

The performance is enjoyable, with a vigorous reading by conductor Marin Alsop, along with excellent vocalism from a mixture of operatic veterans (Paul Groves as Candide and Thomas Allen as Pangloss) and Broadway luminaries (Patti LuPone as the Old Lady and Kristin Chenoweth as Cunegonde, the latter delivering a show-stopping rendition of the florid “Glitter and Be Gay”). Sterling work from the orchestra, supporting cast, and Westminster Symphonic Choir all add to this fine production that was originally recorded for broadcast on PBS. Presented in DTS-HD stereo, this is recommended. (F. Swietek)

Cavalleria Rusticana/ Pagliacci ★★ ★ 1/2

(2016) 2 discs. 153 min. DVD: \$29.99, Blu-ray: \$39.99. Opus Arte (dist. by Naxos of America).



The durable double bill of the titular *verismo* one-act operas by Mascagni and Leoncavallo receives stellar treatment in this 2016 production from the Royal Opera House in Covent Garden. Director Damiano Michieletto situates both operas as contemporary tales occurring simultaneously in a rural Italian village, using the intermezzos in each to add clever references to the events of the companion piece, and Paolo Fantin’s revolving set offers a naturalistic view of the main street, along with the interiors of a bakery for *Cavalleria Rusticana* (with plenty of dough-kneading) and a community center where *Pagliacci* is performed. Conductor Antonio Pappano is entirely at home with the scores, and he secures impassioned playing from the orchestra and equally vivid singing from the chorus. Appearing in both works is the commanding tenor Aleksandr Antonenko, who in *Cavalleria Rusticana* plays Turiddu, a lascivious fellow whose dalliance with two women, Santuzza and Lola, leads to his death at the hands of Lola’s husband Alfio, and in *Pagliacci* is Canio, leader of an acting troupe, who as Pagliacci kills his unfaithful wife Nedda and her lover Silvio onstage. Antonenko is well matched by the other vocalists—Eva-Maria Westbroek (Santuzza), Martina Belli (Lola), Dimitri Platanias (Alfio), Carmen Giannattasio (Nedda), and Dionysios Sourbis (Silvio)—as well as Elena Zilio, who movingly conveys the pain of Turiddu’s mother, Mamma Lucia. Presented in DTS 5.1 and Dolby Digital stereo on DVD, and Dolby Atmos, DTS-HD 5.1, and LPCM stereo on Blu-ray, extras include an interview with Pappano, introductions to the operas, and cast galleries. Highly recommended. (F. Swietek)

Die Entführung aus dem Serail ★★ ★ 1/2

(2015) 168 min. In German w/English subtitles. DVD: \$29.99, Blu-ray: \$39.99. Opus Arte (dist. by Naxos of America).

Mozart’s first great success on the Vien-

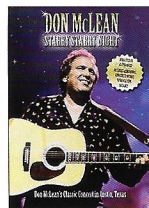
nese stage was this 1782 “singspiel,” which is by definition a piece that alternates musical numbers with spoken dialogue. Modern productions generally pare the latter to a minimum, although that is not the case with David McVicar’s 2015 Glyndebourne mounting, which—like Christof Loy’s 2010 staging from Barcelona (VL-7/12)—retains everything, making for a long and more serious performance, transforming what is ordinarily a sprightly comedy into a larger drama of love and forgiveness. Robin Ticciati leads the period-instrument Orchestra of the Age of Enlightenment in a reading of the score that emphasizes its darker elements without becoming lugubrious, and the vocalism is excellent, with Sally Matthews’s silvery soprano shining in the role of Konstanze—a young woman romanced by her Turkish captor, Pasha Selim (Franck Saurel, imposing in a non-singing role)—and Edgaras Montvidas exhibiting a solid if somewhat nasal tenor as Belmonte, the Spanish nobleman who comes to rescue her. Brenden Gunnell and Mari Eriksmoen are also engaging as the comic servants who become the couple’s confederates, but the outstanding turn here comes from Tobias Kehrer, who not only manages the very low notes that Mozart assigned to the Pasha’s overseer Osmin, but also makes the usually buffoonish character into a genuinely menacing figure. Boasting striking sets and costumes designed by Vicki Mortimer, this is an assured and elegant production that also incorporates well-chosen excerpts from other works by Mozart as background music in a few dramatic scenes. Presented in DTS 5.1 and Dolby Digital stereo on DVD, and DTS-HD 5.1 and LPCM stereo on Blu-ray, extras include a behind-the-scenes featurette and a cast gallery. Highly recommended. (F. Swietek)



Don McLean: Starry Starry Night ★★ ★ 1/2

(1999) 75 min. DVD: \$19.95. Music Video Distributors (avail. from most distributors).

Singer-songwriter-guitarist Don McLean—best known for the perennial radio favorite “American Pie”—is captured live in this 1999 concert from the Paramount Theatre in Austin, TX, backed by a nimble band and a small but sumptuous-sounding string section for a 15-song set that shows off the many colors of McLean’s repertoire. McLean kicks things off with the early favorite “Castles In the Air,” featuring a jangling, folkie feel and idealistic lyrics that reject middle-class conformity. “Jerusalem” is a well-meaning if awkward appeal for peace, while “Crossroads” is a touching nod to destinies that cannot be denied. An interview

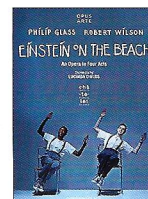


snippet with McLean talking about how he came to write the smash hit “Vincent (Starry, Starry Night)” —about the suicidal genius Vincent Van Gogh—precedes a beautiful rendition of that tune. “You’re My Little Darlin’,” written for McLean’s then-9-year-old daughter, is a golden daddy song right up there with Springsteen’s “Pony Boy.” The concert ends with “American Pie,” which sounds great, even if you’ve already heard it 15,000 times. One of the highlights of this set is McLean’s expressive covers of other songwriters’ material, including Marty Robbins’s brutally honest “You Gave Me a Mountain,” Roy Orbison’s magnificent “Crying,” and—unexpectedly—“It Was a Very Good Year,” an autumnal hit for Frank Sinatra. McLean is also joined by then-rising star Nanci Griffith for stellar duets on Buddy Holly’s “Raining In My Heart” and his own “And I Love You So.” Presented in stereo, extras include additional concert footage from the 1970s-1990s, and backstage clips from a 1975 Hyde Park concert. Highly recommended. (T. Keogh)

Einstein on the Beach

★★ ★ 1/2

(2014) 2 discs. 264 min. DVD or Blu-ray: \$39.99. Opus Arte (dist. by Naxos of America).



Although considered Philip Glass’s first opera, this mammoth 1976 work—clocking in at over four hours in this revival filmed at the Théâtre du Châtelet in Paris in 2014—is actually a huge piece of collaborative avant-garde performance art by the composer, the director-designer Robert Wilson, and dancer-choreographer Lucinda Childs. The series of nine tableaux, divided into four acts and connected by intermezzos called “knee plays,” contain occasional references to Einstein and atomic power (“On the Beach” recalls the title of Nevil Shute’s novel about the aftermath of a nuclear war), but the segments are basically slowly-moving live-action “paintings” by Wilson accompanied by typically propulsive, repetitive numbers by Glass, complete with vocal interjections consisting of nonsense syllables, numerical recitations, and short snatches of disconnected verse. Meaning may be beside the point, but the joint effect of the dazzling visuals and energetic music is hypnotic. This set preserves the 2012 remounting that toured for several years across five continents, including the Paris stop. Overseen by Glass, Wilson, and Childs, the performance can be considered definitive, and the stamina and precision of the company—which includes the Lucinda Childs Dance Company and the Philip Glass Ensemble along with soloists, all under the baton of conductor Michael Riesman—are nothing short of staggering. An excellent staging of a cutting-edge work of art from the ‘70s, *Einstein on the Beach* is presented in DTS 5.1 (DTS-HD 5.1 on the Blu-ray release)