

BONE HILL – THE CONCERT

Music and Lyrics by Martha Redbone and Aaron Whitby
Book by Martha Redbone, Roberta Uno and Aaron Whitby
Directed by Roberta Uno

In *Bone Hill – The Concert*, a new musical work for theater, the 12 member cast (six actor singers and six musicians) become the characters from four generations of a family living high on a mountain top in Appalachia. In telling their stories they take the audience on an epic, unexpected American exploration of family, history, and identity.

Inspired by Martha Redbone's own life and the lives of the women from whom she is descended, the stories of the Bone family members are told in a communal narrative style interspersed with dramatic scenes and driven by songs that span a swathe of American music, almost telling a parallel history.

The music is radically wide-ranging, from traditional Cherokee chants and lullabies to bluegrass and blues, country, gospel, jazz, Rock & Roll, Rhythm n Blues, and funk. The story is simply radical. Great-grandma Liza, whose 102 years of life frames the musical, is a Cherokee born in the aftermath of the Indian Removal Act. Her husband is an Englishman, her son-in-law a colored coal miner from the deep South, and Martha, her great-grandchild, may as well just be black. Dark and violent at times, *Bone Hill – The Concert* is uncompromising in its desire to be honest about uncomfortable subjects and especially the subject of race in America. The piece addresses issues and stories rarely heard in musical theater: the plight of the Cherokee people who returned home after the Trail of Tears; the US government's racial reclassification legislatures of the Mid-Atlantic states; the American Indian and African-American interracial dynamic; the ancient burial mounds on the highest peak on the Eastern seaboard formed on land which was desecrated for coal and for the building of new mining towns during the early 1800s. Beyond reflecting the cultural and aesthetic diversity of today's theater, *Bone Hill – The Concert* adds diverse missing narratives: racial dynamics between Native and African Americans, Native American and White, stories from the perspective of the women and the lives of people of color living in Appalachia, their culture and music. It reveals erased, forgotten truths and it does so with humor, pathos, and exuberance.

"Martha Redbone is a mesmerizing performer, writer, and storyteller," says Charles Randolph-Wright (Director, *Motown the Musical*). "'Bone Hill' is a uniquely American story of family and dreams – I cannot stop thinking about her unforgettable journey. No matter who you are or where you're from, Martha takes you home."

Roberta Uno, *Bone Hill* Director, explains, "We're very excited to have put together a cast of extremely talented and soulful young actor singers in Jessie Shelton, Barrett Doss, Jonathan-David and Soni Moreno to join Martha and Jason Walker who played Billy Bone so successfully at our first workshop."

The accompanying 6-piece band is led by co-creator Aaron Whitby (piano, organ) and features Charlie Burnham (violin, harmonica), Marvin Sewell (banjo, guitar), Alan Burroughs (dobro, guitar), Fred Cash (bass), and Tony Mason (drums).

Larry Blumenfeld, regular contributor to The Wall Street Journal, writes "[Bone Hill] isn't tripped up by uncomfortable truths and unresolved conflicts: It grooves through them, bolstered by some of New York's finest jazz and blues musicians and Redbone's own stirring voice and commanding presence. And it asks, with a coy wink and stern stare: 'What is native to American music?'"



Bone Hill – The Concert commissioned by Joe's Pub at the Public Theater as part of the New York Voices artists' initiative;
Co-commissioned by the Ashe Cultural Center, Lincoln Center for the Arts, Miami Light Project, PA'I Foundation,
the Yerba Buena Center for the Arts, and the National Performance Network Creation Fund.

Bone Hill – Song Cycle AND The Concert are the recipient of a NEFA National Theater Project and an NPN Creation Fund grant.