

# Another triumph with 42nd Street

WHAT a season the Chelmsford Amateur Operatic and Dramatic Society is enjoying.

Following its outstanding performance of *Me And My Girl* in the autumn - definitely *The Andrews* show of the year for 1997, it has put in the strongest of bids for the 1998 award with its scintillating, sizzling, account of *42nd Street*.

The story line on the well worn basis of showbiz chorus girl gets her chance to become a star overnight when leading lady breaks her leg is a thin one but it serves as a basis for two and a quarter hours of stirring singing dazzling dancing in the most gorgeous costumes imaginable.

More than ever the success of *42nd Street* lay in the superb ensemble work and the way the principals dovetailed their performances into the thrilling mosaic of Ray Jeffery's production.

And as he himself would be the first to acknowledge the tap routines of Annie Hertler-Smith were another major ingredient in the success package slickly and expertly performed.

The society's new chairman Barry Hester in no way allowed his new administrative duties to stop him putting on a first rate performance as leading man Billy Lawlor, with Kim Anderson dispensing star bitchiness

throughout the first act as to the manner born and handling the Act Two reconciliation scene with the chorus girl-cum-star that could have been so mawkish with real artistry.

I have never seen Kevin Richards give such a commanding performance as he did with Julian Marsh, the somewhat rocky King of Broadway Producers relying on his the musical *Pretty Lady* to put him back on top, while Alison Reckett produced a fine blend of ingenuity and confidence as the new star.

In smaller roles all performed with equal dazzling scintillation, all praise to Patrick Tucker, Margaret Burgess (hers was a performance of total reliability) Peter Smith, Caroline Richards, John Sullivan and David Smith Snr, who all excelled themselves.

Finally the highest praise to musical director Andrew Denyer whose sparkling and hard hitting account of the score was beautifully balanced against the voices and (again) to Ray Jeffery for creating so strikingly the real theatre atmosphere with its hopes and fears, kindnesses and cruelty. MARCH 1998