

# Wolfgang Amadeus comes to life

**Amadeus**  
Orion Pictures

review by Dean Bennet

*Amadeus*, the latest screen endeavour from director Milos Forman should be seen, if only for its detailed period costuming and scenery and its impressive sound track. Due to a lack of focus however, the story misses the mark every so slightly and is thus prevented from transcending that intangible barrier that separates the good movies from the great ones.

*Amadeus* the screenplay was adapted by Forman and British playwright Peter Shaffer from Shaffer's stage play of the same name. It is the story of an eighteenth century court composer named Antonio Salieri. Salieri has made a pact with God: if blessed with consummate musical skill, Salieri promises to devote his entire life in service to God, practicing complete moral and social chastity in the process. Unfortunately, the only thing he is blessed with is the ability to appreciate how mediocre his music is in comparison to that of an infantile, over-sexed, braggadocio named Wolfgang Amadeus Mozart. Salieri

feels slighted and humiliated and sets out to destroy his rival.

The story falls short, though, because there is not enough emphasis placed on the relationship between Salieri and Mozart. While Salieri certainly does his best to discredit his adversary he seems, at times, to be only one of many at the Hapsburg court who wish to do so. Even Mozart contributes to his own demise with his exorbitant spending habits and uncanny knack of infuriating those he should be impressing.

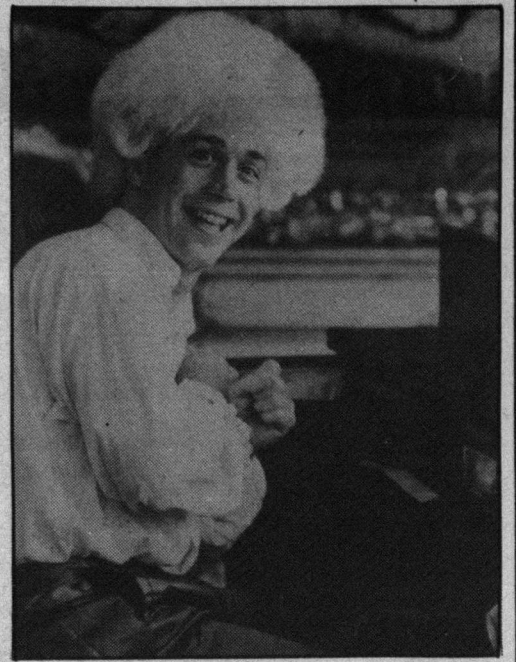
Is *Amadeus* a story of personal revenge, or is Forman making a bigger statement, such as that true art will eventually overcome the petty whims and failings of its creator and his contemporary critics? One cannot be sure, but there is no question that this lack of focus is felt most when a beaten and penniless Mozart apologizes to Salieri for thinking badly of him. Mozart hails Salieri as a true friend, and a scene that should overwhelm you with pathetic irony produces only a wan smile of knowing something that Mozart does not.

The acting is quite competent as Forman continues his style of employing little-known

actors. F. Murray Abraham is memorable as Salieri not so much for his performance but for his thin, cruel face that speaks volumes of anitpathy when watching Mozart perform.

Tom Hulce (Mozart) and Elizabeth Berridge (Mozart's wife Constanze) are enjoyable because the characters they portray are earthy and human, especially when compared to the prim, faceless characters of the court. Hulce and Berridge allow us to surpass the boundaries of written history and we are able to see people of the 1780's who tell dirty jokes and have messy apartments. We see them more like ourselves, and suddenly the bewigged nobles adorning the dusty pages of age-old history texts do not seem as remote and inaccessible as they did before.

While the elaborate concert halls and intricate costume design help give the film its aura of elegance, it is the sound track that strides to the fore to capture your imagination. The music — consisting mostly of Mozart's work — seizes your attention right from the start and keeps you riveted throughout. It is omni-present, pervading every element of the story. It forms the backbone of the inspiration that inextricably links Salieri



Wolfgang (Tom Hulce) tells dirty jokes in *Amadeus*.

to Mozart. Music becomes their reason for living but, in the end, it also affects destruction.

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WED

OCT. 10

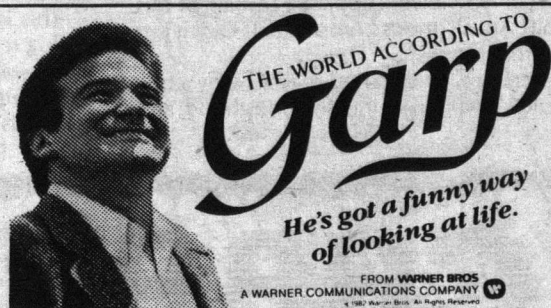
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THURS

OCT. 11

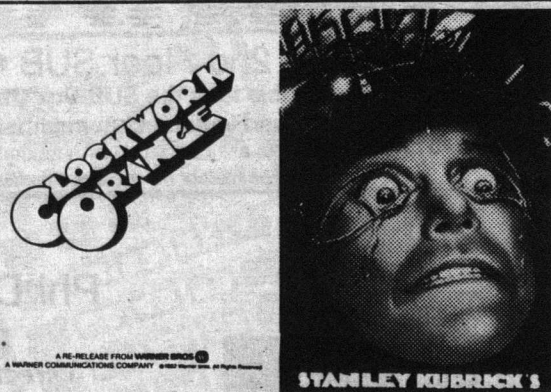
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SAT

OCT. 13

8:00 pm • R



SUN

OCT. 14

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7:00 pm • R



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## Sex in two centuries

**Cloud 9**  
Phoenix Theatre

review by Mike Evans

The current production of Caryl Churchill's *Cloud 9*, playing at the Kaasa Theatre in the Jubilee through October 21, is unquestionably a good entertainment investment. The play, a past winner of the Obie in New York for Best Play Off-Broadway, challenges the audience's perception of sex roles in society.

The first act is a funny, if somewhat ordinary, sex farce, centred around the musical-bed activities of the members of a British family in colonial Africa in 1880. Insufferable manly husband Clive, is sleeping with "different" Mrs. Saunders; wife Betty pines for his best friend Harry, the explorer. Harry is having relations with Clive's underage son, Edward, and Clive's slave, Joshua; Edward's governess, Ellen, carries a torch for Betty. To add to the confusion, not all the actors are quite what they seem: a man plays a woman, a woman plays a young boy and white actor plays a black African.

But the power of Churchill's script doesn't come through until Act II, when the play undergoes a transformation, not only of time and place, but also of genre. The easily acceptable first act is deftly contrasted with an insightful and frequently touching exam-

ination of traditional sex roles. The lights are rekindled upon a London park in 1980 - but for the characters it is only twenty five years later. Now Churchill focuses her attention on separation, homosexuality, homophobia, liberation and loneliness through characters we have previously seen very differently. The result is dramatic indeed.

In what must be either an actor's dream or an actor's nightmare (each plays two or more roles, often switching sex, or at least, sexual preference), there are several performances of note. Stephen Ouimette's Betty in the first act is a wonderful caricature of the delicate female, serving husband and country in the colonies. Leslie Jones and Christine Willes perform admirably in all four of their roles. The evening really belongs though, to Bridget O'Sullivan as Second Act Betty. Her moments with Ouimette's Second Act Gerry and her monologue which closes the show are performed with a lucidity and tenderness that are enchanting.

Stancel Campbell's design is elegantly simple as well as functional, and further unites the two disparate entities that are the first and second acts.

If you are looking for a good evening of theatre, Phoenix's *Cloud 9* is well worth seeing.



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