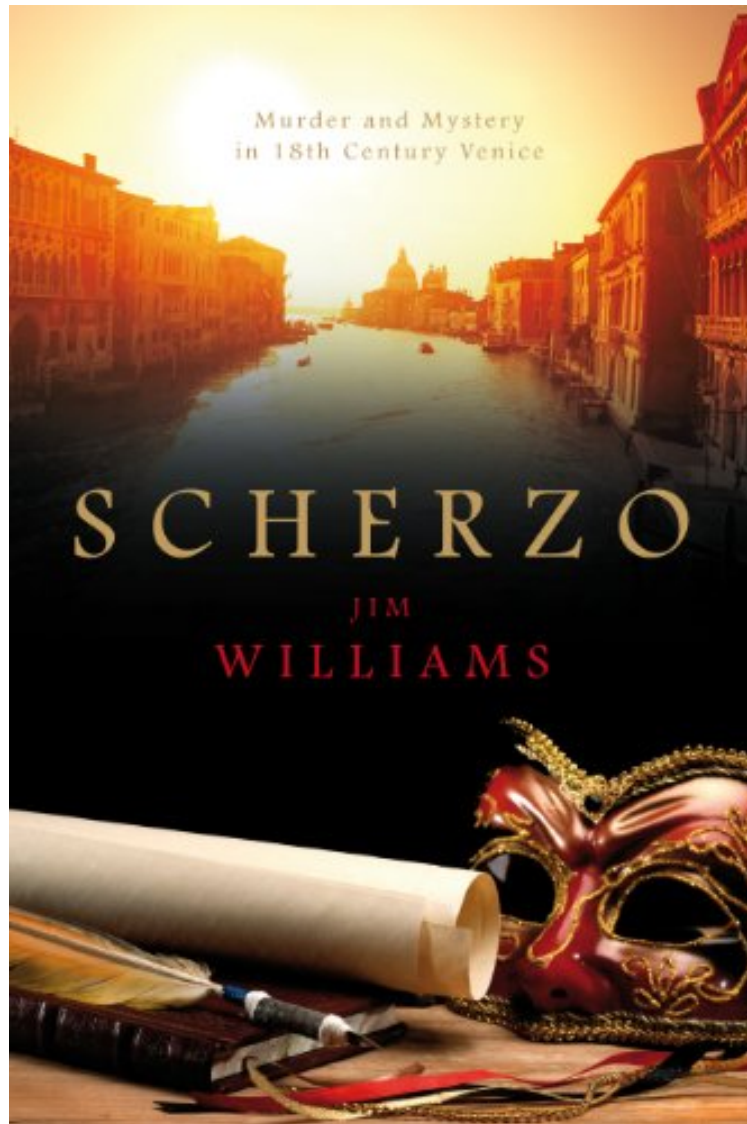


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Scherzo: Murder and Mystery in 18th Century Venice (English Edition)

Von Jim Williams

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Von Jim Williams : Scherzo: Murder and Mystery in 18th Century Venice (English Edition) before purchasing it in order to gage whether or not it would be worth my time, and all praised Scherzo: Murder and Mystery in 18th Century Venice (English Edition):

KundenrezensionenHilfreichste Kundenrezensionen0 von 0 Kunden fanden die folgende Rezension hilfreich. A tour-de-force of a mystery set in 18th century VeniceVon Helen Hancox"Scherzo" is, at first glance, a murder mystery set

in Venice in the 1700s. At first glance, maybe, but as soon as you start reading the book you discover there is so much more to it that the murder mystery becomes, at least for me, a minor side aspect to the book. The real brilliance of this book is in its characters and writing style. But first the murder. A body of a religious nobleman is discovered suspended from a bridge with some post-mortem cuts. The investigation of this crime falls to a French philosopher Monsieur Arouet and a young man, Signor Ludovico, who are the ones that find the body. They soon discover that the trail leads both to the top nobility of Venice and to the seamy underclass with confusion and side-plots all around. The villain is eventually unmasked - or is he? - and the method and motive for the murder provided - or are they? The story of the murder plot is narrated primarily by the young singer Ludovico who is an utterly brilliant character as a narrator. Rather than your traditional young handsome male who saves the day, Ludovico is a castrato opera singer of questionable talent who continually calls himself a coward, has some dubious friends and lives an even more dodgy way of life, who knows he isn't very intelligent and who is more interested in understanding his friend Monsieur Arouet than finding the murderer. Ludovico seems able to fall into multiple disasters including being imprisoned with a murderer, being mistaken for a young woman when an amorous man comes to call, finding himself continually short of money, being attacked because he is wearing borrowed clothes and more. Ludovico's lifestyle is hardly that of a hero but the way that Jim Williams has written this book made me laugh out loud so many times I couldn't help but love Ludovico. There is a great deal of bawdy humour, both from Ludovico and one of the other narrators, his friend Giacomo (Casanova) who seems to find his *raison d'être* in relieving young ladies of their virginity, and the turn of phrase and the wit in this book are just wonderful. The scene where Giacomo and Ludovico find themselves both together in a situation of mistaken identity is just wonderful! I found myself very interested in the historical accuracy of this story. Not of the murder, of course, but of the background to life in Venice, and particularly the life of a castrato who isn't one of the great singers. The Roman Catholic church doesn't come across all that well in this story: Ludovico explains why he left Rome as "the close company of priests and de-natured boys is not likely to lead to the salvation of either". Ludovico is barred from most aspects of life in the church because of his 'castrated condition' (as he calls it) and he knows that he can't receive salvation because he is a eunuch - his only way of making money and making a life is prostitution and singing. I hope that reality for the castrati of that time wasn't as serious but I have a nasty feeling it was. Jim Williams also evokes the beauty and also the rancid side of Venice with descriptions of gondola journeys, buildings, people, an art forger's studio and more. Some of Ludovico's friend Giacomo's exploits are of course historical as Giacomo is Casanova - Ludovico hints that Giacomo's memoirs which detail an escape from prison are actually a recounting of Ludovico's own story. The whole story is chock-full of humour, even to the footnotes which quote non-existent books and show that our lead characters are mis-attributing some of their quotes. There are no great heroic characters in this book - Ludovico is of course a failed castrato opera singer and pederast, Monsieur Arouet is a fraudulent philosopher, Giacomo is a hypocrite and self-deluded in his dealings with women, various other characters are forgers or magicians - but these people all have their own charm. I can't think of a book I have read recently that has caused me to laugh out loud so frequently, although poor Ludovico is the cause of much of this laughter. It's a wonderful read which I recommend to those who love historical fiction and who enjoy a joke.

Kurzbeschreibung MEET two unusual detectives. Ludovico - a young man who has had his testicles cut off for the sake of opera. And Monsieur Arouet - a fraudster, or just possibly the philosopher Voltaire. VISIT the setting. Carnival time in mid-18th century Venice, a city of winter mists, and the season of masquerade and decadence. ENCOUNTER a Venetian underworld of pimps, harlots, gamblers, forgers and charlatans. BEWARE of a mysterious coterie of aristocrats, Jesuits, Freemasons and magicians. DISCOVER a murder: that of the nobleman, Sgr Alessandro Molin, found swinging from a bridge with his innards hanging out and a message in code from his killer. Scherzo is a murder mystery of sparkling vivacity and an historical novel of stunning originality told with a wit and style highly praised by critics and nominated for the Booker Prize. de Jim Williams' Scherzo takes us to the city of gondolas and masks in its most decadent period, to an 18th-century never-never land where dates and identities blur. Castrated as a boy to preserve his soprano voice for the church, Lodovico survives by singing, whoring and his wits. With a visiting French philosopher going by the name of Arouet, Lodovico finds the stabbed and disembowelled body of his employer's rival Signor Molin hanging from a bridge. Lodovico's troubles do not end there. He is pursued by Jesuit conspirators and a jealous madman obsessed with a blue velvet suit Lodovico has borrowed from his gigolo friend Giacomo (as with Arouet, Williams makes us guess at Giacomo's true identity). As he shares in Arouet's investigation of the murder, Lodovico matches wits with the sharpest minds of his time and proves considerably more than the Watson-like narrator he at first appears. Williams has produced one of the more decorative historical thrillers of recent years and at the same time interestingly subverts the whole genre. After all, "scherzo" means "joke", and there are deep levels at which this is not a wholly serious book--"the solution to a mystery is not like the goal of a journey, and that it is the journey not the destination which enlightens us". The games intrinsic to thrillers are played with delicious frivolity. And yet, what is serious is the touching portrait of the vulnerable narrator Lodovico who

gradually acquires self-respect amid the threats and contempt of his social superiors. --Roz

Kaveney Kurzbeschreibung MEET two unusual detectives. Ludovico - a young man who has had his testicles cut off for the sake of opera. And Monsieur Arouet - a fraudster, or just possibly the philosopher Voltaire. VISIT the setting. Carnival time in mid-18th century Venice, a city of winter mists, and the season of masquerade and decadence. ENCOUNTER a Venetian underworld of pimps, harlots, gamblers, forgers and charlatans. BEWARE of a mysterious coterie of aristocrats, Jesuits, Freemasons and magicians. DISCOVER a murder: that of the nobleman, Sgr Alessandro Molin, found swinging from a bridge with his innards hanging out and a message in code from his killer. Scherzo is a murder mystery of sparkling vivacity and an historical novel of stunning originality told with a wit and style highly praised by critics and nominated for the Booker Prize.