

CENTURY SONG: REVIEW HIGHLIGHTS



EDINBURGH 2018

"We can only bear witness. Like the wordless songs and narrativeless videos, it is a history to be seen and heard, not spoken. It resists quantification; it rejects the trappings of the kinds of history that have left these stories untold, these figures forgotten. If she—this timeless black woman, Bickersteth's nameless character—cannot fit into history as it has been told, then she will find a new way to tell it."

- Exeunt Magazine

★★★★★

"An extraordinary hybrid of live music, dance & animation"

- fringebiscuit

★★★★★

"In this wordless stage poem, the black Canadian soprano Neema Bickersteth shapeshifts Orlandoishly across different vistas, eras, identities, colour palettes, to the strains of Rachmaninov, Cage and Messiaen. The show touches on black skin, white masks, and why universalism is so often rooted in whiteness. It blasts open the stories people of colour are told and allowed to tell about themselves. The result is cerebral, fascinating, technically ravishing."

- The Times

★★★★★

"Century Song is [a] work which puts a woman in control of how she presents herself, in a way that's unclassifiable but entirely beautiful... Neema Bickersteth... wears her virtuoso performance skills lightly, winking at the audience as the giant video screen behind her fills with flickering avatars of herself. But that lightness never undermines the show's emotional power. It's made rich by the weight of the forgotten black women's lives she's embodying, and by the ennobling beauty of her voice."

- The Financial Times

★★★★★

"Century Song is a love letter to a hundred years of female endeavour. ... the incredible Bickersteth is magnetically flawless... Volcano Theatre have delivered a piece that will worm its way into your mind."

- The Wee Review

★★★★★

"She is a dancer of effortless physicality and weightless grace, and her operatic soprano voice is a rich, otherworldly instrument..."

- The Scotsman

★★★★★

"Neema Bickersteth is a wholly compelling performer... the kind of theatre that doubles as art through the interconnectedness of its many different and equally arresting elements..."

- The List

★★★★

"Bickersteth is an incredible performer... her voice is almost startling, echoing around the space with a clarity and confidence as though it has always been there."

- The Guardian

★★★★★

"a beautiful piece of work"

- Broadway Baby

PREVIOUS PRESS FOR NEEMA BICKERSTETH AND CENTURY SONG, 2015-2017:

★★★★★★

"Bickersteth... has an incredible ability to dance and deliver classical opera at the same time, to fill the room with ear-splitting sound... she creates a collage of sound – from the angelic to the absurd – that all seems to come from the very depths of her soul... she produces something truly magical... It's rare to feel that you could stay in your seat and watch a complete repeat performance of anything. Century Song doesn't just leave you wanting more, it leaves you bereft that this glorious hour is over."

—The Reviews Hub, Manchester UK

"Bickersteth is, quite simply, a captivating performer. Vocal power aside, her quality of movement, from a more traditional African-style dance to variations on contemporary dance and physical theatre, is almost mesmerizing. Her total embodiment of each character and movement is incredible to watch... Century Song is, without a doubt, an incredible feat of dance, music, and theatricality"

—Vancouver Presents

★★★★

"Bickersteth is thrilling. So too is her range. Not only does she have to change multiple times... but she has to capture a woman's essence vocally and in movement – all without any words... an unforgettable multimedia journey, and a must-see..."

—NOW Magazine, Toronto

★★★★

"Century Song is an extraordinary showcase for Bickersteth's talent. Her rich, creamy soprano is equally at home in Rachmaninoff's lush Vocalise as it is in the more unusual sound-making requirements of the more modern composers. Her ability to maintain breath control while executing Alton's often quite energetic choreography is remarkable.... Century Song is a great achievement"

—Stage Door, Toronto

"the piece, a "music recital" study of ephemeral aspects of the Black Canadian experience over the past century, is completely wordless... Bickersteth is a compelling, magnetic performer with a lovely voice and extraordinary breath and tone control. Her movements are precise and athletic... from chilly high notes to warmer, deeper tones, she can ease into a flat that sends shivers down the spine."

—Mooney on Theatre, Toronto

"Bickersteth voice is clear and pristine with (to my untrained ear anyways) no faults. However, it is the way in which she has chosen to present her vocal stylings that is perhaps the most impressive... The last song Bickersteth sings is clear evidence of this: taking out an old school standing microphone from offstage our protagonist delivers a song comprised of lip trills and varied intonations that seems to carry an immense amount of pain and suffering; feelings that go beyond what mere words could encompass."

—Herd Magazine, Ottawa

"It's a consideration of sexuality, pop culture, identity and agency; and it's an exploration which Bickersteth navigates with confident humility... We walked in with ungrounded expectations and were met with an incredibly emotional experience.."

—Redbrick, Birmingham UK

"a beautiful, vivid, dazzling journey through a century of black experience told through song, dance, movement, projections, music and stunning visual imagery. ... The star is Neema Bickersteth. She sings and dances like a dream... She is the pride, dignity, grit and elegance of each age over the century... a beautiful, artful production."

—The Slotkin Letter, Toronto