Amadeus Essay, Research Paper

At the age of the Enlightenment, Antonio Salieri becomes the most triumphant musician in the city of Vienna, however, without any warning his harmonious universe comes to an utter halt. Salieri s absolute faith in the world, in himself, and in God is all at once diminished by this spontaneous child composer. When the two opposite ends meet, there emerges a fury, a rage, and a passion in Salieri to sabotage the boy that has secured Salieri s deserved God given talent; to destroy the one pubescent child that has made him so mute and naked now in a world of discordance. Salieri s entire reputation and boyhood prayer to attain fame thus rests on his ability to annihilate that child prodigy, Wolfgang Amadeus Mozart.In analyzing the two composers, Salieri and Mozart, there is a distinct line that clearly divides them. Salieri s operas receive astounding receptions, making them the talk of the city, shaking the roofs, buzzing the cafes, and even the name Salieri sounds throughout all of Europe (2,3). The reason for Salieri s success, as well as many musicians of the eighteenth century, is because they have become enslaved by the well-to-do and hence are no better than servants (1,3). This applies especially to the king. For example, in Amadeus, His Majesty forbid any ballet in his operas. Imperial commands such as this are not to be interpreted in any way, in other words, they are to be merely obeyed without any dispute. Since operas tend to the needs of the high society in order to obtain recognition, the operas must communicate through the language of the nobility, that is, Italian. In addition, since the majority of the audience is made up of the upper class, the subject matter of the operas must consist of elevated themes. Such as, mythological heroes, kings, and queens, and so forth. According to the eighteenth century view, operas are supposed to be a sublime and an aggrandizing art. The elevated subject matter is then chosen in order to venerate and honor the nobility. It s purpose is to celebrate the eternal in man says Van Swieten (2,4). Meaning that there is an element in a noble person that lasts without any end, like God who is immortal. God represents the everlasting and the eternality of existence, thus God gives inspiration to operas that animate the indestructible in people.In writing these elevated operas, Salieri spends a tremendous amount of time to perfect them. He thus rationally and intelligently composes the operas in a meditative way. Salieri works on his operas continually with many rewrites, drafts, and edits. Calling up to God, You know how hard I ve worked! (1,12) Salieri indicates his agony. This exemplifies the colossal dedication Salieri devotes in practicing this art. On the other hand, Mozart s operas do not appeal to audiences during the age of Enlightenment. Instead, Mozart s musicals exert offense, especially to that of the nobility, and in turn his operas are failures during this age. For example, Mozart s score of figaro includes a ballet, that was expressly forbidden by the king. However, instead of immediately apologizing and excluding it from his opera, Mozart attempts to go around the decree. He explains that it is not an insertion of ballet, but rather it is a dance and the king does not disallow dancing when it is a portion of the story. Mozart continues opposing the Age of Enlightenment and the commands of the high society by abandoning them through language and themes of his operas. Despite the fact that the nobility will be upset, Mozart aspires to do pieces about real people set in a real place and in the real language of the people (2,4). He explains to Van Swieten that he wants his operas in German in order to communicate with the majority about the most exciting thing on earth, that is, reality. He believes that art should be sensual and creatural and passionate because that is the human condition. Such as love. Love is not permanent but it is fleeting and brief. Mozart does not want to compose operas about legends, and immortal beings because the eternal is unknown to man. Instead, he wants to recognize the true nature, the temporal nature that all human beings share. Thus, celebrating the ephemeral and the transitory that is universal in his operas, which the eighteenth century find difficult to appreciate. Also, Mozart s ideas about putting on this kind of play is considered nonsense to the eighteenth century composers, but he certainly speaks from his heart. He admits that his intellect may seem stupid at times but says that his heart is wise. Thus, his inspiration does not come from God, but rather from the wisdom that lies in his emotions.Mozart spends not nearly as much time as Salieri does in writing operas, instead Mozart promptly completes them one after another. Not more than two weeks since Mozart has started an opera, and yet he has already finished the first act. Thus, unlike Salieri who takes a awhile to edit and rewrite his musicals, Mozart simply and extraordinarily transcribes operas out of his head.Despite the fact that Mozart s Romantic views are rejected by the nobility, his reputation as a superb composer is well known throughout Vienna. In the start of the play, Salieri has never met Mozart personally but has heard about Mozart s reputation as a great composer. Salieri first learns who Mozart is at the Library of the Baroness, where Mozart and his love, Constanze, are secretly playing a game of cat and mouse. He discovers that this child, so silly and rude, is actually Mozart. Salieri, who has worked all of his life to become the Court Composer, is worried about his ego and reputation being threatened because of this youngster. This seems almost incomprehensible to Salieri, and so he enters into a brief state of denial. Salieri is affected piercingly by listening to Mozart s music. While hearing Mozart s piece, Salieri finds such beauty in it that he experiences pain, pain as I had never known it, (1,5) exclaims Salieri and yet he still denies that Mozart s music is genius. Instead, Salieri accuses Mozart that his music is probably composed fortuitously. Salieri soon learns that Mozart not only composes exquisite music, but also that he has a remarkable memory. For example, Mozart needs only to hear Salieri s march once in order to play it exactly note for note. Not only does Mozart repeat the piece, but he is so full of himself that he corrects some faults in the march and improvises happily pretending to have caused no offense. Additionally, Salieri does not completely acknowledge Mozart s genius until Constanze brings him Mozart s manuscripts. Salieri fears the absolute dimensions of Mozart s genius and does not dare open them up. But when he finally does, not only does Salieri notice the harmony of the perfect form and it s absolute beauty, but he also discovers that Mozart miraculously copies operas directly from his mind and onto the page. The manuscripts in his hands are the actual and the completed first drafts of Mozart s operas. Salieri then feels much appreciation for Mozart s music but at the same time there grows a jealousy and hatred towards Mozart s precocious talent.Salieri s growing jealousy of Mozart can also be seen in both of their personal lives. Salieri is in love with one of his students, Katherina Cavalieri, I had kept my hands off Katherina. Yes! But I could not bear to think of anyone else s upon her… (1,6). Thus, remaining entirely faithful to his wife. On the other hand, Mozart is a complete womanizer, who has not led a chaste life. To increase Salieri s jealousy even more, Mozart, unknowing of Salieri s love for Katherina, does not keep away from her. The growing jealousy and animosity toward Mozart however is not aimed directly towards Mozart, rather it is towards the being that gave Mozart such talent, God. Salieri throughout his entire life wants nothing more from God than to be a famous composer and in return Salieri would devote his chastity and virtue to Him. Salieri is sent to Vienna at the age of sixteen and his studying is paid for by a family friend. Salieri then is favored by the Emperor and becomes Court Composer. His pieces are respected throughout all of Europe, and Salieri becomes the most famous composer in the city of Vienna. He then spends his life fulfilling his end of the bargain by living a chaste life, I was very much in love with Katherina…but because my vow to God I was entirely faithful to my wife, (1,3) and being virtuous to God. Everything that has happened seems to have gone as planned, meaning that the trade between Salieri and God clearly has been accepted in Salieri s eyes. This gives Salieri a sense of purpose and harmony in the world. He finally concludes that God has conducted the world designedly and orderly. However, an unanticipated glitch occurs in Salieri s harmonious universe when Mozart appears in Vienna. Mozart s unmistakable genius raises the most profound questions in Salieri s mind. Why would God give such precocious talent to this womanizing, childish, boy and not Salieri who has made a deal with God? What is at stake now is Salieri s very faith in the harmony in the world and reality. I ran home and buried my fear in my work … (kneeling desperately) Let your voice enter me! Since Salieri s entire life is devoted to God, in return that God grant him fame as a composer, he anticipated nothing more but to be the greatest composer. In other words, he did not anticipate another composer to have a greater talent and quite possibly, more fame than himself. Suddenly, the awareness of his own mediocrity emerges. He realizes that all the hard work and time he has spent to complete his operas are in the end not very good at all, his sense of his own accomplishment is destroyed. Mozart s mere presence finally causes Salieri s faith in everything that he has known: his faith in himself, the universe and in God, to be emptied, Now for the first time I feel my emptiness as Adam felt his nakedness, (1,12). Salieri believes his music is finally inadequate and that God has found His voice within Mozart. The talent that Mozart clearly exemplifies leaves Salieri to conclude that God has ultimately betrayed him. God s need is thus fulfilled within Mozart and no longer in Salieri. The pain of God s betrayal, the jealousy of Mozart s genius, and the awareness of the mediocrity of his own works leads Salieri to go against God, thus, against the Age of Reason. Salieri now believes that God is careless because of his random universe, and uncoordinated world, …He cares nothing for whom He uses…, (2,16). Salieri believes that God is no longer benevolent, but chaotic because He let Salieri s faith be destroyed. Hence, he no longer submits to God as he did previously. Salieri thus begins to succumb to his passions and becomes romantic in his criticism against God.Salieri s pact with God is then distinguished as he no longer lives a pure life that is solely devoted to Him. Salieri suddenly becomes a womanizer himself. Salieri tries to woe Constanze but his attempts fail. He becomes so desperate that he even blackmails her. In addition, he also acquires a mistress for many years behind his wife s back. The mistress becomes the twenty one year old student, which he previously has vowed to keep his hands off of, Katherina. In addition to no longer living a chaste life, Salieri also surrounds himself with splendor. The successful lived with gold, and so would I!… (2,4). He no longer settled for plain things, he grew shining, giving parties, and worshipped refinement instead of God. The ultimate act that Salieri performs exemplifies the animosity he has towards God. My quarrel now wasn t with Mozart, it was through him! Through hum to God, who loved him so, (2,1). Salieri s last performance, to finally destroy his pact with God, is to destroy God s beloved voice, Mozart. Salieri first plots to obliterate Mozart s career. He gives deceiving advice to Mozart to put in the private issues of his patron in his opera. Mozart is then left without any students. No positions to tutor the nobility is apparent and Mozart has previously lost his wife because of his constant illusion of his father. The only thing that he has left is his health and part of his sanity. But this is also to be demolished. The wickedest thing that Salieri does is dress up like in Don Giovanni and he would stop right underneath Mozart s window. Mozart thinks that it is his father telling him to write his Death mass. This is a character of guilt that constantly haunts Mozart. Salieri then poisons Mozart as Mozart has poisoned him. In Salieri s contempt for God, he says to the dying Mozart that He has no use for Mozart any longer, that all Mozart can do now is to die. And so he does. Although Mozart does suffer loss, the loss of his life and career, and is somewhat responsible for his downfall, he does not evoke sympathy or recognition. However, it is Salieri who contains all four elements of a tragic hero. Salieri loses practically everything he has faith in before Mozart appears. He suffers from the loss of dignity, esteem, and honor. Salieri also recognizes something he has never felt before, that is the pain as I had never know it, (1,5), the pain from the beauty and delight of Mozart s music. Thus, recognizing the limitations of his own talent, the mediocrity of his talent compared to the genius works of Mozart. He grows an awareness of disharmony in the universe that he has never encountered. Salieri clearly is culpable of his own tragedy. He is the Court Composer, his works are respected throughout Europe, and because he is not stupid, he does not say he is the better composer. Instead, he is the minority who actually appreciates Mozart s music. There is definitely sympathy for Salieri, in that all human beings can work as hard as they want to at something and can still fail miserably.