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**ARTIST BIO: MARTHA REDBONE**

(revised 5-November-2021) p. 1 of 1

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Martha Redbone is a Native & African-American vocalist/songwriter/composer/educator. She is known for her unique gumbo of folk, blues, and gospel from her childhood in Harlan County, Kentucky infused with the eclectic grit of pre-gentrified Brooklyn. Inheriting the powerful vocal range of her gospel-singing African American father and the resilient spirit of her mother's Southeastern Cherokee/Choctaw culture, Redbone broadens the boundaries of American Roots music. With songs and storytelling that share her life experience as a Native and Black woman and mother in the new millennium, Redbone gives voice to issues of social justice, bridging traditions from past to present, connecting cultures, and celebrating the human spirit.

Her album *The Garden of Love- Songs of William Blake*, produced by Nitty Gritty Dirt Band founder/Grammy Winner John McEuen is an unexpected twist – “a brilliant collision of cultures” (The New Yorker) – features Redbone's magnificent voice, Blake's immortal words and a masterful cornucopia of roots music (blues, gospel, bluegrass, soul and traditional Southeastern Woodlands). Featured on NPR's All Things Considered the album released on her own indie label imprint rose to the Top Ten on Amazon Folk Charts for several weeks and has become the bedrock of her live shows bringing audiences to their feet with her fiery old-time mountain gospel singing and foot-stomping energy.

Redbone and her long-term collaborator/husband, composer/pianist/producer Aaron Whitby are called “the little engine that could [by their] band of NYC's finest blues and jazz musicians” (Larry Blumenthal/Wall Street Journal). From grassroots beginnings at powwows across Indian Country and in the underground clubs of NYC Redbone has built a passionate fan base with her mesmerizing presence and explosive live shows. Her debut *Home of the Brave* – “Stunning album, the kind of woman who sets trends” (Billboard) – garnered extremely positive critical attention while her sophomore album *Skintalk* – described as the soulful sound of “Earth, Wind and Fire on the Rez” (J Poet/Native Peoples Magazine) – took her music to Europe and the Far East. Albums *Skintalk* and *The Garden of Love: Songs of William Blake* are included in the Library Collection and “Up Where We Belong: Native Musicians in Popular Culture” exhibits in the Smithsonian National Museum of the American Indian in Washington DC.

Redbone is Composer for the Public Theater's 2019 production of *For Colored Girls Who Have Considered Suicide/ When the Rainbow is Enuff*, a revival/re-imagining of the 1976 classic choreopoem by the late Ntozake Shange. Redbone joined the all-women-of-color Creative Team to celebrate the author's historical work and legacy, and enjoyed a 4-week extended run through December that received rave reviews with notable mentions for their team's original compositions and score — “supreme music...brilliant” (NY Daily News).

Redbone and Whitby's recent work is *Bone Hill – The Concert*, an interdisciplinary musical theater work inspired by the lives of Redbone's family in the hills of coal-mining Appalachia. A multi-racial Cherokee and African American family, they are permanently bonded to their culture, identity and the mountain despite its violent past and the ever-changing laws of the land that threaten to extinguish them. Commissioned by Joe's Pub/NEA and Lincoln Center for the Arts, *Bone Hill – The Concert* is touring extensively nationwide and is a recipient of the NEFA National Theater Project Creation and Touring Grant and National Performance Network Creation Fund. Other theatrical commissions include compositions for the Goethe Institute / New York Theater Workshop collaboration, *Plurality of Privacy; Primer for a Failed Superpower* directed by Rachel Chavkin; a Chinese-American musical collaboration *Flood in the Valley* which premiered in Beijing in 2018; New Musical work, *Black Mountain Women*, currently in development at the Public Theater.

Over the years Martha has performed and recorded with many great artists including; Bonnie Raitt, George Clinton, Judy Collins, Joan Osborne, Steven Van Zandt, Me'Shell Ndegeocello, Nona Hendryx, Lisa Fischer, Steve Martin, David Amram, Randy Brecker, Tony Trischka, John McEuen of the Nitty Gritty Dirt Band, John Carter Cash, Ben Sollee and Tom Chapin amongst many others.

Martha guest lectures on subjects ranging from Indigenous rights to the role of the arts in politics and Native American Identity at many institutions including New York University, the University of Michigan, and the University of Massachusetts at Amherst, to name a few. Redbone includes workshops and motivational talks with grade school children

as part of her touring schedule on numerous reservations including Red Lake, Minn., Cherokee, N.C., Yuma, Ariz., and Menominee, Wisc., among others.

An exemplary ambassador for both Native and African-American Youth for the National HIV/Aids Partnership, she was awarded the Red Ribbon Award for Outstanding Leadership presented on World AIDS Day at the United Nations in 2005. Currently Martha advocates for Why Hunger's Artists Against Hunger and Poverty program which raises and awareness of poverty and hunger in the United States and abroad. Redbone is an Advisory Board member of the ManUp Campaign, the global youth movement to eradicate violence against women and girls for whom she served as the indigenous affairs consultant and creative advisor. She is particularly proud of her accomplishment in working with founder Jimmie Briggs and the Campaign's Board of Directors to include an Indigenous North American contingent (independent of the USA) to the roll call of 50 countries taking part in their Youth Leadership Summit held at the University of Johannesburg in South Africa during the 2010 FIFA World Cup. Redbone serves as an Advisory Board member of The Carlisle Indian School Project, Association on American Indian Affairs, Voices- A Peoples' History of the United States/Howard Zinn, a 2016 Fellow of the Native Arts and Cultures Foundation and is the 2018 MAPfund and 2018 Creative Capital awardee.

Redbone and Whitby are the 2020 Drama Desk Award recipients for Outstanding Music in a Play and the 2020 Audelco Award recipient for Outstanding Composer of Original Music and Score for Public Theater revival *For Colored Girls Who Have Considered Suicide/ When the Rainbow is Enuff* by Ntozake Shange. Redbone is an Awardee of Creative Capital, NEFA, NPN, NACF, MAPFund and NYC Womens Fund for Music.

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