

as a hypocritically chaste and pious man who is overcome with sexual desire for someone whom he detests.

The greatest acclamation, however, goes to Disney's very wise choice in keeping Quasimodo "single." In a "happily-ever-after" world, the thought of marrying Quasimodo and Esmeralda must have crossed the writers' minds, as it certainly crossed the minds of the viewers. If Quasimodo in this film must be a hero rather than a tragic victim, at least he is one who is not compromised or complicated with a love interest. Unlike countless other Disney films, this hero doesn't go off into the sunset with his newly-acquired mate. At last, Disney is telling young people that they don't have to end up with Prince Charming or Princess Jasmine to be a hero! Quasimodo's real dream of being part of the people (beautifully expressed in Tim Hult's performance of the song "Out There") is realized in the end. In this way, Disney departs from the repetitive themes found in many of their past films.

True, Quasimodo is a hero rather than tragic figure in this film, but he lives in a world not entirely unlike that of Victor Hugo's creation. The film owes its richness to the genius of Victor Hugo, but its own boldness establishes itself as Hugo's worthy benefactor.

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### ***The Adventures of Dudley the Dragon.* TV Ontario (Dragon Tale Productions).**

Quietly, amidst the noise and confusion of children's TV shows, a gentle revolution has been taking place on TVO. This is the appearance of a series of productions which thoroughly engage, instruct, and impart cheerfulness to those children lucky enough to watch them. I count myself among these. Immobilized for the better part of a year by a disability, I have been forced to leave a university teaching career and find new activities around the home. After about six months virtually every hit TV show has lost its appeal, even the tragi-comic soaps for the uninitiated. One series of programs, however, has kept fresh — TVO's offerings for young children. Programs such as *Inquiring Minds*, *Polka Dot Door*, and the *Crawl Space* cluster near the noon slot where pre-schoolers, kindergarteners, kids home for lunch, and especially unemployed adults can enjoy them.

Foremost among the TVO offerings, in my own mind and among most children who watch, is *The Adventures of Dudley the Dragon*. The premise, a simple one, is of a not-so-magical, actually rather inept, dragon who goes through a series of adventures with a small group of children and various forest inhabitants. The children are, in fact, the heroes or protagonists in each adventure as they attempt to sort out their own feelings and values, and help Dudley decide on appropriate moral choices.

These are often concerning environmental responsibility or just the

good and bad aspects of growing up, of friendship and respect for others, and always involve Dudley's happy and lovable participation. On the darker side, some episodes can be positively scary for some children — those who have not had their sensibilities blown away by cartoon violence. Good theatre has always had the power of imagination and when subjects like Vernon the Toxin are encountered by Dudley, it is spooky — even for me. The complaint here is that of a good Hitchcock film — it is just done too well! The forest troll of some episodes may also transcend the scary boundary for some kids.

This is not just a children's program, for it excels in production values, music, story line and guest appearances. Notable on the series are Graham Greene's cameos as Mr. Crabby (Apple) Tree (he is outrageously funny), Diana Flack as the adventurous singing butterfly (and Venus Fly-Trap lady — a 1950s horn-rimmed glasses spin on the *Little Shop* character), Mary Walsh (of CBC's *This Hour Has 22 Minutes*) as a real Frog Princess (who still loves to eat flies and deals with prejudice and sexual stereotypes), Saul Rubinek as a spirited new version of the King of the Forest (*Oz's* Cowardly Lion), and a variety of Canadian character actors providing many delightful cameo roles.

The music for Dudley is spirited and adventurous and, of greatest significance to the young, singable. The sight of Dudley driving and singing "I love to drive my Big Red Car" is hilarious and drives home the message of needless air pollution as Dudley drives miles to deliver a handful of berries to Sammy the Frog. This particular program visits some of the major cities of Europe and the Mediterranean with a strong message of pollution and how the individual can help stop it. Dudley expresses his own opinion, of course, that it's all the *other* cars.

Variety and melody are the hallmarks of Dudley's music, while background themes emphasize harp and wind instruments. The number of songwriters for this show is impressive, as is its credited technical support.

As an anthropologist and archaeologist, I can hardly complain about Dudley and Company's moral judgment that taking treasure from ancient sites is not right. However, I love this series because I can be just what I am inside, a Big Kid. We all love adventure and light-heartedness, at least we should, and that is what Dudley provides best.

The series creator, and voice of Dudley, Alex Galatis, has done a marvellous thing for young Canadian children. He has given them songs, adventure, a sense of importance and participation, and most significantly, the view that adults can and should be both responsible and silly. In the grown-up real world, when famed interviewer Marg Delahantey of *This Hour Has 22 Minutes* can interview Prime Minister Jean Chretien in his office about golf protocol, *and* swoon on the floor just to be near Him, I am reassured that all will be right with the world and that Dudley's message, that silly *and* responsible is okay, rings true.

Largely through its innovative use of songs and live action adventure, the series has a universal appeal. Its appeal is both whimsical and direct, lyrical and lackadaisical. The emotional, intellectual, and moral involvement of children viewers is enhanced by an interactive adventure format with Dudley as the lovable and indecisive chief protagonist. High marks go to this series for

creative writing (stories and songs), production values, and general overall silliness. What kid could resist?

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### *Reviews in this issue / Ouvrages recensés*

- Adventures of Dudley the Dragon, The.* TV series, p. 93  
Aldana, Patricia (ed.). *Jade and Iron: Latin American Tales from Two Cultures*, p. 77  
Bailey, Linda. *Petula, Who Wouldn't Take a Bath*, p. 85  
Birdsell, Sandra. *The Town that Floated Away*, p. 68  
Caduto, Michael J. *Keepers of the Night: Native Stories and Nocturnal Activities for Children*, p. 82  
Doyle, Brian. *Uncle Ronald*, p. 67  
Drawson, Blair. *Flying Dimitri; Mary Margaret's Tree*, p. 86  
*Fly Away Home*. Film, p. 91  
Garay, Luis. *Pedrito's Day; The Long Road*, p. 77  
Heidbreder, Robert. *Eenie Meenie Manitoba: Playful Poems and Rollicking Rhymes*, p. 89  
*Hunchback of Notre Dame, The*. Film, p. 92  
Keens-Douglas, Richardo. *Freedom Child of the Sea*, p. 71  
Lesynski, Loris. *Ogre Fun*, p. 89  
MacIntyre, R.P. *Takes: Stories for Young Adults*, p. 69  
Milord, Susan (reteller). *Tales Alive*, p. 82  
Mollel, Tololwa M. *Big Boy*, p. 71  
Patiño, Gilberto Flores. *Esteban*, p. 75  
Quinlan, Patricia. *Night Fun*, p. 86  
Raeside, Adrian. *Dennis and the Fantastic Forest*, p. 89  
Raffi. *Everything Grows; Like Me and You; Rise and Shine; Tingalayo*, p. 84  
Shaw-MacKinnon, Margaret. *Tiktala*, p. 71  
Smith-Ayala, Emilie. *Marisol and the Yellow Messenger*, p. 71  
von Königslöw, Andrea Wayne. *Would You Love Me?*, p. 85  
Ward, Heather Patricia. *I Promise I'll Find You*, p. 85