

Biography -- Ray McNiece, Poet, Actor, Singer, Educator

Ray McNiece is the author of six poetry books – *Dis*, *The Bone-Orchard Conga*, *The Road that Carried Me Here*, *Song that Fathoms Home*, and *Wet Sand Raven Tracks –New Haiku*, and *Us? Talking Across America*, two solo theatre works – *Dis – Voices From a Shelter*, *Us? Talking Across America*, two music/poetry collaborations – *Mouth Music*, *A Rust bowl Hootenanny*, and one collaborative theatre work – *Homegirl meets Whiteboy* -- with Shawn Jackson. He also co-edited the anthology of Contemporary Buddhist Poetry, *America Zen*. The Orlando Sentinel reporting on Ray's solo show at the Fringe Festival called him "a modern day descendant of Woody Guthrie. He has a way with words and a wry sense of humor." In a review of his second theatre work, *Us? Talking Across America*, 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." He was the voice of Woody Guthrie in WCPN/NPR's award winning radio documentary, *Hard Travellin'*.

Highlights of his recent tours include a keynote address shared with Robert Bly at the First Coast Writer's Conference, a featured reading at the opening of City Light's Italia in Florence with Lawrence Ferlinghetti, and a performance with his band Tongue in Groove at the Starwood Festival, opening for legendary drummer Babatunde Oluntunje. In the summer of 2001 he toured Russia with Yevgeny Yevtushenko where he appeared on Good Morning, Russia and performed at the Moscow Polytech, the Russian Poets' Hall of Fame where he was dubbed 'the American Mayakovski'.

He has received numerous awards for his writing and performance, most recently the 2001 Hart Crane Award from KSU, a residency in the Cuyahoga Valley National Park, and a residency at the Jack Kerouac House in Orlando, Florida. He was the captain of two National Poetry Slam Championship teams ('92 Boston, '94 Cleveland) and won the Arkansas Grand Slam, the largest performance poetry prize ever awarded.

He is also an accomplished actor and has appeared in plays at Ensemble, Dobama, Cleveland Public and Cleveland Playhouse theatres. He was an original cast member of the improv comedy Flanigan's Wake. He performs in schools as Johnny Appleseed and Thomas Jefferson. For more information please go to his website: <http://www.raymcniece.com>