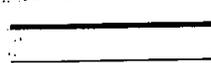


Hensen's puppets capture scary side of Alice's childhood

PASS THE POPCORN

In 1932, an elderly British widow, Alice Hargreaves, arrives in New York to participate in an academic function and finds herself engulfed by a mob of reporters and photographers. She's impatient with the intrusions and baffled by all the attention.

But the 80-year-old was once a 10-year-old who was regaled with



LOANNE ROGERS

fanciful stories by clergyman Charles Dodgson, who later published the stories as "Alice's Adventures in Wonderland" under his pen name of Lewis Carroll.

A Victorian dowerer, Hargreaves, played by Carol Browne, has accepted an invitation from Columbia University to speak at a celebration of the Lewis Carroll centenary. Despite her protests that she really doesn't remember much about Mr. Dodgson, childhood dreams and memories return when she is alone in her hotel room.

In "Dreamchild," Alice remembers the very slow fall into the hole.

Then the elderly woman is talking with the Mad Hatter, the March Hare and the Dormouse. Other times it's the precocious young Alice, played by a rather solemn, dark-haired Amelia Shankley, who is in Wonderland.

Other scenes recall young Alice with her family and Dodgson, who clearly had an inappropriate infatuation for the child. The film certainly raises questions about Dodgson and his impact on the young Alice's mother questions why Dodgson would confide so much in the child. The adult Alice remembers her mother burning all

the letters Dodgson had sent her and speculates she wouldn't have done that if there hadn't been something wrong.

As played by Ian Holm, Dodgson clearly is loveless for the child who he tries to woo with stories, presenting her with a first printing of his tales. He's a stuttering, shy man, jealous of the attention Alice receives from her mother and his rather odd character, who knows his infatuation with the child isn't proper or at least will never be what he wants.

For the first time, the elderly Alice confronts her long buried feelings

and memories about her experience with Dodgson, who called her the dreamchild. Her thoughts start to subtly surface when she talks pragmatically to reporters who want to talk about dreams. They aren't interested in her, Alice tells them, but the girl she was and who Dodgson made her out to be.

It's hard enough to be what I was at my age let alone what I never was," she says.

The film is rich and vividly made, with the story characters designed and operated by Jim Henson and his company. These aren't cuddly cut little figures, they capture the

scary edge that in one side of a child being lost in strange and dangerous land.

The subplot involves the elderly woman's companion and a young reporter, who for a sizeable commission sets her up to do some promotion. It's fun to see the imposing widow Hargreaves recording some rallo commercials.

Director Gavin Millar and screenwriter Dennis Potter took a historical footnote and have made a rich, fascinating film.

"Dreamchild" is available on cassette at local video stores.

DETROIT FILM THEATRE
Detroit Institute of Arts, 5200 Woodward Ave., Detroit, Call 832-2730 for information. \$5.

"Adam's Rib" (USSR — 1991), 7 and 9:30 p.m. Aug. 21-22 and 4 and 7 p.m. Aug. 23. Not to be confused with the Hepburn-Tracy comedy, this is one of the last films to come out of the former Soviet Union. The five-of-life comedy finds three women struggling to get along in a cramped urban apartment.

GOTHAM CITY CAFE
22848 Woodward Ave., Ferndale. Call 398-7430 for information. (Free)

"Repulsion" (Britain — 1965), 8 p.m. Aug. 20. Roman Polanski directed this psychological horror classic about a beautiful young woman (Catherine Deneuve) who goes crazy one weekend in her sister's apartment.

HENRY FORD CENTENNIAL LIBRARY
16301 Michigan Ave., Dearborn. Call 943-2037 for information. (Free)

"At War With the Army" (USA — 1969), 7 p.m. Aug. 17. In his first starring feature together, Dean Martin and Jerry Lewis join the

service. Fresher and funnier than their earlier later romps.

JEWISH COMMUNITY CENTER
151 N. Ton Mile, Oak Park. Call 967-4030. (Free)

"Mame!" (USA — 1938), 10 a.m. Aug. 18. In a film whose title translates to "The Little Mother," a young girl in a family of seven promises her dying mother that she will look after the family. Molly Pinot, the queen of Yiddish, was 40 at the time yet still takes on the role of a 12-year-old girl. As part of an ambitious series of Yiddish-language musicals, shown on video with subtitles.

MICHIGAN THEATRE
603 E. Liberty, Ann Arbor. Call 668-8397 for information. (\$5; \$4 students and senior citizens)

"Casablanca" (USA — 1942), through Aug. 20 (call for show times). The 50th anniversary edition of the classic love story. Humphrey Bogart and Ingrid Bergman are back as better as ever. Rick Blaine, lovers with a past in Paris, in this newly struck drama.

"Pepe, Luci, Don" (Spain — 1980), through Aug. 20 (call for show times). Almodovar's first film, originally shot in 16mm, involves three women who get out to avenge

the sexual assault of Pepe. A whole land of outlandish characters pop up along the way.

"Broadway Bill" (USA — 1934), Aug. 21-28 (call for show times). The 1934 Frank Capra/Robert Riskin comedy has been unseen anywhere since 1949, rediscovered here in a brand new print. Warner Baxter plays a sporting life who leaves his family a fortune to race horses.

REDFORD THEATRE
17560 Lahar, Detroit. Call 637-2360 for information. (\$2.50)

"The Black Swan" (USA — 1942), 8 p.m. Aug. 21-22 (organ

overture begins at 7:30 p.m.). Tyrone Power washbuckles his way through this epic actor as Reinhold, a famous pirate of the Spanish Main. Maureen O'Hara and George Sauters also star.

STATE WAYNE THEATRE
35310 Michigan Ave., Wayne. All films play nightly Wednesday through Sunday. Call 326-4600 for show times. (\$2; \$1 students and senior citizens)

"Jesse James" (USA — 1939). Tyrone Power and Henry Fonda play outlaw brothers in this action-cr.

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