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## **New Disney Hyperion book set at Biltmore Estate**

*Asheville author's **Serafina and the Black Cloak** coming July 14*

**ASHEVILLE, N.C.** – Author Robert Beatty debuts his novel, ***Serafina and the Black Cloak***, a spooky mystery-thriller from Disney Hyperion that takes place at the iconic Biltmore Estate.

Set for nationwide release on July 14, the book tells the story of an intriguing 12-year-old girl who lives secretly in the basement of the grand Biltmore mansion in the 1890s. Serafina heeds her father's warnings to avoid the "fancy folk" living in the upper parts of the house, until one night, when she encounters a menacing stranger in a black cloak and finds herself in the middle of a mystery that only she can solve.

"Serafina is a brave and unusual young girl. Her character, and the idea for this book, grew out of my love of writing stories for my daughters," said Beatty. "I like the idea of girls doing heroic things and I wanted to give my girls that kind of story."

Beatty, his wife and three daughters make their home just outside of Asheville, N.C., where the ex-software entrepreneur writes full-time. The family has played a big part in Beatty's creative process with *Serafina* – from developing ideas and critiquing early drafts to designing costumes for and acting in a promotional "book trailer" filmed on location at Biltmore Estate.

"They've been involved from the very beginning," Beatty said.

Inspiration for the book also came from the rich history and beauty of Western North Carolina, particularly the forests of the Blue Ridge Mountains and the Biltmore Estate.

"I love making historical times and the natural world exciting for young readers, and framing the novel in a mystery seemed ideal," Beatty said.

Biltmore House and its opulent furnishings, as well as the gardens and grounds of the estate, play a big role in the book. Because the story takes place in 1899, Beatty exhaustively researched the early history of the house and visited the estate more than 50 times to ensure he was depicting accurately the 250-room chateau and its period in history.

Although it's age-appropriate for middle grade students, ***Serafina's*** mix of historical fiction, fantasy and mystery makes it appealing to adult readers as well. Early praise from Kirkus Reviews calls the book "enchanting" and "a keenly perceptive portrait of a young girl," and it is in the top slot on Goodreads' Middle Grade Novels of 2015 list.

***Serafina and the Black Cloak*** is available for pre-order wherever books are sold and goes on sale at bookstores nationwide on July 14. The audio book is available from Penguin Random House's Listening Library.

Visit [robert-beatty.com](http://robert-beatty.com) for more information.

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