

in the title role by Barbara Hannigan. But the staging by Krzysztof Warlikowski is odd. Warlikowski emphasizes Lulu's dream of becoming a ballerina, including scenes of her younger self practicing, and adds a number of prolonged dance solos—one at the end of the second act after the music has ceased—often while having Hannigan stand en pointe while singing. She manages, but it's a trick that ultimately doesn't justify the effort. Nor are the set (a hall with escalators, and a backstage screen for projections of Lulu in various states of undress), costumes, or makeup—representing extraordinarily clashing styles—especially convincing. Presented in Dolby Digital 5.1 and PCM stereo, this is an optional purchase. (F. Swietek)

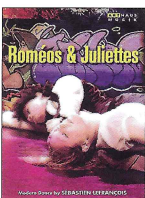
Marco Spada ★★½
(2014) 126 min. DVD: \$24.99, Blu-ray: \$29.99. Bel Air Classics (dist. by Naxos of America).



No one would argue that Daniel-François-Esprit Auber's 1857 ballet makes much sense. Even in the 19th century, the story—about the titular bandit who indiscriminately robs the apparently dense people of Rome while living among them unrecognized, and even dabbles at arranging weddings with the local nobility—was considered absurd. And the denouement, in which a mortally wounded Spada persuades the crowd that his daughter is not actually his, so that her lover, a count, will marry her, does not exactly constitute a happy ending. Yet Auber's music is so genial and sprightly that the plot inanities hardly matter, and it is beautifully played here by the Bolshoi Theatre Orchestra under Alexey Bogorad in this 2014 performance from Moscow. In addition, Pierre Lacotte's sets and costumes are colorful and attractive, while his choreography—always energetic (even, rather incongruously, during Spada's death scene) is superbly realized by the company, especially David Hallberg—the first American to become a principal dancer at the Bolshoi—as Marco and Evgenia Obraztsova as his daughter. Even with its ridiculous libretto, this sumptuous production is still great fun. Presented in Dolby Digital 5.1 and PCM stereo on DVD, and DTS-HD 5.1 and PCM stereo on Blu-ray, extras include a behind-the-scenes featurette. Highly recommended. (F. Swietek)

Roméo & Juliettes
★★½

(2008) 79 min. DVD: \$29.99, Blu-ray: \$39.99. Arthaus Musik (dist. by Naxos of America).

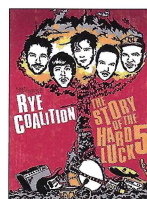


Shakespeare's tale of doomed young love has inspired innumerable adaptations, including Prokofiev's popular ballet (VL-5/01, VL-9/13). But like Mats Ek's recent version for the Royal Swedish Ballet (VL-7/14),

figure-skater-turned-choreographer Sébastien Lefrançois's *Roméo & Juliettes*—created for the Suresnes Cities Festival of Contemporary Dance in 2008—doesn't employ the Russian composer's famous music. Instead, Lefrançois has set his piece to a busy and propulsive new score by Laurent Couson—one that may not be particularly memorable, but well suits the choreography, which employs many hip-hop moves while fairly closely following Shakespeare. The nine dancers here perform on a rather bare stage, periodically shifting platforms around. All are fine, but Jann Galois and Giovanni Léocadie obviously take pride of place as Juliette and Roméo, while Mario Faundez's costumes provide not only some vibrant color but also a hint of Renaissance style. Presented in PCM stereo, this intermittently interesting contemporary balletic twist on the classic story is a strong optional purchase. (F. Swietek)

Rye Coalition: The Story of the Hard Luck 5
★★★★

(2014) 78 min. DVD: \$16.95. Music Video Distributors (avail. from most distributors).



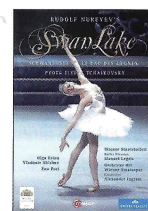
Jersey City natives Rye Coalition take center stage in Jenni Matz's documentary about the relentless drive of an indie band. The quintet came together in the 1990s as music-obsessed teenagers who couldn't play, so at first the kids traded tapes, and then began bashing on their instruments until songs started to take shape, eventually releasing cassettes and touring the dives of America. Some call it emo, but their early material plays more like hardcore filtered through a math rock sensibility (they would move in more of a classic rock direction in the 2000s). To judge from the archival concert footage that dominates the film, the band consistently cut loose on stage: cracking jokes, setting things on fire, and running around like lunatics. To make ends meet, they worked in liquor stores and drove taxis while living at home. As the grind took its toll, the band decided to make Rye Coalition a full-time gig—touring with Queens of the Stone Age, and signing to a major label, although the deal would fall apart. Many bands would've given up, but Rye Coalition forged a compromise between staying together and breaking up. Not a unique story, but one that young musicians should watch; not for instruction, but rather as a how-not-to guide. Recommended. (K. Fennessy)

Swan Lake ★★½

(2014) 132 min. DVD: \$24.99, Blu-ray: \$39.99. C Major (dist. by Naxos of America).

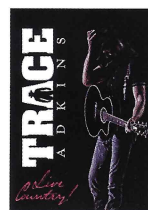
Those seeking a reasonably traditional version of Tchaikovsky's popular ballet will enjoy this 2014 production from the Vienna Staatsballett celebrating the silver anniversary of Rudolf Nureyev's rework-

ing of the Petipa-Ivanov choreography. Nureyev's version makes some adjustments to the score and even more to the story, casting a tragic light on the tale of the nobleman enchanted by the swan queen Odette, and—thanks to the machinations of the evil sorcerer Rothbart—torn between her and her dark counterpart, Odile. Many productions will opt for a happy or equivocal ending, but here Rothbart triumphs, Odette remains in his power, and the prince perishes. Regardless, this is an effective denouement both musically and dramatically, with Olga Esina radiant in the dual role of Odette and Odile. Vladimir Shishov makes a solid partner for her as Prince Siegfried, while Eno Peci cuts a magisterial figure as his rival, Rothbart. The work of the student corps isn't always ideally synchronized, and a few of Alexander Ingram's tempos initially lag a bit, but the performance quickly improves, and the opulent sets and costumes are visually attractive. While the Nureyev *Swan Lake* is already available in a fine 2006 Paris Opera production (VL-9/07), this mounting is just as good. Presented in DTS 5.0 (DTS-HD 5.0 on the Blu-ray release) and PCM stereo, this is highly recommended. (F. Swietek)



Trace Adkins: Live Country ★★★

(2014) 116 min. DVD: \$14.98. Eagle Rock Entertainment (avail. from most distributors).



Veteran baritone country performer Trace Adkins serves up a career-spanning concert in this easygoing 2014 engagement filmed at the Paramount Theater in Huntington, NY. The 20 songs range from Adkins's first single, "There's a Girl in Texas," to newer material. Adkins, a former football player and oil rig worker, receives solid accompaniment from the Sarepta Gentleman's Club, along with Jill and Kate, two backup singers who also perform as a duo. From his muscular performance style to his casual apparel—jeans and t-shirt—it's clear that Adkins served as a model for Luke Wheeler on ABC's *Nashville*. Adkins, who also acts, notes during a bonus interview that his career was launched in Nashville, where success came early. Unlike some country singers whose songs are built around patriotism and family values, Adkins concentrates on women and relationships. Naturally, that also includes numbers about sex, such as "Maintenance Man," which he describes as his "nastiest song" (by gangster rap standards, it isn't nasty at all, of course). As a band leader, he plays it safe, with the exception of "Chrome," which adds funk and boogie to his traditionalist approach. Presented in DTS 5.1, Dolby Digital 5.1 and stereo, this is recommended. (K. Fennessy)