

Reviews and Milestones for Ray McNiece

Lifetime Achievement Award, Cleveland Arts Prize, 2021.

Poet Laureate of Cleveland Heights, 2020-2023.

He is the author six books of poetry, *The Bone-Orchard Conga*, (The WordSmith Press) *The Road that Carried Me Here*, *Song that Fathoms Home*, *Our Way of Life*, (Bottom Dog Press) *Greatest Hits*, (Pudding House Publications) *Wet Sand Raven Tracks*, *New Haiku* (deep cleveland) and *Merry Go Round* (City Lights Italia) a bilingual chapbook in Italian.

He has also written two books of monologues based on his stage shows - *Dis*, *Voices from a Shelter* and *Us Vers Us -- Talking Across America*. (fractal edge press)

He has created two poetry Musicals - *Mouth Music* and *A Rust bowl Hootenanny*, and one collaborative theatre work with Shawn Jackson, *Homegirl meets Whiteboy* which the Chattanooga Press called, "*A Romeo and Juliet for the 90s*."

Most recently he has created two collaborative books from Red Giant Press with photographer Tim Lachina, *Love Song for Cleveland*, and the new *Haiku Collection*,

Breath Burns Away, including haiku performed as three time Cleveland Haiku Champion.

His latest poetry theater work, **the Lives of A Poet**, premiered at Cleveland Public Theater in 2015, and has since been performed in Asheville, North Carolina, and Boston, where he began his acting career at the New Ehrlich Theater.

His first poetry/theater work, **Dis --Voices from a Shelter** was produced by WGBH TV Boston and aired on PBS affiliates across the United States, including San Francisco and Minneapolis.

Of his first solo theater work, **Dis**, presented at the Edinburgh Fringe Festival, **The Edinburgh Scotsman** commented "McNiece's characters are acutely observed, the speech patterns and mannerisms perfectly caught."

In a review from the same Festival, **London's Stage and Television Today** said, "The energy he has for each character is impressive and he never fails to surprise with the variety packed into the show."

In a review of his second solo work, **Us? Talking Across America**, that toured the Canadian Fringe Festival Circuit, the Star-Phoenix said, **"His thoughtful writing combines with perfectly timed delivery to create a powerful wordscape that owes as much to jazz as drama."**

Of the same work, The Orlando Sentinel calls him **"a modern day descendant of Woody Guthrie."** He has a way with words and a wry sense of humor."

He is also the voice of **Woody Guthrie** in **WCPN/National Public Radio's** documentary, **Hard Travellin'** which is broadcast nationally every Labor Day.

He toured in Russia with **Yevgeny Yevtushenko**, appearing on **Good Morning, Russia**, a nationally broadcast morning talk show seen in six time zones, from the Baltic Sea to the Bering Straights. Yevtushenko calls him, **"A born poet and a born performer."** The Russian Press dubbed him, **"an American Mayakovsky,"** because of his affinity for working people. His work was published in **"I'm not Made for Immortality"** an anthology of **International Poetry for the Baikal Festival 2001.**

He has toured twice to Italy with **Lawrence Ferlinghetti** for the opening of **City Lights Italia.** On the second

“Pullman my Daisy” tour he performed with Anne Waldman and Ed Sanders in a **outdoor Roman Amphitheater** for over **10,000 people**.

He has captained two **National Championship Poetry Slam** teams, **Boston in 1992**, and **Cleveland 1994**. He also won the **Arkansas Grand Slam**, one of the largest **Performance Poetry** awards ever given.

With his band **Tongue-in-Groove**, of which Ray is the singer, spoken word artist and rhythm guitarist, he opened for legendary Nigerian drummer **Babatunde Olatunje** and **The Drums of Passion** at the **Starwood Festival** in New York.

He has been hosting **Tongue-in-Groove Poetry Music Jams** at various venues on both the East and West Sides of Cleveland since 1996, most prominently as part of the **Hessler Street Fair** at the **Barking Spider Tavern**. He currently hosts a monthly jam at **The Millard Fillmore on Waterloo**, featuring prominent poets/performers from the Midwest and beyond.

He has toured extensively throughout the US, most recently to the **Walt Whitman House** reading series on Long Island. He has performed in Universities, most

recently **WTAM in Amarillo** and theatre venues in every state except Alaska.

He has also toured in Asia, appearing at **Seikei University in Tokyo**, in Hong Kong, the Philippines and at the **Art House in Singapore** where he worked as poet in residence with **Word Forward**.

He has appeared on Cleveland station **WCPN's Around Noon** a dozen times and on "**Applause**" four times.

In 2018 he was awarded a **Young Audiences Arts for Learning National Residency Teaching Artist Credential (TAC)** and is part of a **National Teaching Artist Cohort**. He has been working as an arts educator for over 30 years with his own company **Page to Stage Productions**, with the national touring **Poetry Alive!**, with **Word Forward** in Asia, with the **Ohio Arts Council's Artist in Residence program**, with **Young Audiences** in both New Orleans and Cleveland, and is currently working with the **Center for Arts Inspired Learning** in Cleveland leading performance and writing workshops and residencies. He is on the **OAC Arts in Education Roster** as well as the **Creative Aging Cohort**.

He has been **Writer in Residence** at **Ruffing Montessori** in Cleveland Heights since 2015.

He has been an adjunct professor/ Visiting Artist in Creative Writing and Composition at John Carroll University since 2011.

He received the **1999 Award of Excellence** for his writing from Northern Ohio Live and won the **1999 Lyricist Review** Song contest. McNiece was awarded an artist residency at the **Cuyahoga Valley National Park** in 2001, and at the **Jack Kerouac House** in Orlando in 2002.

He won a **Creative Workforce Fellowship** from CPAC in 2012. In 2013 he received a grant for the **Collinwood Story Project**, an intergenerational writing project about his ancestral neighborhood in North Collinwood.

In 2007, He performed excerpts of Kerouac's **On the Road** as well as poems from his collection "The Road that Carried me Here" accompanied by **David Amram** -- Kerouac's original pianist -- at the **Bowery Poetry Pub** to commemorate the 50th Anniversary of its publication.

An accomplished actor he has been in productions at **Cleveland Playhouse, Dobama, Ensemble Theater, Bad Epitaph** and his theatrical home, **Cleveland Public Theater**, most recently in **Barbecue** and **Open Mind**

Firmament. He has directed in the new play festival there and also was a **playwright** for **Blue Sky Transmission**, a Tibetan Book of the Dead