

A special edition of
Lunch With Books
at the
**Ohio County
Public Library**
Wheeling, WV

**OCTOBER 13,
2020**

*Wheeling
Poetry
Series*



PRESENTS

**ALLISON PITINII
DAVIS**

Wheeling Poetry Series

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."



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.

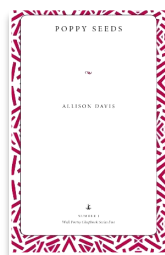
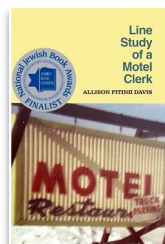
Wheeling
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FEATURED GUEST... OCTOBER 13, 2020

ALLISON PITINII DAVIS

A superb younger American poet, **Allison Pitinii Davis** is the author of ***Line Study of a Motel Clerk*** (Baobab Press, 2017), a finalist for the National Jewish Book Award and the Ohioana Book Award, and ***Poppy Seeds*** (Kent State UP, 2013), winner of the Wick Poetry Chapbook Prize. Her work has appeared in *Best American Poetry*, *The New Republic*, The Academy of American Poets website, and elsewhere.

She holds fellowships from Stanford University's Wallace Stegner program, the Fine Arts Work Center in Provincetown, and the Severinghaus Beck Fund for Study at Vilnius Yiddish Institute. Originally from Youngstown, Ohio, she is a PhD candidate in English and Creative Writing at The University of Tennessee, where she served as an editor of *Grist: A Journal of the Literary Arts* and writes about the intersection of labor, diaspora, and gender in the Rust Belt.



The Function of Humor in the Neighborhood

—with a line from Louise Glück

Humor functions in the neighborhood as it functioned in the shtetl: the only way into a world insistent on your pain. Something you'd be shot for. If they want you to cry, tears are evasive; if they want you vulnerable, vulnerability's a cop-out; if they want a confession, your confession is cheap. "When I speak passionately, / that's when I'm least to be trusted." A privilege to weep when to laugh is to choke on history. Oh diaspora: seventy-five years ago I'd be gassed beside my sisters, yet here I am, running out for milk in a heated car. Does a funnier joke exist? Yet there's so many jokes in this neighborhood, that one barely gets a laugh.

You're telling us.

—Allison Pitinii Davis

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Inheritance

Whatever he did is characterized by meticulously fine and painstaking craftsmanship. [. . .] In the care and precision of his lines, people and objects retain their own lives.

—Harvey Shapiro on the poet Charles Reznikoff

1. Reznikoff's parents made hats. His lines are tight
as his parent's stitching:
word-word-word-word-word.

Lines to cover a head on a freezing day.

2. My mother is a bookkeeper,
my father is an innkeeper.
I'm a keeper of a language
that won't register under its name.

3. Reznikoff's mother moved to America
and had a son. She wanted to name him Ezekiel
after her father. The doctor said, "Call him Charlie,
he'll be grateful."

4. When the thread unravels, run it between your lips.
When there isn't thread, invent separation.
Double knot the end of every truth.

5. Between being horseman
in Czarist Russia
and trading horses
in Chicago, a Jew stopped in England
and grabbed a new name quickly
as a jacket
that we keep handing down
to inherit the sweat.

—Allison Pitinii Davis

from **LINE STUDY OF A MOTEL CLERK**, Baobab Press, 2017
Featured Poem of the week, Missouri Review, May 9, 2016.

PREVIOUS GUESTS

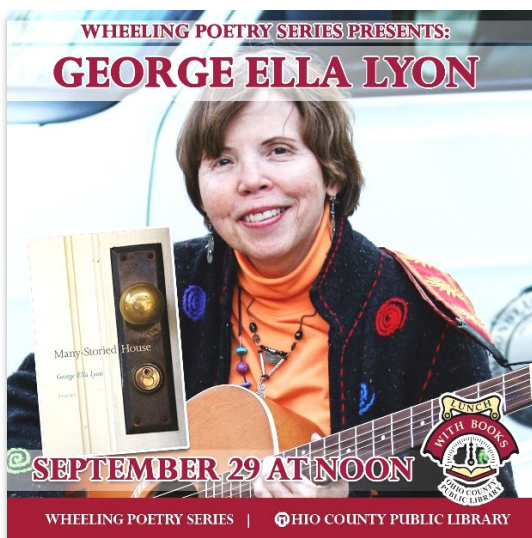
Wheeling Poetry Series

GEORGE ELLA LYON

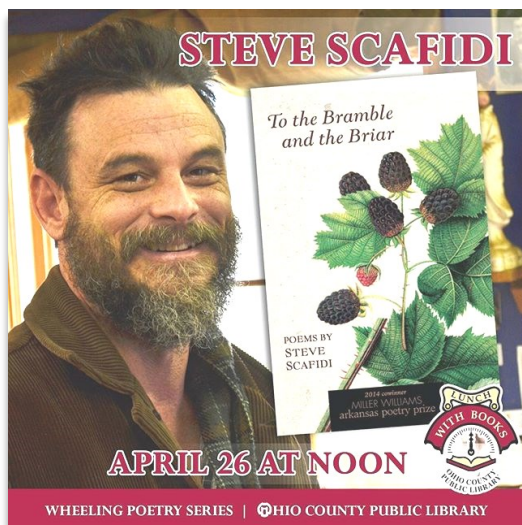
The **Wheeling Poetry Series** opener featured the poet laureate of Kentucky, **George Ella Lyon**, who appeared at Lunch With Books at the Ohio County Public Library on **September 29, 2015**.

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 **Wheeling Poetry Series** program 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.

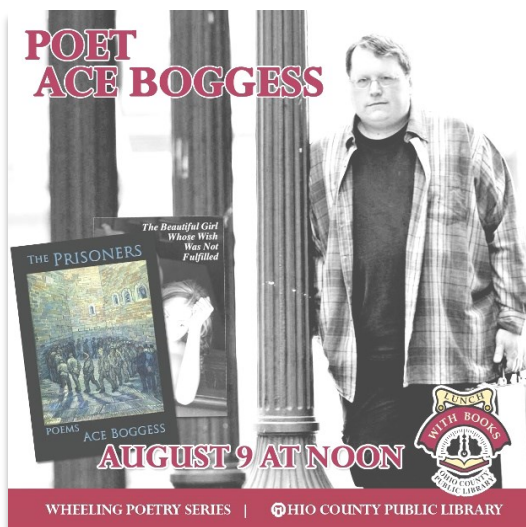
Scafidi, who earned his MFA in creative writing at Arizona State Uni-

versity, lives in Summit Point, WV.

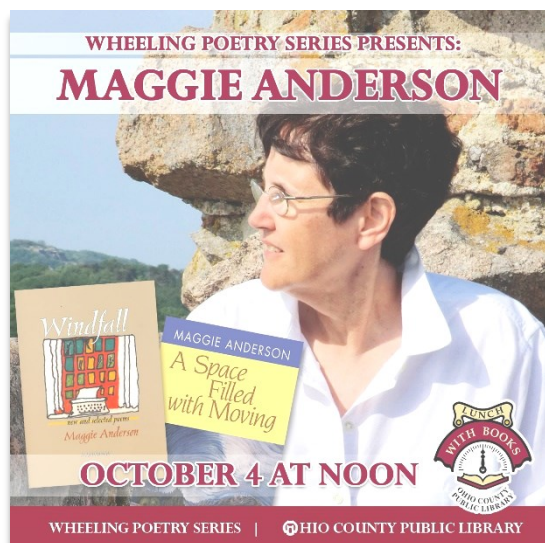
ACE BOGGESS

Our featured guest on **August 9, 2016**, Charleston native **Ace Boggress** 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).



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**.

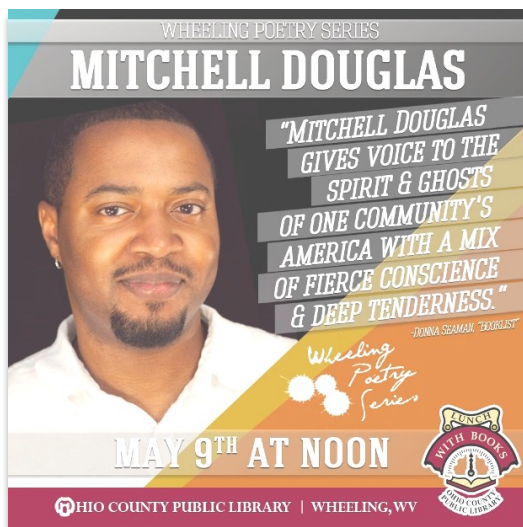
Her awards include two fellowships from the National Endowment for the Arts, fellowships from the Ohio, West Virginia, and Pennsylvania Councils on the Arts, and the Ohioana Library Award for contributions to the literary arts in Ohio.

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.

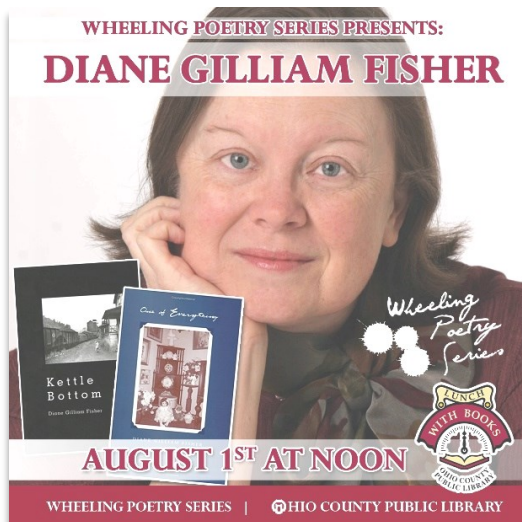
MITCHELL DOUGLAS

Our featured guest on **May 9, 2017**, **Mitchell Douglas** read from his poetry collection **\blak\ \al-fə bet** (Persea Books, 2013). Mitchell Douglas is a founding member of the Afrilachian Poets, a Cave Canem fellow, and Poetry Editor for **PLUCK!: the Journal of Afrilachian 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.



DIANE GILLIAM

Diane Gilliam grew up in Columbus, Ohio, daughter of parents who were part of the post-war Appalachian outmigration, from Mingo County W. Va. and Johnson County Kentucky. Gilliam's first book, **One of Everything** (2003), tells the stories of four generations of women in her family, beginning on Stepp Mountain in eastern Kentucky and ending in a shopping mall in Akron, Ohio.



Her second book, **Kettle Bottom** (2004), a Pushcart Prize winner and Ohioana Library Association Book of the Year in Poetry, showcases the voices of people living in the coal camps at the time of the 1920-21 West Virginia Mine Wars. Gilliam was awarded the 2008 Chaffin Award for Appalachian Writing. She earned a PhD from Ohio State and MFA from Warren Wilson University.

Diane Gilliam was the featured **Wheeling Poetry Series** guest **August 1, 2017**.

JAMES HARMS

James Harms, was our featured guest on **October 3, 2017**. The founding director of the MFA Program in Creative Writing at WVU, Harms the author of the poetry collections **Rowing with Wings, Comet Scar, After West, Freeways and Aqueducts, Quarters, The Joy Addict and Modern Ocean, and What to Borrow, What to Steal**, a limited fine press edition, East of Avalon, as well as several poetry chapbooks. He has received a National Endowment for the Arts Fellowship, three Pushcart Prizes, the PEN/Revson Fellowship, and fellowships from the WV and PA Arts Commissions, as well as residencies at Yaddo and the MacDowell Colony. His work has appeared in *Poetry*, *The American Poetry Review*, *Oxford American*, and many other journals.



MARY B. MOORE

An astounding writer and teacher, **Mary B. Moore** has published three major collections and won four poetry contests in just the past two years. Her life's work has been hailed by some of the finest poets in America.

The featured **Wheeling Poetry Series** guest **April 10, 2018**, Moore's latest poetry book, **Amanda and the Man Soul**, was selected by Dorianne Laux for the 2017 EMRYS award. Other recently published poetry books include her second full-length collection **Flicker** (Broadkill River Press, 2016), winner of the 2016 Dogfish Head Poetry Award judged by Carol Frost, Baron Wormser, and Jan Beatty; and **Eating the Light** (Sable Books, 2016) chosen by Allison Joseph for the 2016 chapbook contest. **The Book of Snow**, a full-length collection, came out in 1998 from Cleveland State University Press. She won the Second Place Award, in 2017, in Nimrod's Pablo Neruda Poetry Contest.



RON HOUCHIN AND A. E. STRINGER

On **July 17th, 2018**, the Wheeling Poetry Series hosted an astounding writer and teacher, **Ron Houchin**. In the past two years alone, Houchin has published three major collections and won four poetry contests. His life's work has been hailed by some of the finest poets in America. He was awarded the Appalachian book of the year in poetry in 2004 and the Weatherford Award in poetry in 2013 for his collection, *The Man Who Saws Us In Half*, LSU Press.

As a special bonus, the distinguished author and poet, **A.E. Stringer**, joined Houchin. Stringer taught writing and literature at Marshall University for nearly twenty-five years. The A.E. Stringer Visiting Writers Series at Marshall is named in his honor. He has published three major collections of poetry including *Channel Markers* from the legendary Wesleyan Poetry Series and most recently, *Late Breaking*, 2013, Salmon Poetry Publishing.

ED OCHESTER AND JUDITH VOLLMER

One of America's most distinguished poets, **Ed Ochester**, along with the award-winning and prolific poet, **Judith Vollmer**, kicked off the fourth season of the Wheeling Poetry Series on **October 9th, 2019**.

Ochester's book, *Sugar Run Road*, was published by Autumn House Press. He is the editor of the University of Pittsburgh Press Poetry Series and for many years was a member of the core faculty of the Bennington MFA Writing Seminars. He was formerly director of the Writing Program at the University of Pittsburgh.

Vollmer is the author of five full-length books of poetry, including most recently, *The Apollonia Poems*,

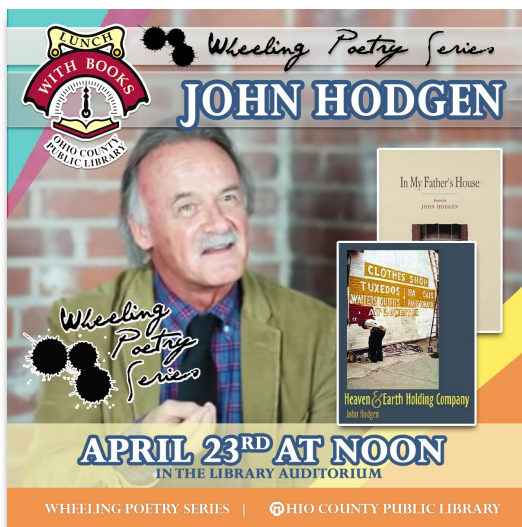
awarded the Four Lakes Poetry Prize of the University of Wisconsin Press. She teaches in the Drew University MFA Program in Poetry & Poetry in Translation.

JOHN HODGEN

John Hodgen is the Writer-in-Residence at Assumption College in Worcester, MA. Hodgen won the AWP Donald Hall Prize in Poetry for Grace (University of Pittsburgh Press, 2005). His fourth book of poetry, **Heaven & Earth Holding Company**, is out from University of Pittsburgh Press, and his first book **In My Father's House**, has just been reprinted from Lynx House/University of Washington Press.

A recent poem was selected for Scribner's Best American Poetry 2017. Hodgen's latest book, **The Lord of Everywhere**, was released in early September 2019, also from the University of Washington.

Hodgen was the featured author at the Wheeling Poetry Series **April 23, 2019**.



JOHN HOPPENTHALER

John Hoppenthaler was the featured guest at the Wheeling Poetry Series, **August 13, 2019**.

Hoppenthaler is the author of three books of poetry, **Lives of Water**, **Anticipate the Coming Reservoir**, and **Domestic Garden**, all with Carnegie Mellon University Press. His poetry has appeared in *Ploughshares*, *McSweeney's*, *Blackbird*, and *The Literary Review*, as well as in several anthologies, including *Eyes Glowing at the Edge of the Woods: Fiction and Poetry From West Virginia* (WVUP, 2017).

For nine years he served as Personal Assistant to American novelist, essayist, book editor, and college professor, Toni Morrison. He received his MFA in Poetry Writing from Virginia Commonwealth University and is an English professor at East Carolina University.

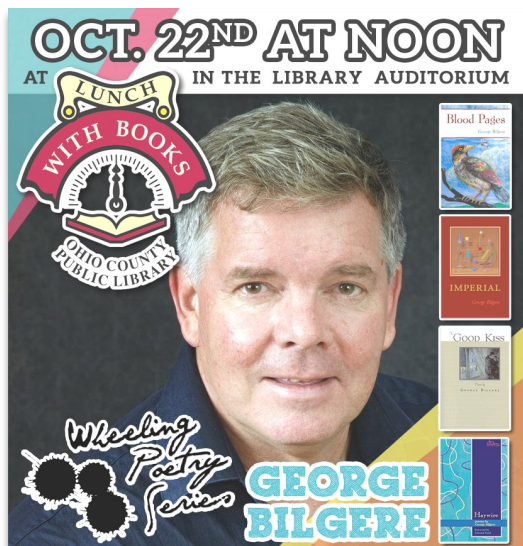


GEORGE BILGERE

Hailed by Michael Heaton, features reporter for *The Cleveland Plain Dealer* as "America's Greatest Living Poet,"

George Bilgere can count among his other admirers Garrison Keillor and former poet laureate Billy Collins, who has described him as "a welcome breath of fresh American air.,,"

A professor of English at John Carroll University, Bilgere has published six collections of poetry, including **Imperial** (2014); **The White Museum** (2010), which was awarded the Autumn House Poetry Prize; **Haywire** (2006), which won the May Swenson Poetry Award; and **The Good Kiss** (2002), which was selected by Collins to win the University of Akron Poetry Award. Other awards include the Midland Authors Award and a Pushcart Prize.



Bilgere was the featured author at the Wheeling Poetry Series **October 22, 2019**.

Wheeling Poetry Series

"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 sound-bites from talking heads reporting on the doings of the millionaires and corporate figure heads dominating what currently passes for news here in America."

-Marc Harshman, West Virginia Poet Laureate

NEXT

Wheeling Poetry Series

MARK YOUR CALENDARS
NOV. 3, 2020



We are pleased to welcome Erin **Murphy**, author of eight collections of poetry, including **Human Resources** (forthcoming from Salmon Poetry in 2021) and **Too Much of This World** (Mammoth Books, 2008), winner of the Anthony Piccione Poetry Prize, and **Science of Desire** (Word Poetry, 2004), a finalist for the Paterson Poetry Prize for the best poetry book of 2004. Her awards include the Dorothy Sargent Rosenberg

Poetry Prize and the Foley Poetry Award, among others. Her work has been featured on Garrison Keillor's *The Writer's Almanac*, and has appeared in numerous journals and anthologies, including *The Georgia Review* and *Women's Studies Quarterly*. Murphy is Professor of English and creative writing at Penn State Altoona.



Wheeling Poetry Series



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