

tumes designed by Mariia Levytska that are attractive without being particularly opulent. The company orchestra delivers a competent if unexceptional reading of the score under the baton of Oleksiy Baklan, while the chief soloists—Iuliia Moskalenko as Clara and Mykyta Sukhorukov as the Nutcracker Prince—are an engaging pair, who perform their important *pas de deux* effectively. Other company dancers also do well in the smaller roles, and the string of show-stoppers at the close make suitable impact. While this *Nutcracker* is unlikely to be anyone's first choice, it is an agreeable mounting that would appeal to admirers of the Odessa company. Presented in Dolby Digital 5.1 and PCM stereo on DVD, and DTS-HD 5.1 and PCM stereo on Blu-ray, this is a strong optional purchase. (F. Swietek)

Onegin ★★★★★

(2017) 96 min. DVD: \$31.99, Blu-ray: \$41.99. C Major/Unitel (dist. by Naxos of America).



This 1965 ballet, based on Alexander Pushkin's 1833 Russian verse novel (and the Tchaikovsky opera adapted from it), is regarded as one of the masterpieces (along with *Romeo and Juliet* and *The Taming of the Shrew*) by John Cranko (1927-1973), the dancer/choreographer who became artistic director of the Stuttgart Ballet in 1961 and transformed it into one of the world's premier companies, while also reviving the full-evening story ballet form that had fallen into disfavor in an age devoted to one-act plotless works. This 2017 revival, beautifully mounted by the company, was part of the final season in the tenure of Reid Anderson, the director since 1996, who was mentored by Cranko. The set and costume designs by Jürgen Rose remain exquisite, the score (Tchaikovsky, mostly from *The Seasons*) is played elegantly under the baton of James Tuggle, and the dancing is impeccable. Friedemann Vogel is a superbly disdainful Onegin and David Moore a volatile Lensky, the friend Onegin kills in a duel after Onegin has flirted with Lensky's fiancée Olga (the equally remarkable Elisa Badenes), while Alicia Amatriain captures the full range of Tatiana, Olga's younger sister, whose attentions Onegin first cruelly rejects but comes to desire years later, only to be spurned himself. As an added treat, Marcia Haydée, the original Tatiana, appears as the girls' nurse. One could hardly imagine a more perfect tribute to Cranko's talent and influence as a choreographer than this masterful recreation of one of his greatest works. Presented in DTS 5.1 (DTS-HD 5.1 on the Blu-ray edition) and PCM stereo, extras include an extended interview segment with Anderson, Rose, and Haydée. Highly recommended. **Editor's Choice** (F. Swietek)

Orphée et Euridice

★★★1/2

(2018) 129 min. In French w/ English subtitles. DVD or Blu-ray: \$35.99. Belvedere (dist. by Naxos of America).

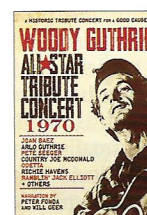


Although the original 1762 Vienna version of Christoph Willibald Gluck's opera, which reformed lyric tragedy by emphasizing emotional expression over vocal pyrotechnics, was performed in Italian, this 2018 production from La Scala in Milan presents the French revision that the composer made for Paris in 1774. In addition to the language alteration, it also adds new music—mostly brief dances for the interpolated ballets that French audiences expected—while rewriting the role of Orpheus, the musician who travels to Hades to bring his late wife back to the world of the living, from alto to high tenor. Juan Diego Flórez does not possess the sort of haute-contre voice for which Gluck wrote (or rewrote) the role, but his heroic tenor is so free, accurate, and dramatic that it would be churlish to complain, while sopranos Christiane Karg (Euridice) and Fatma Said (L'Amour) provide admirable support. Unfortunately, under conductor Michele Mariotti, the orchestra—situated on a moving platform at the rear of the stage—as well as the chorus sound a bit mushy. Nor does Hofesh Shechter's choreography come across as particularly apt, involving mostly angular, spasmodic movements, while the spare sets and modern costumes are not terribly inviting. One might also dispute some staging decisions by Shechter and John Fulljames—for instance, the decision to have Orpheus at the close immolate a mannequin to signify a second funeral service for the wife he has now lost twice. But the quality of the vocalism alone makes this worth considering. Presented in DTS 5.0, Dolby Digital 5.0, and PCM stereo on DVD, and DTS-HD 5.0 and LPCM stereo on Blu-ray, this is a strong optional purchase. (F. Swietek)

Woody Guthrie: All-Star Tribute Concert 1970

★★★1/2

(2019) 80 min. DVD: \$19.95. Music Video Distributors (avail. from most distributors).



Previously unavailable in any form, this remarkable historic concert film—capturing a benefit for the California chapter of the Committee to Combat Huntington's Disease (the fatal illness that took Woody Guthrie's life in 1967)—offers a superb presentation of the Hollywood Bowl event, which taps the combined talents of Woody's son Arlo Guthrie, and such friends and kindred spirits as Pete Seeger, Joan Baez, Odetta, Country Joe McDonald, Ramblin' Jack Elliott, and Richie Havens. The 15 songs performed hail from

the vast canon of Americana composed by Woody Guthrie, and the fun (and musically adventurous) angle lies in the occasional mix-and-match of the show's artists on individual numbers. While there are plenty of solo spots (Arlo on "Oklahoma Hills," Seeger's take on "The Sinking of the Reuben James"), the real treat is finding Baez in a duet with Seeger on the appealing "So Long, It's Been Good to Know Yuh," and McDonald, Elliott, and others harmonizing on "Goin' Down the Road Feeling Bad." Two big stars from the era, Peter Fonda (riding high from the success of *Easy Rider*) and Woody's pal Will Geer (soon to be seen in *The Waltons*) host the concert, reading excerpts from Guthrie's copious writings. Although it's too bad that Guthrie protégé Bob Dylan wasn't on hand for the tribute, this is a still huge treat for music fans. Presented in stereo, extras include three bonus songs, and brief audio interviews with Arlo Guthrie and Elliott. Highly recommended. (T. Keogh)

Wozzeck ★★1/2

(2017) 107 min. In German w/ English subtitles. DVD or Blu-ray: \$24.99. Naxos (avail. from most distributors).



Not long ago, Alban Berg's 1925 opera—with its grotesque plot and astringent atonal music—was rarely performed. Now it is part of the repertoire of virtually every international company. Adapted from a play by Georg Büchner, the libretto is based on an actual murder case in which a soldier killed his mistress, an incident that Berg transformed into a powerful music drama, portraying mental deterioration that inexorably led to tragedy. Krzysztof Warlikowski's 2017 production for the Dutch National Opera has many musical strengths, not least the superb conducting by Marc Albrecht, and excellent vocalism from baritone Christopher Maltman as Wozzeck and Eva-Maria Westbroek as his mistress Marie. But Warlikowski's apparent need to do something out of the ordinary leads him not only to jettison the army setting—Wozzeck is simply a barber—but also to expand the role of Marie's little son (played here by Jacob Jutte) to an extraordinary degree. In a long added prologue, the boy is bullied at a dance class, and later recites a monologue from Büchner's play about a child overcome by solitude—which points to the final scene in which he is suddenly orphaned (and for some reason shown taking plastic organs from a mockup of the human body and tossing them into an aquarium). Presumably this is intended to suggest disaster passed from generation to generation, with the boy as doomed as Wozzeck, but the point is elusive at best. Despite its musical strengths, the production is somewhat hampered by the eccentric staging. Presented in DTS 5.1 (DTS-HD 5.0 on the Blu-ray edition) and PCM stereo, this is a strong optional purchase. (F. Swietek)