



Gregory Berg

The first review in this installment of the Media Gallery is of an art song collection titled *Force of Nature* by soprano Emily Albrink that she created as a memorial to her mother, pianist Nancy Albrink. It features song cycles by Rene Orth, Nailah Nombeko, Steve Rouse and Jake Heggie. The second review is of *Renée Fleming: Greatest Moments at the Met*, which offers up excerpts from seventeen of the operas she has performed at the Met. The third and final review is an overview of offerings by the streaming service BroadwayHD.

**Force of Nature.** Emily Albrink, soprano; Kathleen Kelly, piano. Lexicon Classics LC2303; 57:08.)

Rene Orth: *Weave Me a Name*: “Beginnings,” “One of Nine Children, Your (Wild) Grandmother,” “The Return,” “The Plaits,” “Your Turn,” “The Single Mother,” “Handiwork.” Nailah Nombeko: *Many Facets of Womanhood*: “Be brave, be bold, be free,” “Time to take this Leap,” “How do I keep it all together?” Steve Rouse: *Mor-reale Monologues*: “I Know I Look

Good,” “Thank You,” “Can You Keep a Secret?” “Rest Now,” “I Love This Song.” Jake Heggie: *Force of Nature*: “Force of Nature,” “Space Mountain,” “Now I See You.”

Out of sorrow and loss can emerge tremendous beauty, and that is most certainly the case with the recording at hand. A note from soprano Emily Albrink tells us of the heartbreaking loss she experienced back in 2017 with the sudden death of her mother, Nancy Albrink, who was just sixty-five years old. Compounding the pain of the loss was the fact that Emily Albrink was pregnant with her second child at the time. To have the promise of new life intermingled with the brutal reality of a life ended far too soon must have been all but unbearable. Emily Albrink ultimately confronted the loss by creating *Force of Nature*, a recording of striking beauty and poignancy that is a fitting tribute to a remarkable woman and fine musician.

Nancy Helen Groetzinger Albrink had been a powerful musical presence in Louisville, Kentucky for many years as a formidably gifted pianist and pedagogue. She helped create and performed with the Ceruti Chamber Players and was the founder and artistic director of The Academy of Music at St. Francis. She was a highly regarded church musician as well. She was also a devoted mother to Emily, as well as one of her chief musical inspirations and most frequent collaborators. In fact, one can go to YouTube and view several videos of mother and daughter making music together, with Emily singing and Nancy expertly accompanying her at the piano. These are precious and poignant mementos of a close musical partnership forged in devotion and love.

Although it was the death of Nancy Albrink that was the primary catalyst for this project, it is meant to be more than a memorial to her. “For centuries,” says the soprano in the liner notes, “the canon of classical song has not reflected the female experience—particularly of mothers—with the same breadth and variety of expression that it has granted the experience of men.” Sadly, even when the experience of women has been explored in art song, it has often been squarely through the lens of male observers or framed in terms of how women relate to men; Robert Schumann’s *Frauenlieben und Leben* is a perfect example. These four newly commissioned song cycles are intended to widen the scope of art song to encompass more of the experience of women in far more authentic fashion.

The disc opens with Rene Orth’s *Weave Me a Name*, a cycle of seven songs that recently won the 2023 NATS Art Song Composition Award (although evidently the award was granted too recently for it to be referenced in the liner notes). It is a captivating work in which the piano part is every bit as beautiful as the vocal lines. The texts by Jeanne Minahan are drawn from various stages in the life of her beloved grandmother. In this way, it somewhat resembles the aforementioned Schumann cycle, but with a much more expansive and discerning understanding of what a woman might experience in life and love. The musical language grows more daring and complex as the cycle proceeds, as though to reflect the reality of our rich yet challenging lives. It culminates with “Handiwork,” a remarkable song that opens with the words “marvels as yet uncounted” and proceeds to recount just some of the simple, quiet miracles that make life worth living.

Nailah Monbeko's *The Many Facets of Womanhood* probes even more deeply into the daily experience of women, courtesy of the illuminating poetry of Mary McCallum, a gifted New Zealand writer who actually cofounded a publishing house when she was in her fifties. McCallum has an uncanny ability to give voice to the deepest vulnerabilities with which most people contend for so much of their lives, but she also calls us to confront those vulnerabilities and ultimately rise above them. The refrain of the first song says it well:

They say pressure makes a diamond  
But that's not what you need  
The only weight there should be  
Is to be true to yourself  
Be brave be bold be free

This song cycle covers an amazing amount of emotional ground over the course of just three pieces, but one is left wishing that it went on even longer. One might also wish that Nombeko's colorful musical settings were written with more attention to making these texts understandable. Nevertheless, this is a moving and deeply affecting work.

A pleasant surprise in this release is the song cycle *Morreale Monologues* by Steve Rouse, a composer who seems to have devoted most of his time and talents to instrumental rather than vocal music. His expert settings of these five vividly personal poems leave us hoping that he will follow this with many more song cycles. The texts are by Vin Morreale Jr., who is actually best-known as a screenwriter and playwright. There is an expressive directness in his writing that is an effective counterpoint to some of the more poetic lyrics to be found in this collection, and Rouse's musical settings work wonderfully.

The fourth and final song cycle gives this disc its title and also serves as the most direct tribute to the soprano's mother. *Force of Nature* by Jake Heggie features words contributed by Emily Albrink as well as her piano collaborator, Kathleen Kelly. At the heart of this cycle is the deeply poignant experience that so many of us have of not fully understanding and appreciating a cherished loved one until they are gone. As if to leaven such a deeply moving lesson, the middle movement is a rollicking musical depiction of a family's visit to the famous Disney ride known as "Space Mountain," complete with two childish temper tantrums theatrically conveyed by both singer and pianist. It is a perfect way to underscore the message that to be a loving mother (or father, for that matter) requires an almost superhuman amount of patience along with wisdom, strength of will, and a bottomless well of love. Heggie is one of our most revered composers and he has crafted a small masterpiece with this three-song cycle that clearly demonstrates his exceptional gifts. What is especially lovely about these three songs is how they seem to have been woven from the same fabric, yet each makes its own indelible and unique musical statement. It is a perfect finale for this marvelous disc.

It should come as no surprise that these song cycles so beautifully suit the talents of the gifted soprano who commissioned them and for whom they were lovingly crafted. Emily Albrink possesses a voice of shimmering, radiant beauty which she uses with consummate skill and musicality. Kathleen Kelly proves to be a splendid collaborator at the piano, dispatching even the most demanding songs with astonishing ease. The technical quality of these recordings is sterling. There

are liner notes by both the soprano and pianist as well as texts to all of the songs. The only thing missing is background information about the four composers.

This is among the finest recordings of newly composed art songs to be released in the last several decades. Somewhere, Nancy Albrink must be smiling down with justifiable pride and gratitude at such a marvelous and moving memorial.

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**Renée Fleming: Greatest Moments at the Met.** Renée Fleming, soprano; Cecilia Bartoli, Heidi Grant Murphy, soprano; Susan Graham, Wendy White, mezzo-soprano; Richard Leech, Massimo Giordano, tenor; Dimitri Hvorostovsky, Nathan Gunn, Alan Opie, baritone; Samuel Ramey, bass; Metropolitan Opera Chorus; Donald Palumbo, chorus master; Metropolitan Opera Orchestra; James Levine, Julius Rudel, Jesus Lopez-Cobos, Jiri Belohlavek, James Conlon, Bruno Campanella, Valery Gergiev, Patrick Summers, Riccardo Frizza, Andrew Davis, Semyon Bychkov, Christoph Eschenbach, Marco Armiliato. (Decca 485-3569; 66:06, 77:42.)

Mozart: "E Susanna non vien . . . Dove sono," "Cosa mi narri . . . Sull'aria." (*Le Nozze di Figaro*); "Credete? Ah no, mio bene . . . Non mi dir" (*Don Giovanni*). Strauss: "Marie Theres" (*Der Rosenkavalier*); "Das war sehr gut, Mandryka" (*Arabella*). Verdi: "Era piu calmo . . . Piangea cangando . . . Ave Maria" (*Otello*); "Ah! Dite alla giovine . . . Imponete" (*La Traviata*). Massenet: "Obéissons quand leur voix appelle . . . Toi! Vous! . . . N'est-ce plus ma main que cette main presse" (*Manon*); "Ah

je suis seule . . . Dis-moi que je suis belle" (*Thaïs*). Charpentier: "Depuis le jour" (*Louise*). Gounod: "Alerte! Alerte! Ou vous êtes perdus" (*Faust*). Lehár: "Hello, here's a soldier bold" (*The Merry Widow*). Rossini: "Dove son io? . . . Fug gi! . . . È ver, god'è quest' anima" (*Armida*). Tchaikovsky: "O! Kak mnye tyazhelo!" . . . "Onegin! Ya togda molozhe" (*Eugene Onegin*). Handel: "Mio caro bene" (*Rodelinda*). Bellini: "Col sorriso d'innocenza" (*Il Pirata*). Floyd: "Ain't it a Pretty Night!" "That's mighty pretty singin,' Susannah." (*Susannah*). Britten: "Embroidery in childhood was a luxury of idleness" (*Peter Grimes*). Korngold: "Glück, das mir verblieb" (*Die tote Stadt*).

One of the happiest developments during Peter Gelb's tenure at the Metropolitan Opera has been the contractual breakthroughs that have allowed widespread commercial release of many noteworthy live performances from the Met. In addition to more than two dozen complete opera performances, the Met has also released a number of compilation albums that have drawn upon its rich archives. Among them have been three releases that celebrated the legacy of a trio of exceptionally significant singers. 2011 saw the release of *Anna Netrebko: Live at the Metropolitan Opera*, which was issued to celebrate her first decade as a Met artist; this single disc featured her in all nine roles that she had sung at the house during that time. Three years later came *Domingo at the Met: Anniversary Edition*, a lavish three-disc set in honor of the 45th anniversary of Plácido Domingo's Met debut. The tenor-turned-baritone would go on to surpass the half-century mark in leading roles at the Met, an unprecedented accomplishment

in the company's long history. The third release, *Leontyne Price at the Met*, was issued in 2021 to mark the sixtieth anniversary of her triumphant Met debut. This two-disc compilation encompassed nearly all of the roles she performed at the Met over the course of twenty-four years. It is important to underscore that these were not collections of extant studio recordings already well-known to fans of these singers; rather, these were recordings drawn specifically from Metropolitan Opera broadcasts that captured these artists in live performance. Interestingly, the Met careers of both Netrebko and Domingo were abruptly ended due to offstage controversies. The Met severed ties with Netrebko over her reluctance to denounce Vladimir Putin in the wake of Russia's invasion of Ukraine; arbitrators eventually ordered the company to pay reparations to the soprano for cancelled performances. The Met's dismissal of Plácido Domingo over allegations of sexual misconduct signaled the sudden and shocking end to a career with the company that had lasted just over half a century. Price's Met career suffered no such fate, of course, but her relationship with Met management was famously rocky over disagreements about repertoire and her insistence on limiting her Met performances to a precious few.

Now comes a tribute to an artist who has enjoyed triumphant successes with nearly every major opera company on the planet, but whose artistic home has remained the Metropolitan Opera and to which she has been a steadfast and irreplaceable presence. *Renée Fleming: Greatest Moments at the Met* is a two-disc showcase of the exceptional depth and breadth of this remarkable artist's career at the Met. Excerpts from seventeen of the operas

in which she has sung at the Met are presented here, along with a couple of treasurable concert excerpts featuring arias from operas not performed by the company in quite some time.

Just over two decades (1994–2015) of the soprano's Met career are highlighted here, and the release emphatically lives up to its billing by its inclusion of nearly all of her finest successes, save for some regrettable omissions, one of the most puzzling of which is John Corigliano's *The Ghosts of Versailles*, in which Fleming essayed the role of Rosina. Something from this fascinating and bewitching score (commissioned by the Met itself) would have been a welcome taste from the soprano's first year with the company. It would also have been nice if room had been made for Fleming's performance in Richard Strauss' *Capriccio*, an opera for which she was ideally suited. Finally, there is nothing here from *The Hours*, the modern masterpiece with which Fleming rejoined the company in such spectacular fashion. This marked a twofold triumph for Fleming: it was at her suggestion that the opera was created in the first place, and her performance of the central role of Clarissa was key to this opera's rousing success. A handful of other Met roles for Fleming—Pamina, Fiordiligi, Ilia—were never broadcast, so their exclusion from this release is understandable and unavoidable.

What remains is a veritable feast of splendid singing in which we can trace the soprano's artistic development and revel in her extraordinary versatility. The release begins appropriately enough with Countess Almaviva, the role with which Fleming made her assured Met debut as the last-minute substitute for the ailing Felicity Lott in the spring of 1991; the amusing description of the rather

harried circumstances of that performance are well worth reading in Mary Jo Heath's liner notes. That particular performance was not preserved, but a broadcast of the opera from 1998 yields treasures galore. We are treated to an extended sequence from the third act that includes "Dove sono," an aria with which Fleming is given ample opportunity to display her sovereign vocal technique and limitless breath support. The aria is followed by a charming performance of the duet "Sull'aria" in which she is memorably joined by superstar Cecilia Bartoli as Susannah. The other Mozart role included here is Donna Anna, as captured in a *Don Giovanni* performance from 2000. This performance of "Non mi dir" conveys far more emotional intensity and daring than her studio recordings of the same aria, and her vocalism is nothing short of spectacular.

Most Mozartian singers excel in the operas of Strauss as well, and Fleming has scored some of the most stirring successes of her career as Arabella and the Marschallin. From the former comes an excerpt from a 2001 performance that finds Fleming in exceptionally fine form. For the latter, the puzzling choice is made to bypass the act one monologue (for which Fleming is perfectly suited) in favor of the well-traveled trio from act three. Certainly there is nothing wrong with this sublime performance of it (in which she is joined by Susan Graham and Heidi Grant Murphy) but it is a little too crowded to be an ideal showpiece for our honoree.

A trio of French roles represent Fleming in three of her finest triumphs at the Met. Her performance as Manon marked a much-needed resurgence of an opera that had not received its due at the Met in quite some

time. Likewise, her traversal of the role of Thaïs helped modern audiences to a new appreciation of this complex and challenging score. Her Marguerite in Gounod's *Faust* may have been the greatest success of the three, but once again an odd choice has been made for what to include from it. Rather than treating us to her scintillating "Jewel Song" or to the exquisite love duet with the impassioned Richard Leech, we're instead given the hectic trio from the final act. Fleming manages its relentless tessitura with aplomb but it is by no means her finest moment in the opera. Perhaps this choice was made with an eye toward the clock.

Fleming has only sung two Verdi roles at the Met, but they are both showcased here in marvelous fashion. Some regard Desdemona as her finest role, and one would be hard pressed to find a finer performance of the "Willow Song" and "Ave Maria" than this 2008 performance conducted by Semyon Bychkov. In a fiendishly difficult scene in which many skilled sopranos have come to grief, Fleming is utterly flawless. But her performance here is about far more than managing challenges or avoiding mishaps. We find ourselves immersed in Desdemona's acute heartbreak and sense of dread, thanks to the soprano's open-hearted honesty. As for Violetta, the showy aria that ends act one has been eschewed in favor of the sorrowful act two confrontation between Violetta and Germont. Fleming is memorably partnered by baritone Dimitri Hvorostovsky in a performance that surely rivals any in recent memory.

Fleming and Hvorostovsky achieve comparable greatness in the final scene from a 2007 performance of *Eugene Onegin* that was part of the first season of HD simulcasts from the

Met. What is particularly remarkable is the extent to which Fleming is the baritone's equal in her grasp of style as well as mastery of the Russian language. It is a triumphant success. So is the soprano's marvelous performance of the title role of Dvorak's *Rusalka*, from which the lovely "Song to the Moon" has been a staple of Fleming's recitals and concerts. It's interesting how much more intense the aria becomes when heard in context of the opera and the story it tells. It was Czech soprano Gabriela Benacková who introduced Met audiences to the opera in 1993, but it is Fleming who will be most indelibly linked with Dvorak's enigmatic water sprite in the minds of Met fans.

*Bel canto* has been the realm in which Fleming's successes have been most contested, and her singing in Bellini's *Il Pirata* and Rossini's *Armida* may not be everyone's idea of how this music is meant to be sung. The long, supple lines of Bellini's music tend to bring out the droopiness for which the soprano is often criticized, and this particular performance is no exception. As for "È ver, god'è quest'anima" from Rossini's *Armida*, it is capably performed, but Fleming makes it sound like hard work, thanks to her rather mannered and self-conscious approach. With the aria from Handel's *Rodelinda*, the soprano finds herself on far more congenial ground, singing with unforced ease that is entirely convincing.

There is no contesting her magnificent singing of "Ain't it a pretty night" from Carlisle Floyd's radiant *Susannah*. Fleming's technical poise allows her the freedom to sculpt these wide-ranging phrases with heartfelt expressiveness and elegant beauty. Especially remarkable is the way in which she manages to spin the lengthy

final phrase “and cover us all in one big blanket” in one breath. It is one thing to achieve such a feat in a recording studio where multiple takes and editing wizardry can be employed; it is quite another to achieve this in live performance. Right after this we can hear Fleming go toe to toe with Samuel Ramey’s Reverend Olin Blitch in a moment from their blazing act two confrontation. Ramey (who fully deserves a Met tribute recording of his own) is in stupendous form, hurling out waves of burly sound as only he can, but it is Fleming’s ability to not back down, vocally or otherwise, that makes this scene so shattering. What a pity that the Met did not telecast one of these *Susannah* performances from 1999; it amounts to a priceless opportunity squandered.

Similarly beautiful and impressive is Fleming’s performance of the character Ellen Orford’s “Embroidery Aria” from Britten’s *Peter Grimes*. Has there ever been a soprano who could encompass this aria’s technical challenges so assuredly while also embodying its poetic essence? It is a shame that this role proved to be a rather infrequent venture for her; it was an ideal vehicle for her both vocally and expressively. Just below this exalted level is her assumption of the role of Hanna Glawari in Franz Lehar’s *The Merry Widow*. This is the latest performance (2015) on this release, but the beauty of Fleming’s voice and the solidity of her vocal technique is as solid as ever. One would only wish that she could equal the textual clarity delivered by her scene partner, baritone Nathan Gunn. He manages to sing beautifully while rendering every word with perfect clarity; Fleming, by contrast, delivers several entire phrases as incomprehensible gibberish.

One of the best things about this release is the inclusion of two arias from gala concerts that find Fleming in supreme form. In 1996, the Metropolitan Opera honored music director James Levine’s 25th anniversary with a lavish gala that featured nearly every major singer associated with the company. Fleming, just five years into her Met career, was the only singer granted three performances on that concert; it was an unmistakable indication of her central position with the company. Alongside performances of the Sextet from *Don Giovanni* and the Trio from *Der Rosenkavalier*, Fleming also delivered an almost unbearably luxurious performance of “Depuis le jour” from Charpentier’s *Louise*, an opera that the Met has not performed since 1948. Thirteen years later, the Met celebrated its own 125th anniversary with a sprawling gala in which many of the singers appeared in facsimiles of historic costumes worn by illustri-

ous artists of the past. The final solo of the evening was given to Fleming, and those who were there will never forget the sight of her stepping in front of the Met’s curtain in a replica of the gown worn by Maria Jeritza when she performed in Korngold’s *Die tote Stadt* back in 1921. Fleming proceeded to offer up an utterly sublime performance of “Marietta’s Lied” that one can scarcely imagine being equaled, let alone surpassed. It is the ideal finale for this tribute to one of the finest artists of our time.

The liner notes by Mary Jo Heath are fascinating and enlightening. They imply, without quite coming out and saying it, that Fleming had a very direct hand in the selection of what was included on these two discs. The fact that several of the operas are highlighted with duets or trios rather than solo arias may be a reflection of Fleming’s collaborative spirit. Background information is

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given on each of the highlighted operas and their place in the soprano's career. There is a moving final section in which Fleming extends lavish and entirely deserved praise to the Metropolitan Opera and Chorus and to the Met itself. Completing the twenty-page booklet are gorgeous photos that show Fleming as the Countess, Hanna Galwari, Marie, Tatyana, Rusalka, and the Marschallin. There are no texts or translations, but that is all that is missing from this magnificent release.

### BROADWAY HD

Broadway HD is a media company that was founded by Stewart Lane and Bonnie Comley, two Tony Award-winning theatrical producers who were interested in filming noteworthy live theatrical productions and sharing them digitally with a much wider audience. They were able to broker agreements with all seventeen of the unions, guilds and associations that present Broadway and off-Broadway performances; these agreements facilitate the compensation for the participants in the performances in question. They made headlines with their 2016 live stream of a performance of *She Loves Me* at Studio 54, the first live stream of a Broadway show, and have gone on to produce other live streams of various shows and concerts.

Broadway HD has now entered the rapidly widening arena of on-demand digital streaming with a service that is sharing (as of this writing) roughly two hundred forty offerings of musicals, spoken plays, concerts, documentaries and more that subscribers to the service can enjoy without limit. The vast majority of what is available

here cannot be found anywhere else (outside the realm of piracy), aside from authorized excerpts.

The most extensive offerings on Broadway HD are not musicals but rather spoken plays. More than one hundred of them can be viewed, and they range from towering classics to groundbreaking new works. Shakespeare fans have much to enjoy with *Antony and Cleopatra*, *Loves Labour's Lost*, *As you like it*, *Hamlet*, *Henry V*, *Henry VIII*, *Julius Caesar*, *King Lear*, *Macbeth*, *Romeo and Juliet*, *King John* and *Othello*. Several of these works can be viewed in more than one production, and opera fans may be especially interested in a 1990 *Othello* production by the Royal Shakespeare Company featuring well-known operatic bass Willard White in the title role opposite the Iago of Sir Ian McKellen. Among the most precious treasures to be found here is the 1966 TV movie adaption for CBS of Arthur Miller's Pulitzer Prize-winning masterpiece *Death of a Salesman*. The production reunited Lee J. Cobb and Mildred Dunnock, who were the leads in the play's world premiere seventeen years earlier. The opportunity to see these two theatrical legends in their finest roles is a priceless privilege.

Alongside all of the Shakespeare, plays by O'Neill, Miller, and Noel Coward are examples of contemporary theater at its finest. Not to be missed is Martin Zimmerman's unsettling one-woman show *On the Exhale*, in which a single mother tries to confront the unimaginable heartbreak of losing her only child in a school mass shooting. It is nothing less than shattering. Similarly moving is Paula Vogel's award-winning 2015 play *Indecent*, which is based on the true story of Sholem Asch's *God of Vengeance*, that opened on Broadway in 1923 to such

controversy that most of the cast was arrested on obscenity charges.

One might ask, why open this section about Broadway HD by reviewing spoken performance in a journal devoted to the art of singing? An answer is: as singers and teachers of singing, we are engaged in one of the most profound acts of communication, and there is no way to calculate how much we can learn from the practitioners of spoken theater. Broadway HD grants its subscribers remarkable access to a wide array of theatrical performances, the vast majority of which are of the highest rank.

Nearly seventy musicals can be viewed on Broadway HD, and its well-stocked shelves include such beloved classics as *42nd Street*, *An American in Paris*, *Cats*, *Into the Woods*, *Miss Saigon*, *Show Boat*, *Pippin*, *Godspell*, and *The Sound of Music*. Subscribers can encounter Angela Lansbury's and George Hearn's definitive performances in Sondheim's *Sweeney Todd* or drink in the extraordinary grandeur of the Royal Albert Hall concert performance celebrating the 25th anniversary of Andrew Lloyd Webber's *Phantom of the Opera*. Among the modern works available for viewing are *Kinky Boots*, *Little Women*, *Billy Elliot*, *Title of Show*, *The Last Five Years*, and *Falsettos*. Some intriguing but rather obscure works can be seen as well. They include *Allegiance*, which is based on Star Trek actor George Takei's experience in the Japanese-American internment camps during World War Two. (Takei himself is part of the cast and acquits himself surprisingly well.) Also worth investigating is a 2013 musical adaption of James Jones' award-winning novel *From Here to Eternity*. Sir Tim Rice based his libretto on the uncensored version of the novel that had



just been released a couple of years earlier. It included certain gay themes that the original publisher had deemed inappropriate for a mainstream novel; Stuart Brayson has crafted a compelling and imaginative score. And for something truly out of the ordinary, seek out a recent off-Broadway show titled *Space Dogs* that was inspired by the story of Laika, the first dog to be sent into space. It is just the sort of off-beat fare that makes off-Broadway so fun and fascinating to explore.

In the sprawling world of musical theater, seventy works represent just the tip of an enormous iceberg. One will look in vain for *Oklahoma*, *My Fair Lady*, *The Music Man*, *Fiddler on the Roof*, *Guys and Dolls*, *South Pacific*, *The Producers*, *Company*, and many other beloved classics. Such modern-day masterworks as *Hamilton*, *Come From Away* and *Light in the Piazza* are missing as well. Moreover, certain works are only present in disappointing versions. Chief among them is Lerner and Loewe's *Camelot*, which is seen only in the deeply disappointing film version starring Richard Harris and Vanessa Redgrave. *Gypsy* is also presented in a studio film version rather than a live staged performance,

but at least it features the charismatic Bette Midler as Mama Rose.

Beyond the musicals and plays, Broadway HD includes outstanding entries from the worlds of ballet and opera. The fifteen ballets include five magnificent productions by the brilliant Sir Matthew Bourne (who prefers the term "dance theatre works") with his New Adventures company. The latter features ten operas that range from standard fare such as *Don Giovanni* and *Nabucco* to modern scores such as Jake Heggie's *Moby Dick* and Charles Wuorinen's *Brokeback Mountain*. Rounding out the offerings are twenty-eight concerts and ten documentaries. There are also a few odd entries such as four Christmas episodes from The Carol Burnett Show and a Christmas special by country singer Glen Campbell. Just what those are doing here is anybody's guess.

Perhaps the single most serious shortcoming to Broadway HD is how difficult it is to navigate through each performance. Unlike "Met Opera On Demand," which divides each performance into clearly titled chapters, Broadway HD offerings are presented in a single long file. Moreover, the fast forward and rewind functions do not visually indicate exactly where one is

in the performance. Consequently, if one wants to find a particular moment—such as Nathan Gunn's powerful singing of Billy's Soliloquy from *Carousel*—one must be prepared for more than a little frustration.

Aside from that technical matter, Broadway HD has a great deal to offer to fans of both theater and musical theater, and it's likely that it will have expanded its offerings by the time this review sees print. That is something for all of us to be excited about. Visit [broadwayhd.com](http://broadwayhd.com) for more information.

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