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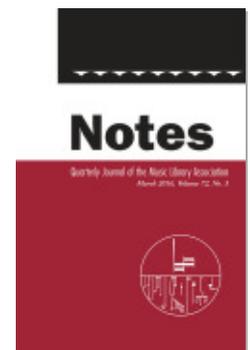
Barbara Hannigan: Concert Documentary by Barbara Hannigan, and: Lulu
by Alban Berg (review)

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VIDEO REVIEWS

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This semiannual column presents reviews of significant video releases of interest to the field of music and to music libraries, as well as occasionally providing review essays. All genres of music in all video formats will be covered, with a preference given to those in DVD. All Web sites accessed 30 September 2015.

Barbara Hannigan: Concert Documentary. DVD. Barbara Hannigan / Mahler Chamber Orchestra. Directed by Michael Beyer and Barbara Seiler. [Leipzig]: Accentus Music, 2014. ACC20327. \$24.99.

Alban Berg. Lulu. DVD. Paul Daniel / Orchestre Symphonique de la Monnaie. Directed by Krzysztof Warlikowski. With Barbara Hannigan, Natascha Petrinsky, Frances Bourne, Tom Randle, Dietrich Henschel, Charles Workman, Pavlo Hunka, Ivan Ludlow, et al. [Paris]: BelAir Classiques, 2014. BAC109. \$29.99.

Known for her vocal prowess and remarkable musicianship, Canadian coloratura soprano Barbara Hannigan demonstrates, in these two DVDs, that she is as comfortable performing Ligeti's works as Mozart arias, but also just as comfortable conducting an orchestra as she is performing daring renditions of *Lulu*, on pointe, or *Mysteries of the Macabre*. The Concert Documentary DVD comes out of the 2014 Lucerne Festival and features the Mahler Chamber Orchestra. The program includes: Gioachino Rossini's Overture to *La scala di seta*; Wolfgang Amadeus Mozart's *Vado, ma dove? O Dei!*, *Un moto di gioia*, and *Misera, dove son?*; Gabriel Fauré's *Pelléas et Mélisande*, op. 80; and Györgi Ligeti's *Concert Românesc* and *Mysteries of the Macabre*. The 2014 release of *Lulu* was filmed during the 19 and 26 October 2012 performances of the opera at La Monnaie in Brussels, under the direction of Krzysztof Warlikowski and baton of Paul Daniel, featuring Hannigan in the title role.

Hannigan's performance of Ligeti's *Mysteries of the Macabre* is the highlight of the Concert Documentary DVD. Ligeti's *Mysteries*, three arias from his opera *Le Grand Macabre* (1974–77/96), was prepared for soprano and piano in 1992 by the composer and arranged by Elgar Howarth. Hannigan has made a name for herself with her twist on *Mysteries*, documented on

this DVD by her experience as conductor, vocalist, and actress. The program as a whole highlights Hannigan's vocal color and agility, but her Ligeti is a "must see" for vocalists or audiences interested in a performance representing the highest understanding of the intimate details of this masterpiece of twentieth-century music. This DVD offers an important look at what it means to be a versatile musician; Hannigan excels in conducting Ligeti's little-performed *Concert Românesc* (1951/rev. 1996) along with performing and conducting Fauré, Mozart, and Rossini.

For those who like to "get to know" performing artists, the documentary portion of the DVD, "I'm a creative animal," provides footage of Hannigan discussing her background; views of her as a working, practicing, and a teaching musician; and scenes from her rehearsals at the 2014 Lucerne Festival as a conductor and as she prepared to perform Unsuk Chin's "Le Silence des Sirènes" in the same summer. Hannigan's hunger for new musical experiences and commitment to improving her artistic craft is evident in every scene.

Krzysztof Warlikowski's 2012 production of Alban Berg's *Lulu*, featuring Hannigan as the title character, is provocative and at times, salacious. While all of the lead characters offer remarkable performances of their roles, especially Dietrich Henschel as

Dr. Schön/Jack the Ripper and Charles Workman as Alwa, Warlikowski's production sensationalizes material that is already, by its nature, grotesque and sexy. He chose to infantilize Lulu, making her a victim of circumstances. He draws a literal relationship, on stage, by employing adolescent ballet dancers to represent the adult characters; this at times falls flat, and becomes extraneous stage fodder. Hannigan's timbre and acting, however, sell the victimized, childlike aspect of Lulu. Her remarkable performance has her singing some of the most difficult vocal lines in Acts 1 and 2 on pointe, or while mimicking sex acts.

The importance Warnikowski places on culturally coded references detracts from the material at hand, and often from the stellar performance by the performers. The use of classical ballet connects Lulu to Odette/Odile of *Swan Lake* as well as Darren Arnofsky's 2010 film *Black Swan*, associating the downfall of Lulu to the main character in the film, who loses her grip on reality and begins living a nightmare. The second inference (and perhaps more tasteless link to contemporary culture) includes the visual cues of the Painter "Joker" made famous in Batman films, but specifically as portrayed in Christopher Nolan's *The Dark Night* trilogy—the role some speculate as

having influence toward actor Heath Ledger's suicide.

In the opera we see the Painter, Tom Randle, during his demise, depicted as a modern artist ranting and raving to a video camera, projecting, on a large video screen used throughout the opera, its close-up images to the audience, losing his mind due to his muse Lulu. He paints his face with the Joker-esque makeup, including the deranged smile, and begins to unravel until his suicide, which we see on stage and also on the video projection. A provocative production like this has its place among numerous other versions of the opera, which has been receiving somewhat of a revival since the early 2000s, because Hannigan, Henschel, and Randle are remarkable vocalists delivering quality performances in spite of the distracting staging.

The two DVDs, featuring Barbara Hannigan, highlight a vocalist who welcomes "difficult" roles and performs with agility and clarity of sound. Good for vocalists and opera enthusiasts alike, these DVDs, give us a new view on what it means to be a versatile performing musician.

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Aribert Reimann. *Lear*. DVD. Simone Young / Philharmoniker Hamburg and Chorus of Staatsoper Hamburg. With Bo Skovhus, Katja Piweck, Hellen Kwon, Siobhan Stagg, Andrew Watts. Halle/Saale, Germany: ArtHaus Musik, 2015. 109063. \$29.99.

Aulis Sallinen. *King Lear*. DVD. Okko Kamu / Orchestra and Chorus of Finnish National Opera. With Matti Salminen, Taina Piira, Satu Vihavainen, Lilli Paasikivi, Jorma Hynninen. Helsinki: Ondine, 2015. ODV4010. \$29.99.

Of all the operas which never moved beyond the planning stage, Giuseppe Verdi's *King Lear* will probably head anyone's list as our greatest loss. Except for a forgotten work performed in 1937 by an obscure Italian composer with close ties to the Fascist party, no one seems to have taken on Shakespeare's monumental tragedy until the last quarter of the 20th century, when two composers of international reputation took it on – Aribert Reimann in 1978, and Aulis Sallinen in 2000.

Reimann's *Lear* was written for Dietrich Fischer-Dieskau and first performed in Munich. Since that time it has received approximately thirty productions around the world, possibly unique for a post-World War II opera. The reason, however, is clear: Reimann's score shows a dramatic sensitivity which is lacking in so many contemporary operas, and the title role is an outstanding vehicle for a star baritone. The dense orchestral textures are chosen carefully for each character and situation. The