

Movies

Was Wolfie Mozart really just a geek?

By SHAWN BEHLEN
Staff Reviewer

"Amadeus" is a beautiful film with one major flaw.

For those of you who don't know yet, this is the film version of the hit Broadway play of the same name and probably the most eagerly anticipated film this season. It shows us the life and times of Wolfgang Amadeus Mozart with all the pomp and intrigue possible.

The film starts with the attempted suicide of Antonio Salieri and his call, "Forgive me, Mozart! Forgive your assassin!" Throughout the next night, Salieri tells a priest his life story. It turns out to be Mozart's story as well.

Back in 1781, Salieri is the most famous musician in Vienna. He is Court Composer to Emperor Joseph II and has only one desire: to serve God through his music. As a young boy, he had offered his chastity, industry and deepest humility to God in return for musical excellence as a composer and immortal fame. He has worked his way up from a small Italian town to reach his present position and thinks his deal with God has been accepted.

Then Mozart enters the musical arena and Salieri's life

changes dramatically. Salieri watches with bulging eyes as he realizes that Mozart is the truly gifted one, the one "blessed by God," and that Mozart is also "a sniggering, unattractive little show-off."

As Mozart displays endless talent, which surpasses any gift

of Salieri's, Salieri takes on a fight with God. Since God has chosen Mozart to favor, Salieri turns his back on such a vicious God and vows to destroy Mozart, His divine musical creation. The fight is a brutal one in which Salieri gives up all else to ensure his victory and Mo-

zart's end.

That fight is the integral part of this film and Salieri is the major character. Both are dramatic, intriguing and worth more than two hours of your time. That leaves the third major part of this film to be the flaw: Mozart himself.

As portrayed in this film, the man is, in simplest terms, a jerk. I might believe all the dirty talk, the innuendos, the names (his wife calls him "Wolfie"), the endless games, even the laugh (although that giggle is pushing it after about an hour and a half), but I cannot believe that his music had no personal effect on him whatsoever.

Whenever Mozart's music is revered or recognized for its greatness in this film, it is done by Salieri. In "Amadeus," Mozart cares about his music only because it brings in the money. I like to believe that someone truly blessed with talent would at least approach that portion of his life with maturity and realization.

I have read all the reports and interviews in which the makers of this film say this is not meant to be factual but "a fantasia based on fact." Between the play and the film, however, this one became more fantasy than fact (for all of you who loved the play, a warning: there are some major changes here, including the ending) and Mozart's character caught the brunt of the changes.

Even though I liked the film, I found myself agreeing with Salieri — I wanted Mozart out of my life too.



Musical genius

Tom Hulce ("Animal House") stars in "Amadeus" as the brilliant composer and musician Mozart, who was known for writing his music in a first draft with no corrections.

'Country' is a contemporary masterpiece

By SHAWN BEHLEN
Staff Reviewer

With its passionate, eloquent look at the foundations of Americanism, "Country" is a film that must be dealt with at all levels. It is many things — poignant, loving and sad to name just a few — but most of all, it is real.

The Ivy family consist of father Gil, mother Jewel, a son, two daughters and a grandpa. It is a farming family; the land has been in Jewel's family for more than a hundred years.

And it is a loving family. Gil and Jewel work the farm as a team with full partnership and there is true passion between the two. The oldest daughter goes out of her way to get on her brother's nerves, but she obviously loves him to the point of worship. Grandpa can be cranky, but as Jewel's anchor to the past, he is a vital part of the family. Everyone takes care of the baby.

Their lives, though full of hard times, are happy. Their days are simple, but full of common, everyday experiences that bond them together. When the daughter

finds a condom in her brother's room and brings it to her parent's attention, they approach the confrontation with hidden smiles, suppressed laughs and understanding looks. These are real people here, not movie caricatures.

The past couple of years have not been the easiest for the Ivys as far as their corn crop is concerned. Several years ago, they took out a forty-year loan from FmHA for farm improvements and now they are falling behind on payments, due to horrible crop prices. It is costing four cents more to produce each bushel than that same bushel will bring at market.

When Gil takes in his latest crop, he discovers that his paycheck must now be signed by FmHA because of what that governmental body terms "mismanagement." Gil and Jewel, with bookkeeping records in hand, visit the office and learn the worst. FmHA wants the money and, as the Ivys learn later in the mail, they want it now. The Ivys have 30 days, not 37 years, to come up with \$900,000.

After coming up with no solutions, Gil resorts to drinking and hires an auctioneer to begin the process of selling the farm and the equipment. He has become a failure. "You know, I wish you had never set foot on my farm," Jewel's father tells him. The bottle becomes Gil's haven and eventually he pushes Jewel too far.

He comes home after drinking one day and confronts his son, who tells Gil that he is nothing but a drunk. They argue and break into a fist fight, until Jewel breaks them up. She does so by bashing Gil with a two-by-four and telling him to get off the farm. "We don't need you anymore," she says and the family is split.

With fierce conviction, Jewel then takes on the fight herself. She approaches other farmers in the same situation and comes up with an alliance of sorts. There is nothing so forceful as a woman with a mission. When the FmHA comes to sell the equipment, the farmers take the situation into their own hands and finally make a stand.

This film is set in 1983 and shows us basically one family's view of the effects of governmental grain embargoes and FmHA policies. The Ivys assets were valued at \$450,000 in 1980 when grain prices were high and their FmHA loan was given out on that valuation. After the embargo, however, prices dropped and farmers had no other market to turn to. There was no way farmers could pay off their loans. FmHA then started foreclosing on all deficient loans in order to cut their losses as quickly as possible. This put hundreds of small farmers out of business until last year when federal courts proclaimed that small farmers must be allowed due process and the federal government, under intense pressure, stopped FmHA foreclosure activities.

Although this film is based on a very political subject (many have written that Reaganites will not be pleased), "Country" doesn't come off heavy-handed or preachy. Instead, this is truly the Ivy's story — we just learn a lot through their eyes.

The greatest asset this film

has is Jessica Lange. She is not only the star, but also the co-producer and she reportedly fought for years to get this story filmed. Her performance is brilliant. She has topped the job she did in "Frances" two years ago and I, for one, didn't think that was possible.

This is a characterization with true compassion. Lange is Jewel Ivy in this film — gone is the glamour. On screen, Lange is a driven, ambitious and practical farming wife who simply loves her family and her land more than anything else in her life.

Excellent performances also are given by Sam Shepard ("The Right Stuff") as Gil and Levi Knebel as the son. Both bring a strong sense of realism to their roles and should, along with Lange, be recognized at Oscar time. If any of these three are not at least nominated, I will be surprised and disappointed.

Together, they make "Country" an important and moving film. It touches on aspects of politics, family, farming and love. It should not be missed.