

BILL PATERSON

IS THE VOICE OF THE STORYTELLER

Known most recently for his role in spooky BBC Drama *Sea of Souls*, Scottish actor Bill Paterson was delighted to be asked to provide the distinguished and knowing voice of The Storyteller in *Shoebox Zoo*.

Claire Mundell, Executive Producer and Co-creator for the series, explains the importance of the role: “The Storyteller guides us through the epic and tells the story from a position of knowledge. *Shoebox Zoo* is such a classic tale comprising of many elements, the idea of having a narrator is a classic device.

“He is our connection between the past and the present.”

A first time for Bill to work on a children’s drama, he thoroughly enjoyed adding emotion, intrigue and menace to the story which he believes will excite a wide audience.

Bill, who recorded his piece in May this year, explains: “I think it has a nice blend of fantasy and humour which should appeal to grown ups as well as their kids. I particularly liked the voices and animation.

“I hope *Shoebox Zoo* will give the viewers the same buzz of excitement and promise that it gave me when I first read it.”

EPISODE SYNOPSES

EPISODE 1

The Magic is Awakened

It’s the worst birthday of Marnie McBride’s life. Still grieving from her mom’s death and Marnie’s recent move from Colorado to Scotland, she sees no reason to celebrate turning 11, despite Dad’s best efforts. But, unbeknownst to Marnie she’s about to be touched by a dangerous and irresistible magic.

When Dad wants to stop in an old junk shop, Marnie begrudgingly agrees, unaware that her fate lies inside. The mysterious man behind the counter seems out of place somehow, and Marnie waits for Dad tentatively by the door. When the strange man encourages Marnie towards a shoebox, she opens it cautiously and finds it filled with four toy animals – a snake, a bear, a wolf and an eagle.

As the clock strikes 11, the man rushes Marnie and Dad out of the shop, insisting Marnie take the toys as a birthday gift. “How did he know it was your birthday?” asks Dad. Marnie shrugs.

The next day, Marnie finds herself drawn to the toys. She cleans them up and sets them out on the counter, playing at magic words that would make them come alive. To her shock, she does wake them up – but just as quickly, the animals – the *Shoebox Zoo* – are frozen once again.

Unable to explain her newfound powers, Marnie goes to return the *Shoebox Zoo* to the junk shop, and stops dead when she rounds the corner of the alley and realises that the shop has disappeared!

EPISODE 2

Friend or Foe?

It’s Marnie’s first day of school in Scotland. Not only is she the new kid, but she’s late, and having trouble finding her class. Marnie could not feel more out of place, not to mention the strange birthday gift from the man at the junk shop - the *Shoebox Zoo* – toys that come alive and talk to her.

After Marnie discovers the *Shoebox Zoo* have hitched a ride in her backpack, a couple of bullies overhear her, and try to take them away. She steps up to protect the *Shoebox Zoo*, not fully understanding the power that draws her to them. When her sinister new classmate, John Roberts, hypnotizes the bullies and hands Marnie back her toys, she is unsure whether to feel relieved or put off from the help of this unlikely ally.

Back at home, Marnie pressures the *Shoebox Zoo* for answers, and discovers that the four were students of the great alchemist Michael Scot. They were human once, eleven hundred years ago! Now trapped in the form of carvings, the only way for them to become human again is to recover Michael Scot’s great work: The Book of Forbidden Knowledge.

It’s a lot to believe and Marnie is glad to be distracted by Dad calling her to go pick up a package: a belated birthday present arrives from Marnie’s grandma and grandpa. Unbeknownst to Marnie, the waking of the *Shoebox Zoo* has attracted the attention of Michael Scot’s nemesis: Toledo the Shapeshifter, and he’s waiting inside the depot for her.

