

The Royal Gazette



Woman of many parts

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Published Feb 20, 2019 at 8:00 am (Updated Feb 20, 2019 at 8:47 am)

Home-grown talent: Bermudian Rebecca Faulkenberry was on stage at City Hall this week as part of the Bermuda Festival of the Performing Arts (Photograph supplied)

Well Behaved Women Rarely Make it on Broadway
Earl Cameron Theatre, City Hall
Bermuda Festival of the Performing Arts

It's always a treat to have Rebecca Faulkenberry return for a production on the island — especially having had the chance to see her star rise from her early years.

From the age of 7, she was performing at City Hall, on the very stage she revisited on Monday and last night, as part of her Bermuda Festival show.

Well Behaved Women Rarely Make it on Broadway is a play on the famous quote by Laurel Thatcher Ulrich, the Pulitzer Prize winner and feminist, about what it takes for women to make history.

And for the programme, Faulkenberry looked to find songs from throughout Broadway and music's history to demonstrate the changing nature of women's roles both on stage and in the world.

Allowing Faulkenberry to open up about her career so far, many of the songs chosen were a special treat for the audience.

She let the audience in through snippets of her successes (meeting idol India Arie topped the list), and the hard work she has put in to get where she is today — both gave the evening an intimate feel.

The name of the show had me thinking she was going to call out Broadway for its lack of diversity as part of the #MeToo movement.

It was not until near the end of the show — before she sang her pivotal song Playing Nancy from 2017's Groundhog Day, in which Faulkenberry played Nancy Taylor — that she revealed lewd comments were directed at her following the performance, which a celebrity had attended.

But what stands out most about the programme in my memory was her voice — and the deep emotional connection she seemed to have with several of the songs.

Faulkenberry was accompanied by Matt Hinkley, Allison Miller and Alexandra Eckhardt, each of whom have their fair share of Broadway and musical successes.

She started the show with Happy to Keep His Dinner Warm from the 1961 musical How to Succeed in Business Without Really Trying. The lyrics draw on classic themes of a woman minding the home while the man climbs the corporate ladder.

A rousing rendition of Carole King's Natural Woman moved on to Stars and the Moon, from the 1995 musical Songs for a New World, about a woman having too many choices and, in the end, sacrificing too much of herself in exchange for wealth and comfort.

This was one of the standout moments for Faulkenberry, showing off her rich voice full of character — clearly made for the stage.

Although off the theme a bit, Faulkenberry wowed the audience with her impressive control and range with the Italian aria O Del Mio Dolce Ardor, accompanied only by Hinkley on guitar. As with her other songs, it allowed her vocal talent to shine and displayed what a dynamic performer she is.

However, the night's stellar performance was Burn, a song about a jilted wife, taken from the hit musical Hamilton.

She was accompanied by fellow Bermudian Raven Baksh and their fiery female performance showcased two incredibly talented, home-grown voices.