

BONE HILL

Music and Lyrics by Martha Redbone and Aaron Whitby

Bone Hill is a new musical work for theater created and developed by librettist/composers Martha Redbone and Aaron Whitby at Joe's Pub and the Public Theater. In its current Song Cycle iteration, Redbone becomes the characters from four generations of a family in the hills of coal-mining Appalachia, and the musicians are the townsfolk. In telling their stories the audience is taken on an epic, unexpected American exploration of family, history, and cultural identity.



Inspired by her own life and the women Martha Redbone is descended from, the lives of the Bone family members are told in songs that span a swathe of American music telling a parallel history. From traditional Cherokee chants and lullabies to Bluegrass, Blues, Country, Gospel, Jazz, Rock & Roll, Rhythm n Blues.

Dark and violent at times, *Bone Hill* is uncompromising in its desire to be honest about uncomfortable subjects particularly colonization and race. 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 and the ancient burial mounds on the Eastern seaboard, land which was desecrated for coal and the building of new mining towns during the early 1800s. Beyond reflecting the cultural and aesthetic diversity of today's theater, *Bone Hill* adds diverse missing narratives— racial dynamics between Native and African Americans, Native American and European, 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.

You Caught My Eye” is a song selection from the piece recorded live at the original workshop commissioned by at Joe's Pub and The Public Theater's NY Voices artist initiative. A waltz describing the day Redbone's grandfather, a sharecropper from Mississippi, migrated to Kentucky to work in the coalmines and met her Cherokee grandmother.

Redbone and Whitby are currently engaged in residencies to develop their full theatrical vision, and perform some work-in-progress workshop readings during this process.

“Martha Redbone is a mesmerizing performer, writer, and storyteller. “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.”
— **Charles Randolph-Wright (Director, *Motown the Musical*)**

“It 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?”
— **Larry Blumenfeld, regular contributor to *The Wall Street Journal***