

ANTONIO SALIERI

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Antonio Salieri was born in Legnago, south of Verona, on 18 August 1750 and he lived most of his adult life and career being loyal to the Habsburg monarchy.

Sadly, he seems only to be remembered for the absurd nonsense that he poisoned Mozart.

In the last year of his life, Salieri suffered a form of dementia and said things which he did not mean and which have been wrongly interpreted. But this appalling injustice has served to diminish both him and his music. The other problem is that he is almost exclusively an opera composer.

The truth about Salieri and Mozart is that Salieri was a far better composer than Mozart and was an excellent conductor and highly admired teacher. Whenever a prodigious music position came up and both composers applied, Salieri won and Mozart and his father, Leopold, were jealous and criticised Salieri with venomous and untrue attacks upon both him and his music. In saying this, we are not speaking against Mozart's music, for, indeed, some works are of very high quality.

Salieri was a very important person figure in the development of late 18th-century opera. He was a student of Florian Leopold Gassmann and a protégé of Gluck and developed into a cosmopolitan composer so very versatile and educated that he wrote operas in three languages. His music was a powerful influence on contemporary composers.

He was unanimously chosen to be the director of the Italian opera by the Habsburg court, where he was from 1774 to 1792. He dominated Italian language opera in Vienna and was universally admired and far more so than Mozart or anybody else. He also spent time writing works for opera houses in Venice, Rome, and Paris where he was also held in the highest esteem, much to the annoyance of Mozart and his father. Salieri's compositions were widely performed throughout Europe during his lifetime more so than Mozart or anyone else. He was the Austrian imperial Kapellmeister from 1788 to 1824, responsible for music at the court chapel and its school. When his works had less and less performances (he wrote no new operas after 1804) he was the most sought-after teacher of his time. Franz Schubert, Ludwig van Beethoven and Franz Liszt were among the most famous of his pupils.

Despite the excellent tutelage, Schubert was an inadequate and lazy student and his music is very poor compared with Beethoven and Liszt. All of Schubert's stage works were disastrous flops.



Salieri's music sank into oblivion between 1800 and 1868, and was rarely heard thereafter but in the 20th century interest began to be shown in his work due to the dramatic and highly fictionalized depiction of Salieri in Peter Shaffer's 1979 play *Amadeus*, which was made as a film in 1984 directed by Miloš Forman. His music has regained some popularity due to some recordings.

Salieri was first taught at home by his older brother, Francesco Salieri, who had lessons from the violinist and composer Giuseppe Tartini. Antonio received further lessons from the organist of the Legnago Cathedral, Giuseppe Simoni, a pupil of Padre Giovanni Battista Martini.

As a child, Salieri had a passion for sugar, reading and music. He ran away from home twice to hear his elder brother play violin concertos in nearby churches. He was once disciplined by his father for failing to respect a local priest. Salieri responded by complaining that the priest's organ playing was in a theatrical style.

Sometime between 1763 and 1764, Salieri suffered the death of both parents and was briefly cared for by a monk in Padua, and in 1765 or 1766 he became the ward of a Venetian nobleman named Giovanni Mocenigo a member of the powerful and well connected Mocenigo family.

While living in Venice, Salieri continued his musical studies with the organist and opera composer Giovanni Battista Pescetti, but Pescetti's sudden death led to Salieri studying with the opera singer Ferdinando Pacini and enabled Salieri to obtain the attention of the composer Florian Leopold Gassmann, who, impressed with his exceptional talents, took the young orphan to Vienna where he personally directed and paid for the remainder of his musical education.

Salieri and Gassmann arrived in Vienna on 15 June 1766. Gassmann's first act was to take Salieri to the Italian Church to consecrate his teaching and service to God, an event that left a deep impression on Salieri for the rest of his life. Salieri's education included instruction in Latin and Italian poetry by Fr. Don Pietro Tommasi and instruction in the German language, and European literature. His music studies revolved around vocal composition, and thoroughbass. His musical theory training in harmony and counterpoint was rooted in Johann Fux's *Gradus ad Parnassum*, which Salieri translated during each Latin lesson. As a result, Salieri continued to live with Gassmann even after Gassmann's marriage, an arrangement that lasted until the year of Gassmann's death and Salieri's own marriage in 1774.

Few of Salieri's compositions have survived from this early period. In his old age Salieri hinted that these works were either purposely destroyed, or had been lost with the exception of a few works for the church. Among these sacred works there survives a Mass in C major written without a "Gloria" and in the antique a cappella style and dated 2 August 1767. A complete opera composed in 1769. *La vestale* (The Vestal Virgin) has been lost.

Beginning in 1766, Gassmann introduced Salieri to the daily chamber music performances held during Emperor Joseph II's evening meal. Salieri quickly impressed the Emperor, and Gassmann was instructed to bring his pupil as often as he wished. This was the beginning of a relationship between monarch and musician that would last until Joseph's death in 1790.

Salieri met Pietro Antonio Domenico Trapassi, better known as Metastasio, and Christoph Willibald Gluck during this period at Sunday morning salons held at the home of the Martinez family. Here Metastasio participated in the weekly gatherings. Over the next several years Metastasio gave Salieri informal instruction in Italian poetry, and Gluck became an informal advisor, friend and confidante. It was toward the end of this extended period of study that Gassmann was called away on a new opera commission and a consequence gap in the theatre's program allowed for Salieri to make his debut as a composer of a completely original opera buffa. Salieri's first full opera was composed during the winter of 1770; *Le donne letterate* and was based on Molière's *Les Femmes Savantes* (The Learned Ladies) with a libretto by Giovanni Gastone Boccherini, a dancer in the court ballet and a brother of

the famous composer Luigi Boccherini. The modest success of this opera would launch Salieri's 34 year operatic career as a composer of over 35 original dramas.

Following the modest success of *Le donne letterate*, Salieri received new commissions writing two additional operas in 1770 both with libretti by Boccherini. The first is a pastoral opera, *L'amore innocente* (Innocent Love) which was a light hearted comedy set in the Austrian mountains, and the second was based on an episode from Cervantes *Don Quixote* – *Don Chisciotte alle nozze di Gamace* (*Don Quixote at the Marriage of Camacho*). In these first works, drawn mostly from the traditions of mid-century opera buffa, Salieri showed a penchant for experimentation and for mixing the established characteristics of specific operatic genres. *Don Chisciotte* was a mix of ballet and opera buffa, and the lead female roles in *L'amore innocente* were designed to contrast and highlight the different traditions of operatic writing for soprano, even borrowing stylistic flourishes from opera-seria in the use of coloratura in what was a short pastoral comedy more in keeping with a Roman *Intermezzo*. The mixing and pushing against the boundaries of established operatic genres would be a continuing hallmark of Salieri's own personal style, and in his choice of material for the plot he manifested a lifelong interest in subjects drawn from classic drama and literature.

Salieri's first great success was in the realm of serious opera. Commissioned for an unknown occasion, Salieri's *Armida* was based on Torquato Tasso's epic poem *La Gerusalemme liberata* (*Jerusalem Delivered*) and premiered on 2 June 1771. *Armida* is a tale of love and duty in conflict and is saturated in magic. The opera is set during the First Crusade and it features a dramatic mix of ballet, arias, ensemble and choral writing combining theatricality, scenic splendor and high emotionalism. The work clearly followed in Gluck's footsteps and embraced his reform of serious opera which had begun with *Orfeo ed Euridice* and *Alceste*. The libretto to *Armida* was by Marco Coltellini, the house poet for the imperial theatres. While Salieri followed the precepts set forth by Gluck and his librettist Ranieri de Calzabigi in the preface to *Alceste*, Salieri also drew on some musical ideas from the more traditional opera-seria and even opera buffa, creating a new synthesis in the process. *Armida* was translated into German and widely performed, especially in the northern German states, where it helped to establish Salieri's reputation as both an important and innovative modern composer. It would also be the first opera to receive a serious preparation in a piano and vocal reduction by Carl Friedrich Cramer in 1783.

Armida was soon followed by Salieri's first truly popular success; a *commedia per musica* in the style of Carlo Goldoni, *La fiera di Venezia* (*The Fair of Venice*). *La fiera* was written in 1772 and premiered on 29 January. Here Salieri returned to his collaboration with the young Boccherini who crafted an original plot. *La fiera* would feature characters singing in three languages, a bustling portrayal of the Ascension-tide Fair and Carnival in Venice, and large and lengthy ensembles and choruses. It also included an innovative scene that would combine a series of on stage dances with singing from both solo protagonists and the chorus, a pattern to be imitated by later composers, most famously and successfully by Wolfgang Amadeus Mozart in *Don Giovanni*. Salieri was original and an innovator when Mozart was a copier. Salieri would also write several bravura arias for a soprano playing the part of a middle class character that would combine coloratura and concertante woodwind solos, another innovation for a comic opera that was to be widely imitated.

Salieri's next two operas were not lasting successes. Of the two, only *La secchia rapita* (*The Stolen Bucket*), deserves mention. A parody of Metastasian opera-seria. it featured dazzling parodies of the high flown and emotive arias found in that genre, as well as bold and innovative orchestrations, including the first known use of three timpani. Again a classic of Renaissance literature was the basis of the libretto by Boccherini, in this case a comic mock-epic by Tassoni, in which a war between Modena and Bologna ensues over a stolen bucket. This uneven work was followed by another popular comedic success *La locandiera* (*Mine Hostess*), which was an adaptation of the classic and popular spoken stage comedy, *La locandiera* by Carlo Goldoni, the libretto was prepared by Domenico Poggi.

The majority of Salieri's modest number of instrumental works also date from about this time. Salieri's instrumental works have been judged by various critics and scholars to lack the inspiration and innovation found in his writing for the stage. These orchestral works are mainly in the galant style, and although they show some development toward the late classical, it is said that they reflect a general weakness in comparison to his operatic works of the same and later periods. These works were written for mostly unknown occasions and artists. They include two concertos for pianoforte, one in C major and one in B flat major (both 1773); a concerto for organ in C Major in two movements, also of 1773; two concertante works, a concerto for oboe, violin and cello in D major (1770), and a flute and oboe concerto in C major (1774). These works are among the most frequently recorded of Salieri's compositions.

One of his masterpieces is the Symphony *Il giorno onomastico* of 1775 which has a sublime slow movement, years ahead of its time.

Upon Gassmann's death which was most likely due to complications from an accident with a carriage some years earlier, Salieri succeeded him as assistant director of the Italian opera in early 1774. In 1775, on the 10th October, Salieri married Therese Helferstorfer. She was the daughter of a recently deceased financier and official of the court treasury. Sacred music was not a high priority for the composer during this stage of his career, but he did compose an Alleluia for chorus and orchestra in 1774.

During the next three years, Salieri was occupied with rehearsing and conducting the Italian opera company in Vienna and teaching. His three complete operas written during this time show the development of his compositional skills, although with no great success, either commercially, or artistically. His most important compositions during this period were a symphony in D major, performed in the summer of 1776, and the oratorio *La passione di Gesù Cristo* with a text by Metastasio performed during Advent of 1776.

After the financial collapse of the Italian opera company in 1777 due to financial mis-management, Joseph II decided to end the performance of Italian opera, French spoken drama, and ballet. Instead, the two court-owned theatres would be reopened under new management, and partly subsidised by the Imperial Court, as a new National Theatre. The re-launched theatres would promote German language plays and musical productions that reflected Austrian and German values, traditions and outlook. The Italian opera buffa company was therefore replaced by a German language Singspiel troupe. For Joseph and his supports of Imperial reform united his multi-lingual and ethnic subjects under one common language; they also hoped to save a considerable amount of money in the process.

Beginning in 1778, the Emperor wished to have new works in German, composed by his own subjects and brought on the stage with his Imperial support. This in effect left Salieri's role as assistant court composer in a much reduced position. Salieri also had never truly mastered the German language, and he now felt no longer competent to continue as assistant opera director. A further blow to his career was landed when the spoken drama and musical Singspiel were placed on an equal footing. For the young composer, there would be few, if any, new compositional commissions to receive from the court. Salieri was left with few financial options and he began looking for alternative employment.

However, in 1778 Gluck turned down an offer to compose the inaugural opera for La Scala in Milan, and upon the suggestion of Joseph II and with the approval of Gluck, Salieri was offered the commission, which he gratefully accepted. Joseph II granted Salieri permission to take a year long leave of absence thus enabling him to write for La Scala and to undertake a tour of Italy. Salieri's Italian tour of 1778–80 began with the production of *Europa riconosciuta* (*Europa Recognized*) for La Scala. From Milan, Salieri included stops in Venice and Rome and finally a return to Milan. During this tour he wrote three new comic operas and he also collaborated with Giacomo Rust on one opera, *Il Talismano* (*The Talisman*). Of his Italian works one, *La scuola de' gelosi* (*The School for Jealousy*), a witty study both of amorous intrigue and emotion, would prove a popular and lasting international success.

Upon his return at an imperial behest to Vienna in 1780, he wrote one German singspiel *Der Rauchfangkehrer* (The Chimney Sweep) which premiered in 1781. Salieri's Chimney Sweep and Mozart's work for the same company in 1782, *Die Entführung aus dem Serail* (The Abduction from the Seraglio) would be the only two major successes to emerge from the German singspiel experiment, and the only Mozart's opera would survive on the stage beyond the close of the 18th century. In 1783, the Italian opera company was revived with singers partly chosen and approved by Salieri during his Italian tour. The new season would open with a slightly re-worked version of Salieri's recent success *La scuola de gelosi*. Salieri then returned to his tasks of rehearsing, composition and teaching.

However, his time at home in Vienna would be quickly brought to a close when an opportunity to write an opera for Paris arose, again through the patronage of Gluck. Salieri travelled abroad to fulfil this important commission.

The opera *Les Danaïdes* (The Danaids) is a five-act *tragédie lyrique*. The plot was based on an ancient Greek legend that had been the basis for the first play in a trilogy by Aeschylus, entitled *The Suppliants*. The original commission that reached Salieri in 1783–84 was to assist Gluck in finishing a work for Paris that had been all but completed but, in reality, Gluck had failed to notate any of the score for the new opera and gave the entire project over to his young friend. Gluck feared that the Parisian critics would denounce the opera by a young composer known mostly for comic pieces and so the opera was originally billed in the press as being a new work by Gluck with some assistance from Salieri. Shortly before the premiere of the opera, the Parisian press reported that the work was to be partly by Gluck and partly by Salieri, and, finally, after popular and critical success were won on stage, the opera was acknowledged in a letter to the public by Gluck as being wholly by the young Salieri. *Les Danaïdes* was received with great acclaim and its popularity with audiences and critics alike produced several further requests for new works for Paris audiences by Salieri. *Les Danaïdes* followed in the tradition of reform that Gluck had begun in the 1760s and that Salieri had emulated in his earlier opera *Armida*. Salieri's first French opera contained scenes of great solemnity and festivity, yet overshadowing it all was darkness and revenge. The opera depicted politically motivated murder, filial duty and love in conflict, tyrannicide and finally eternal damnation. The opera with its dark overture, lavish choral writing, many ballet scenes, and an electrifying finale depicting a glimpse of hellish torture kept the opera on the stage in Paris for over forty years. A young Hector Berlioz recorded the deep impression this work made on him in his *Mémoires*.

Upon returning to Vienna following his success in Paris, Salieri met and befriended Lorenzo Da Ponte and had his first professional encounters with Mozart. Da Ponte would write his first opera libretto for Salieri, *Il ricco d'un giorno* (A Rich Man for a Day) in 1784, but it was not a success. Salieri next turned to Giambattista Casti as a librettist and a more successful set of collaboration flowed from this pairing. In the mean time Da Ponte would begin work with Mozart on *Le nozze di Figaro* (The Marriage of Figaro). Salieri soon produced one of his greatest works with the text by Casti *La grotta di Trofonio* (The Cave of Trofonius) in 1785, the first opera buffa published in full score by Artaria. Shortly after this success Joseph II had Mozart and Salieri each contribute a one-act opera and/or singspiel for production at a banquet in 1786. Salieri collaborated with Casti to produce a parody of the relationship between poet and composer in *Prima la musica e poi le parole* (First the Music and then the Words). This short work also highlighted the typical backstage antics of two high flown sopranos. Salieri then returned to Paris for the premiere of his *tragédie lyrique* *Les Horaces* (The Horati) which was a failure.

However, the failure of this work was more than made up for with his next Parisian opera *Tarare* with a libretto by Beaumarchais. This was intended to be new synthesis of poetry and music that was an 18th-century anticipation of the ideals of Richard Wagner. He also created a sacred cantata *Le Jugement dernier* (The Last Judgement). The success of his opera *Tarare* was such that it was soon translated into Italian at Joseph II's behest by Lorenzo Da Ponte as *Axur, Re d'Ormus* (Axur, King of Hormuz) and staged at the royal wedding of Franz II in 1788.

In 1788, Salieri returned to Vienna where he remained for the rest of his life. In that year he became Kappellmeister of the Imperial Chapel upon the death of Giuseppe Bonno. As Kappellmeister he conducted the music and musical school connected with the chapel until shortly before his death, being officially retired from the post in 1824.

His Italian adaptation of *Tarare*, *Axur* would prove to be his greatest international success. *Axur* was widely produced throughout Europe and it even reached South America with the exiled royal house of Portugal in 1824. *Axur* and his other new compositions completed by 1792 would mark the height of Salieri's popularity and his influence. Just as his fame was being reached abroad, his influence in Vienna would begin to diminish with the death of Joseph II in 1790. Joseph's death deprived Salieri of his greatest patron and protector.

During this period of imperial change in Vienna and revolutionary ferment in France, Salieri composed two additional extremely innovative musical dramas to libretti by Giovanni Casti. Due, however, to their satiric and overtly liberal political inclinations, both operas were seen as unsuitable for public performance in the politically reactive cultures of Leopold II and later Francis II. This resulted in two of his most original operas being consigned to his desk drawer, namely *Cublai, gran kan de Tartari* (Kublai Grand Kahn of Tartary) a satire on the autocracy and court intrigues at the court of the Russian Czarina, Catherine the Great, and *Catilina* (Cataline) a semi-comic-semi-tragic account of the Catiline conspiracy that attempted to overthrow the Roman republic during the consulship of Cicero. These operas were composed in 1787 and 1792 respectively. Two other operas of little success were composed in 1789, and there was one great popular success *La cifra* (The Cipher).

As Salieri's political position became very insecure, he was retired as director of the Italian opera in 1792. He continued to write new operas under imperial contract until 1804, when he voluntarily withdrew from the stage. Of his late works for the stage only two works gained wide popular esteem during his life, *Palmira, regina di Persia* (Palmira, Queen of Persia) 1795 and *Cesare in Farmacusa* (Caesar on Pharmacusa), both drawing on the heroic and exotic success established with *Axur*. His late opera based on William Shakespeare's *The Merry Wives of Windsor*, *Falstaff* also known as *Le tre burle* (Falstaff, or the Three Tricks), (1799) has found a wider audience in modern times than its original reception promised. His last opera was a German language singspiel *Die Neger*, (The Negroes), a melodrama set in colonial Virginia with a text by Georg Friedrich Treitschke, who was the author of the libretto for Beethoven's *Fidelio*, performed in 1804 and was a failure.

When Salieri retired from the stage, he recognized that artistic styles had changed and he felt that he no longer had the creative capacity to adapt or the emotional desire to continue. Also as Salieri aged he moved slowly away from his more liberal political stances as he saw the enlightened reform of Joseph II's reign, and the hoped for reforms of the French revolution, replaced with more radical revolutionary ideas. As the political situation threatened and eventually overwhelmed Austria, which was repeatedly crushed by French political forces, Salieri's first and most important biographer Mosel described the emotional effect that this political, social, and cultural upheaval had on the composer. Mosel noted that these radical changes, especially the invasion and defeat of Austria, and the occupation of Vienna intertwined with the personal losses that struck Salieri in the same period led to his withdrawal from operatic work. Related to this Mosel quotes the aged composer concerning the radical changes in musical taste that were underway in the age of Beethoven, "From that period, circa 1800, I realized that musical taste was gradually changing in a manner completely contrary to that of my own times. Eccentricity and confusion of genres replaced reasoned and masterful simplicity."

As his teaching and work with the imperial chapel continued, his duties required the composition of a large number of sacred works, and in his last years it was almost exclusively in religious works and teaching that Salieri occupied himself. Among his compositions written for the chapels requirements were two complete sets of vespers, many graduals, offertories, and four orchestral masses. During this period he lost his only son in 1805 and his wife in 1807.

Salieri continued to conduct publicly, including the performance of Haydn's *The Creation*, during which Haydn collapsed, and several premiers by Beethoven including the 1st and 2nd Piano Concertos and Wellington's Victory. He also continued to help administer several charities and organize their musical events.

His remaining secular works in this late period fall into three categories.....: first, large scale cantatas and one oratorio, *Habsburg*, written on patriotic themes or in response to the international political situation, pedagogical works written to aid his students mainly for voice, and finally simple songs, rounds or canons written for home entertainment; many with original poetry by the composer. He also composed one large scale instrumental work in 1815 intended as a study in late classical orchestration namely *Twenty-Six Variations for Orchestra on a Theme called La Folia di Spagna*. The theme is folk song derived and is known as *La Folia*. This simple melodic and harmonic progression had served as an inspiration for many baroque composers, and would be used by later romantic and post-romantic composers. Salieri's setting is a brooding work in the minor key, which rarely moves far from the original melodic material and its main interest lies in the deft and varied handling of orchestral colour. *La Folia* was the most monumental set of orchestral variations before Brahms' *Variations on a Theme by Haydn*.

His teaching of budding young musicians continued, and among his pupils in composition were Ludwig van Beethoven, Antonio Casimir Cartellieri, Franz Liszt, Franz Schubert and many other luminaries of the early Romantic period. He also instructed many prominent singers throughout his long career. All but the wealthiest of his pupils received their lessons for free, a tribute to the kindness Gassmann had shown Salieri as a penniless orphan.

Salieri was committed to medical care and suffered dementia for the last year and a half of his life. He died in Vienna on 7 May 1825, and was buried in the Matzleinsdorfer Friedhof on 10 May. At his memorial service on 22 June 1825 his own *Requiem in C minor* – composed in 1804 – was performed for the first time. His remains were later transferred to the Zentralfriedhof. His monument is adorned by a poem written by Joseph Weigl, one of his pupils:

Rest in peace! Uncovered by dust
Eternity shall bloom for you.
Rest in peace! In eternal harmonies
Your spirit now is dissolved.
It expressed itself in enchanting notes,
Now it is floating to everlasting beauty.

During his time in Vienna, Salieri acquired great prestige as a composer and conductor, particularly of opera, but also of chamber and sacred music. Among the most successful of his 37 operas staged during his lifetime were *Armida* (1771), *La fiera di Venezia* (1772), *La scuola de' gelosi* (1778), *Der Rauchfangkehrer* (1781), *Les Danaïdes* (1784), which was first presented as a work of Gluck's, *La grotta di Trofonio* (1785), *Tarare* (1787) (*Tarare* was reworked and revised several times as was *Les Danaïdes*), *Axur, re d'Ormus* (1788), *La cifra* (1789), *Palmira, regina di Persia* (1795), *Il mondo alla rovescia* (1795), *Falstaff* (1799), and *Cesare in Farmacusa* (1800).

Salieri's earliest surviving sacred work is a *Mass in C major*. He would write four major orchestral masses, a requiem, and many offertories, graduals, vesper settings, and sacred cantatas and oratorios. Much of his sacred music dates from after his appointment as Hofkapellmeister in 1788.

In the 1780s while Mozart lived and worked in Vienna, he and his father Leopold wrote in their letters that several "cabals" of Italians led by Salieri were actively putting roadblocks in the way of Mozart's obtaining certain posts or staging his operas. For example, Mozart wrote in December 1781 to his father that "the only one who counts in the Emperor's eyes is Salieri". Their letters suggest that both

Mozart and his father, being Austrians who resented the special place that Italian composers had in the courts of the Austrian princes, blamed the Italians in general and Salieri in particular for all of Mozart's difficulties in establishing himself in Vienna. Mozart wrote to his father in May 1783 about Salieri and Lorenzo Da Ponte, the court poet: "You know those Italian gentlemen; they are very nice to your face! Enough, we all know about them. And if Da Ponte is in league with Salieri, I'll never get a text from him, and I would love to show here what I can really do with an Italian opera." In July 1783, Mozart wrote to his father of "a trick of Salieri's", one of several letters in which he accused Salieri of trickery. Decades after Mozart's death, a rumour began to circulate that Mozart had been poisoned by Salieri. This rumour has been attributed by some to a rivalry between the German and the Italian schools of music. Carl Maria von Weber, a relative of Mozart by marriage whom Wagner has characterized as the most German of German composers, is said to have refused to join Ludlams-Höhle, a social club of which Salieri was a member and avoided having anything to do with him. These rumours then made their way into popular culture. Albert Lortzing's *Singspiel Szenen aus Mozarts Leben* LoWV28 (1832) uses the cliché of the jealous Salieri trying to hinder Mozart's career.

The facts of the matter are that the Mozarts were arrogant and thought too highly of themselves and they were inferior to Salieri and so the Mozarts began a campaign of hatred and character assassination towards Salieri and such arrogance and bad manners have been perpetrated by other unpleasant composers notably Elgar and Britten.

Salieri's music was much more in the tradition of Gluck and Gassmann than of the Italians like Paisiello or Cimarosa. In 1772, Empress Maria Theresa commented on her preference of Italian composers over Germans like Gassmann, Salieri or Gluck. While Italian by birth, Salieri had lived in imperial Vienna for almost 60 years and was regarded by such people as the music critic Friedrich Rochlitz as a German composer.

The biographer Alexander Wheelock Thayer believes that Mozart's rivalry with Salieri could have originated with an incident in 1781 when Mozart applied to be the music teacher of Princess Elisabeth of Württemberg, and Salieri was selected instead because of his reputation as a singing teacher and being a finer musician. In the following year Mozart once again failed to be selected as the Princess's piano teacher. Salieri and his tribe will move heaven and earth to put it down", Leopold Mozart wrote to his daughter Nannerl. But at the time of the premiere of Figaro, Salieri was busy with his new French opera *Les Horaces*. In addition, when Lorenzo Da Ponte was in Prague preparing the production of Mozart's setting of his *Don Giovanni*, the poet was ordered back to Vienna for a royal wedding for which Salieri's *Axur, re d'Ormus* would be performed. Obviously, Mozart was not pleased by this.

When Salieri was appointed Kapellmeister in 1788 he revived Mozart's Figaro instead of bringing out a new opera of his own; and when he went to the coronation festivities for Leopold II in 1790 he had no fewer than three Mozart masses in his luggage.

Mozart's *Davide penitente* (1785), his Piano Concerto KV 482 (1785), the Clarinet Quintet (1789) and the 40th Symphony (1788) had been premiered on the suggestion of Salieri, who supposedly conducted a performance of it in 1791. In his last surviving letter from 14 October 1791, Mozart tells his wife that he collected Salieri and Caterina Cavalieri in his carriage and drove them both to the opera; about Salieri's attendance at his opera *The Magic Flute*, speaking enthusiastically: "He heard and saw with all his attention, and from the overture to the last choir there was not a piece that didn't elicit a 'Bravo!' or 'Bello!' out of him ..."

Salieri, along with Mozart's protégé J. N. Hummel, educated Mozart's younger son Franz Xaver Mozart, who was born the year his father died.

Within a few years of Salieri's death in 1825, Alexander Pushkin wrote his "little tragedy" Mozart and Salieri (1831) as a dramatic study of the sin of envy. Russian composer Nikolay Rimsky-Korsakov adapted Pushkin's play as an opera of the same name in 1898.

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