

Making **The Dream** come true

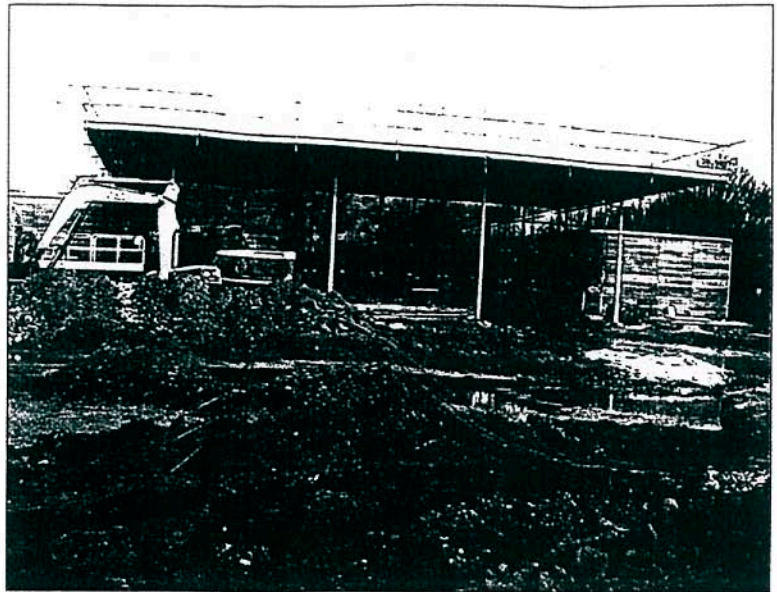
The past 13 years have been years of opportunity and great challenge for Playbox Theatre, a national performing arts company founded in 1986 and constantly evolving, writes *Stewart McGill*. Based in Warwickshire, Playbox works exclusively for and with young people both regionally and across the country in a series of city bases. Scheduled to open in May is the UK's first state-of-the-art Creation and Development Centre for theatre, circus and allied arts, created exclusively for young artists. Known as The Dream Factory, the scheme was the conception of Playbox Theatre and Glenn Howells Architects (UK) with Sceno Plus (Montreal). It has been funded with support from The National Lottery and the encouragement of Warwickshire County Council, and is located in Warwick, at the heart of England and crossroads of major motorways and railway terminals. Land adjacent to Aylesford School has been made available to enable the £2.7m project to go ahead.

All of us at Playbox Theatre insist that young people should have the best! Having seen the work of Sceno Plus around the world with Cirque Du Soleil we decided to approach them to look at our project. In Montreal we outlined ideas for a facility in England that could not only train but present shows in all the performing arts. A major feature of our building is the trampoline aerial tension grid. We are about to open a centre of excellence for young people second to none.

Studios for creation, training and development are to include theatre, dance, circus and music. The performance arena, 'Kermesse', houses up to 270 spectators in all formats for productions by Playbox Theatre as well as national and international visiting companies.

Supporting the training areas are the Playbox Theatre administrative offices, theatre workshops, wardrobes, dressing rooms and 'Rendezvous', a spacious front of house meeting place for Playbox artists and visitors. In the heart of this village concept is a café, 'Whirl' - a base for relaxation, socialising, pre-show food and entertainment - to welcome everyone to this unique facility.

A special feature of the building is 'Jinks', a special studio exclusively designated for work with pre-school children in the



The Dream Factory under construction

arts. Designer Judy Reaves is working with Artist in Residence Zoe Jelley to provide a special surround for the work.

Playbox Theatre receives no regular project or revenue funding and since day one in 1986, has operated as an independent company funded through membership, training, development and projects. A confection of funding over the years has enabled the company to move to the forefront of theatre with young people.

The preview season opens on May 18 with the Young Production Company

followed by Henry IV parts

1 and 2 and an exotic

reworking of the

Cinderella story. The

official opening date is

September 18, with a

spectacular circus-based

show, code-named DF4.

Playbox Theatre believes

that the theatre belongs to

the young people who work

and perform there, rather

than those doing the

administration behind the

scenes. Having been nomadic

for 12 years, often working in

very poor conditions, we have

seen wonders created by young

artists. Young people tend to be

overlooked in this country, but

given the support of the Playbox

professionals tend to create work which is second

to none.



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