

Throne for a loop

Love is in the air with engaging 'Only a Kingdom'

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Romance is alive with the legendary love affair of King Edward VIII and Wallis Simpson, in the elegant "Only a Kingdom" now playing at the Pasadena Playhouse.

The perfect pair are perfect strangers to one another — but such is the nature of fantasy and romantic love; where Edward's brilliant hair gleams like the sun and Wallis' flesh glows,

resembling a touch of satin.

Gossip columnist Elsa Maxwell (Mary Pat Gleason) narrates the story of the most prevailing love affair this century has known. Stan Chandler plays Edward, the fragile, impressionable and ineffectual soon-to-be British monarch.

Filled with self-doubt, he grapples with his impending coronation and finds comfort in breaking from tradition and the ordinary — represented by Wallis Simpson.

The married Simpson has an indecisive nature sparked with the

gift of light-heartedness. Soon the femme fatale spell molds Edward's inconstancy with his fate. He makes his decision; they marry, spend their lives in exile and his sense of unworthiness continues as the man without a purpose.

Actress Kaitlin Hopkins is by far lovelier than the real Simpson and has a euphonic voice to match. As their adulterated union clashes between personal happiness and moral obligations, songs that are bewitchingly romantic create chemistry between the actors.

'ONLY A KINGDOM'

- ◆ **WHERE:** Pasadena Playhouse, 39 S. El Molino Ave., Pasadena
- ◆ **WHEN:** Tuesday through Friday at 8 p.m., Saturday at 5 and 9 p.m., Sunday at 2 and 7 p.m. through Dec. 20
- ◆ **HOW MUCH:** \$13.50 to \$42.50
- ◆ **PHONE:** (626) 356-7529
- ◆ **WEB SITE:** www.pasadenaplayhouse.com

Stan Chandler and Kaitlin Hopkins embrace their roles and each other in "Only a Kingdom" at the Pasadena Playhouse.



There is also a saucy Tango beautifully orchestrated by the ensemble to an international tune commencing in French, moving to Spanish and ending in English. The production is opulent, with sets designed by James Joy that are embellished with the look of splendor. Costumes by Diana Eden are wonderful and historically accurate.

While the show had its moments of fluidity its only flaw stemmed from the writing. Many lines were embodied with cliches and gaps of political innuendoes lead one astray to its true story line.

Nevertheless, as we live in a time of royalty yearning for the simple pleasures of the common citizen, this musical does a fine job of embracing that concept. ◆