

★ Oscar Wilde and the Dead Man's Smile

Gyles Brandreth. Touchstone, \$14 paper (384p) ISBN 978-1-4165-3485-3

Oscar Wilde once again makes a convincing detective in Brandreth's excellent third whodunit to recreate the late Victorian age (after 2008's *Oscar Wilde and a Game Called Murder*). Framed as a puzzle posed by Wilde to his friend Arthur Conan Doyle in 1890, this adventure concerns a series of mysterious deaths plaguing a French acting troupe, the Compagnie La Grange, which Wilde encounters aboard ship in 1883. The first death is of a poodle, Marie Antoinette, whose body a customs officer in Liverpool unearths in a dirt-filled trunk that Wilde believed to be full of books he was bringing home from America. Human victims follow, forcing Wilde and his Watson, real-life journalist and Wilde biographer Robert Sherard, to untangle the complicated nest of emotions at play among the members of the Compagnie La Grange. John Dickson Carr fans will be gratified to find echoes of his style in several places, including the use of false endings. (Sept.)

All My Enemies: A Brock and Kolla Mystery

Barry Maitland. Minotaur, \$13.99 paper (336p) ISBN 978-0-312-38400-5

First published in the U.K. in 1996, the engrossing third entry in Maitland's series to feature David Brock and Kathy Kolla (*Spider Trap*, etc.) is at last available in the U.S. The day before Kathy begins her new job in Scotland Yard's Serious Crime Branch, she gets a call from her superior, Chief Inspector Brock, that her detective services are needed sooner than expected. Angela Hannaford, a pleasant young woman who taught Sunday school, has been brutally stabbed to death in her parents' South London home, her face mutilated. Kathy, who becomes the head of the investigating team, traces clues to other recent murders of women who all eerily resemble one another, and soon discovers that a theater troupe may be the critical link in the Hannaford case. But as Kathy moves closer to finding the perpetrator, she also inches closer to danger. Maitland does a fine job developing complex, interesting characters within a sinister, well-paced plot. (Sept.)

Her Deadly Mischief: A Tito Amato Mystery

Beverle Graves Myers. Poisoned Pen, \$24.95 (286p) ISBN 978-1-59058-233-6

Venice's Teatro San Marco opera house forms the dramatic backdrop for the start of Myers's absorbing fifth historical to feature castrato Tito Amato (after 2008's *The Iron Tongue of Midnight*). On the opening night of Torani's *Armida*, Tito has the audience in his thrall, except for the occupants of a fourth-tier box with its scarlet curtains drawn. Keen to attract their attention, Tito projects his voice in the direction of the closed box. Suddenly, the curtains part, and he sees a masked man struggling with a woman, later identified as Zuliatta Giardino, a conniving courtesan. Pushed by her assailant, Zuliatta falls to her death into the orchestra pit. Tito and his wife, Liya, who shares a similar background to Zuliatta, take a personal interest in her case. Encouraged by Tito, Liya hesitantly returns to the Jewish ghetto of her childhood to investigate, and unexpectedly begins to reconcile with the family that once shunned her. As ever, Myers bring 18th-century Venice to vivid life. (Sept.)

While My Guitar Gently Weeps: A JP Kincaid Mystery

Deborah Grabien. Minotaur, \$24.99 (288p) ISBN 978-0-312-59096-3

In Grabien's diverting second mystery to feature witty Brit rock musician JP Kincaid (after 2008's *Rock and Roll Never Forgets*), someone bashes in the head of vocalist Vinny Fabiano with Vinny's own guitar in a San Francisco rehearsal hall. While no one's shedding a lot of tears for the loutish Vinny, who'd recently insulted Bree Godwin, JP's old lady, JP and Bree still want to know what idiot would use a guitar custom-made by luthier Bruno Baines as a murder weapon. Missing from Vinny's stash after the murder is his fabulous pearl-top Zemaitis guitar, similar to one stolen from the Rolling Stones' Ron Wood. After another murder—a blunt instrument breaks the neck of Vinny's guitar tech, Rocco Galliano—JP and mates pool their detecting skills. Readers may learn more about guitars as well as JP's ongoing battle with multiple sclerosis and Bree's cancer scare than they care to know, but JP's perky narration and his

love for Bree keep the pages turning. (Sept.)

Hound

Vincent McCaffrey. Small Beer (Consortium, dist.), \$24 (280p) ISBN 978-1-931520-59-1

McCaffrey, the owner of Boston's legendary Avenue Victor Hugo Bookshop, succeeds in conveying his love of books in his intriguing debut. Boston bibliophile Henry Sullivan, who leads a lonely life in pursuit of rare books, attracts police attention after the strangulation murder of Morgan Johnson, the widow of a renowned literary agent—and Sullivan's former lover. Not long before, Morgan retained Sullivan to appraise her late husband's book collection that she was planning to donate to Boston University. Johnson's husband's relatives, each with a financial motive to have done her in, make up the small circle of logical suspects. Meanwhile, the reappearance of an old girlfriend forces Sullivan to consider another missed opportunity at happiness. Indeed, the crime-solving remains secondary to the author's sensitive portrayal of his middle-aged protagonist's search for meaning, suggesting this novel could've worked as well as straight fiction without the whodunit plot. (Sept.)

Death and the Black Pyramid

Deryn Lake. Severn, \$28.95 (208p) ISBN 978-0-7278-6770-4

At the start of Lake's lurid 13th Georgian historical (after 2008's *Death in Hellfire*), apothecary John Rawlings, summoned by his pregnant mistress, joins a London carriage bound for the West Country. Other passengers include Jack Beef (aka the Black Pyramid), a bare-knuckle fighter, and his agent. Rawlings, who does detective work for Sir John Fielding of Bow Street, soon gets embroiled in a murder case after a fellow traveler is bludgeoned to death during an overnight stop at an inn. While the Black Pyramid disappears for many pages, Rawlings, with the help of local constable Tobias Miller and fellow Bow Streeter Joe Jago, manages to track down and interrogate all the other passengers on the ill-fated coach. Coincidences abound, as Rawlings observes midway through his deadlocked investigation. In the end, Lake of-