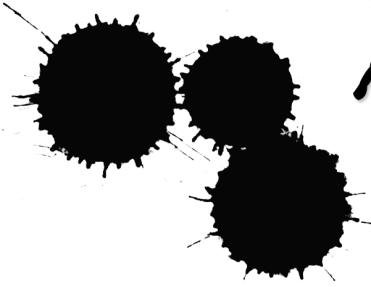


# Wheeling Poetry Series



Featuring:  
**Mitchell  
Douglas**

Host:  
Marc Harshman

A special edition of Lunch With Books at the  
Ohio County Public Library

**May 9, 2017**



# The Wheeling Poetry Series

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Launched in September 2015, the “**Wheeling Poetry Series**” features readings by some of the finest poets from our Appalachian region and beyond. When he is available, **Marc Harshman**, the poet laureate of West Virginia, serves as host.

The series came about as a result of an ongoing conversation with Harshman, who felt that there was a need for a dependable venue in which to present major American poets reading and talking about their work here in West Virginia and more specifically here in Wheeling. Harshman had long lamented the loss of the **James Wright** Festival which had been held for many years in Wright’s home town of Martins Ferry, Ohio. “That annual event was a towering success,” Harshman explained, “lauded by poets across the U.S., and I see no reason why such a success cannot be replicated here in Wheeling. And some will remember that frequently some of the programming for the Wright festival was, in fact, held at various locations in Wheeling.”

“I have a great faith in poetry to refocus in us what it means to be human, and with every passing year I feel an ever greater need to be reminded about what it is that we hold in common as men and women who value beauty and the kind of meaning revealed in artistic expression. I am not embarrassed to continue to quote as immensely relevant **William Carlos Williams**’ adage that **‘It is difficult / to get the news from poems / yet men die miserably every day / for lack / of what is found there.’** In a political season that seems more sad and pathetic than ever before, perhaps the news that may be found in poetry will hold a brightness, a freshness more useful than the soundbites from talking heads reporting on the doings of the millionaires and corporate figure heads dominating what currently passes for news here in America.”



**George Ella Lyon**, poet laureate of Kentucky, & **Marc Harshman**, poet laureate of West Virginia, at the inaugural Wheeling Poetry Series at Lunch With Books, September 29, 2015.

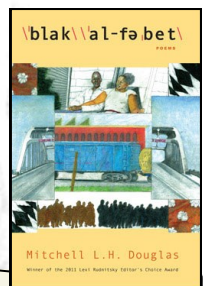
# May 9, 2017: Our Guest Today

## *Mitchell Douglas*

**Mitchell Douglas** is a founding member of the Affrilachian Poets, a Cave Canem fellow, and Poetry Editor for *PLUCK!: the Journal of Affrilachian Arts & Culture*. A professor of English at Indiana University-Purdue University Indianapolis (IUPUI), his second poetry collection */blak/ /al-fə bet/*, was winner of the 2011 Lexi Rudnitsky/Editor's Choice Award. His debut collection, *Cooling Board: A Long-Playing Poem*, was a runner-up for the 2007 Stan and Tom Wick Poetry Prize. In 2010, *Cooling Board* was nominated for an NAACP Image Award in the Outstanding Literary Work-Poetry category.

*"Mitchell L. H. Douglas gives voice to the spirit and ghosts of one community's America with a mix of fierce conscience and deep tenderness. He has built 'an altar of remembrance' that is at once personal and collective."*

- Donna Seaman, *Booklist*



# HOUSETOP

(for Matilda Gohagan)

Through daylight, through denim,  
nightfall and sunflower,  
through parched grass, through violets,  
melon rind, melon flesh,  
you sew a plow's winding path —  
loving turn of earth.

I leave Selma, filled  
with proof of fingers' work,  
how we weave love  
into a soft, warming field.  
From the center out, heart  
built on the strength of seed,  
yield of crop,  
raising fences in honor  
arms interlocked  
holding in, not keeping out.

When I board the train back,  
I wrap our stories around me,  
think of the stitches —  
the way a bloodline is born,  
the way we honor the art.

— *Mitchell Douglas*

*"Housetop" from \blak\ |al-fe bet\, winner of the 2011 Lexi Rudnitsky Editor's Choice Award.  
Written by Mitchell L. H. Douglas and published by Persea Books/New York.*

# OFFERINGS

Grandfather, 79, scales basement steps,  
separates colors & whites  
while you say *I can wash my own.*

Grandmother, 80, reads romance novels  
like morning papers, sings gospel  
with God's soul, hallowed notes.

Breakfast, toast points  
pierce north, east & west,  
George Washington, Mamie Lee & you.

Coffee instant, bacon fried long,  
grits loose — a hard-boiled egg  
rocks the edge of the grains.

Two smiles sip heat  
from chipped cups, insist  
you have seconds.

— *Mitchell Douglas*

*"Offerings" from \blak\ |al-fe bet\, winner of the 2011 Lexi Rudnitsky Editor's Choice Award.  
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## Previous Guests:

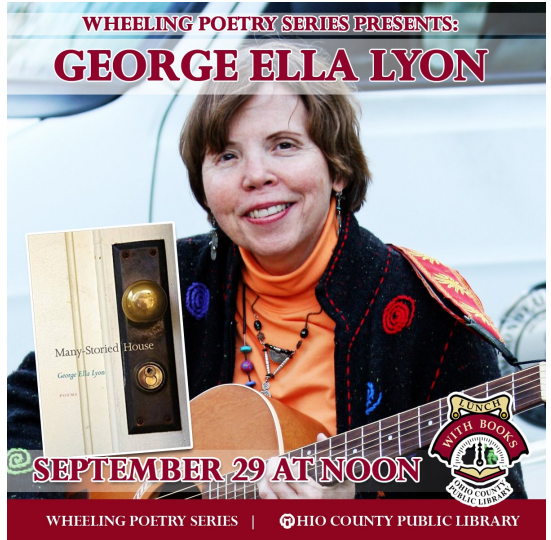
# Wheeling Poetry Series

## George Ella Lyon

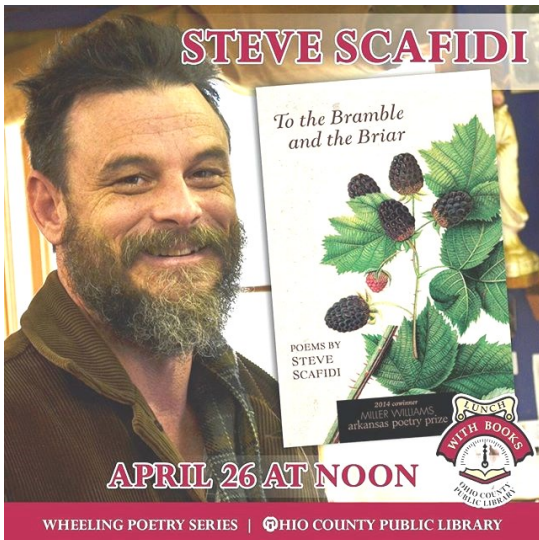
The **Wheeling Poetry Series** opener featured the poet laureate of Kentucky, **George Ella Lyon**, who appeared at Lunch With Books at the Ohio County Public Library on **September 29, 2015**.

The author of four books of poetry, a novel, a memoir, a short story collection, and thirty-seven books for young readers, Lyon read from her collection, *Many-Storied House*.

Originally from the mountains of Kentucky, George Ella holds a PhD in English from Indiana University, where she studied with poet Ruth Stone. She has taught writing on many campuses and spoken at hundreds of schools, libraries, and conferences throughout the country.



## Steve Scafidi



**Steve Scafidi**, the featured guest at the second entry in the **Wheeling Poetry Series** on **April 26, 2016**, read *Autumn Begins in Martins Ferry Ohio* by his favorite poet, James Wright. “Wright wrote poems that endure,” Scafidi said. “His poems move me—they helped me live when I was younger and they still do.” From his own poems, Scafidi read *This Page*, written for his late grandmother, *The Coin*, a poem in which he imagines Abraham Lincoln’s son Robert carrying the first Lincoln penny in his pocket, and *Song for Sunday Morning*, a poem he dedicated to fathers everywhere.

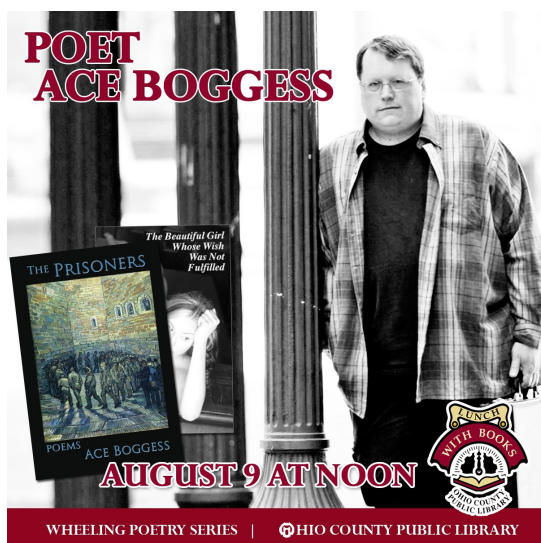
Scafidi, who earned his MFA in creative writing at Arizona State University, lives in Summit Point, WV.

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## Ace Boggess

Our featured guest on **August 9, 2016**, Charleston native **Ace Boggess** read from his book of poetry, *The Prisoners* (Brick Road Poetry Press, 2014). Ace has also published *The Beautiful Girl Whose Wish Was Not Fulfilled* (Highwire Press, 2003). His novel, *A Song Without a Melody*, was published in December 2016 by Hyperborea Publishing.

His writing has appeared in *Harvard Review*, *Mid-American Review*, *RATTLE*, *River Styx*, *North Dakota Quarterly* and many other journals. He earned his law degree from the West Virginia University College of Law, received a fellowship from the West Virginia Commission on the Arts, and spent five years in West Virginia prison system (the basis for his latest book of poems).



**POET  
ACE BOGGESS**

*THE PRISONERS*  
POEMS  
ACE BOGGESS

*The Beautiful Girl Whose Wish Was Not Fulfilled*

**AUGUST 9 AT NOON**

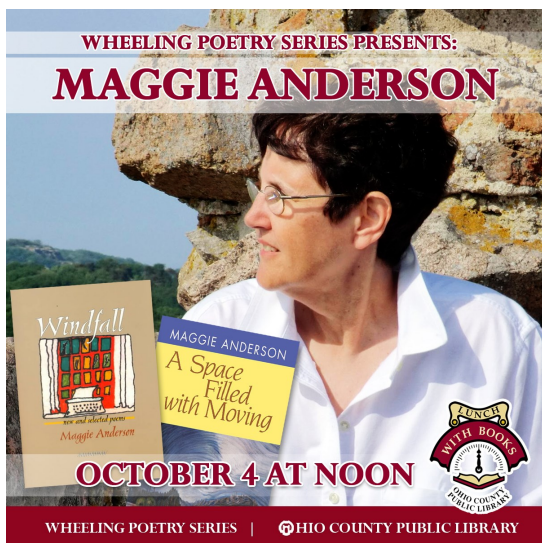
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## Maggie Anderson

**Maggie Anderson**, the featured **Wheeling Poetry Series** guest **October 4, 2016**, is the author of four books of poetry, including *Windfall: New and Selected Poems*, *A Space Filled with Moving*, and *Cold Comfort*.



WHEELING POETRY SERIES PRESENTS:

**MAGGIE ANDERSON**

*Windfall*  
new and selected poems  
Maggie Anderson

MAGGIE ANDERSON  
*A Space Filled with Moving*

**OCTOBER 4 AT NOON**

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Her awards include two fellowships from the National Endowment for the Arts, fellowships from the Ohio, West Virginia, and Pennsylvania Councils on the Arts, and the Ohioana Library Award for contributions to the literary arts in Ohio.

The founding director of the Wick Poetry Center and of the Wick Poetry Series of the Kent State University Press, Anderson is Professor Emerita of English at Kent State University and lives in Asheville, NC. Her new collection of poems, *Dear All*, was released September 2017, by Four Way Books in New York.

*Photos of Mitchell Douglas by Photos by Rachel Eliza Griffiths.  
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