

Press Release

For Release: Immediately Contact: Raymond Hammond, Editor; 917.843.8825; rhammond@nyq.org
 Publication Information: 6 x 9 in.; 80 Pages LCCN: 2023931435 ISBN: 978-1-63045-095-3
 Publication Date: March 2023 Website: <https://nyq.org/books/author/matthew-johnson> SRP \$18.95 USD
 Availability: Amazon, Barnes and Noble, Powell's, Small Press Dist. To the Trade: Ingram Distribution, SPD

NYQ Books™ Announces the Publication of *Far from New York State* by Matthew Johnson



March 2023 - Beacon, NY - NYQ Books is proud to announce the publication of *Far from New York State* by Matthew Johnson. In his second book of poetry, Johnson constructs a space where the rural communities of Upstate, the suburban living of the Lower Hudson Valley, and the metropolitan landscapes of the City are woven together in a mosaic snapshot. A collection of poems where the historical and cultural traditions of New York State meet, the reader is acquainted not only with seminal figures across the cultural channels of literature, music, and sports, such as Washington Irving, Paul Robeson, and the '86 Mets, but to the author himself. Tender, playful, and meditative, Johnson presents stories that he has lived, and shares others that have been passed down through familial storytelling around the kitchen table and cookout barbecue pit.

"Matthew Johnson offers a rich tapestry of stories drawn from the lives of historical figures, professional athletes, musicians, and more, to address divisions, struggles, triumphs, and realities. He writes, 'the long cool is whittled down to the essentials of the essentials,' carving out an image of America in all its smooth and sharp edges. His language moves from direct to musical, narrative to lyric, in a style

that interrogates as it engages and invites."

—Grant Clauser, author of *Muddy Dragon on the Road to Heaven*

"With its brilliant homages to Nas and Red Foxx, Matthew Johnson's *Far from New York State* creates a true jazz story, a collage, or a jigsaw puzzle—it's full of play and worthy of being read...Johnson opens up a space and lets the poems tell their own story."

—Rochelle Spencer, author of *AfroSurrealism: The African Diaspora's Surrealist Fiction*

"Even from 35,000 feet, baseball diamonds look like baseball diamonds. In Johnson's poems, you can still see the diamonds, though they are sketched on the blacktop with chalk or manifest by construction cones and fire hydrants on the minds of neighborhood kids. In the same way the giants of Jazz and Blues emerge from the poetic landscape and lend us a couple of bars, enliven and vivify a world that refuses to go sterile, because it has deep roots. Matthew Johnson's poetry gives these roots rain and mixes the demotic and the mythic to create a landscape of verse where one can imagine Duke Ellington and Satchel Page tipping caps to each other before disappearing into the poetic mist of Johnson's rich language that roils beneath each line. When the myth and the mist have cleared, you can still see the baseball diamonds, the kids still pretending to be Hideo Nomo and Sammy Sosa, and you can faintly hear the blues, and smell the newly oiled leather."

—Aaron Dylan Graham, author of *Blood Stripes*

Matthew Johnson is the author of the poetry collection, *Shadow Folk and Soul Songs* (Kelsay Books). He is a former sports journalist and editor, having written for *USA Today College* and *The Daily Star* (Oneonta, New York). A native of New Rochelle, New York, who grew up in Stratford, Connecticut, he earned his M.A. in English from the University of North Carolina at Greensboro, where he currently lives. A three-time Best of the Net nominee, his poetry has appeared in *Maryland Literary Review*, *Roanoke Review*, *Northern New England Review*, *Up the Staircase Quarterly*, and elsewhere. He currently serves as the managing editor of the journal, *Portrait of New England*, and poetry editor of the journal, *The Twin Bill*. www.matthewjohnsonpoetry.com



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NYQ Books™ was established in 2009 as an imprint of The New York Quarterly Foundation, Inc.

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