



## Requiem in Vienna

*J. Sydney Jones*

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"What Sir Arthur Conan Doyle did for Victorian London and Caleb Carr did for old New York, Sydney Jones does for historic Vienna."

—Karen Harper, *New York Times* bestselling author of the Queen Elizabeth I mystery series

At first it seemed like a series of accidents plagued Vienna's Court Opera. But after a singer is killed during rehearsals of a new production, the evidence suggests something much more dangerous. Someone is trying to murder the famed conductor and composer Gustav Mahler. Worse, Mahler might not be the first musical genius to be dispatched by this unknown killer.

Alma Schindler, one of Mahler's many would-be mistresses, asks the lawyer and aspiring private investigator Karl Werthen to help stop the attacks. With his new wife, Berthe, and his old friend, the criminologist Hanns Gross, Werthen delves into Vienna's rich society of musicians to discover the identity of the person who has targeted one of Austria's best-known artists.

Set during the peak of Vienna's cultural renaissance and featuring some of the city's most colorful residents, *Requiem in Vienna* is a perfect historical fiction. Rich in description and populated by vivid characters, this is a mystery that will leave readers guessing until the very last moment.

## Requiem in Vienna Details

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## From Reader Review Requiem in Vienna for online ebook

### Janebooks says

Maestros and Murder: a tangled web of Viennese music and musicians, March 26, 2010

Yesterday I was sitting in the home of Gustav Mahler, current conductor at the Vienna Court Opera House, near a glorious Bosendorfer grand piano. A tall woman dressed in a long white gown is playing Bach. It is the summer of 1899.

Advokat Karl Werthen, one of the few fictional characters in Jones' mysteries, is looking into a series of incidents surrounding Mahler's current performances: a young mezzo soprano crushed by a fallen asbestos curtain and a suspicious hanging death of the third violinist. He has been hired by a charming Alma Schindler to investigate these incidents and more personal attacks against Gustav Mahler, the renown composer and youngest conductor at the Hofoper. Werthen is soon joined by his sidekick in Jones' first Viennese mystery **THE EMPTY MIRROR**, the real-life Dr. Hanns Gross, the father of modern criminology.

The action, the tour of fin de sicle Vienna, begins at the funeral of Johann Strauss at the Zentralfriedhof, the Central Cemetery, the largest and most famous of Vienna's almost fifty cemetaries. The funeral cortege has consisted of eight carriages of flowers. the hearse drawn by four gray Lippizanners.

Later Werthen and Gross interview the likely suspects. The men behind the curtain: Hans Richter, the former conductor at the Hofoper; Leitner, the financial director; and Siegfried Blauer, the stage manager. The music critics including Everhard Hassler, the anti-Semitic, and Edward Hanslick, a staunch enemy of the new music; the head claqueur of the time, Peter Schreier, whom Mahler has banned from his performances (he has no need for professional applauders); and Karl Kraus, a young journalist of *The Torch* magazine. Then the members of Mahler's household including his sister Justine who has been disinherited and his faithful companion, Natalie Bauer-Lechner, and the friends and enemies of Mahler's student days at the Austrian Conservatory including Hugo Wolf, who had accused Mahler of plagiarism.

Jones' novel touches on the political side of the era: the Jewish-driven renaissance of musicians and the Brahms-Wagner controversy. And the Austrian food sounds delicious: wild boar with red currant sauce, coffee with sclag obers and a linzer torte, a spicy goulash served with new potatoes.

Mahler survives arsenic poisoning in his Turkish delights imported from Istanbul...the killer is discovered immediately before a performance of *Tannhauser*.

**REQUIEM IN VIENNA** is a satisfying and didactic mystery.

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### Zach says

*Requiem in Vienna* follows close to the first Viennese Mystery from J. Sydney Jones *The Empty Mirror*. Just like the first entry, it combines real life figures from turn of the century Vienna, with fictional ones to create

a grand mystery. The sequel very much equals if not surpasses the original, with perhaps a more realistic murderer.

Just like with *Empty Mirror*, the main character advokat Karl Werthern is visited by a real world figure to help stop a crime. Whereas last time Gustav Klimt was the initiator (and he does make an appearance in this one), Alma Schnidler, the future Mrs. Gustav Mahler, sets the plot in motion. She fears her beau Gustav is being targeted for murder after a series of accidents in the Hofoper, the Royal Viennese Opera that Mahler recently became the conductor of. Werthern, his friend Hans Gross (a real life criminologist) and his wife Berthe delve into the world of Viennese classical music to pursue the potential killer.

I really did enjoy the various musicians that are characters and/or referenced. It helped that not too long ago I read *Music And Musicians In Vienna* which detailed the lives of composers like Hugo Wolf, Anton Bruckner, Johann Strauss and of course Mahler. I liked how Jones incorporated these figures without retconning their lives too much. (view spoiler) That was one flaw of the *The Empty Mirror*.

Like the first book, I was guessing towards the end. I thought I had detected the real killer earlyish, but it was all red herrings. So kudos to Jones for keeping an engaging story fresh and not repetitive of the first encounter.

Lastly, for anyone wondering, I would recommend reading the first one before this, since it does a good job of setting up all the characters. Nonetheless, it could work on its own if the classical music angle is what hooks you, more than the overall story.

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### **Therese says**

I really, really enjoyed this mystery set in turn-of-the-century Vienna, featuring appearances and cameos by all kinds of famous historical figures. The premise is that someone is trying to kill the composer Gustav Mahler. In the course of the investigation, we also meet Hugo Wolf (a great composer of art songs), the artist Gustav Klimt, the critic Eduard Hanslick, journalist Karl Kraus, and on and on. Of course, it helps that I was sort of familiar already with some of the historical framework - so I got the same sort of thrill from reading this as from watching the movie *Midnight in Paris* - seeing people you've only read about as historical figures come to life in a mystery novel (as on screen) was sort of like walking into a restaurant and recognizing a group of modern celebrities hanging out.

I've sometimes thought turn-of-the-century Vienna was one of those golden ages and places that I'd like to go back to and visit with a time machine, just because it was such a hotbed of artistic and cultural and intellectual activity at the time. I finally got my wish, thanks to J. Sydney Jones. If you're not familiar with the era, Jones's book makes a fun introduction. As a book (vs. time machine), *Requiem in Vienna* is well-written and seemed decently plotted to me - I haven't read enough mysteries to compare it to others in the plot department, but it seemed to have the usual twists and turns, plus some unexpected ones, and the characters were likeable and charming. It was also interesting to how the historical issue of anti-Semitism was portrayed, since the main character is Jewish.

I appreciated that this story was a bit less grisly and hard-boiled than some of the (few) contemporary mysteries/crime novels I've read. Yes, there is some violence and death, but it still made for a comfortable, pleasant read, and as I said, the characters were charming and I enjoyed getting to know them. I recommend

this, especially for anyone who loves classical music or cultural history.

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### **Mary Ronan Drew says**

I do enjoy reading books about Vienna. Never can an author who really knows the city, and J Sydney Jones, the author of Requiem in Vienna has written guide books about Vienna, never can these people resist writing about their characters stopping at every café and eating lots of pastries, all of them mit schlag. I swoon.

The first book in the series was The Empty Mirror (2009). This second book, set in 1899, again teams fictional lawyer Karl Werthen and Hans Gross, who is not fictional; he was a noted criminologist. The cooperate on a new case when the beautiful Alma Schindler asks them to prevent someone from killing Gustav Mahler. At first they don't take her fears very seriously but when a couple of other people associated with the Vienna Court Opera turn up dead they realize the seriousness of the situation.

The characters in this book were particularly interesting, from the new assistant Werthen takes on, William Tor, to Mahler's sister and her friend, a beautiful violinist who is hopelessly in love with the composer. Hopelessly because apparently no woman could compete with Ia Schindler. She married Gustav Mahler, Walter Gropius and Franz Werfel, and had affairs with Arthur Kokoschka and numerous others. She was, not surprisingly, breathtakingly beautiful. (Google her name.)

I'm awaiting eagerly the next book in the series.

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### **Cheryl says**

Famous music composer and conductor, Gustav Mahler is preparing for a new musical production. Unfortunately, someone does not want the show to go on. Maestro Mahler's leading lady and lover becomes the victim of a horrible accident on set during rehearsals. It seems that Mahler was the target. One of Mahler's other lover's Alma Schindler fears for Mahler's life. She turns to private investigator, Karl Werthen for help. Mr. Werthen brings his old friend and criminologist, Hanns Gross in on the case. Together Werthen and Gross hope to solve the mystery before it is too late.

Requiem in Vienna is the second book in the Viennese mystery series. It can be read and enjoyed as a stand alone novel. As I was reading this book, I couldn't help but feel hints of Sir Arthur Conan Doyle. The author of the famed Sherlock Holmes mysteries. This is a good thing, because I really loved Sherlock Holmes stories. This was one of my reasons for liking this genre. It is refreshing to find another author who could rise to the level of Sir Doyle. Mr. Jones brought to life the city of Vienna as well as his characters and storyline. This book draws you in bit by bit. I like that Mr. Jones incorporates fiction with one or two real people. True mystery fans will fall in love with this book...as I did!

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### **Carmen says**

Once again Karl Werthen and his friend, Hanns Gross, are trying to stop a murderer. The intended victim is none other than the famous musician, Mahler. There are a few red herrings, a few false trails, but they do

eventually get the culprit. The interesting part is the atmosphere. Vienna in 1898 is alive because of the wonderful descriptions in this book.

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### **Daniele says**

I happened upon this book at the library, not realizing that it was the second in a series, but it sufficiently stood alone. I had high expectations from the book - turn of the century mystery with a musical plot. But, it did not deliver. I found it to be flat without much suspense, and I didn't care "who did it" by the end. I'll stick with Frank Tallis for my Vienna mystery fix.

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### **Debbie says**

Volume one in this series was about the art scene in fin de siecle Vienna. This book centers on the music scene. There appears to be a plot to murder Gustav Mahler. Alma (soon to be Mahler) puts in an appearance, actually several. I still prefer the Tallis series, but these will serve in the interim.

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### **Brenda Mengeling says**

This is the second Viennese mystery by Jones to feature Advokat Karl Werthern. As with the first book in the series, *The Empty Mirror*, I enjoyed the characters and their interactions very much. However, in this installment, the case is pretty far-fetched and contrived. It appears that someone wants to kill Gustav Mahler the genius composer and conductor of the Viennese Opera. Werthern is again helped by Hans Gross, and I felt they were too credulous here. They fell for every possible red herring the criminal threw at them. That said, I did guess wrong about who was guilty, so perhaps I would have done no better had I been the sleuth. A good, high-tension ending brings the book to a successful conclusion.

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### **Kelly says**

*The Empty Mirror & Requiem in Vienna* by J. Sydney Jones; books 1 & 2 of the Advokat Werthen series.

These two mysteries are set in Turn-of-the-20th Century Vienna, when the Austro-Hungarian Empire was at its apex and was peopled by such luminaries as Sigmund Freud, Richard Freiherr von Krafft-Ebing, Gustav Mahler, Franz Ferdinand, the Emperor Franz Joseph and of course the waltz-king Johann Strauss. The Empire is seen through the eyes of a young lawyer, or in German Advokat, Karl Werthen and his associate the noted criminologist Hanns Gross. Gross and Werthen share a partnership not unlike Sherlock Holmes and Doctor Watson of the Conan Doyle stories, with Gross being the overeducated maverick and Werthen the heroic albeit more humble companion. In the first book, *The Empty Mirror*, Gross and Werthen are on the trail of a seeming serial killer whose signature neck cut has the entire city spooked. The second book, *Requiem in Vienna* involves what looks like another string of serial murders, this time aimed at prominent musicians. The author has an enormous understanding of All Things Viennese to draw upon including its history, geography and culture. This is probably due to the fact that he has also written a number of travel books related to Austria. These added details give a sumptuous layer to the proceedings for the reader to

enjoy. While I could usually guess at who the culprits were midway through the books, the richness of the story arcs kept me going. Overall, I enjoyed reading these books and would recommend them to anyone interested in immersing themselves into another time and place.

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### **Dianne says**

This is the second in the series, and I enjoyed it on several levels. First, it's fun to be roaming around Vienna with Werthen and Gross, who is outraged that Sir Arthur Conan Doyle is having such a vogue in Britain, using what Gross thinks of as his own criminological techniques.

Next, the device of mixing real life personages into the story is fun...this time it's Gustav Mahler and other famous composers of the era...though our old friend Klimt makes his appearances, too -- along with Krafft-Ebbing.

There's a bit of women's lib tossed in for good measure, as Werthen has recently married a very modern young woman.

All in all, good fun.

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### **Estelle says**

Someone is trying to kill Gustav Mahler the fiery conductor and composer. A fun read with people and places that really existed in late nineteenth century Vienna.

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### **Terri Lynn says**

I am so fond of his series of historical mystery books set in the wonderful city of Vienna, Austria that features Advokat (attorney) Karl Werthen, his wife Berthe, and his criminologist friend Hans Gross. Werthen had practiced law by doing wills and trusts but he did get involved in a criminal investigation in the last book and so now adds criminal investigations and inquiries to his practice.

In this book, in 19th century Vienna, there are a series of accidents that seemed to be aimed at conductor/composer Gustav Mahler of the Vienna Court Opera but when a young singer is killed at the Opera house, Alma Schindler (part time mistress to Mahler) asks Werthen to look into the possibility that someone is trying to murder Mahler. After being injured in a fall at the Opera House when a podium mysteriously collapses, Mahler decides to hire Werthen to change his will and to check into the accidents

Soon Werthen, Berthe (who is newly pregnant and battling nausea 24/7) and Hans find themselves up to their necks in suspects. Even when Mahler goes out to the countryside, trouble follows and he is almost killed when a bicycle's brakes are tampered with and then he gets poisoned on some arsenic in his Turkish Delight candy. Berthe hires someone to handle the wills and trusts part of the law firm but even he comes under suspicion. It begins to look like other composers like Brahms and Strauss have been murdered recently too and of course, the accidents continue to go on. Fortunately they are able to get the Prince in

charge of the opera to give them his assistance and a letter so that everyone will be obligated to talk to them but with each person they interview, more and more suspects popped up.

The problem is that Mahler has collected enemies since he was young and they keep finding them. Even many women have cause to want to do him in- including his sister who he threatens to write out of his will if she marries someone he didn't approve of as a brother-in-law and his fiancee Melanie who isn't delighted with his shenanigans.

When Berthe's dad (who has mutual love and respect for his son in law Werthen) arrives for a long visit after hearing his daughter is expecting a baby, the four of them work together.

I won't tell you more because you should be able to delight in the mystery this book offers. The book richly describes the music of Austria, the food, and the people and places of Vienna. Since I have long loved Vienna (and classical music), I loved this book.

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### **Deborah says**

\*\*\*SPOILER ALERT\*\*\*

Got annoyed with the sleuths for not investigating Tor earlier. Now, I realize that he was not the murderer, but so much pointed toward him, and of course it turned out that he was involved with the real murderer as a semi-unwitting accomplice.

Berthe (fictional) was an interesting, if somewhat anachronistic, character, but the rest, other than maybe Mahler (real), did not resonate. I love Vienna, which was what attracted me to this historical mystery, but only the food descriptions brought the city alive for me.

Perhaps, because I was nursing a bad cold and thus read it in too-small segments, I am not being entirely fair. Maybe I just wish it had diverted me more.

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### **Rosemary says**

Jones' knowledge of Vienna, as demonstrated in his first book in the series of 19th century mysteries is even more evident as his characters, Gross and Wenthen attempt to find the person behind attacks upon Gustav Mahler. This time, Jones displays solid knowledge of the composers of the day ( The book opens with the funeral of Johann Strauss.), along with various intrigues that include professional jealousy and competition for patronage from the Habsburg nobility. While there is some serious name dropping going on with respect to famous cafés and composers, the twists in the plot kept me engaged. Who would ever guess what may lie behind walrus type moustaches?

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