

# **Forman's *Amadeus* and the Role of Music in Film**

## **Narrative**

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## Abstract

The subject of this thesis is a study of the ways of using the music of Wolfgang Amadeus Mozart in Miloš Forman's motion picture *Amadeus*. In my thesis, I focus on how *Amadeus* employs pre-existing classical compositions to create a new, largely fictional narrative based on the life and music of Mozart. I argue that instead of applying pre-existing pieces as film music, *Amadeus* conceives individual scenes as well as its overall filmic structure to accommodate the music's expressive qualities and biographical associations.

I engage in a conversation with relevant existing scholarship to establish a theoretical framework for a systematic interpretation of the meaning-making roles of music in *Amadeus*. Drawing on Claudia Gorbman's concept of diegetic, non-diegetic and metadiegetic sound categories, I apply her taxonomy to *Amadeus* in order to show how not only the selection and placement of music but also its relation to the diegesis determine its impact on the narrative. I propose that in its treatment of Mozart's music, *Amadeus* reverses the traditional hierarchy of the subjugation of a musical score by the visual and verbal aspects of the film. In addition to eliciting mood, expressing emotion and enhancing action, the music provides an integral foundation for the film narrative. Moreover, by placing the music in novel contexts, *Amadeus* produces its cinematic interpretation that may be of interest to sound studies and musicology.

As opposed to Jeongwon Joe, who defends the fragmentation of music in *Amadeus* by treating it as a film score, I suggest that the film approaches Mozart's compositions both as an essential means of narration as well as the subject of the narration. Analyzing key scenes, such as the introduction of Mozart, Mozart's wedding, the manuscript presentation montage, and the composition of the *Requiem*, I aim to demonstrate that thanks to its unusually prominent role on the soundtrack, and its explicit agency within and without the inner diegesis, the music functions as a significant character as well as a narrator in the film.