



THE SNAIL AND THE WHALE – Press Notes 2019

Magic Light Pictures presents

THE SNAIL AND THE WHALE

Based on the book by Julia Donaldson & Axel Scheffler

Directed by Max Lang, Daniel Snaddon

Starring Rob Brydon, Sally Hawkins, Dame Diana Rigg

© Magic Light Pictures Limited. 2019.

INTRODUCTION

THE SNAIL AND THE WHALE is based on the imaginative book written by Julia Donaldson and illustrated by Axel Scheffler, the UK's bestselling picture book team. It was first published by Macmillan Children's Books in 2003.

As the snail and the whale go on their journey, the film celebrates the wonderful richness and diversity of our natural world. The story gives power to voices that often go unheard and creates a sense of hope through action in times of difficulty.

The Snail and the Whale is Magic Light's seventh animated adaptation of a Donaldson & Scheffler picture book. Their previous films are established family classics; and the most recent, *Zog*, premiered on BBC One, Christmas Day 2018 to an audience of 8.8 million. Since then it has been awarded the Audience Award at New York International Children's Film Festival; Best Animation at Shanghai TV Festival Magnolia Awards; and nominated at Annecy International Animated Film Festival and the upcoming International Kids Emmys.

In 2016 Magic Light produced a two-part animated special based on Roald Dahl's *Revolting Rhymes*. The films were watched by over 10 million viewers for their first broadcast. The films garnered Magic Light's fourth nomination for an Oscar; won their second BAFTA and second International Emmy; and multiple other awards including the Cristal for best TV Production, Annecy.

LOGLINE

A beautiful tale of an unlikely friendship, a tour of the world and a heroic rescue. Based on the picture book written by Julia Donaldson and illustrated by Axel Scheffler.

SHORT SYNOPSIS

A half hour family film based on the much loved picture book written by Julia Donaldson and illustrated by Axel Scheffler.

Join the snail on the tail of a great big grey-blue humpback whale on her journey around the globe. In the unlikely friendship between an ambitious sea snail and a humpback whale, discover the power of the sea and the perils of swimming too close to the shore... Can the snail save the whale when he is beached in a secluded bay?

A Christmas viewing treat for all the family from four-time Oscar-nominated producers Magic Light Pictures.

SYNOPSIS

*"This is the sea,
So wild and free,
That carried the whale
And the snail on his tail."*

A half hour animated film for all the family based on the much-loved book written by Julia Donaldson and illustrated by Axel Scheffler. **THE SNAIL AND THE WHALE** is the much loved classic that shows us a restless young snail who has ambitions to travel the world. The other snails think she should stay put, but she puts out a call for a "Lift wanted around the world". Eventually her call is answered by a great big grey-blue humpback whale! She sets off with him across the seas. On their journey the snail and the whale discover towering icebergs and far-off lands, fiery mountains and golden sands. The snail is delighted by the wonderful world around her, until she realises how small it makes her feel. Then when the whale get confused by noisy motorboats zooming on the surface, he loses his way in the shallows and ends up beached in an isolated bay. Suddenly it's down to the tiny snail to rescue the powerless whale. She crawls off determinedly, to a school where she alerts the children by writing: "Save the Whale". They call the fire brigade and everyone works together to help the stranded whale. Free once more, the whale takes the snail back home, only to discover the other snails are inspired by the tale of the tiny Snail. So they all set off together, on the tail of the whale, on a new epic journey.

From Magic Light Pictures, producers of the hugely successful films *The Gruffalo*, *The Gruffalo's Child*, *Room on the Broom*, *Stick Man*, *The Highway Rat*, *Zog* and *Roald Dahl's Revolting Rhymes*.

Featuring the voices of Rob Brydon as the whale, Sally Hawkins as the snail, Dame Diana Rigg as the narrator and Cariad Lloyd as the teacher.

Directed by Max Lang and Daniel Snaddon; produced by Michael Rose & Martin Pope of Magic Light Pictures; with animation services provided by Triggerfish Animation.

CAST QUOTES

ROB BRYDON

"It's always so wonderful to work with Magic Light on these animated specials for Christmas. The Snail and the Whale is a longstanding favourite in our house. It's an epic journey across the globe, where the tiniest creature and the mightiest mammal experiences the vastness of our planet together."

SALLY HAWKINS

"I'm very proud to voice the little snail in this magical film. Both characters go on such a heartwarming, emotional and ultimately life changing journey together. It's a very beautiful and important friendship for them both. The protection of our oceans is everything; I hope this animation will inspire family audiences everywhere in helping to take care of our beautiful earth & its creatures for future generations and beyond"

DAME DIANA RIGG

"I jumped at the chance to narrate this wonderful story. It's beautiful, thoughtful and inspiring in so many ways. My grandchild is a huge fan of these books and films and I'm looking forward to us watching The Snail and the Whale together this Christmas."

BIOGRAPHIES

About Julia Donaldson and Axel Scheffler

Julia Donaldson and Axel Scheffler are the UK's number one picture book pair.

Julia embarked on her publishing career when a song she'd written for the BBC – 'A Squash and a Squeeze' – was turned into a book. This was the beginning of the acclaimed partnership of Julia and artist Axel Scheffler. The duo became picture book superstars with bestselling titles including *The Gruffalo*, *Room on the Broom*, *Stick Man*, *Tabby McTat*, *Zog* and *Superworm*. Her latest picture book with Axel Scheffler is number one bestseller, *The Smeds and the Smoos*.

Magic Light Pictures have made award-winning animated films of their books, most recently *The Highway Rat* and *Zog* – both in the top 10 most watched programmes on Christmas Day.

Julia met guitar-playing medic Malcolm – her husband-to-be – in her 20s, where they set out on a world trip to taste adventure and to explore different cultures. Relying on busking to survive, they lived a simple existence. Julia and Malcolm still relish performing Julia's stories and songs at schools, festivals, libraries and

theatres across the UK and around the world. Julia is a full-time writer with picture books, novels, songbooks and a phonics series to her name. She was a much praised Children's Laureate 2011-2013, and awarded an CBE in 2019 for services to Literature. A portrait of Julia, in her costume and puppet-filled props room, by Peter Monkman, hangs in the National Portrait Gallery. Julia Donaldson divides her time between Scotland and West Sussex where she lives with her husband. www.juliadonaldson.co.uk

Axel Scheffler was born in Hamburg, Germany. In the 1980s Axel moved to study Illustration at Bath Academy of Art, where he spent much of his time drawing sheep and peacocks in the grounds of Corsham Court. Axel then moved to London where he began work on illustrations for a variety of English and German magazines, newspapers and children's books. In the early 90s he began his picture book partnership with Julia Donaldson. Axel was made inaugural 'Illustrator of the Year' at The British Book Awards 2018. His instantly recognizable, witty artwork is exhibited internationally; he supports many charities, and designed the Royal Mail Christmas stamps in 2012, as well as a set of stamps in 2019 to commemorate The Gruffalo's 20th anniversary. Axel lives in London with his family and often travels internationally. www.axelscheffler.com

MAX LANG (Director)

Max Lang is a two-time Oscar nominated director who has also won a BAFTA. He jointly directed the award-winning animated films THE GRUFFALO and ROOM ON THE BROOM for Magic Light Pictures as well as the animated Christmas special ALBERT for Nickelodeon. He was Assistant Director on the first season of THE AMAZING WORLD OF GUMBALL for Cartoon Network.

Max is also a story artist, illustrator and character designer, with work including storyboard artist on Warner Animation's recent feature, SMALLFOOT.

Max's illustrator credits include the books FAMILIES! FAMILIES! FAMILIES!, HOORAY FOR KIDS and the *New York Times* Bestselling Book GRUMPY MONKEY.

DANIEL SNADDON (Director)

Daniel Snaddon studied computer graphics at Boston Media House in Johannesburg before transferring to Griffith University in Brisbane where he learned to animate with pencil and paper in the sweltering Queensland heat.

After a 6 year stint as a development artist and commercials director at Bugbox Animation in Johannesburg, Daniel joined Triggerfish Animation Studios in Cape Town as a lead on their film *Khumba* in 2013. The film won the attention of Magic Light Pictures, which led to the chance for Daniel to co-direct their BBC Christmas Special *Stick Man* in 2015. Since then, Daniel has worked on each of Magic Light's films, serving as animation supervisor on *Revolting Rhymes* in 2016, and story-board artist and animator on *The Highway Rat* in 2017.

Daniel recently wrote and story-boarded on Mike Scott's animated series *Moosebox* for Nickleodeon, and is currently developing the animated feature film *Kariba* with fellow director Daniel Clarke at Triggerfish Animation Studios.

MICHAEL ROSE (Producer) & MARTIN POPE (Producer)

Michael Rose and Martin Pope jointly run London-based Magic Light.

Their recent animated productions include the Oscar and BAFTA nominated THE GRUFFALO; the BAFTA nominated The Gruffalo's Child; the Oscar nominated and BAFTA winning Room on the Broom; the BAFTA nominated Stick Man; the Oscar nominated and BAFTA and International Emmy winning Revolting Rhymes; the Rose D'or winning The Highway Rat and the Oscar nominated and European Film Award winning Chico & Rita, an animated feature directed by Fernando Trueba and star designer Javier Mariscal. Other feature films include Wild Target starring Billy Nighy, Emily Blunt and Rupert Grint; natural history documentary One Life; and romantic comedy Sparkle starring Stockard Channing and Bob Hoskins.

Previously, Michael headed up the feature film division of UK animation studio Aardman. He was executive producer of animated features CHICKEN RUN and the Oscar and BAFTA winning Wallace & Gromit: The Curse of the Wererabbit. He was joint producer of Nick Park's 1995 Oscar winning Wallace and Gromit film, A Close Shave and has won two BAFTAs for animated short films, A Close Shave and Stage Fright.

Prior to starting Magic Light, Martin ran his independent company producing feature films including Sundance festival hit Touch of Pink (starring Kyle Maclachlan); LFF closing film The Heart of Me (starring Helena Bonham Carter); Lawless Heart (with Bill Nighy) and Alive & Kicking. TV credits include The Turn of the Screw (starring Colin Firth); John Madden's Meat and John Schlesinger's BAFTA award winning film of Alan Bennett's A Question of Attribution. Martin also produced feature films for Magic Light including Stephen Poliakoff's Glorious 39 (starring Bill Nighy and Romala Garai) and Paul Andrew Williams' The Cottage.

About Magic Light Pictures

Magic Light Pictures makes imaginative entertainment for audiences, families and children worldwide.

The company creates high quality films and products and has built the wonderful Gruffalo brand over many years.

Awards and acclaim for Magic Light's films include four Oscar nominations, two Bafta awards, two International Kids Emmys, the European Film Award, a Rose D'Or, three Cristals from the top global animation festival at Annecy, an RTS award, three Shanghai Magnolias and many others.

The company directly manages production, licensing, global distribution and marketing. Magic Light has sold its award winning films, The Gruffalo, The Gruffalo's Child, Room on the Broom, Stick Man, The Highway Rat, Revolting Rhymes and Zog to over 180 broadcasters worldwide. It runs an international merchandising programme with over 80 licensees. The company's filmmaking includes feature films such as Oscar-nominated animation Chico & Rita, comedy thriller Wild Target and natural history documentary One Life.

About Triggerfish Animation

Established in 1996, Triggerfish Animation Studios is a Cape Town-based film and entertainment company. The studio has produced two of the top five highest-grossing South African feature films of all time: *Adventures in Zambezia* (2012) and *Khumba* (2013). In collaboration with Magic Light Pictures, Triggerfish has also animated two previous BBC Christmas adaptations: *Julia Donaldson and Axel Scheffler's Stick Man* (2015) and *Roald Dahl's Revolting Rhymes* (2016), which both earned BAFTA nominations and won the Cristal for a TV Production at top global animation festival, Annecy, among other accolades. For more information, visit <https://www.triggerfishstudios.com/> and follow the animation studio on Facebook, Twitter, and Instagram.

About Macmillan Children's Books

Macmillan Children's Books, a division of Pan Macmillan, is one of the UK's leading children's publishers; creating and publishing great stories for all ages for over 150 years. The publishing house is the original home of classics such as *The Jungle Book*, *The Water Babies* and *Alice in Wonderland*, and publishes around 250 books a year. International bestselling and award-winning authors and illustrators include Julia Donaldson, Axel Scheffler, Rod Campbell, Lydia Monks, Emily Gravett, Eva Ibbotson, Judy Blume, Roddy Doyle, Frank Cottrell-Boyce and Chris Riddell. MCB is the home of Poet Laureate Carol Ann Duffy's work for children and has an extensive poetry list, which includes Allie Esiri's *A Poem for Every Day of the Year* collections. Pre-school specialist Campbell Books, award-winning illustrated list Two Hoots, and non-fiction led Kingfisher are also imprints. Its most recent prize successes include winning the Costa Book of the Year with *The Lie Tree* by Frances Hardinge, the Costa Children's Book of the Year with *The Skylarks' War* by Hilary McKay, and the Kate Greenaway Medal with *There is a Tribe of Kids* by Lane Smith.



© Magic Light Pictures Limited. 2019.