

## Arts scene

IVOR Novello's **Kings Rhapsody**, playing all this week at Chelmsford's Civic Theatre, serves as a cogent reminder of the revolutionary changes through which the musical show has passed since the composer's death 31 years ago.

This unashamedly weepy Ruritanian-style musical about a king, who unwillingly ascends his throne and willingly abdicates when his plans for reform are thrown out by a reactionary Assembly, is presented with artistry by director Ray Jeffery and the cast of Chelmsford Amateur Operatic And Dramatic Society.

But this kind of musical, by

its very nature, demands an opulent presentation which taxes the Civic's resources to their very limit, and, for all the show's style, its artistry is sometimes artistry in slow motion.

Yet many of the hallmarks of a fine Ray Jeffery production are present including good chorus work, exciting choreography (especially in the Muranian Rhapsody Ballet) plus some fine solo singing and dramatic performances.

Joy Wallace is an actress of great perception and presence, and has a fine carriage on stage, qualities which make her performance as Queen Elana memorable. To hear the scorn with which she upbraids her kingly son for his shortcomings is almost worth the price of the admission ticket alone.

As the queen with whom the king finally falls in love, Gay Jackson acts with steel and sings enchantingly the famous *Some Day My Heart Will Awake*, sharing top vocal honours with her attendant, Countess Vera Lemainken (June Bridges) in her singing of *Fly Home Little Heart*, both singers performing with poise and a fine control over their soft high notes.

Taking over the Ivor Novello role of King Nikki at short notice, Peter Smith suggests the character's regality and dissoluteness, but on Monday his performance still had to acquire humanity.

Finally words of praise for musical director Ian Hayter who persuaded the orchestra to perform Novello's romantic score with warmth and passion without being unfair to the singers, and to Paul Dicker as the Boy King, who is as successful as his stage father in conveying a regal air.

Being on holiday last week