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Salieri had made a deal with God to serve him in return for his talents and grew on to become a legend in Vienna, the city of music, where at the time the music scene was dominated by Italians and everyone important knew each other. The former child prodigy, Mozart resigns his position as Konzertmeister in Salzburg and journeys to the Austrian capital.

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This starts a bitter and jealous feud with Salieri who sees his deal with God broken and does not stop at anything to upstage Mozart, who begins his long descent into madness. Mozart, too, despite often relying on Salieri for advice, isn't too coy on him, describing his music as that of "someone who can't get it up". This according to him is why Salieri had not courted his star pupil Katherina (Fleur de Bray).

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The whole play is epic. The music from the Southbank Sinfonia lead by Ruth Elder sets the scene for a dramatic fast-moving plot. The music is emphatic, eerie and everything in between. The singing lead by various cast members is on point all night long and helps propel the plot forward. The stage - with a great, big, moving platform and evocative visual decorations do much the same.

The acting is also superb. Msamati and Gillen do a stunning job portraying two men as they descend into madness, Msamati like his portrayal of Iago in RSC's Othello is conniving whilst Gillen is eccentric, creating an interesting dynamic between the two characters. Gillen provides much of the humour, with juvenile remarks but also on more than one occasion is reduced to a sobbing mess.

Mozart's long-suffering wife, Constanze (Adelle Leonce) shows a woman losing a battle to save a husband whose downward spiral she cannot sport. All the characters are pawns in Salieri's attempts to destroy Mozart and this is shown through an intricate plot delving into the minds of both men.

Count Von Strack (Alexandra Mathie), Count Orsini-Rosenborg (Hugh Sachs) and Baron Van Swieten (Christopher Goodwin) are much aggrieved in their attempts to satisfy the needs of Emperor Joseph II (Matthew Spencer) whilst also attempting to not allow Salieri and Mozart to make a mockery of Vienna's music scene. Whilst, the Venticelli (Sarah Amankwah and Ekow Quartey) provide explanations amongst Salieri's narration and amusingly correct their master's inaccurate reports and boasts.

The play does very little wrong. It is full of colour, with dance scenes from operas from both composers, humour that is both high-brow and slapstick and shows an interesting snapshot into the lives of two men. The courts of Vienna, the ordinary German population of the city and the mysterious Freemason society are all explored.

Salieri's desperate attempts to return to fame and impress the Vienna establishment come to a close in dramatic circumstances that lead the audience to reflect on the perils of going mad with jealousy but also entertained and amused. *Amadeus* is most definitely a must-see play.

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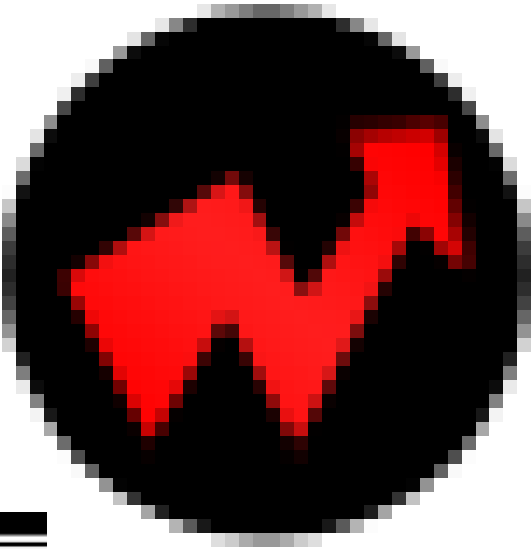
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