

“AMADEUS” Reviews



Despite the title, the play lives and dies on the strength of whoever tackles the role of Shaffer's Italian-born glittering mediocrity, Salieri. [He] virtually never leaves the stage, and serves as our narrator and tour guide, albeit one whose reliability is often in question.

Fortunately, Kevin Theis in Oak Park Festival Theatre's "Amadeus," makes the multiple challenges of playing Salieri look as easy as Shaffer's "Wolfie" dashing off an opera.

From long self-aware expositional passages to scheming comic interludes with the puffed-up stooges who control court life, **Theis fully inhabits the role without resorting to the sort of gimcrackery that mars his character's musical output.**

This is particularly true in the first act's hair-raising curtain closer, when Salieri examines copies of Mozart's compositions brought to him by Constanze (Meg Warner), Wolfie's wife. Theis' Salieri shifts from the planned seduction of his rival's wife to a man stripped naked by awareness of his own inadequacies.

It's a hypnotic and gutting scene, enhanced by Theis' pinpoint articulation and control of his vocal and physical instrument, even as his character is reeling toward an existential abyss.

Theis is a reason unto himself to make the trip.

- Kerry Reid



The murder conspiracy that lies at the heart of Peter Shaffer's 1979 drama—that rival composer Antonio Salieri was responsible for Mozart's death—is fiction, but it still makes for great theater. Especially when it's presented with as much intelligence and fire as it is in Mark Richard's staging for Oak Park Festival Theatre. Directing again after a long hiatus, Richard has crafted a graceful, powerful production that artfully balances both the emotional and intellectual sides of Shaffer's script, and **Kevin Theis and Chris Daley expertly bring the lead antagonists to life. This is particularly fine as Salieri, embodying all that's dark and bright in this deeply conflicted character.**

– Jack Helbig



Directed by Mark Richard, “Amadeus” has a stormy, electrical power that pulses through in large part due to **Kevin Theis’ take-no-prisoners depiction of the tormented Salieri**. It’s an Everest of a role, continually demanding that the stakes be progressively heightened as Salieri journeys from smug, securely pious egotist to shattered, wholly disillusioned schemer intent not on praise but on destruction.

This digs into the plum part with a voracious gusto that almost atones for Shaffer’s extremely exposition-heavy text. **It takes an artist of fortitude and nuance to contend with Shaffer’s slavish verbiage and to bring Salieri’s tortured memories to life without gnashing the scenery into splinters. This pulls it off in a bravura turn.**

- Catey Sullivan



“Amadeus,” presented outdoors in Austin Gardens is blessed with strong production values and a phenomenally talented cast. The two lead players are especially remarkable. Deftly directed by Mark Richard, this intelligent, fast-paced production really kicks off Festival's 39th summer nicely.

Kevin Theis, a longtime Festival favorite, is outstanding in the massive role of Salieri, our narrator. This commands the stage for the play's nearly 2½-hour running time. His range is astonishing: Salieri has numerous monologues running the gamut from disbelief to outrage to revenge.

Amadeus- a powerful production that's smart and fun- is really a must-see show.

- Doug Deuchler