

## Cleveland Orchestra provides the live soundtrack to 'Amadeus,' reveling in the splendor and genius of Mozart (Sept 21)



The Cleveland Orchestra is performing the score to "Amadeus" live Sept. 21-24, 2023, at Severance Music Center.

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By Peter Feher

CLEVELAND, Ohio -- The classical season at Severance Music Center got off to a shocking start on Thursday, Sept. 2, with the Cleveland Orchestra's live performance of the score to *Amadeus*. In the first half of the evening alone, there was cursing, flatulence, some hanky-panky, an attempted suicide, and much talk of murder — and all because of one 18th-century composer.

The brilliant 1984 film directed by Miloš Forman was adapted from Peter Shaffer's 1979 play of the same name — Shaffer also wrote the screenplay. Yet nothing about Mozart's character as portrayed in *Amadeus* should really scandalize contemporary audiences. The myths and misconceptions around the life and work of Wolfgang Amadé Mozart — he preferred Amadé over Amadeus — would sooner upset a historian than outrage the average 21st-century concertgoer.

The true surprise of the evening was that the Cleveland Orchestra managed to generate so much interest in Mozart while playing so little of his music. The movie packs in the composer's pieces where it can, either as underscoring, or as context for the story, and clips from *Don Giovanni*, the aria *Martern aller Arten*, and the *Requiem* (especially the opening phrases of the *Lacrimosa*) recur like Leitmotifs. To get the full Mozart experience, fans will have to wait until May 2024, when the Orchestra ends its season with a staged production of *The Magic Flute*.

*Amadeus* live in concert takes a little over three hours, and that's the shorter theatrical cut of the film. The movie's plot centers on the historically based, but greatly exaggerated rivalry between Mozart and the Viennese court composer Antonio Salieri. Just don't take that too seriously — Tom Hulce's beguilingly mischievous Mozart doesn't.

As a Guardian reviewer [wrote](#), *Amadeus* is "a slightly hallucinatory interpretation of late 18th-century Austro-Hungarian splendour, complete with vertigo-inducing wigs, flaming candelabras and heaving bosoms," and F Murray Abraham's portrayal of Salieri at different stages in his life is "a brilliant, humanistic portrait of jealousy, guilt and, in the end, a kind of redemption."

Conductor Richard Kaufman skillfully met the challenge of coordinating singers on film with the live Cleveland Orchestra — a situation much like working with live singers. The Cleveland Orchestra Chorus handsomely fleshed out the opera scenes in the film. Although timid on a couple of entrances, the excerpts from the *Requiem* really gave them a chance to shine.

Scenes where the music is dissected on screen (like the writing of the *Confutatis*, or Salieri's explanation of Mozart's scoring tradeoff of oboe and clarinet) provide insights into composition and orchestration. Jump-cuts between Mozart's works and overlapping

pieces (the Magic Flute Overture superimposed on the Requiem) are fun and bridge the gap between onscreen and live music.

Although it's a made-up story, it's one that provides a wonderful and fun introduction to the music of a composer who possessed the "voice of god," as Salieri says several times in referring to Mozart and visits a special period in the life of Vienna, "the city of musicians," as both Mozart and Salieri say.

Performances continue at 7: 30 p.m. Friday, Sept. 22, 8 p.m. Saturday, Sept. 23, and 2 p.m. Sunday, Sept. 24. Tickets are available at [clevelandorchestra.com](http://clevelandorchestra.com).

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