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Heaven in Sight ★★★

(2013) 100 min. DVD: \$19.99. Christian Faith Ministries (dist. by Vision Video).

In this video autobiography and concert, blind Christian pianist and composer Peter Jackson of Wales shares his story of faith and determination while also intermittently playing favorite hymns—as well as jazz and classical pieces—before a live audience in Fraserburgh, Scotland. We learn that Jackson lost his vision as a result of contracting measles, and since his parents felt ill-equipped to raise a sightless child, he was removed from home at the age of 2 and cared for by a social service agency. Struggling with sadness and feeling unloved, Jackson found salvation upon hearing his first piano notes—and a song about Jesus—when he was 4. Not only was the sound of the instrument revelatory, but also the message about a God who loved all boys and girls, including him. Talking about his education—which initially included prayers and learning to read and write Braille in equal measure—Jackson says that he felt a personal connection not just to God but also to teachers who were kind and lived their faith. Eventually, music lessons were added to his educational regimen, and during his teenage years he was playing parties and clubs, inspired by such greats as Fats Waller. Jackson also went through the normal rebellion of most teenagers, even moving away from God; but then returned to his religious roots with a fervor that led him to make ministry a full-time pursuit. Offering an inspiring account of an unusual spiritual journey, this is recommended. Aud: P. (C. Block)



such as families who no longer speak to them. One youthful mother's travails appear to consist of not being able to hail a taxi to accommodate her and a very large and colorful child's coupe (a tricycle with a cab). Despite taking on a topic worth exploring, the lack of context here makes this an optional purchase. Aud: C, P. (F. Gardner)

Brown Babies: The Mischlingskinder Story ★★★

(2013) 61 min. DVD: \$195; high schools & public libraries; \$295; colleges & universities. Transit Media. PPR.

The Allied conquest of Germany at the end of WWII led to the birth of approximately 100,000 illegitimate babies between German women and Allied occupation soldiers, almost 5,000 of whom were mixed-race "mischlingskinder" children, fathered by black servicemen. Filmmaker-narrator Regina Griffin finds multiple ironies in the lives of these innocent kids. Although the scandal of "brown babies" was culturally discomfiting to Aryan-blond Germans, it became appallingly clear (even to members of the Third Reich) that the U.S. was a mercilessly racist society, a place where such children would find no welcome either. A flawed heroine here is the late Mabel Grammer, a light-skinned Afro-American socialite who undertook a personal mission to place the unwanted children with accepting families. Unfortunately, her DIY adoption system had its own share of problems, and we meet siblings Dan and Sonja Cardwell, who went from Germany to a miserable existence as farm laborers in Maryland (Dan tells a particularly poignant story about his search for his true birth mother). Combining interviews and archival material, *Brown Babies* shines a light on a little-covered chapter from WWII. Recommended. Aud: C, P. (C. Cassidy)

mentary, *Thank God for Football!* chronicles the birth of soccer in the U.K., while also focusing on the Christian organizations that embraced—and helped develop—the game during its early years. Historian Peter Lupson tells the stories of 12 clubs in exhaustive detail with highlight footage sure to thrill aficionados. For example, viewers will learn about the origins of the Aston Villa club—one of the most winning teams—which started with Bible students at a Wesleyan chapel, who first played together on a cricket team (four of them were intrigued by a new thing called "association football" and decided to give it a go). Presented alongside the sports history but accounting for much less of the running time is a message about the importance of Christian faith, values, and worship to players and officials alike. Host and narrator Lupson appears on location, backed by archival footage, photographs, and drawings, as well as dramatic re-enactments. The chapters here can be played in their entirety, or accessed individually by the clubs, which include: Barnsley, Everton, Fulham, Liverpool, Manchester City, Southampton, Swindon Town, and Tottenham Hotspur. Recommended. Aud: P. (C. Block)

Through Lent & Easter Sunday with the Gospels of Matthew and John ★★★

(2013) 22 min. DVD: \$24.99. Oblate Media (dist. by Videos With Values). PPR. ISBN: 978-193214288-4.

This step-by-step overview of the importance of New Testament Gospels during the season of Lent (leading to Easter) begins with a reflection on the significance of Easter in Catholicism, noting that every other event in the church's annual life actually springs from Easter. Suggesting that Catholics will

get more out of the celebrations by understanding relevant Gospel passages, this guide explains the cycle of Gospel readings that take place during Lent, with specific purposes linked to different Sunday services. Along the way, viewers learn about the "scrutinies," rites tied to passages that encourage self-evaluation and offer reminders about temptation and the meaningfulness of Jesus's resurrection in the daily lives of Christians. Also touching on the need to renew Baptismal promises, the meaning of transfiguration, and the last days of Christ and his prophecy of "end times," this will serve as a solid springboard for group discussion or personal reflection. Recommended. Aud: P. (T. Keogh)

SOCIAL & POLITICAL ISSUES

Bittersweet Joke ★★1/2

(2011) 52 min. DVD: \$390. Icarus Films. PPR.

Claiming to be "the first film to show the real lives and faces of unwed mothers and their children in Korea," this well-intentioned effort from filmmaker Paik Yeonah nevertheless fails to quantify how South Korean society's treatment of single moms is markedly different from that in other places around the globe (even though the country is known for exporting babies for adoption worldwide). The young women whose stories are highlighted in *Bittersweet Joke* are bright, optimistic, funny, and opinionated, and they include activists in a nascent association established to fight for women's rights. But the documentary falls short in explaining what, exactly, are the obstacles they face, aside from social pressure expressed in various ways,

Building Babel ★★★1/2

(2012) 58 min. DVD: \$79.95; public libraries; \$295 w/PPR; colleges & universities. Seventh Art Releasing.

Director David Osit's fly-on-the-wall documentary centers on Sharif El-Gamal, a New York City real estate developer whose intention to build a Muslim community center in Lower Manhattan—two blocks from Ground Zero, where the World Trade Center collapsed following the 9/11 terrorist attack—caused local outrage. While El-Gamal is portrayed as a well-meaning and even affable philanthropist determined to stop the demonizing of Muslims in America, his harshest critics here regard him as tone deaf and insensitive to the pain of New Yorkers who lost loved ones on 9/11 (the fact that those naysayers are stereotyping an entire group of people as an enemy is an irony that is lost on them). Shot over two years, *Building Babel* captures the long process of moving this quixotic project along at its creator's mounting ex-