

## Salieri and Mozart to face off in Master Singers concert

By Daniel Hautzinger



For most people, the name Antonio Salieri denotes mediocrity envious of genius, and is inextricably (and unfavorably) associated with Mozart. In Pushkin's play *Mozart and Salieri*, Rimsky-Korsakov's opera of the same name, Peter Shaffer's play *Amadeus* and its film adaptation, Salieri is depicted as a jealous composer who poisons Mozart after being upstaged by him.

But Salieri was a popular composer in his own right, and the mythology surrounding his relationship to Mozart has probably been exaggerated. His operas were widely known in Europe in the late eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries, and he was a well-regarded teacher of composition whose students included Liszt, Schubert and Beethoven.

You can evaluate Salieri and his music on their own terms at St. Paul's Episcopal Church in Akron on August 3, when the Master Singers Chorale and Strings present his Requiem in c minor under the direction of J.D. Goddard.

"We don't know if the *Amadeus* story is true or not, it's just an interpretation," Goddard said over the phone. "But it made for a great show." Because of the popularity of *Amadeus* and the prevalence of the Mozart-Salieri rivalry, Master Singers will perform Mozart's *Eine Kleine Nachtmusik* and *Ave Verum Corpus* alongside Salieri's Requiem. As far as Goddard knows, this will be only the second time the Requiem has been performed in the United States.

"The Requiem is filled with Mozartean moments," he said. "And yet, there are moments in it that are sheer Romanticism." The work was written in 1804, thirteen years after Mozart's death, when the Romantic style was beginning to ferment in Beethoven, though Romanticism as a defined period would not appear for another couple of decades.



“Salieri uses a lot of rubatos and rallentandos [to add freedom to the tempo]. Unlike Mozart, there are often several fermatas within a movement for dramatic purpose.” Goddard said. “It’s interesting that he does not use soloists, but instead a solo quartet that always sings together. I’ve never run into that before.”

The singers in the quartet will all come from the Master Singers Choral, which is an all-volunteer, non-auditioned group. “Our mission statement is ‘preserving the past and premiering the future of Classical choral literature,’” Goddard said. “We don’t do pops, show-tunes or Broadway, but have done a vast majority of a Romantic type or style.”

Goddard himself started the Master Singers about fourteen years ago, after dropping out of performance for around twenty years, having been a clarinetist and opera singer, director, and conductor. He instead concentrated on teaching voice at the University of Akron. “All I ever wanted to do was be a choral-orchestral conductor. With opera you have to work with sets, costumes, personalities and egos. That got to me.”

Besides being the artistic director of the Master Singers, Goddard also holds the same position with the Chagrin Valley Choral Union and the Euclid Symphony Orchestra, where he is also the conductor. In November, he will present another “rivals” program with Euclid: Salieri’s *Overture to Les Danaïdes* and Mozart’s first violin concerto with Andrew Sords as soloist. “The overture came from my research on the Requiem. It’s earlier, and very, very different, more classical in style.”

The Mozart-Salieri mythology will continue to live on this fall. But perhaps Salieri’s name will be redeemed, at least in Northeast Ohio, in Goddard’s hands.

*Published on ClevelandClassical.com July 28, 2014.*

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