

RE: MOZART Winter 2023/24

CLIPPING HIGHLIGHTS



Actors Alexander Albrecht and Alexander Moitzi of the Alpine Theater Company: «Mozart Was a Rebel»

by Marina S. Haq — 2. Januar 2024 0

The Alpine Theater Company is presenting a fresh interpretation of Mozart's story in the church in the village of St. Moritz until 18 January 2024. In this interview, the actors Alexander Albrecht and Alexander Moitzi recount their acting careers, the founding of the Alpine Theater Company and the play RE: MOZART.

QISMAT

The new and innovative Alpine Theater Company (ATC) presents a unique interpretation of the world-famous Mozart, based on Alexander Pushkin's play, Mozart's letters and targeted research that promises to reveal never-before-seen facts about the mystery of Mozart. The avant-garde, neon-colored costumes, the deliberately simple stage design, the strategic lighting and the artistic integration of music create an emotional impact which this chamber-like performance strives for. Antonio Salieri, a celebrated musician, encounters Wolfgang Amadeus Mozart, who dramatically changes his life. The deeply devout Salieri, who is overwhelmed by Mozart's musical brilliance, sees Mozart as an instrument of God and falls into a whirlwind of jealousy and self-doubt. Meanwhile, Mozart sacrifices everything to break free from aristocratic expectations. In a sophisticated game of chess, driven by envy and pride, they challenge each other until the grand finale. RE: MOZART is a modern drama and a profound exploration of freedom and duty and the transformative power of music that takes the audience on an intense emotional journey.

Mozart is portrayed by the Swiss actor Alexander Albrecht, who grew up partly in St. Moritz and gained international recognition through roles in renowned productions such as the successful Netflix series "The Queen's Gambit", the Sky series "Little Birds" and the UFA series «Kudamm 63». Albrecht is also the artistic director of RE: MOZART. The role of Salieri is portrayed by Austrian actor Alexander Moitzi, who is known for his international stage engagements at the Metropolitan Opera New York, the Vereinigten Bühnen Wien, the Staatstheater am Gärtnerplatz München and the Bregenz Festival, among others. Moitzi is also responsible for the concept and realization of the play RE: MOZART.

Qismat: Alexander Albrecht, you have been all over the world for your job. What led you back to your hometown St. Moritz?

Alexander Albrecht (A.A.): The alluring reputation of St. Moritz. I also grew up partly here and my parents still live here. The corona period was a very difficult time for us actors as we practically could not work for two years. After that, my instinct told me to go home.

What do you appreciate most about St. Moritz?

A.A.: The valley itself, the mountains and Engadin as a whole. It is a source of strength for me. There is a famous saying: when you drive your car over the Julier Pass, facing the uphill climb and then descend into Engadin, it is your home – I deeply connect with this sentiment.

You have acted on television, such as in «The Queens Gambit» but also on stage. What is the difference?

A.A.: In front of the camera, the challenge is that you have to express yourself within a very short time frame, as you are not acting chronologically but rather work on individual scenes. In addition, you have no influence over the cut. Whereas in theater, you work on a project as a group for a certain period until you stand in front of the audience, which can be considered part of the crew – as is the case with the camera on television.

Alexander Moitzi, you have worked around the world too. How has this global background influenced your acting?

Alexander Moitzi (A.M.): After completing my studies and working in Vienna, I pursued further studies in New York, where I ended up residing and working for 10 years. American drama schools differ significantly from those in German-speaking regions. The lessons I learned in the United States have greatly influenced me and I strive to pass this knowledge here in Europe, such as in RE: MOZART. Whether it is a play or an opera, it is important to convey real feelings. Our chamber-like play provides the audience a profound experience of this.

How did you come to establish the Alpine Theater Company?

A.A.: We wanted to bring something new to St. Moritz with our passion and came up with the idea of founding our own theater company. We recognized the potential and understood that in these times, it is more important than ever to touch people's hearts spiritually and emotionally.

Was there a theater scene before ATC in St. Moritz?

A.A.: There is an entertainment scene here; however, it is in Romansch, including amateur theater such as the Globe Theater at Lyceum Alpinum Zuoz, directed by Ivo Bärtsch, who works with his own students. The high-quality entertainment format provided by the Alpine Theater Company was non-existent in St. Moritz until now. We aim to introduce an urban Broadway feel, which we believe would be a great addition to St. Moritz.

ATC has brought together individuals from diverse backgrounds. Alexander Moitzi, being from Austria, how did you become a part of ATC?

A.M.: Alexander Albrecht and I have been acting together for a long time. We met in New York, where I fell in love with theater collectives. It was always clear to me that this is the kind of work I want to be involved in. Our idea developed into an international theater collective, where each department contributes creatively to construct a production together. It is an opportunity for sustained and collective growth, which, in my opinion, is the most inspiring form of work.

RE: MOZART is an innovative and unique production. What attracted you to this particular project?

A.A.: We considered the marketing aspect when choosing our first production RE: MOZART. As locals, guests and tourists who are in St. Moritz show sincere interest in classical music and art, we then reflected on how we could inspire them and foster theater culture. This led us to the choice of classical music. Additionally, Alexander Moitzi has always wanted to play Antonio Salieri.

How did you develop this play?

A.M.: Our initial idea was the play *Amadeus* by Peter Shaffer. For this, we would have needed an ensemble of 15 actors, but we could not afford it. Hence, we made a two-person play in combination with music. I started to shorten Shaffer's play to the characters of Mozart and Salieri, but quickly realized that if you remove all other components, there is nothing left of Mozart apart from the music. When I began reading his biographies and especially his letters, I discovered more about the person behind Mozart. This is when we decided to write our own version of these two characters. It was important to me to provide a nuanced portrayal of them and not, for example, Salieri as a monster. It is interesting to wonder about what would have happened if they had done great things together instead of being competitors.

But the story of RE: MOZART is fictional?

A.M.: Yes, it is. Nevertheless, we used a lot of original quotes from Mozart's letters in the play. Thus, he really was as messed up as we show, which is quite funny. This is a fact that not many people know.

Is Mozart not as sophisticated as we think?

A.A.: We have de-romanticized this idea a little. He is portrayed as someone who is sophisticated, as he is the symbol of Austria. Whereas, Mozart was a rebel, who caused intrigues at court. If he had lived today, he would have probably been a pop star. He would have belonged to the same group as child stars like Britney Spears or Macaulay Culkin. The comparison with Michael Jackson is quite accurate, as both have dark chapters with their fathers, who trimmed them.

How would you describe the musical opera scene in Austria during Mozart's time?

A.A.: The Vatican and the Italians had the musical opera scene completely in their hands. As the French revolution caused fear in the Austrian court that things would get out of hand, the court would not allow certain plays on stage or the use of certain sounds in compositions as this could awaken some emotions in people.

A.M.: During that time, the zeitgeist was characterized by strong censorship, which we incorporated in our play. The political situation was also tough. Moreover, it was difficult getting into the court. Salieri had the greatest position as a musician; however, it was not enough because he was musically so enthusiastic about Mozart. Mozart wanted to enter the court but was not allowed.

How would you describe the relationship between Mozart and Salieri? Did Salieri kill Mozart?

A.A.: This was just a myth. There was rumor that Salieri ended up in a mental institution in his old age and said in a delusional state that he had poisoned Mozart. This rumor spread all the way to Russia, where Pushkin heard about it and wrote the one-act play *Mozart and Salieri* (1832), which is the foundation for Peter Shaffer's film *Amadeus* (1979). It is not true that Salieri hated Mozart; he admired him but did not support him much. In fact, after Mozart's death, Salieri taught one of Mozart's sons to play the piano.

