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Gottfried Helnwein and the Dreaming Child ★★1/2

(2011) 72 min. DVD: \$27.95. First Run Features (avail. from most distributors).

In a cross-disciplinary pollination, Viennese-born artist Gottfried Helnwein—whose oversized canvasses present photographs of waiflike children in macabre, threatening, and grotesque poses (holding guns, bloodied, and sometimes appearing to be dead)—was selected as the guest production designer for an opera based on *The Dreaming Child*, a stage piece by Israeli writer and dramatist Hanoch Levin (who died in 1999) that similarly explores the innermost fears of a little girl, which chiefly focus on parental loss and nightmarish quasi-military authority figures. Helnwein says that his haunting imagery grew from the guilty silence—regarding the Holocaust—in which he grew up, leading to a fixation with the thousands of suffering and exploited children. The mounting of *The Dreaming Child* (in Tel Aviv and Los Angeles) witnesses some temper tantrums and kerfluffle (Israeli labor laws thwart the use of an age-correct child actress/vocalist). Although described as a kindred spirit to Helnwein, the celebrated Levin remains a shadowy figure here, and *The Dreaming Child* itself only comes across in fragments as a Cirque du Soleil-style oddity in Lisa Kirk Colburn's documentary, which mainly serves as a portrait of Helnwein. A seemingly levelheaded (despite his odd fashion sense) family man, Helnwein's work might easily strike many as transgressive voyeurism—some of it derives directly from forensic photos. The avant-garde opera becomes quite literally an art installation for him, leaving little doubt whose story this is. DVD extras include outtakes and an art gallery. A strong optional

purchase. Aud: C, P. (C. Cassidy)

Hava Nagila ★★★

(2012) 75 min., DVD: \$150; public libraries, \$350; colleges & universities. Katahdin Productions (avail. from www.havanagilamovie.com). PPR.

Humor and agreeable docu-schtick flavor this you-don't-have-to-be-Jewish-but-it-helps dissertation on the title tune. "Hava Nagila" is so thoroughly associated with Jewish culture and identity that some believe it dates to Old Testament times. But the song is actually a Ukrainian Hasidic melody from the 1800s, with 20th-century lyrics added by Zionist composer A.Z. Idelsohn (or, possibly, his adolescent protégé Moshe Nathanson—a lawsuit and royalties controversy followed, oy vey!). The upbeat, evocative song was popularized by Harry Belafonte, covered by Glen Campbell, parodied by Alan Sherman, and deliberately travestied by Bob Dylan. Serious Jewish musicologists still harbor a love-hate relationship with "Hava Nagila" and its kitschy associations (shown in Hollywood film clips ranging from *Thoroughly Modern Millie* to *Wedding Crashers*). Filmmaker Roberta Grossman uses "Hava Nagila" and its various iterations to portray the Jewish-assimilation experience and cultural resilience, right up to the YouTube era, in this entertaining film with a quirky interviewee list ranging from Leonard Nimoy to Connie Francis, along with illustrious rabbis, rebbes, and authors. Recommended. Aud: C, P. (C. Cassidy)

Lost and Sound ★★★

(2012) 76 min. DVD: \$295. Filmmakers Library. PPR.

Like the filmmaker herself, the hearing-impaired Britons in Lindsey Dryden's artful

Jedi Junkies ★★★

(2010) 73 min. DVD: \$19.95. Docurama (avail. from most distributors).

In the documentary subgenre of films about rabid fantasy fans, a handful have already been devoted to *Star Wars* followers, including *A Galaxy Far, Far Away* and *Starwoids*. Filmmaker Mark Edlitz's somewhat scattershot *Jedi Junkies* adds little that is new, but it entertains in a can-you-top-this? way. A few actors (Jeremy Bulloch, Ray Park, Peter Mayhew) make appearances at nostalgia conventions, and there is a fondly recalled encounter with Carrie Fisher, but this is mainly centered on the fans, who defend their obsession—noting that nobody considers team-sports backers or classic-car hobbyists to be so abnormal in their all-consuming preoccupations. Interviewees (besides a pair of psychologists) include members of a NYC school for light-saber fighting; hoarders of tie-in toys (right down to minute variations in molds and packaging); a metalworker who creates commissioned *Star Wars* weapons and props; a Sith villain rock band; and a man who attained renown for building a full-sized Millennium Falcon in his backyard—albeit as a short-lived prop for his "fan film" (and speaking of fan films, the documentary does feature some amusing excerpts). The sexy box art with a cosplayer attired as Princess Leia in her metal "slave" bikini outfit is not indicative of the main focus of this film, which should attract viewers for whom the force is strong. DVD extras include audio commentary by the director, deleted and extended scenes, and featurettes. Recommended. Aud: C, P. (C. Cassidy)



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