

THE GRUFFALO



PHOTO COURTESY OF Tall Stories; The Gruffalo © Julia Donaldson and Axel Scheffler 1999 - Macmillan Children's Books

Manitoba Theatre for Young People

MTYP ARTISTIC DIRECTOR
Pablo Felices-Luna



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Photo courtesy of Tall Stories; The Gruffalo © Julia Donaldson and Axel Scheffler 1999 – Macmillan Children's Books

PICTURE BOOKS ON STAGE

After every show, I meet with a group of local theatre-makers to talk about how that particular production came about, and to explore how it might influence their own creative work. We have nicknamed this group "The Sandbox" because there is a lot creative play at work in those sessions.

Lately, we have been diving into plays adapted from picture books. I imagine we will be having some musical fun post-Gruffalo, since Tall Stories has really embraced the musicality of Julia Donaldson's text by, well, making music with it.

One of the things we have rediscovered in the Sandbox is that there is no single path to making the world of a book come to life on stage. I hope you had the chance to see the Todd Parr stories in January, The Velveteen Rabbit in October, or Alice in Wonderland last season. Even our Fall 2021 stream of The Snail and the Whale, another play inspired by a Julia Donaldson book, took its own path to inviting us into the amazing worlds we have grown to love by turning page after page, time and time again.

Mouse's path will take us into the deep, dark wood in this one, but we expect it will be uneventful. After all, we all know there's no such thing as a Gruffalo, right?



ARTISTIC DIRECTOR
Pablo Felices-Luna

PHOTO OF PABLO FELICES-LUNA: Wayne Glowacki / Winnipeg Free Press

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A Tall Stories of London PRODUCTION

THE GRUFFALO

CAST

MOUSE AIMEE **Louise Bevan**

THE GRUFFALO **Aaron Dart**

FOX, OWL, & SNAKE **Anna Nicholson**

CREATIVE TEAM

DIRECTOR **Olivia Jacobs**

CREATIVE PRODUCER **Toby Mitchell**

DESIGNER **Isla Shaw**

LIGHTING DESIGNER **James Whiteside**

MUSIC AND LYRICS BY

Jon Fiber, Olivia Jacobs, Robin Price AND Andy Shaw

PRODUCTION MANAGER **Nick May**

COSTUME SUPERVISOR **Martin Rodges**

PUPPET DESIGNER **Yvonne Stone**

CHOREOGRAPHER **Morag Cross**

ADDITIONAL CHOREOGRAPHY BY

Bex Allingham AND Luanna Priestman

COSTUME MAKERS

Christine Atkinson, Calum Harvey, Aislinn Luton, Alice Lessing

COMPANY STAGE MANAGER **Charlie Hodsdon**

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ABOUT TALL STORIES

Tall Stories brings great stories to life for audiences of all ages. The company is a registered charity which tours the UK and the world with its exciting blend of storytelling theatre, original music, and lots of laughs. Tall Stories was founded in 1997 by Olivia Jacobs and Toby Mitchell. Our shows have played in the West End, on Broadway, and at the Sydney Opera House, as well as all sorts of venues and countries in between.

ABOUT THE SHOW

A Word from Toby and Olivia

When we first read *The Gruffalo* in 1999, we immediately loved it. The story, the text and the illustrations are fantastic - in both senses of the word. We asked Julia Donaldson and Axel Scheffter if we could adapt it for the stage and we were thrilled when they said yes. We were even more thrilled when the book started to win awards - as it looked like other people loved *The Gruffalo* as much as we did. Little did we know how popular it would become! We're very grateful to all the performers and crew who have worked on the show over the last 22 years, particularly Tom, Felix, and Sharon, our original cast. We continue to develop and reinvent the show as time passes, and the set, some of the songs and the costumes have seen multiple iterations and (hopefully!) improvements over the years. We hope that you enjoy watching it as much as we enjoyed making it.

- Olivia Jacobs DIRECTOR and Toby Mitchell CREATIVE PRODUCER

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BIOS • ARTIST BIOS



MOUSE AIMEE LOUISE BEVAN • Aimee trained at Kingston University and at Associated Studios, and she now works as an actor, dancer, movement director, and puppeteer. Her credits include *There's a Rang-Tan in My Bedroom and Other Stories*, *The Gruffalo* UK tour, *The Firebird*, *In the Night Garden Live* UK tour, *Reach for the Stars*, *The Fourteenth Stop*, *Puss In Boots*, and *Small Island*. Aimee is thrilled to be back with *The Gruffalo* team and is excited to tour North America.



THE GRUFFALO AARON DART • Aaron trained at East 15 Acting School. He has been touring with *The Gruffalo* since October 2022 and his previous theatre credits include *Dinner Is Coming* (The Vaults, London), *Beauty and The Beast: A Musical Parody* (Kings Head Theatre, London) and *Wuthering Heights* (UK Tour). His screen work includes ITV's *Doc Martin*, and various characters in ITV2's *The Stand Up Sketch Show*. Commercials include comedy lead for Taco Bell, Samsung, Cineworld, and Bose. Aaron is very excited to be touring *The Gruffalo* across North America this year!



AUTHOR JULIA DONALDSON • Julia Donaldson is the author of some of the world's best-loved children's books, including modern classics *The Gruffalo* and *The Gruffalo's Child*, which together have sold over 17 million copies worldwide, and the hugely successful *What the Ladybird Heard* adventures. Julia also writes fiction, including the *Princess Mirror-Belle* books illustrated by Lydia Monks, as well as poems, plays, and songs – and her brilliant live shows are always in demand. She was Children's Laureate 2011-13 and has been honoured with a CBE for Services to Literature. Julia and her husband Malcolm divide their time between West Sussex and Edinburgh.



DIRECTOR OLIVIA JACOBS • Olivia trained at Central School of Speech and Drama and obtained a degree from the University of London before studying Japanese Children's Theatre in Tokyo. She worked with Besht Tellers, Black Theatre Co-operative, and Soho Theatre before becoming Artistic Director of Camden People's Theatre. Her directing credits include: *Wilde Creatures* (co-director, West End), *Emily Brown and the Thing* (UK tour), *The Gruffalo* (UK, US including Broadway, Australia including Sydney Opera House, international), *The Gruffalo's Child* (UK, US, Asia and international), *Snow White* (UK/US tours including Broadway), *Room on the Broom* (UK, US, Australia including Sydney Opera House, international), *The Extraordinary Adventures of Mr Benn* (UK, international), *How The Giraffe Got Its Neck* (UK tour), *William's Monsters* (UK, international), *Mum and the Monster* (UK tour), *Something Else* (UK tour), *The Happy Prince* (UK tour), *Rumpelstiltskin* (UK tour), and *Latke Who Couldn't Stop Screaming* (UK tour). Olivia is co-founder and joint artistic director of Tall Stories.



COMPOSERS JOLLYGOODTUNES (JON FIBER AND ANDY SHAW) • Jon

Fiber and Andy Shaw of Jollygoodtunes have been composing music and designing sound for theatre since 1997. Their work with Tall Stories includes *Wilde Creatures*, *The Canterville Ghost*, *Mr Benn*, *William's Monsters*, *The Gruffalo's Child*, *Room on the Broom*, *Snow White*, *Something Else*, *The Owl and The Pussycat*, and *Rumpelstiltskin*. Other sound design work includes, *And All the Children Cried* (BAC, London), *Change of Heart*, *Modern Man*, *This Story of Yours* (New End Theatre), *Measure for Measure Malaya* (Riverside Studios). Beside their theatre work they also compose and record music for TV (BBC2, Discovery Channel, HSBC, Ericsson, and Johnnie Walker).



CREATIVE PRODUCER TOBY MITCHELL • Toby studied at Cambridge

University and Central School of Speech and Drama. He has been a French and drama teacher, an editor at Macmillan Children's Books and designer of Total Theatre Magazine. Recent directing credits include *The Smeds and The Smoos* (UK Tour), *Wilde Creatures* (co-director, West End), *The Snail and the Whale* (UK, international), *Alfie White: Space Explorer* (UK tour), *My Brother the Robot* (UK tour), *Twinkle Twonkle* (UK, US), *The Snow Dragon* (UK, international), *Does a Monster live Next Door?* (UK tour), *Cat and No Mouse* (Edinburgh/London), *The Owl and the Pussycat* (UK tour), *The Egg* (Edinburgh/London) and *Alice and Mr Dodgson* (Edinburgh/London). Recent performing/devising work includes: *Future Perfect*, *Monsters Got Talent*, *A British Guide to French Pop*, *The Island of First Loves* (Edinburgh), and *Pandemonium* (Edinburgh/London). He has worked with Soho Theatre and the Royal Court and is co-founder and joint artistic director of Tall Stories.



FOX, OWL, & SNAKE ANNA NICHOLSON • Anna is an award-winning

writer and performer and has worked in the UK and internationally for over 10 years. Last year she wrote the script for pantomime *Cinderella* at the Oxford Playhouse and played Cindy-Lou in *The Grinch*. In 2021 she co-wrote and starred in series one of *The Adventures of the Juniper*, a children's sitcom set in space. In 2020 Anna was a sketch writer for CBBC's *Crackerjack* and was short-listed for BBC's *Caroline Aherne Character Comedy Bursary*. Between 2018-2021 Anna wrote and performed two solo character comedy shows *Woman of the Year* and *Get Happy*. Her debut show was developed with Soho Theatre Young Company and BBC's *James Cary* (Miranda, Bluestone 42). These shows toured the UK, enjoyed sold out runs at the Edinburgh Fringe and were transferred to international festivals including New Zealand and Adelaide Fringe where she won a Best Comedy Award. Anna is excited to be working with Tall Stories again and can't wait to see you all at the shows.

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BIOS • ARTIST BIOS



DESIGNER ISLA SHAW • Theatre includes, for Tall Stories: *Emily Brown and the Thing*, *My Brother the Robot*, *Does a Monster Live Next Door?*, *The Gruffalo's Child*, *The Gruffalo*, *Mum and the Monster*, *Snow White and Something Else*. Other theatre credits: *Checklist For An Armed Robber* (Australia), *Requiem for the C20th* (Australia), *One Way Street* (Australia), *The Wall Project* (Australia), *Copenhagen* (The Watermill), *Fen & Five Kinds Of Silence* (Live Theatre), *Neville's Island* (The Watermill), *The Memory Of Water* (UK Tour), *The Argument & Three Dark Tales* (Theatre O), *Skin Deep* (Warehouse Theatre), *Desire Under The Elms* (RSC), *Alban 2000* (St. Alban's Cathedral), *Phaedra* (Royal Lyceum Edinburgh). *Dance & Opera*: *The Barber of Seville* (Denmark), *Maria De Buenos Aires* (Norwich Theatre Royal), *The Strauss Gala* (UK Tour), *From Berlin to Broadway* (Denmark), *Grabmusik & Bastien and Bastienne* (Germany).



ILLUSTRATOR AXEL SCHEFFLER • Axel Scheffler is a star illustrator whose instantly recognisable, warm, and witty illustrations have achieved worldwide acclaim and numerous awards. Axel is the illustrator of wonderful novelty, gift, and poetry books for Macmillan, such as *Fish Dream of Trees* (Two Hoots) and the bestselling *The Bedtime Bear*, *The Tickle Book*, and *Mother Goose's Nursery Rhymes* – and of course, he is the illustrator of some of the world's best-loved picture books, including the modern classic *The Gruffalo*, with over 30 million books sold worldwide across the series. Axel's artwork is exhibited internationally; he has illustrated for many charities, and designed the Royal Mail Christmas stamps in 2012. Born in Hamburg, Axel now lives with his family in London.



LIGHTING DESIGNER JAMES WHITESIDE • Tall Stories credits include: *The Gruffalo*, *The Gruffalo's Child*, *Room on the Broom*, *Snow White*, and *Mr Benn*. West End credits include: *Never Forget* at the Savoy; *Footloose* at the Novello and Playhouse; *Holding the Man* at Trafalgar Studios; *The Female of the Species* at the Vaudeville, and *Calamity Jane* at the Shaftesbury. Other recent credits include: *The Ragged Trousered Philanthropists*, *Wallenstein*, *Funny Girl*, *Alice in Wonderland* and *The Snow Queen* for the Chichester Festival Theatre; *A Christmas Carol*, *Arcadia*, *Grimm Tales* and *Gates of Gold* for the Library, Manchester; *Twelfth Night* for Perth Theatre; *The Absence of Women* for the Lyric, Belfast; *Love's Labour's Lost* for Rose Theatre, Kingston; *Salonika for the West Yorkshire Playhouse*; *Animal Farm* for Bath Theatre Royal; *Jump!* for Live Theatre, Newcastle, and tours of *Midnight Tango*, *Shaun's Big Show*, and *Guess How Much I Love You*.



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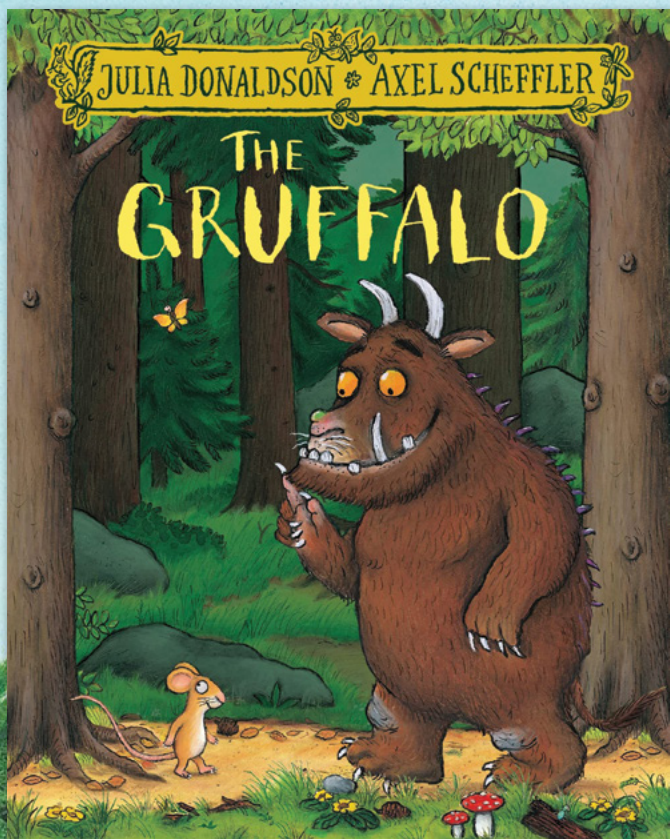
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