

LAWEEKLY

Pick of the Week

November 27, 1998

ONLY A KINGDOM “People do incredible things for love, even kings” says Edward (Stan Chandler), the bachelor Prince of Wales, to Wallis Simpson (Kaitlin Hopkins), the married American woman for whom he would eventually do the incredible — abdicate the British throne in 1936. With book, music and lyrics by Judith Shubow Steir and compelling direction by Scott Schwartz, this musical account of the romance that rocked the British Empire is a witty and heart-warming fairy tale exalting the redemptive powers of love and rebuking obligation to archaic institutions. Though most of the tunes and lyrics are forgettable, Chandler and Hopkins’ dramatic chemistry and excellent voices make up for them. Complementing the leads are scene stealers par excellence John Connolly, as Edward’s confidant, Winston Churchill; and Mary Pat Gleason’s Elsa Maxwell, the show’s narrator and the couples longtime friend. Thankfully, Steir is a better storyteller than lyricist, weaving a suspenseful yarn replete with palace intrigues, parliamentary machinations and ecclesiastical maneuvers. Steir’s better songs, however, will bring tears to the staunchest anti-monarchist: “Except Good-Bye,” for instance — a bittersweet farewell ballad sung between Wallis and her ex-husband — or Edward’s touching tribute to his bride, “Home is Where the Duchess Is.” Pasadena Playhouse, 39 S. El Molino Ave.; Tues.-Fri., 8 p.m.; Sat., 5 & 9 p.m.; Sun., 2 & 7 p.m.; thru Dec. 20. (800) 233-03123. (Martin Hernández)