



Charles Jessold, Considered as a Murderer

Wesley Stace

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One of *The Wall Street Journal's* Best fiction books of 2011

England, 1923. A gentleman critic named Leslie Shepherd tells the macabre story of a gifted young composer, Charles Jessold. On the eve of his revolutionary new opera's premiere, Jessold murders his wife and her lover, and then commits suicide in a scenario that strangely echoes the plot of his opera---which Shepherd has helped to write. The opera will never be performed.

Shepherd first shares his police testimony, then recalls his relationship with Jessold in his role as critic, biographer, and friend. And with each retelling of the story, significant new details cast light on the identity of the real victim in Jessold's tragedy.

This ambitiously intricate novel is set against a turbulent moment in music history, when atonal sounds first reverberated through the concert halls of Europe, just as the continent readied itself for war. What if Jessold's opera was not only a betrayal of Shepherd, but of England as well?

Wesley Stace has crafted a dazzling story of counter-melodies and counter-narratives that will keep you guessing to the end.

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