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Posted on 09 August 2017 By Ngaio Marsh

# E-PUB ? Overture to Death (Roderick Alleyn, #8) ? Weplayit.co

Wanda McCaddon who also narrates under the names Donada Peters and Nadia May was perfect for this Golden Age mystery. August 2017 Very enjoyable even knowing the solution I could appreciate how well Marsh gives the reader a the clues without making it obvious. It is a solidly entertaining mystery, I suppose, aware of the genre and making sly little jokes at its expense It doesn't really sparkle, though I felt that the culprit was made obvious by their behaviour, and not just because they acted guilty also because they had that whole cliché Freudian repressed sexuality going on, which seems to crop up in crime fiction of that period far too much Gaudy Night is another example, though it does sparkle, because of the character development that is going on too In this one, despite his engagement, and the appearance of some regular characters, it isn't really about Alleyn or development of him or the minor characters In fact, the POV characters are pretty much two young lovers who we may not even see again. The repressed sexuality stuff is worthy of an eyeroll, but the machinations of the murder set up are quite interesting to follow It gets a bit repetitive, and does that irritating holding back of details that means you can't solve the crime for yourself or, in this case, be sure about it, but as a murder mystery it's alright I just hope somebody kicks Alleyn into a higher gear Originally posted here. E-PUB ? Overture to Death (Roderick Alleyn, #8) ? It's Murder In The Little English Village, But The Two Local Spinsters, Miss Campanula, The Victim, And Miss Prentice, Her Friend Who May Have Been The Intended Victim, Are Not Exactly The Beloved Little Old Ladies Of Song And Story They Were And Are Waspish, Gossiping Snobs, Passionate Only About Their Own Narrowly Defined Religion, Perhaps, About The Local Vicar But Could They Have Been Sufficiently Unpleasant To Provoke A Murderer This book was published in 1939 and it shows The plot involves the murder of an unpopular but rich middle aged spinster and a cast of very unlikeable suspects indeed Ngaio Marsh, despite being a spinster herself, is very keen to push all the stereotypes of the time surrounding unmarried women of a certain age They are narrow minded, hysterical, sexually repressed, bitter harpies It is a constant in the story and one which left a very unsavoury taste in my mouth I think it is my least favourite of the Roderick Alleyn series. Detective Chief Inspector Roderick Alleyn goes to the small village of Chipping in 1939's Overture to Death, published during the height of Ngaio Marsh's heyday The local church really needs a new piano, so a group of eight local citizens gets together to raise money for a new piano by putting on a play Two middle aged spinsters, Idris Campanula and Eleanor Prentice, embody the modern term frenemies, heads always together in gossip against the rest of the world, but backbiting at each other in private and fighting over the affections of the widowed Rector Copeland Eleanor Prentice lives with her brother in law, the someone dense Squire Jocelyn Journingham, and his son, Henry, who is

in love with Dinah Copeland, daughter of the rector and a young lady trying to make her way on the London stage Both the squire and rector oppose the marriage of this young couple, the squire because Dinah does not have money and the rector because of what Dinah calls reverse snobbery, concern that she s trying to reach above her station The final pair consists of Dr Template and Mrs Celia Ross, a new resident of Chipping with a suspicious background and with whom it seems apparent that Dr Template, the husband of an invalid, has been having an affair. Read the rest of this review and other fun, geeky articles at Fangirl Nation

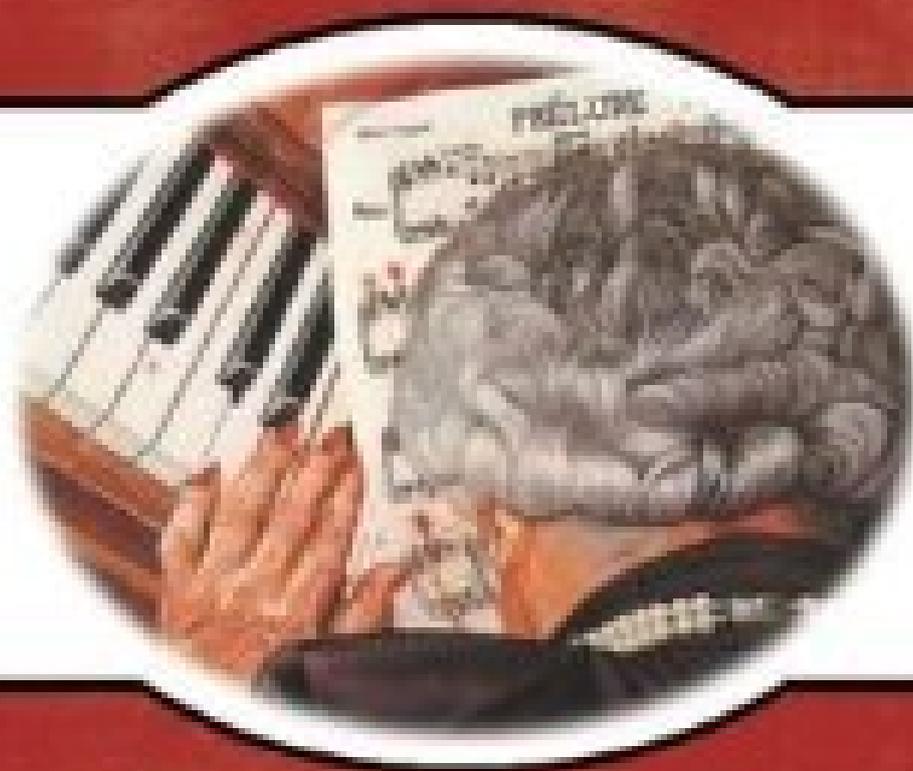
When reading the synopsis for *Overture to Death* 1939 by Ngaio Marsh, one can be excused for thinking that this will be another of her theatrical mysteries After all, it tells us that a group of seven amateur actors are preparing to put on the play *Shop Windows* when Rachmaninoff s *Prelude in C Sharp Minor* is set for the overture Then on opening night the pianist barely gets started playing three chords and then stepping on soft pedal before a loud bang is heard and Miss Idris Campanula falls dead against the sheet music There s no performance and the play setting itself features very little in the plot other than to provide a way for Marsh to insert a rather ingenious method of murder I m quite sure I d never come across a deadly piano before I read this one the first time long ago and far way from our local library. The stars of Marsh s show are Miss Campanula and her bosom friend Miss Eleanor Prentice, two embittered old maids who like nothing than to spread dreadful rumors about their neighbors and then confess their sins to the handsome rector Of course, the dear friends are also rivals for the rector s regard each woman imagining herself to be the front runner in the rector s wife stakes

When Inspector Roderick Alleyn arrives on the scene to decide who gave Miss Campanula such a dramatic death scene, he finds that he must first discover if the murderer has cast the right woman as victim For until about twenty minutes or so before curtain time, everyone assumed that Miss Prentice would be playing her standard piece as the opening She is prevented from doing so by an infected finger and only agrees to give up her martyr s determination to play no matter how much it hurt after the rector convinces her There seems to have been no time for the gun to have been rigged up in the piano after the change in pianists took place so was Miss Prentice the intended victim And what was the motive Do people really kill just because someone is a meddling, gossipy busybody This was an enjoyable entry in the Alleyn case files A cast of interesting characters from repressed village spinsters and the handsome cleric to the county squire and the young lovers whose parents are forbidding the match to the doctor and his adulterous love interest, the attractive widow a clever murder method a heaping helping of red herrings some provided courtesy of the young scamp George Biggins and plenty of humor and excellent dialogue Alleyn does an amusing turn as Holmes and we blessedly see little of Nigel Bathgate I am getting a bit tired of Mr Bathgate Great fun even though I remembered who the culprit is and a half rounded to four here First posted on my blog *My Reader s Block* Please request permission before reposting Thanks. I do love the Roderick Alleyn mysteries I ve read the first 8 so far, with

Overture to Death by Ngaio Marsh being the 8th one, plus a couple of others further down the line They do seem to get better and better The mysteries are always interesting In this story, an unpopular woman is murdered in a most interesting way Was she the target or another Alleyn and his team, the steady, constant Inspector Fox and his friend, news reporter Nigel Bathgate, accompany Alleyn to Pen Cuckoo at the behest of the local authorities as they are busy trying to sort out a series of robberies I love the investigation, the interviews with the various characters I also like how Marsh develops the story, leading up the murder before even bringing Alleyn into the picture, about half way through the story There is nice humour, there are lovely touches I m thinking of late in the story when Alleyn writes a letter to his beloved, Troy The whole story is a joy to read and hard to put down Excellent series and excellent story 4 stars Just as amateur pianist Miss Campanula strikes the third chord of the overture to a new village play, a shot rings out and she slumps dead across the keys Closer examination reveals the piano was boobytrapped a cunning arrangement of pulleys within meant that, the first time someone pressed the soft pedal, a cord would pull the trigger of an internally mounted Colt automatic pistol. But who could have wanted Miss Campanula dead Just to complicate matters, was Miss Campanula really the intended victim After all, until mere minutes before, Miss Campanula s bosom friend and bitter rival, Miss Prentice, was the designated pianist it was only thanks to the influence of the vicar that Miss Prentice abruptly conceded the honor because of a septic finger. Enter Chief Inspector Roderick Alleyn and his trusty sidekick, Inspector Fox, drafted in from the Yard because the local rozzers are tied up handling the latest exploit of a serial burglar gang. The cast of suspects seems easily whittlable down to the seven people involved in the presentation of the play eight, if you count Miss Campanula herself, who might feasibly have chosen to boobytrap her piano as a particularly macabre means of suicide Slowly and painstakingly, Alleyn and his team tease out the truth. After reading Marsh s 1953 romp *Spinsters in Jeopardy*, it was refreshing, even although I enjoyed that book a great deal, to turn to one of her traditionally formed mystery stories Most of the book is taken up with Alleyn s investigation, which might have become a tad longwinded had it not been for Marsh s prose, laced as it is with numerous of her trademark good jokes and shrewd observations of village life and human foibles The revelation of the murderer came as no great surprise not because it was obvious whodunnit but simply because, by the novel s latter stages, any one of several of the suspects could have been revealed as the guilty party without my raising an eyebrow Leaving that aside, the denouement was perfectly satisfying as it should be in a good Golden Age tec. I know some people have difficulty with Ngaio Marsh s fiction as a whole, but I m not one of them This isn t a particularly outstanding example of her work like beans on toast than smoked salmon but it did for me exactly what it set out to do provide good, solid enjoyment for a few hours. When a group of worth locals decide to put on some amateur theatricals, in order to raise money for a new piano, it inflames local passions, jealousies and insecurities Our cast include the local

Squire, Jocelyn Journingham, his cousin, Eleanor, his son, Henry, who is in love with the Rector's daughter, Dinah, her father, Rector Copeland a man adored by the two local, gossipy spinsters, Cousin Eleanor and Idris Campanula, the local doctor, Dr Template, whose wife is an invalid and the attractive widow, Mrs Celia Ross, who is rumoured to be having affair with the doctor Eleanor and Idris are united in their disapproval of much of the behaviour they come across in others, but compete for the attentions of the rector Idris is a wealthy woman, while Eleanor is the poor relation, and reliant upon Jocelyn's goodwill When Henry and Dinah fall in love, it would weaken Eleanor's position and so she is determined to do all she can to stop the match Jealousy, greed, love and fear are all involved in this crime, which results in Idris Campanula being shot dead by an ingenious method, which could be found only in Golden Age mysteries However, although Miss Campanula was the victim, was she the intended victim Published in 1939, this is the eighth in the Inspector Roderick Alleyn series I am greatly enjoying this series and loved listening to this audio version, as Alleyn, Fox and Nigel Bathgate, undercover the reasons for murder in a small village hall The cast are colourful, the number of possible suspects and the crime itself give a number of possibilities to solve the murder The two, spiteful spinsters, Cousin Eleanor and Idris Campanula, jar somewhat with modern ears There is a reliance on the idea of women considered Old Maids, being repressed sexually, like Eleanor and Idris, or vampish seducers, such as Mrs Ross Still, overall, a good read and a series I look forward to continuing. I have developed a theory regarding the appeal of these golden age British mysteries every character is so poisonous and hateful that one is freed from any concern for their fates or sadness about the fictional death and suffering This installment is set just before Alleyn's marriage, but sadly Troy does not feature.

# NGAIO MARSH



OVERTURE TO DEATH

'Admirably mysterious.'

DAILY MAIL

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