

Music Box Films Presents

# OUR BLOOD IS WINE



78 MINUTES | USA | 2018 | NOT RATED | 2.35:1 | ENGLISH, GEORGIAN (WITH ENGLISH SUBTITLES)

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## **SYNOPSIS**

Filmmaker Emily Railsback and award-winning sommelier Jeremy Quinn provide intimate access to rural family life in the Republic of Georgia as they explore the rebirth of 8,000-year-old winemaking traditions almost lost during the period of Soviet rule. By using unobtrusive iPhone technology, Railsback brings the voices and ancestral legacies of modern Georgians directly to the viewer, revealing an intricate and resilient society that has survived regular foreign invasion and repeated attempts to erase Georgian culture. The revival of traditional winemaking is the central force driving this powerful, independent and autonomous nation to find its 21st century identity.

## **LOGLINE**

Families in the Republic of Georgia revive 8,000-year-old winemaking traditions that were almost lost during the era of Soviet domination.

## HISTORY'S BEST KEPT SECRET

Georgia is recognized as the world's birthplace for domesticated wine, with a consistent historical record dating to 6,000BC. Wines continue to be made according to ancient methods by nearly every family, yet they are largely unknown, and have never been fully documented; only miniscule quantities from a handful of families are currently bottled. After 70 years of Soviet occupation, and a 7-year Russian embargo (2006-2013), the last few years have been a breakout for Georgian wines, as winemakers have been forced to explore new markets, re-examine legendary terroirs, and identify their wines as vital in the global narrative of 'natural' wine. This film documents a voyage across the country to discover the finest wines from rural villagers and to tell their story, one of tradition's survival in the face of adversity.

A new generation's commitment to follow tradition is critical to that survival. This film introduces the rich Georgian wine culture to the world at large, and also gives the new generation of Georgian artisans a fuller understanding of the global relevance of their efforts, providing them with further incentive to continue.

## GEORGIAN WINE IN THE NEWS

New discoveries on the origins of wine in Georgia by anthropologist Patrick McGovern has recently been featured in:

**The New York Times:** <https://www.nytimes.com/2017/11/13/science/georgia-oldest-wine.html>

**Washington Post:** <https://www.washingtonpost.com/news/science/wp/2017/11/13/earliest-evidence-of-wine-found-in-giant-8000-year-old-jars/>

**BBC:** <http://www.bbc.com/news/world-europe-41977709>

**NPR:** <https://www.npr.org/sections/thesalt/2017/11/13/563281665/georgian-jars-hold-8-000-year-old-winemaking-clues>

**Food & Wine:** <http://www.foodandwine.com/news/worlds-oldest-wine-found>

**National Geographic:** <https://news.nationalgeographic.com/2017/11/oldest-winemaking-grapes-georgia-archaeology/>

## DIRECTOR'S STATEMENT

In December 2014 I went to Georgia to visit Jeremy for the holidays. Georgia had a pull on me, the same way it had pulled him there the previous spring. When you make your way through airport customs, the man who stamps your passport also hands you a bottle of Georgian wine to welcome you to the country. Things don't always make sense in Georgia, but the hospitality and love that people show each other through eating and drinking is transformative. Jeremy and I had worked in the restaurant industry for years, and never experienced anything remotely similar. My first meal in Tbilisi was at a traditional restaurant where Jeremy was the sommelier. When guests were moved by their food, or by the company of their friends, they would break into song; the deep, heart-felt polyphonic song of their ancestors. It brought me to tears. I had never been around a culture that felt their highs and lows so vividly, and in community over toasting and song. My lack of connection to a place or 'home' gave me the desire to be adopted into this deep-rooted family of winemakers.

While traveling through villages in the Caucasus Mountains a few days later, Jeremy mentioned that Georgia claims to have over 500 native grape species, which were mostly wiped out during the industrialization of the Soviet era. Many of these varieties remain in the backyard gardens of families, and are now at the national nursery. Most of these families don't bottle for sale, so the only way to taste the wine is to visit the families. Jeremy looked out the window at the passing homes, and said he wanted to walk the entire country to taste the forgotten wines of Georgia. Walking across the country sounded awful to me, unless we could make a film about it. So we did.

We didn't have a script, and we weren't entirely sure what the film would even turn out to be. I chose to shoot on the iPhone, because it was versatile and quite frankly we hate wine films where everything looks sexy. The informality of our equipment became a benefit, since people didn't fear the camera or me. I was able to capture honest interactions with villagers, which might've been stifled if I was lugging around expensive camera gear. The look and feel of the iPhone captured the rustic culture, which is full of improvisation.

When we returned from our 5 months of filming, I had gathered almost 200 hours of footage. There were so many stories to be told, and the hardest part was

leaving out some of my favorite memories. We ended up with a tapestry of Georgian stories that lets the viewer experience Georgia the way we did. Everything is interconnected: the Soviet past, the traditions and songs that keep the culture alive, the rebirth of qvevri winemaking among the younger generation, and the return to the village and natural farming methods. This film has ignited a curiosity in Jeremy and I about the connection between traditional beverages and ancient cultures, which we hope to expand into a global story.

## ABOUT THE FILMMAKER

### **Emily Railsback - Director, Cinematographer, Editor**

Emily is an independent film director, screenwriter, designer & photographer based in Chicago, Illinois. She graduated with an MFA in Cinema Arts & Sciences from Columbia College Chicago in 2014. Railsback began the production company *Burnt Sugar Productions* with sommelier Jeremy Quinn. As a team, their work focuses on culture and identity through the understanding of beverages. Railsback's prior work consists of narrative short films, music videos, visual arts, and humanitarian work. While tutoring children in the slums of Trujillo, Peru, she created an award-winning photography and painting exhibit "A Juxtaposition of Peruvian Life," documenting the quality of life among poor people in cities versus the Peruvian countryside. Her film career began in 2012 with a 16mm short film "The First Fall". She was the recipient of the Albert P. Weisman grant for her film "WarBaby." Railsback has completed 7 short films that have premiered at festivals across the country. Her other films include "The Vain Illusionist", "Fort", "Atoms", "At Papa's", "A Fool", and "The 6th Stage of Sugar." Railsback is currently working on "Ad Astra", a narrative feature film about contemporary women on the prairie, set in her hometown post the Trump election.

## FEATURED SOMMELIER

### **Jeremy Quinn**

Jeremy has enjoyed a career as a sommelier for nearly twenty years. A recipient of numerous awards, including Top American Sommelier (Food & Wine) and Best Wine List Lyricist (Chicago Reader), he has traveled to over two dozen countries for wine research, working grape harvest in five of them over the last decade. He is a vocal proponent of natural farming methods; his views on wine can be heard on multiple radio shows, podcasts, and in print. He is currently exploring the intersections between winemaking, culture, and identity in a number of locations around the world.



## CREW BIOS

### **Bruce Sheridan – Producer**

Bruce began his film career in New Zealand, where his producing and directing credits include *Perfectly Frank*, a documentary on the life of writer Frank Sargeson, and *Spellbound*, which tells the story of seminal rock band Split Enz. He won the 1999 New Zealand Best Drama Award for the tele-feature *Lawless*, and in 2012 produced *Head Games*, a highly-acclaimed documentary on sports concussion. His current projects include a feature film called *The Mother Road* and a non-fiction project called *Hunting Daniel*. Bruce is working with an international team to create a web and app based service that provides creators with the power to secure, protect, control, and monetize their work. In August 2017 he was appointed to the Advisory Board of a leading U.K. virtual reality company as Key Advisor & Producer focused on developing scripted and documentary immersive experiences across all production and delivery modes.

### **Anna Lindholm Noa - Editor & Motion Graphics**

Anna Lindholm Noa is an editor/graphics artist based in the Midwest. A graduate of Columbia College Chicago, she received a B.A. in Cinema Art + Science with a focus in post-production and documentary filmmaking, a combination that has allowed her to dive deeply into the non-fiction storytelling craft. In 2015, she co-produced and edited the short documentary, *Rainbow Families*, a film that was showcased at the Merklinka International Film Festival and Chicago's Ethnographic Film Festival. In 2017, she worked as an intern for Kartemquin Films, assisting the filmmakers with graphic design, project research, and fundraising campaigns. Currently, Lindholm works as a freelancer, specializing in motion graphics for documentaries and editing non-fiction narratives.

### **Gabriel Dib - Composer**

Gabriel Dib is a composer based in Los Angeles. His career started in São Paulo, Brazil and after moving to the US for a Masters in Film Scoring he worked with several composers writing music for TV shows on major networks such as *Castle* (ABC) and *Criminal Minds* (CBS). He wrote the music for *Miss Beverly Hills Ghost* which is among the most awarded web series in the world today. Recently Gabriel has scored the TV show *171 - Negócio de Família* for Universal Channel and the

feature length documentary *Our Blood is Wine* by Emily Railsback. Among his upcoming projects is the action film *EAS - Esquadrão Anti-Sequestro* (Anti Kidnap Squad).

### **Nino Arobelidze - Singer / Songwriter**

Nino Arobelidze is a Georgian born singer, composer and producer based in Chicago. Nino received her formal music education from DePaul University. Melding her interdisciplinary influences into her work, she has recorded two solo albums (*Nomad* and *Girl Named Nino*) commanding several languages, most distinctly embodying Soul, R&B and Rock. She has toured the U.S. as *Girl Named Nino*, drawing vocal comparisons to Billie Holiday and Jeff Buckley. Her music has been compared to St. Vincent, Erika Badu and Prince, but musicophiles and concert-goers readily recognize that Nino Arobelidze has a sound uniquely her own.

### **Assya Dimova - Line Producer**

Tokyo-born, Sofia-raised, Milano-educated, Berlin-experienced, Chicago-inspired, Los Angeles-based behind the scenes-struck child, Assya has chosen the producing path because she wants to find and cultivate relationships with inspirational filmmakers who have individual voice. She has worked on numerous short films that are successfully making the festival rounds. She sees the role of the producer as best described by two notorious redheads: the Red Queen from *"Through the Looking-Glass"*: "It takes all the running you can do, to keep in the same place. If you want to get somewhere else, you must run at least twice as fast as that!" and Conan O'Brien: "If you work really hard and you're kind, amazing things will happen." Her ultimate goal is to produce smart and original content that encourages people to think, feel and laugh.

## **C R E D I T S**

Directed By	Emily Railsback
Produced By	Bruce Sheridan
Featuring	Jeremy Quinn
Executive Producers	William Schopf
	Edward Arentz
With Support From	Dablon Vineyard
Featured Winemakers	Ramaz Nikoladze
	Giorgi Natenadze
	Zaza Darsavelidze
	Mariam Iosebidze
	Engus Natmeladze
	Soliko Tsaishvili
	John Wurdeman
	Zurab Topuridze
	Ioane Topuridze
	Kakha Berishvili
	Ketevan Berishvili
	Nika Vachieshvili
	Zaza Gagua
“Giogobistve” Clips	Provided by Otar Iosseliani
Camera	Emily Railsback
Additional Camera	Johnny Kvezereli
	Jon Drake
Additional Footage	Levan Koguashvili
	Eliso Sulakauri
	Irakli Tskhadadze
Stock Footage	Pond 5
Drone Operator	Nick Paniashvili
Grip & Lighting	Mamuka Tkeshelashvili
	Gela Kobakhidze
Editing	Anna Lindholm Noa
	Emily Railsback
Sound Design	Steve Emling
Line Producer	Assya Dimova
Colorist	CJ Covell
Research Assistant	Greta Valentine
Translators	Elene Bukhaidze
	Levan Chubinidze
	Nino Arobelidze
	Mariam Iosebidze
	Ketevan Berishvili

Original Songs by	Johnny Kvezereli
Original Score by	Nino Arobelidze
	Gabriel Dib
Transcriptions by	Georgian Wine Tourism Association
Final Translation	Nino Arobelidze
Legal Services	Holland & Knight LLP
	Robert Labate
	Jane Marie Russell
	Jacqueline Y. Win
Production Insurance	Johnsonese Brokerage, LLC

## **FEATURING**

Narrator & Ethnographer	Luarsab Togonidze
Filmmaker	Levan Koguashvili
Artist	Rezo Gabriadze
Painter at End	Elene Rakviashvili
Qvevri maker	Zaliko Bojadze
	Sandro Bojadze
	Jaba Bojadze
	Rati Bojadze
Qvevri Expert	Giorgi Barisashvili
Archeologists	Mindia Jalabadze
	Mikhail Abramashvili
	Stephen Batiuk
	Kathryn Weber
	Nugari Ioidze
Ramaz's Cellar	Archil Guniava
	Amiran Vepkhvadze
	Giorgi Kobakhidze
Didgori Ensemble	Givi Poti Abesadze
	Giorgi Kartsivadze
	Giorgi Yipiani
Gurian Singers	Ana Topuridze
	Mariam Topuridze
	Elene Topuridze
	Saba Topuridze
	Ioane Topuridze
Imeretian Singers	Gogita Makaridze's family & friends
Ateni	Zaza Arakelyan
	Dmitri Arakelyan
Meskheti	Giorgi Natenadze
	Sophie Natenadze
	Kesaria Natenadze
	Naia Natenadze
Racha	Badri Japaridze
	Mamuka Khazaradze
	Nodar Chkhartishvili
	Bakur Sardanashvili
	Kakha Vakhtangadze
	Engus Natmeladze
Tbilisi & Kartli	Lazare Koguashvili
	Eka Togonidze
	Elene Togonidze
	Nisime Koguashvili
	Irakli Tskhadadze

Japanese Importer  
& Sommeliers

Nino Tchatchkhiani  
Eliso Sulakauri  
Iago Bitarishvili  
Marina Kurtanidze  
Yasuko Goda  
Setsuko Yoshida  
Terashita Mitsuhiko  
Motohiro Okoshi  
Masanobu Egami  
Eita Fukui

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Azarphesha  
Ia Tabagari  
Tamara Natenadze  
Music Box Theatre  
Georgian National Museum  
Columbia College Chicago  
Living Roots  
Georgian Wine Tourism Association  
Georgian National Wine Agency  
Saguramo National Vineyard  
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Kermit Lynch Wine Merchants  
Yves Canarelli  
Antoine Pouponneau  
Raphael Pierre-Bianchetti  
Guillaume Peraldi  
Frederic Vesperini  
Jean-Charles Abbatucci  
Daniel Cesari  
Boris Gasparyan  
Marina Dallakyan  
Udo Hirsch  
Suzanne Esoyan  
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Elene Bukhaidze  
Levan Chubinidze  
Catie Olson  
Erik Brown  
Phil Ashton  
Sara Slawnik  
Claire Alden  
Julian Antos  
Pascaline Lepeltier  
Kris Yenramboong  
Ryan Oesterich  
Kozma Gujabidze  
Keti Gagua  
Nincho Shonia  
George Korganov  
Nina Khelaidze  
Tea Melanshvili  
Nodar Kartsivadze  
David Maghradze  
Levan Ujmajuridze  
Jamie Wolff  
Vazha Sikharulidze  
Chris Brockway  
Elisabetta Foradori  
Sylvio Messano  
Eric Texier  
Hervè Villemade  
Red & White Wine Shop  
Josefa Concannon  
Lee Campbell  
Werner Herzog

“Dzghabi Dudi Damanebi”  
From Samegrelo  
Performed by Didgori Ensemble  
Produced by Didgori First Studio

“Supruli” – Feasting Song  
Performed by Zedashe  
Produced by Ketevan Mindorashvili

“Dzabrale”

From Samegrelo  
Performed by Didgori Ensemble  
Produced by Didgori First Studio

“Orovela” – Work Song  
From Samstkhe Javakheti  
Performed by Zedashe  
Produced by Ketevan Mindorashvili

“Harira”  
Samegrelo Circle Song  
Performed by Gogita Makaridze and family

“Gaul-Gavkhe” – War Song  
From Svaneti Xaldes Village  
Performed by Zedashe  
Produced by Ketevan Mindorashvili

“Mravalzhamier”  
Performed by Luarsab Togonidze, Givi Abesadze,  
Giorgi Yipiani, and Giorgi Kartsivadze

“Batonebis Singera”  
From Imereti  
Performed by Ana Topuridze and Mariam Topuridze

“Shen Khar Venakhi” (Thou Art A Vineyard)  
Medieval Hymn  
Written by King Demetrius I  
Performed by Luarsab Togonidze, Nino Mamuashvili,  
Eliso Sulakauri

“Mze damakvs Khurjinit”  
Composed by Meti  
Performed by Ioane Topuridz