

Fun day, Sunday of sweat and smiles

WHEN I interviewed Ray Jeffrey, Chelmsford Amateur Operatic and Dramatic Society's new producer earlier in the year, it was obvious this 27-year-old man was blowing a wind of change through the ranks of the Society.

But, having watched him conduct a one day school in mime, improvisation, and dance steps under the title, Fun Day, Sunday, I think a dose of salts might be a more accurate description of his effect on the Society.

For this human tornado is pumping his own special brand of expertise and enthusiasm into the Dram and Op in a way I am quite certain it has never experienced since it was founded in the early 1920s.



Anything you can do I can do better! Ray Jeffrey in action.

And what a response members are giving to Ray, loving every moment of the instruction, genial abuse and outrageous remarks that are thrown at them with the force of a boxer hammering a punchbag.

For they know that Ray has it in him to get the Society out of the rut into which it has got bogged down for the last few years and lead it onto an exciting future in this demanding challenging era of the 70s.

That is why some 40 of them were ready to give up a major part of the hottest Sunday of the year to be put through their paces with sweat gleaming on their foreheads and pouring out of every pore of their bodies.

DISAPPROVAL

Two days later many present (and by no means just the older members) were still feeling the effects of this work out, comparable in its result with an enema. Yet on the Sunday when Ray suggested stopping 20 minutes early, there was a roar of disapproval.

Ray's first production at



● One of the more relaxing moments of Fun Day, Sunday.

lised musical, staged at the Civic Theatre in April, but his next musical, Half A Sixpence, scheduled for a Civic Theatre production at the end of March 1975, is tailored for his ebullient personality. Ray is also producing this adaptation of an H. G. Wells novel at Wood Green and Harrow this season.

Fun Day, Sunday took place at St Cedd's School in Chelmsford's Maltese Road. It started at 10 am and finished at 4 pm with a lunch break of 50 minutes during which many members sunbathed outside and the laughter (genuine not forced) from Mr J's sallies was near continuous.

For Ray has learned the best way to get results from amateurs is to make them realise that a rehearsal of hard

work can also be a rehearsal of fun.

His discipline over the members is near total. When he screeches abuse at them like a carrion crow, they laugh, but they do what he says; when he really gets annoyed (which is rare), they obey and pronto.

DRASTIC

On Sunday this only happened once. Twice his "Please stop talking, darlings" only caused a momentary reduction in the volume of background chatter. Mr J realised more drastic measures were needed.

"I wish you folks wouldn't talk," there is a snap in his voice that cut through the noise like a reaper's scythe and a glint in his eye that

boded ill for anyone who continued to chat. The face, normally laughing and goblin-like, takes on a menacing expression. His point is made.

The session started with some loosening up exercises, with Ray loosening up more vigorously than anyone else. "Let your face muscles go," he calls out, adding a second later, "don't let your teeth fall out Stan," at which sally no one laughs louder than Stan Parsons, at that moment a very sweaty secretary of the Society.

After a few moments Ray steps up the pace. He is now bouncing about on his toes like a dancing dervish. "Keep everything up, girls, even the boobs," he exhorts. "Gents I don't want you walking round like a lot of cowboy queens in

THE ARTS compiled by



● Anger and apprehension — Fun Day, Sunday Style!

Oklahoma. Half a Six has got life."

From many lips remarks