Biography

CHRISSIE GITTINS was born in Lancashire and lives in Forest Hill in London. She studied at Newcastle University and St Martin's School of Art, and worked as an artist and a teacher before becoming a full-time writer. She writes poetry, poetry for children, short stories and radio drama.

Chrissie's poems have won prizes, been broadcast on BBC Radio 4 and are widely published in magazines, newspapers and anthologies. Her first adult poetry collection is *Armature* (Arc, 2003): 'one of the more striking debuts of 2003. Gittins's deadpan tone and skewed perspective mark her out as a true original – she has a genuine gift'. *Jane Yeh, Poetry Review*. Her second adult collection is *I'll Dress One Night As You* (Salt, 2009). 'Her appealing poems reconnect a child's wide-awake senses with an adult's intelligence and passion.' *Alison Brackenbury, Poetry Review*

Her pamphlet collections are *A Path of Rice* (Dagger Press, 1997) and *Pilot* (Dagger Press, 2001). Her third pamphlet is *Professor Heger's Daughter* (Paekakariki Press, 2013). '*Professor Heger's Daughter* is **one of the finest pamphlets I've read in recent years**, for its range of ideas, its emotional sensitivity, its great wit and humour, and – more than anything else – its deranged use of language.' *Russell Jones, Elsewhere*. 'In this pamphlet, Gittins strikes **a glorious balance between plaintive lyricism and vivacious exuberance**, between a life lived *en plain air* and a sequence of repressive indoor spaces.' *John Field, Poor Rude Lines*

Chrissie was the winner and a runner-up in the Belmont Poetry Prize for children's poems in 2002. Her first children's collection *Now You See Me, Now You* ... (Rabbit Hole, 2002) was shortlisted for the inaugural CLPE Poetry Award in 2003; in 2009, republished, it was selected as a 2010 Poetry Book Society Choice for the Children's Poetry Bookshelf. Her second children's collection *I Don't Want an Avocado for an Uncle* (Rabbit Hole, 2006) was shortlisted for the CLPE Poetry Award 2007, and was a PBS Choice for the Children's Poetry Bookshelf. *I Don't Want an Avocado for an Uncle* was also selected as one of four single poet collections for the 'Boys into Books 5-11' booklist (School Library Association). Her third children's collection *The Humpback's Wail* (Rabbit Hole, 2010) was also a PBS Choice.

Chrissie has been a guest reader on Carol Ann Duffy's Moniack Mhor course for children's poetry. She contributed to *Poetry Pie* and *The Rhyme Rocket* for Cbeebies TV, and to the Oxfam CD of Poems for Children. Her children's poems are widely anthologized and feature in Michael Rosen's anthology *A-Z – The Best Children's Poetry*. In 2012 Chrissie made an hour's recording of her children's poetry for the Poetry Archive. Her 'New and Collected' children's poems 'Stars in Jars' (Bloomsbury, 2014) was a Scottish Poetry Library recommendation in 2014. She was a finalist in the first Manchester Children's Literature Prize 2014 with a portfolio of new poems. Her new collection 'Adder, Bluebell, Lobster' (Otter-Barry Books, 2016) is based on 40 of the 110 nature words deleted from the Oxford Junior Dictionary.

Chrissie has read her adult and children's poetry on BBCR4 and at the StAnza, Hay, Aldeburgh, Ledbury, Ilkley, Edinburgh, Southwell, Huddersfield, Torbay, Wigtown, Wenlock, West Cork, Highland, Shetland and Belfast festivals, and at the Manchester Children's Book Festival. She has also read her poetry at venues including the Royal Festival Hall, the British Council Bangkok, Keats' House Hampstead, Newcastle and Oxford Universities, the Troubadour, Newcastle Centre for the Literary Arts, and the Poets House, Bowery and Cornelia Street Cafe in New York.

Chrissie's short stories have won prizes, and been published in *The Guardian*, *Horizon Review*, *The London Magazine*, *Litro*, *The Lampeter Review*, *Wales Arts Review*, *Unthology 6* and in several anthologies; five have been read on BBCR4 by actors including Anne Reid, Stephanie Cole and Penelope Wilton. Her stories were highly commended by Ali Smith in the New Writing Ventures Awards.

Chrissie's first short story collection is *Family Connections* (Salt, 2007); 'most of them carry an insidiously discomforting charge', *Nicholas Clee*, The Guardian. She has read her stories at Newcastle and Salford Universities, the Whitechapel Gallery, Manchester Central Library, Lancaster Litfest, Foyle's Bookshop, the Edinburgh International Book Festival and on BBC Radio 4. Her second collection is *Between Here and Knitwear* (Unthank Books, 2015). Helen Dunmore chose it as one of her top two collections of 2015: 'tough, flexible fibres of Lancashire lives, woven together with laconic wit and warmth of feeling.' *Helen Dunmore, Bristol Short Story Prize* website; 'exceptional ... Gittins has a superb way with evocative suburban detail and chord-striking experiences'. *Phil Baker, Sunday Times*; 'Gittins conveys not only memory's tendency to focus suddenly and fully on selected moments, but equally the impulse that works to shape them into the narrative of a life.' *K.J. Orr, Times Literary Supplement. Knitwear* was shortlisted in the 2016 Saboteur Awards short story category.

Her plays for BBCR4 include *Poles Apart* starring Bernard Cribbins ('an early and deserved repeat,' *Anne Karpf, The Guardian*), *Starved for Love* starring Patricia Routledge ('A striking play ... deftly written,' *Kate Kellaway, The Observer*), *Life Assurance* starring Sorcha Cusack ('a horrific tale of mass murders,' *Gillian Reynolds, The Telegraph*), and *Dinner in the Iguanodon* ('As flamboyant settings for dinner parties go you'd be hard pushed to beat eating seven courses inside the mould of a life-sized iguanodon, *Jane Anderson, Radio Times*). They were all Radio Choices in the Radio Times, and newspaper Best Drama/Picks of the Day.

Chrissie's residencies have included Maidstone Borough Council, twelve Southwark primary schools, Croydon Libraries, the Refugee Council, Bangkok Patana School and Belmarsh Prison. Chrissie was resident writer on Shetland in September 2010 and May 2013. In 2010 she was appointed as the first honorary Writer-in-Residence in Lewisham. She tutors for the Arvon Foundation and has run workshops for the NAWE/Writing Together Research Project, The Write Team (Bath Festivals), Authors Abroad, Authors Aloud, and the Northern Children's Book Festival. She is a member of the Poetry Society's Poetryclass team.

Chrissie has received two Arts Council Grants for the Arts, and awards from the Royal Literary Fund and the Authors' Foundation. She is represented in the British Council Writers Directory which 'contains profiles of some of the UK and Commonwealth's most important living writers', and she is a Hawthornden International Fellow. In 2016 Chrissie was awarded a Society of Authors' Authors' Foundation Award to travel to India for the month of November. www.chrissiegittins.co.uk