

Review: Bring It On – The Musical ****



It's fair to say many people could do with a pick-me-up right now. One is almost at the stage where one is wary of switching on the television or radio or going on-line for fear of news of some other atrocity such as the incident in Munich on Friday evening. To the good citizens of Edinburgh, I say if you want some escapism you would be hard pushed to better the experience of watching Bring It On, The Musical, a quite simply superb show at the King's Theatre in Scotland's capital city.

The Beyond Broadway Experience's production was born from the seed of an idea last autumn and gives a brilliant opportunity for highly talented Scottish youngsters to demonstrate their musical skills in telling the story of the cutthroat world of competitive cheerleading and the fierce rivalries of American High School politics.

The cast of 150 youngsters has an infectious feel-good factor with memorable songs, highly energetic dancing and cheering squad routines.

Bring It On is one of the most popular musicals on Broadway and, indeed, one of its stars – Taylor Louderman – has been the creative consultant behind the Edinburgh show.

The story follows the ambitious Campbell, a well-bred senior at Truman High School. Her ambition is to lead her cheering squad to victory in the national cheerleading competition but a redistricting of the school areas means she is placed in the less than glamorous Jackson High. Her bubble-gum style of cheerleading is mocked by Jackson High students who prefer juicy R&B and hip-hop.

The result is a high-energy, breathless musical treat and there's no doubt that some of the young cast are very much stars in the making. The wonderfully assured Eilidh Murray plays the main character, Campbell and she is ably supported by the convincing Honey Joseph who plays Danielle and the wonderful Paul Clark who had the hugely appreciative audience in fits of laughter with his trans-gender character La Cienega.

But the wee gem who stole the show was undoubtedly Sarah Kerr who played the somewhat frumpy Bridget who – to her astonishment – attracts the attention of an eager suitor.

The pace of the show is tremendous with high-rise human pyramids, wild throws and lifts which are made to look easy by the hard-working and clearly passionate cast.

Despite one or technical issues with the microphones, the youngsters maintained their professionalism admirably. My only irritation – and this has nothing to do with the production or the sublime cast – was with some members of the audience who insisted on 'whoo-whooping' every couple of minutes. I know the musical is based on an American show and is situated in an all-American way of life but sometimes I wished some of the audience had toned it down just a little.

And to those who run the Kings' Theatre – ever thought of installing air-conditioning?

Bring It On is not only very entertaining it contains a bucketful of feel-good factor. Occasionally silly, frequently acrobatic but never dull, this is a musical brilliantly staged by young Scottish talent that will lift your heart.

And in these troubled times we could all do with that.

Bring It On is only on until this Saturday so grab your chance to see it if you can.

Tickets and details: <http://www.edtheatres.com/bringiton>

Edinburgh Reporter Review: ****