

## **DAVID ROBERTS IN HIS OWN WORDS**

### **David Roberts - As a child:**

I was born in Liverpool, England in 1970, I worried a lot as a child about everything. I was happy at school until I was 11 years old and I went to high school, I hated high school, every day of it for the next five long years. I left school when I was 16 and went to Art School. My grandma taught me to sew and I loved to make my own toys. I hated sport, and still do. The only prize I ever won for sport was when I came second in the sack race. I cut all the hair off my sisters' dolls. My brother used to read to me at night, *The Far-away Tree*; *The Whishing Chair* and *Fantastic Mr Fox* were amongst my favourites. I loved music and we would all look forward to *Top of the Pops*, *Blondie*, *Kate Bush* and *Culture Club* were my favourites.

### **As an adult :**

I went to college in Manchester to study fashion design, and while I was there I shared a house with two children's book illustrators: Gillian Tyler and Dominic Mansell, they were both older than me, and I was very inspired by their work, I think the seed was sown then that took me away from a career in fashion design and into illustration. I lived in Hong Kong for a year after graduating and found a job as a Milliner, but it was while I was making hats that I started to do some fashion illustration for local newspapers and fashion magazines. Then I returned to England, I met my agent Christine Isted in 1996, after being turned away from every other artists agency in London, she took me on and encouraged me to re-do my portfolio towards children's illustration. I got my first book in 1997, a great story called *Frankie Stein's Robot* by Roy Apps. I have illustrated over 70 books since.

### **As an artist:**

I have been very lucky as an illustrator to be offered such a variety of stories to illustrate. I enjoy the darker stuff I get like the *Tales of Terror* books by Chris Priestly, where I can really try and get a sense of tension and drama and terror in to the images, but without giving too much away, and only using black and white tone. It is a real challenge that I hope I have achieved. I've also been very fortunate to work on some great picture books with my sister Lynn; we did some retellings of popular fairy tales and changed their settings: a boy little red riding hood, an Art Deco Cinderella and a 1970s Rapunzel who lived in a tower block and wore platform shoes and leg warmers and had a groovy record collection that included Abba and Bowie and Kate Bush. That was a lot of fun as I really dipped into my own childhood memories with that one. I am currently working with Julia Donaldson, whose stories are not only lots of fun but very clever and such a pleasure to work on.

I am also working directly with American publishers and have had some great books from them, *Iggy Peck Architect* by Andrea Beaty was a joy and I allowed my self to be influenced by my favourite artist, David Hockney, when doing the art for this book, there are lots of little

"borrows" from his work in that book, hope he doesn't mind.

### **Things you didn't know about David Roberts**

- Cake is my favourite food ever, ever, ever, Victoria sponge is the food of the Gods!

- I don't have a mobile phone.

- I always wear stripy socks, never plain.

- I have a cat who is 20 years old !!!! Blind in one eye, no teeth and totally deaf, but I love him .

- I am scared of dogs, all dogs big or small.

- I once made a hat for Kylie Minogue.

- The first book I bought is called A Hole Is to Dig by Ruth Kraus and Maurice Sendak, it's still my favourite.

- When I was 14 years old I had a pair of bright yellow shoes, I wish I still had them.

- I used to have flamingo pink hair.

- When I was at school I played the double bass in the orchestra. it was bigger than me at the time.