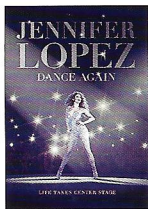


passion and sensitivity, and both the chorus and the supporting singers (Botnarcu; Roberto Lorenzi as Lorenzo, the Capulet family doctor who administers the sleeping potion to Giulietta; and Benjamin Bernheim as Tebaldo, to whom Giulietta is betrothed) provide stirring vocalism. Presented in DTS 5.1, Dolby Digital 5.1, and PCM stereo on DVD, and DTS-HD 5.1 and PCM stereo on Blu-ray, this offers viewers another chance to enjoy DiDonato in what is becoming a signature role for her. Recommended. (F. Swietek)

Jennifer Lopez: Dance Again ★★★

(2014) 84 min. DVD: \$19.98. Anchor Bay Entertainment (avail. from most distributors). SDH captioned.



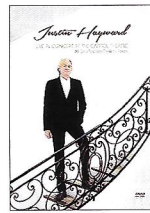
This 2014 documentary follows singer-actress Jennifer Lopez over a half-year period on her first world concert tour. As Lopez makes clear in the film's opening moments, this project is a particular challenge, given her age at the time (mid-40s), hardships of full-out choreography over a number of shows, traveling with her two small children (as well as her parents and other family members), and career uncertainty in other areas of her life. Still, she dives right in, demanding perfection from herself and her many onstage and offstage collaborators, and is met with adoring audiences wherever she performs. Viewers need not be familiar with Lopez's music to appreciate this fast-moving profile that balances the personal with a look at the mystique of stardom. Director Ted Kenney invites numerous comments from Lopez's parents about their daughter's driven nature, and he captures Lopez's tender admission that she is living out the dream that eluded her mother. Lopez's hard break with her gig on TV's *American Idol* adds some drama, as does her discussions about former husband Marc Anthony, who briefly reunites with her at a triumphant concert in Puerto Rico (where Lopez sang years before in her first concert). Perhaps most memorable, however, is the sight of Lopez putting on a full show in pouring rain at an outdoor concert—proving that not every moment of her life is glamorous. Also featuring renditions of some of Lopez's greatest hits—including “Get Right,” “Love Don't Cost a Thing,” “I'm Into You,” “All I Have,” and the title track—*Jennifer Lopez: Dance Again* is a solid behind-the-scenes music documentary. Presented in Dolby Digital 5.1, this is recommended. (T. Keogh)

Justin Hayward: Live in Concert at the Capitol Theatre ★★★1/2

(2014) 110 min. DVD: \$19.95. Music Video Distributors (avail. from most distributors).

Justin Hayward, lead singer and songwriter for the legendary Moody Blues—and a fine solo artist—performs a wide selection of songs

from multiple phases of his career in this intimate 2014 concert filmed at the Capitol Theatre in Clearwater, FL. Backed only by keyboardist-percussionist-back-up vocalist Julie Ragins and lead guitarist Mike Dawes, a relaxed and courtly Hayward kicks off this 16-song set with what must be the Moodies' most-ubiquitous tune on classic rock radio, “Tuesday Afternoon.” Still in fine voice, Hayward evokes the old dreamy, romantic feeling of Moody Blues chestnuts (others here include “Nights in White Satin” and “Question”), while also delving deep into his own songbook with the likes of the gorgeous, dusky “In Your Blue Eyes,” and the delicate memory piece “The Western Sky.” “You Can Never Go Home Again” is one of several wintry, mournful works from the old canon, along with what might be the most stirring piece in this set, a hushed performance of “December Snow,” which improves upon the studio recording. Presented in Dolby Digital 5.1 and stereo, extras include bonus performances of “Blue Guitar” and “Who Are You Now,” as well as a music video for “The Wind of Heaven.” Highly recommended. (T. Keogh)



KISS Rocks Vegas ★★★

(2014) 114 min. DVD: \$21.98 (audio CD included), Blu-ray: \$26.98 (audio CD included). Eagle Rock Entertainment (avail. from most distributors).

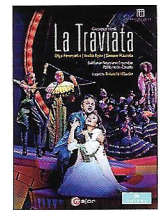


KISS chose to celebrate their 40-year anniversary with a nine-show run—complete with flash pots and laser lights—at Las Vegas's Hard Rock Hotel in 2014, the year the band was also inducted into the Rock and Roll Hall of Fame. Since Kabuki makeup and samurai-inspired costumes have always been part of the act, the two original members—64-year-old singer-guitarist Paul Stanley and 67-year-old bassist Gene Simmons—could pass for years younger, a fringe benefit they probably didn't anticipate when the band formed in the 1970s. While Peter Criss and Ace Frehley showed up for the induction ceremony, they are not part of the current lineup, although guitarist Tommy Thayer and drummer Eric Singer pick up the reins just fine. The band opens and closes the 16-song set with the anthem-like numbers “Detroit Rock City” and “Rock and Roll All Nite,” while saving the more reflective material, such as the Rod Stewart-inspired “Hard Luck Woman” and the hit ballad “Beth,” for a bonus acoustic section in which they perform *MTV Unplugged*-style (seated, sans makeup). Throughout the main show, Stanley communes with the fans at the front of the stage, Simmons unfurls his tongue whenever a camera moves in for a close-up, and Singer and his drum kit float up in the air on a riser towards the end of the set. Between the concert and the acoustic set, every key KISS

track is included (with the exception of “Cold Gin”). Bundled with an audio CD (of the main concert), this is presented in DTS 5.1, Dolby Digital 5.1 and stereo on DVD, and Dolby Atmos, DTS-HD 5.1, and LPCM stereo on Blu-ray. Recommended. (K. Fennesy)

La Traviata ★★★

(2015) 139 min. In Italian w/ English subtitles. DVD: \$29.99, Blu-ray: \$34.99. C Major/Unitel (dist. by Naxos of America).

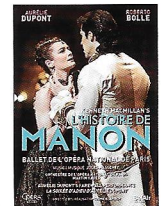


Oddball productions of famous operas proliferate nowadays, but few have been more wrongheaded than Rolando Villazón's 2015 Baden-Baden Festival staging of Verdi's ever-popular 1853 tale of the courtesan Violetta's self-sacrificial rejection of her lover Alfredo at the urging of his pragmatic father Germont. For some reason Villazón has chosen to set the action inside a circus tent, with the secondary characters costumed as clowns and such, while Violetta is followed about by a sort of blonde double who is apparently a trapeze artist. Is Violetta's consumption to be compared to a possible fall from a high wire? Hard to fathom, even if this approach does allow for some spectacular images. In any case, the musical side is not strong enough to compensate for the visual peculiarity. The only remarkable element is Olga Peretyatko's Violetta; her voice does not fit the role perfectly—being more sharp than seductive—but her vocalism is powerful, and while her acting skills are perfunctory, she at least brings intensity to the doomed character. The remaining singers—including Atalla Ayan as Alfredo—are more serviceable than inspired, and it is hard to gauge the performance of Simone Piazzola as Germont when the poor man is made up all in gray, looking like the statue of the Commendatore in *Don Giovanni*. The playing of the Balthazar-Neumann-Ensemble under Pablo Heras-Casado is energetic, but this misguided version of Verdi's perennial warhorse cannot be preferred to the many other fine versions already available, including the recent 2014 Glyndebourne staging (VL-11/15). Presented in DTS 5.1 (DTS-HD 5.1 on the Blu-ray release) and PCM stereo, this is not a necessary purchase. (F. Swietek)

L'histoire de Manon

★★★★1/2

(2015) 125 min. DVD: \$29.99, Blu-ray: \$39.99. Bel Air Classiques (dist. by Naxos of America).



Several operas—by Auber, Massenet, and Puccini—have been based on L'Abbé Prévost's 1731 novel *L'Histoire du Chevalier Des Grieux et de Manon Lescaut*, centering on a beautiful young French woman named Manon who becomes an object of desire for both the handsome