

Ten – A Celebration of Ten Years of the MGA Academy of Performing Arts *****




Photographs courtesy of AJG Photography

2016 is the tenth anniversary of one of Scotland's leading performing arts academies – Edinburgh's very own MGA Academy of Performing Arts. They are celebrating this notable achievement by putting on a dazzling show at Edinburgh's King's Theatre this week, a superb production which features the very best song and dance numbers from its productions over the last decade.

Andrew Gowland, Managing Director of The MGA Academy of Performing Arts, said: "We are proud to celebrate a decade of success at The MGA Academy and to present the very best in song and dance from the first ten years of our productions."

Helping the Academy celebrate the anniversary is television actor and star of London's west end Ray Quinn. A former actor in Channel Four soap opera Brookside, winner of the ITV show Dancing on Ice and X-Factor finalist is hosting the shows in Edinburgh this week and it's obvious he is delighted to do so.

"I'm really looking forward to performing in Ten as Edinburgh is a city that I really love." said the 27 year-old from Merseyside. "Murray Grant, one of the founders of The MGA Academy, is a good friend of mine and it's great to see how successful his academy has become. When I was a kid, I used to sleep, eat and breathe musical theatre so I know how excited all the students will be to get up on the stage and show of the skills they've learnt. I can't wait to be a part of it" 

This ageing Edinburgh Reporter hack has to admit he half expected a 'warts and all' performance as these talented youngsters are just making their way in the entertainment world. However, if Friday evening's show is anything to go by, this group of gifted young people are already within touching distance of excellence. The show was quite superb right from the very first number and Hushaby Mountain set the energetic tone of the evening.

There are some memorable performances, particularly in the first half of the show with the rendition of You'll Never Walk Alone tugging at the heartstrings of a hugely appreciative audience.



A special guest appearance of Natasha Barrie, who graduated from the MGA Academy last year was one of the highlights of the evening. Barrie, who has recently worked with Scott Alan and Natalie Weiss has an astonishing voice and her accompaniment to the dancers performing Romeo and Juliet brought a lump to the throat of this reporter. This young lady is clearly bound for stardom.



The second half of the show opens with an entertaining medley from The Addams Family and the mood continues to fluctuate from the raucous Flashdance routine to the brooding Mary Queen of Scots feature.

Some might say the tribute to Mel Brooks' The Producers – in which some of the cast wave Nazi swastikas and join Benjamin Collins singing Springtime for Hitler – had dubious levels of taste but this was clearly a nod to the genius of Brooks rather than being flippant about the Second World War. Just as Brooks intended with his musical, the performance was caricaturing a hated dictator as well as all those who

followed his ideologies.

I thoroughly enjoyed Ten. Its energy, feel-good factor and superb performances from all those involved – from the hugely talented young performers to Murray Grant, Creative Director and Marcella Macdonald, Musical Director/Choreographer made it a brilliant show, one which brightened up an otherwise gloomy Friday for many.

Ten ends its all too brief run at the King's Theatre on Saturday 25 June so you had better be quick if you want to catch the show. The good news is there are two performances on Saturday – a matinee performance at 2.30pm and an evening performance at 7.30pm.

If you want good old-fashioned family entertainment which restores one's faith in humanity, this is the show for you. Catch it if you can!

Tickets and details: www.edtheatres.com/mgaacademyten or telephone 0131 529 600.

Edinburgh Reporter Review: *****