

SIMON CALLOW IS WOLFGANG THE WOLF



For the multi-talented Simon Callow, playing the Shoebox Zoo character of Wolfgang the Wolf provided the ideal opportunity to practice his howling technique.

“Yes, my howling really was exceptional,” grins the actor, probably best known to viewers as Gareth, the bon viveur who dropped down dead at a Highland wedding in *Four Weddings and a Funeral*.

“It has stood me in good stead since as I have gone on to own two dogs. They seem to like my howling too.”

A wily individual, Wolfgang is always on the lookout for number one and his main role in the drama is to act as spy for evil Professor Toledo as he attempts to find the Book of Forbidden Knowledge.

“He is a cunning, wicked individual,” explains Simon, who has won acclaim as a director and a writer as well as an actor. “Wolfgang had ideals once, as a young wolf cub. Life has taught him to be cunning.”

For Simon, who is set to appear as Andre in the forthcoming film of *Phantom of the Opera*, working on Shoebox Zoo had a special significance because it meant he finally got to work with his old friend, Shoebox Zoo Lead Writer, Brian Ward.

“We have known each other for over 25 years,” he says. “I had a partner back then who was Turkish and he attended the British Film School with Brian. Brian was one of a wonderfully anarchic Scottish contingent at the school and we all got on wonderfully well.”



“I would have done Shoebox Zoo anyway because it is wonderfully written and a fully imagined world but it had added significance for me because Brian was involved.”

For Simon, the few days spent recording the voice of Wolfgang were ‘hugely enjoyable’.

“Voiceovers are fun because you don’t have to worry about how you look and you are not obliged to learn your lines. It means you can be more flexible. I have done quite a bit of work as an animated character, working on James and the Giant Peach as a giant grasshopper and *George and the Dragon*, as the dragon.”

It was the first time Simon had worked alongside fellow Shoeboxers and he admits he enjoyed it immensely.

“We all screamed with laughter as we each recorded our parts. It’s interesting that they record you as you say your lines to see how you move and so on because I don’t think I am particularly lupine. You might think Alan Cumming is not particularly bear-like but there was something very cuddly about him!” For Simon, the next part of the fun, he says, will be viewing the series as a completed entity.

“When you record voices, you are only involved in a production for a very short period and you know nothing of the live action. I am really looking forward to seeing the completed series. I think it is going to be fantastic.”