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## 'Amadeus' at Camelot Theatre

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Max Gutfreund, front, plays Wolfgang Amadeus Mozart and Paul R. Jones plays Antonio Salieri in Camelot Theatre's "Amadeus."

Photo courtesy of Steve Sutfin

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January 24, 2013

**By Roberta Kent**

for Tempo

Wolfgang Amadeus Mozart is a name familiar to most. Mention his contemporary, a composer named Antonio Salieri, and you will probably get a blank stare.

Salieri was a superstar in the late 18th century in Vienna. He'd written successful operas, ballets and sacred music, and he was a famous teacher — his students included Franz Schubert, Ludwig van Beethoven and Franz Liszt.

Mozart was a precocious child, a brash, career-threatening interloper with daring, new musical ideas for composition.

Peter Shaffer's 1980 Tony Award-winning play, "Amadeus," brings Salieri's all-consuming jealousy of Mozart's genius and his efforts to destroy him to light.

The show previews Wednesday, Jan. 30 — with a fundraiser for Siskiyou Singers — and Thursday, Jan. 31; it opens Friday, Feb. 1, at Camelot Theatre, 101 Talent Ave., Talent.

Camelot's Artistic Director Livia Genise directs, with Paul R. Jones starring as Salieri and Max Gutfreund as Mozart.

Shaffer based "Amadeus" on real as well as apocryphal facts. Mozart was, indeed, boorish and foul-mouthed. During his life, he blamed Salieri, official court composer to the Austrian Emperor Joseph II, for his difficulty in getting his work performed. At the time of Mozart's death in 1791, there were rumors that he had been poisoned by an envious Salieri. Shaffer's story line was inspired by a 19th-century play accusing Salieri of the deed, written by the Russian author Alexander Pushkin.

But Shaffer's "Amadeus" takes the story further. Salieri has consecrated himself and his work to the glory of God, filled with the certainty that God would reward his efforts. Instead, God bestowed genius on an unthinking child. A bitter Salieri vows vengeance — on Mozart and on God.

Shaffer continually revised "Amadeus" for the 1984 film and for other stage productions. Camelot is using the script revised by the playwright for the 1998-1999 Broadway revival. Sir Peter Hall, director of both the original Broadway production as well as the later one, writes that Shaffer transformed the work from a simply thrilling melodrama into a profoundly humanist tragedy.

Jones first played Salieri 20 years ago in a community theater in Visalia, Calif., which used the 1980 script. He notes the major difference in the two scripts.

"In this most recent version, Shaffer changed the confrontational scene between Salieri and Mozart in Act 2, made it more dramatic. In the original, Salieri hears that Mozart has gone mad, and he visits Mozart in disguise to see for himself. In this version, he is not in disguise. Mozart sees him lurking around the house and invites him in. As Salieri sees the mental deterioration of the younger man, he realizes that in destroying Mozart, he may have achieved his revenge, but he has also destroyed himself."

Genise says she drew her inspiration both from the film and from an early, regional production of the original play. She says she was "a little in awe of taking it on to direct."

"But, when I cast Paul as Salieri, Max as Mozart and Grace as Constanze, I knew it was going to work. They understand and give real depth to these characters."

Gutfreund, a student at Southern Oregon University, also has appeared in Camelot's productions of "All the King's Men," "Gypsy" and "1776." Peets is a veteran of Camelot's Conservatory program. She is majoring in vocal performance at SOU.

"Amadeus" is filled with music of the period — Mozart's music, of course, but also music by Salieri and other contemporary composers chosen by music adviser Kendra Taylor.

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### IF YOU GO

What: "Amadeus"

When: Previews Wednesday and Thursday, Jan. 30 and 31, opens Friday, Feb. 1, and runs through Feb. 24

Where: Camelot Theatre, 101 Talent Ave., Talent

Tickets: \$22 for the Jan. 30 preview; \$10 for the Jan. 31 preview; \$22, \$20 for seniors and students, for all other shows

Call: 541-535-5250 or see [www.camelottheatre.org](http://www.camelottheatre.org)

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Roberta Kent is a freelance writer living in Ashland. Reach her at [rbkent@mind.net](mailto:rbkent@mind.net).

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