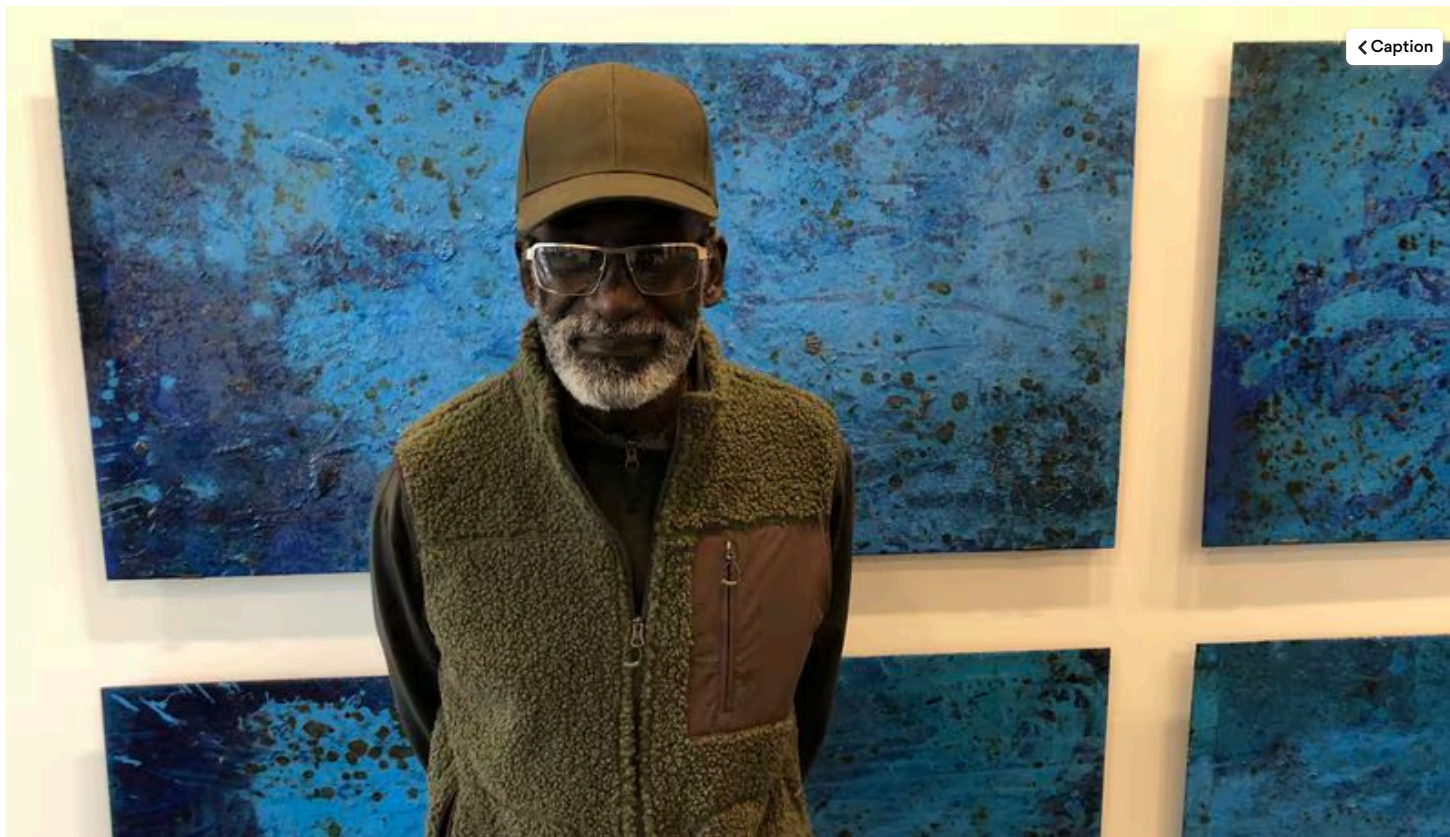


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Dayton poet, musician David Matthews will be showcased Thursday at Sinclair



Credit: CONTRIBUTED PHOTO DON THRASHER

LIFESTYLES

By **Don Thrasher**

April 2, 2024

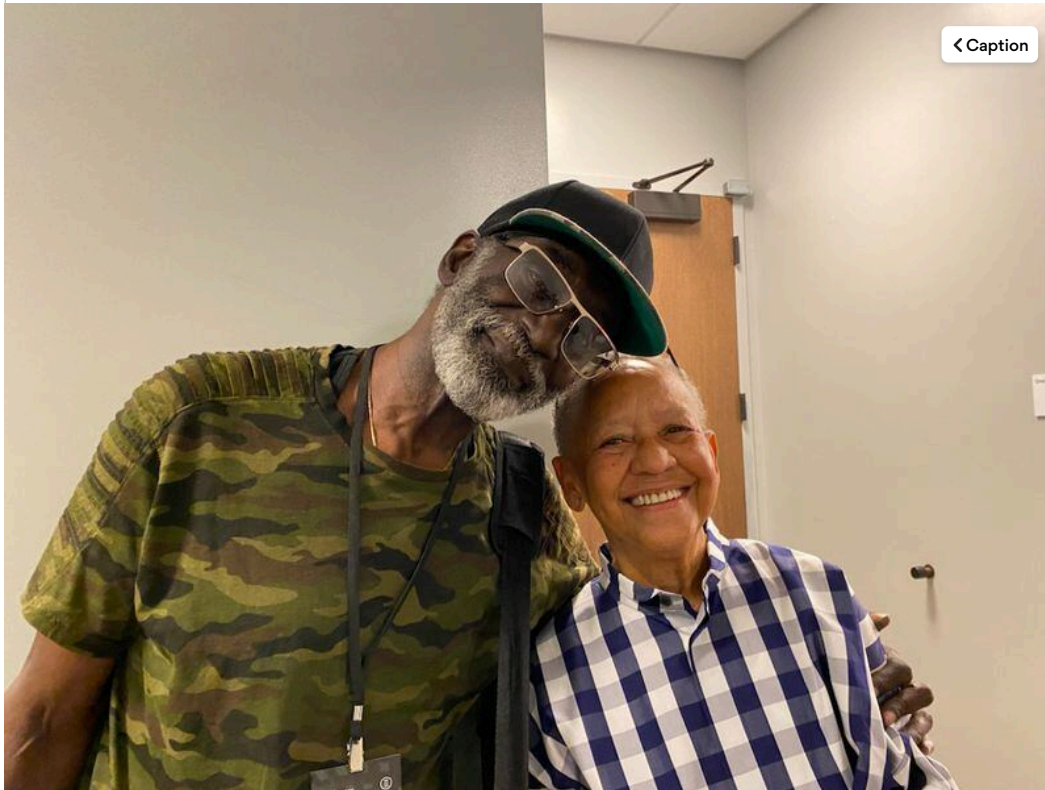


Many Daytonians know David Matthews as the tall, good-natured musician playing African and Latin percussion in groups like Big Gil & the Funky Allstars. However, the Detroit native is also a respected poet, which is the focus of “An Evening with David Matthews” in Sinclair Community College’s Smith Auditorium on Thursday, April 4.

Matthews, who was discovered by poet Nikki Giovanni in 1972, will present a segment of spoken word and stories followed by an interview with his wife, Hsanni Scott-Matthews, an author, poet, actor and filmmaker. The event is presented by Soul Fire Productions and Sinclair's Department of Diversity.

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Credit: CONTRIBUTED PHOTO

His poetic side

Matthews published three poetry books early in his career: "The Feel of Feeling" (1976), "Time Brings About a Change" (1980) and "Message" (1984). His fourth book, "Poetry Classics," will be available at Thursday's event.

"I was encouraging David to at least look at printing a book that is 40 years in the making," Scott-Matthews said. "His music is wonderful, but I don't want him to lose touch with his artistry. He's been writing little poems here and there since we've been together. Surely, he had written more poems since he published the last book."

While Matthews never stopped writing, playing percussion with area groups has occupied most of his time the past several decades. Nonetheless Scott-Matthews has encouraged her husband to tap back into his literary side. In February 2020, they presented "Rhapsody-N-Soul" at PNC Arts Annex through her Soul Fire Productions. In May 2022, they presented

“Rhapsody-N-Soul: “Revival Revelation Rejoice” at The Tank, the black box theater in the lower level of the Dayton Arcade. His own poetry show was the next logical step.

“Since April is Poetry Month, I wanted to have a special performance by an African American poet that is current,” she said. “I also wanted it to be free and open to the public. Then I thought, since David is an award-winning poet, I should showcase him. I thought it was important for David to share his poetry with people. I just needed to find the perfect venue to present him.”

Michael Carter, chief diversity officer for Sinclair, is pleased for the opportunity to present Matthews and his work on campus.

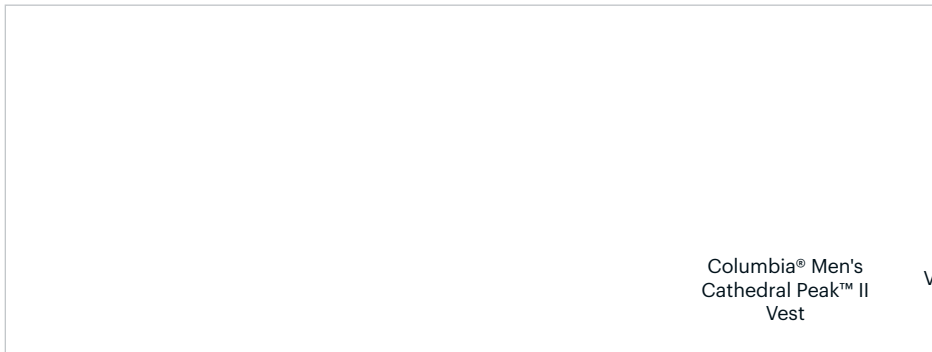
“I already knew David because he’s been around the community for years,” Carter said. “I (was) introduced to David through Bing Davis several years ago. We always like to provide platforms for people who are talented. Diversity and inclusion is what we do, and I believe strongly in this. An event like this is another opportunity to showcase someone who is not only talented but has given so much to the community.”

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The early years

Matthews was born in Detroit on Dec. 11, 1951, but is a product of Dayton. He grew up known as a jock, not a poet or musician. As a star basketball player at Roosevelt High School, most of his focus was on securing an athletic scholarship. However, he was also inspired to start writing at 16. His first published works were in “The Thought of the Week,” a section of the school’s weekly student newspaper.

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Matthews graduated from Roosevelt in 1970 and attended Urbana University on a basketball scholarship. He harbored dreams of a professional career before a knee injury at the end of his junior season altered that plan. Matthews lost his financial support for athletics, but his 3.3 grade point average helped him secure an academic scholarship for his senior year. He was able to complete his studies and earn bachelor’s degrees in behavioral science and sociology while minoring in theater and poetry.



Credit: CONTRIBUTED PHOTO

Spoken word performance

The lessons Matthews learned at home combined with insight into the human condition fine-tuned through his bachelor's programs fed into his poems. His theater studies taught him how to bring his poems to life by controlling his deep voice, which can go from sheer power to a smooth whisper. With a boost in profile thanks to an endorsement from Giovanni, Matthews decided to take his writing to the stage. In 1973 he created "An Evening on Broadway Poetry Production." He has presented the spoken word program at more than 300 colleges and universities.

"I'm not just going to come to the podium and read my poems," Matthews said. "I'm going to act and reach out to people. We're not bringing the big production like I did when I was performing at universities. We're just going to give them a little taste. I'm doing five pieces from the book. Two of them are award-winning pieces and another piece is one I dedicated to George Floyd, (which) has never been heard on a stage. Another one, 'Time Brings About a Change,' inspired Bing Davis to do a painting in honor of me and Paul Laurence Dunbar for his poem, 'Who Wears the Mask.' (It) was quite an honor to be included in a painting with Paul Laurence Dunbar. I'll have a print of that on display at Sinclair."

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Matthews credits Scott-Matthews and his faith with making Thursday’s poetry performance a reality.

“My wife has really helped me get back into poetry,” he said. “This is a really big deal to have this Sinclair event for my fourth book. And for it to be 40 years later, oh my goodness. The Father has his way, doesn’t it? I look at my career and my life and it has been guided by the Father. I am blessed.”

Contact this contributing writer at 937-287-6139 or donthrasher100@gmail.com.

HOW TO GO

What: Soul Fire Productions and Sinclair College Diversity Department present An Evening with David Matthews

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Where: Sinclair Community College, Conference Center, Smith Auditorium, 444 W. Third St., Dayton

When: 6 p.m. Thursday, April 4

Cost: Free

More info: 937-512-3000 or sinclair.edu

Artist info: davidmatthewsauthorpoetmusician.com

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About the Author



Don Thrasher



Don Thrasher, a native of Gadsden, Alabama, has been a weekly contributor for the Dayton Daily News since 2003. He covers national and international music, performance and art. Don is a versatile writer, who has interviewed ballet dancers, professional athletes, authors, comedians, filmmakers, rodeo clowns and other disparate figures.

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