitan Detroit and is going into its fifth big week at the Movies at Prudential, Prudential Town Center, Southfield.

Describing Mozart, Hulce said, "He was musically brilliant. Other times he was so infantile and vulgar and crazy. I explore all those direc-

tions and make them into one person."

Hulce hit the books to learn more about the composer. "I read every biography I could lay my hands on. They were useful up to a point. One of the things that was a great help was his letters."

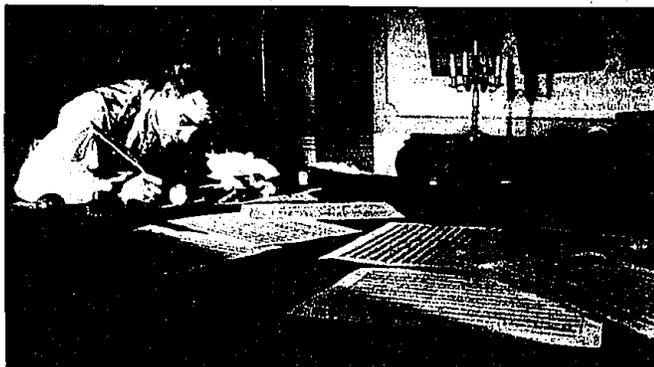
The letters were incredibly vulgar, Hulce said. Mozart's vulgarity is in the movie. "It's in there with a really light touch." As an example, Hulce cited the scene introducing Mozart, where Mozart and Constanze are rolling around under tables and he tricks her into using a vulgar play on words.

"Hundreds and hundreds of hours were spent in preparation," Hulce said, telling how he took piano lessons daily and also learned how to conduct. There was no teacher for the conducting. "Conducting as we know it didn't exist. It was mostly keeping time. A composer would make up his own style. It's a matter of knowing the music inside and out," he explained.

It wasn't until Hulce studied conducting that he recalled an incident back in grade school, where he briefly conducted a number with the school orchestra directed by Wayne Dunlop.

HULCE WENT to school through the 10th grade in Plymouth. Then he went to Interlochen, and after that finished his last year of high school in North Carolina where he attended "a real professional training school. I was in a big hurry," he said.

"My fantasies growing up were singing and that led to musicals



Tom Hulce as the young genius, Amadeus Wolfgang Mozart, creates a musical score in "Amadeus," film version of the Broadway play.

locally, mostly in Ann Arbor," Hulce recalled. When his voice changed, he decided to pursue an acting career. He landed on Broadway in Peter Shaffer's "Equus," first as understudy, then in the starring role when the English cast was replaced.

"Nothing like starting at the top," he agreed, when asked about his good fortune in gaining such a plum role on the New York stage.

While he is delighted to be doing "Amadeus," he points out that he has been working many years at his craft. He and his knowledgeable actor friends are amused by the overnight success label.

Hulce has done four movies, one of them the comedy smash "Animal House." He said, "People who only know me from 'Animal House' think it's a big leap."

THE MOVIE version of "Amadeus" differs quite a bit from the stage play. "All the pieces were tossed up in the air and put together in a purely cinematic way. It's less an intellectual exercise," he said, contrasting the play and film.

"The film is a rich weave. The story exists on a lot of different levels." Among these are one man's (the mediocre composer Salleri's) jealousy of a genius, of Mozart's rebelling against what is expected of him, of Salleri and his relationship with God.

The film expands some of the stage action, with scenes of Mozart at home, with his wife and father. "It's much more complete," Hulce said.

After finishing "Amadeus," the actor has gone on to some other

projects. He worked in Chekhov's play "The Seagull" in California last spring. He recently finished the movie "Echo Park," made by an Austrian director and cinematographer. The company worked outside of Hollywood and in the Alps.

"The fantasy aspect of filmmaking is getting to go," Hulce declared.

"Amadeus" was shot in Czechoslovakia, where scenes of Viennese court life were recreated.

In filming, the relationship is between the director and the actor, Hulce said. "Milos (Forman) was just great for me. He had a specific vision. He's a very demanding director. It gave me the courage to take risks and really be creative."



Mozart and Constanze (Elizabeth Berridge) are playful in this scene from the movie about the composer's life and music.

Theater does Moliere comedy in French language

The Theatre du Nombre d'Or, a company of French Theatre artists, will present Moliere's classic comedy "Les Precieuses Ridicules" (The Ridiculous Ladies) at 7:30 p.m. Monday, Nov. 12, in the auditorium of the Detroit Institute of Arts.

This is the first time this play will be performed in Detroit in the original French language.

The program is offered by the French Institute of Detroit in cooperation with the Performing Arts Department of the Detroit Institute of Arts.

It is presented under the auspices of the Association Francaise d'Action Artistique and with the patronage of the Cultural Services of the French Embassy in the United States.

Ticket prices are \$25 for patrons, \$15 and \$12 for general admission. Tickets for student groups of 10 or more are \$7.50. For tickets and reservation information call the DIA ticket office at 832-2730 or the French Institute at 644-4410.

The Theatre du Nombre d'Or is known for its faithful recreation of

17th and 18th century theater. Productions are researched, and the actors use both mime and stylized gestures typical of baroque theater to communicate with the audience.

The baroque-style costumes with an abundance of beads, lace and ribbons and symbolic makeup are reproduced in the spirit of the commedia dell'arte.

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