

At 45 minutes, Pushkin's **Mozart and Salieri** (Almeida) is barely half the length of Carrière's *Carmen* and Churchill's *Icecream*. In a co-production between the Almeida, the Vienna Burgtheater and the Hebbel Theatre in Berlin, Manfred Karge stages it as a piece about buddy-envy performed by two women. Lore Brunner plays Salieri as a humourless classicist with a passion for music, who believes that all creation can be kept in order with a reliable metronome. He adores Mozart, but uncontrolled genius disturbs the precarious order of things, so Mozart (Tilda Swinton) has to go.

Swinton is Mozart as Cherubino, androgynous man-child and mutant fledgling, hunched over his keyboard in disbelief at the sounds that are coming out: at one point, boogie seems about to emerge. It is a clean, witty and brilliantly inventive performance, whose sweet sharpness is perfectly matched by Brunner's melancholy and pedantic accompaniment.

## Ratcliffe on Mozart Salieri

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