

Marion Lake Story: Defeating the Mighty Phragmite ★★★

(2014) 28 min. DVD: \$69: public libraries; \$59: high schools; \$199: colleges & universities. New Day Films (www.newday.com). PPR.

Greta Schiller's documentary centers on Marion Lake, a small body of water on Long Island with a big problem: namely, a tall, woody, invasive reed called phragmite has taken over, choking off native vegetation and ruining wildlife habitat. Getting rid of this invader, or at least checking its ravages, has pulled together the community of homeowners who live on or near Marion Lake—led by the fundraising of an indomitable woman named Lori Luscher, who won't stop until the project succeeds. As related by Luscher and others, this requires years of chopping back the grass—a backbreaking task—followed by careful watch and the pulling out of new growth with the aim of clearing enough ground to reintroduce native plants. Neighbors are rewarded as wildlife and birds reestablish themselves, and even raising money becomes easier as the residents notice the spectacular results and express their gratitude. Offering an uplifting example of how concerned citizens can make a big difference when they tackle something together, this is recommended. Aud: C, P. (F. Gardner)

The Story of Women and Art ★★1/2

(2014) 186 min. DVD: \$34.99. Athena (avail. from most distributors). SDH captioned. ISBN: 978-1-62172-292-2.



This three-part documentary series, originally broadcast on the BBC, takes on a truly fascinating subject—the challenges facing women artists—but proves to be disappointing. The main problem is that despite its comprehensive title, *The Story of Women and Art* limits itself to a handful of artists working in Western Europe from the Renaissance up through the early 20th century, with a belated hop over the Atlantic for a look at Georgia O'Keeffe's works. Hosted by historian Amanda Vickery, the series gives the false impression that only a few women were able to create paintings and sculptures of great value, and that the majority of their work is either poorly considered or not accessible for contemporary appreciation. It's certainly barely visible here—Vickery displays some of the works on her iPad but the camera rarely offers a contemplative gaze at the great paintings under discussion. Worse, Vickery steamrolls her way through art history, most egregiously limiting female contribution to the Impressionists' movement to Berthe Morisot while ignoring Marie Bracquemond and Mary Cassatt. The series also ignores non-white women who created art that achieved international acclaim, including the African-American sculptors Edmonia Lewis and Meta Vaux Warrick Fuller, Mexico's celebrated artist Frida Kahlo, Hopi-Tewa ceramist Nampeyo, and Japanese painter Uemura Shōen. An ambitious undertaking that nevertheless falls short, this is still a strong optional purchase given the general lack of titles on the subject. Aud: H, C, P. (P. Hall)

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Darcey Bussell: Darcey's Ballerina Heroines and A Ballerina's Life ★★★

(2014) 89 min. DVD: \$24.99. Opus Arte (avail. from most distributors).



Balletomanes will undoubtedly enjoy this BBC double feature with Darcey Bussell, who reigned as the prima ballerina of London's Royal Ballet for nearly 20 years before her retirement in 2007, and has since engaged in a variety of pursuits, including a stint as a judge on the BBC competition program *Strictly Come Dancing*. In *Darcey's Ballerina Heroines*, she serves as host and primary narrator for a brief history of ballet, from its origin at the French royal court in the 17th century through its embrace in Russia during the 19th and the emergence of English and American schools in the 20th, although director Ross MacGibbon