



*DaSilva puppets after Tenniel.*



*Geppetto and Pinocchio.*

the various courses for children, adults, teachers and trainee puppeteers.

The theatre will become the touring base for DaSilva Puppet Theatre who will continue to use this name for trading, particularly touring, although the official company name has been changed to Norwich Puppet Theatre Trust Limited.

The company will present seasons of performances from repertoire and plan to produce a wide range of presentations including new works and others drawn from existing plays, opera and ballet. The building will offer good puppet theatre

facilities to touring companies and it is hoped that it will soon become a centre for the puppet arts of international significance.

We are extremely fortunate to have found such an intrinsically beautiful building to start with. It has so many natural features which can easily be incorporated into the design so that it will be unnecessary to spend money on lavish decorations in order to create an artificial atmosphere. The atmosphere is already there — one of welcoming dignity.

Today, as I write, the first of the steel structures with the tracks for the moving

bridges are being hoisted into position. The theatre seats, which came secondhand from Crewe Theatre, have all been reupholstered in a beautiful moquette (rejected by a German bus seat order because of pattern flaws which do not affect us) by three trainees under the Manpower Services scheme, and are ready for fixing. The main house electrics have all been installed and the toilets and bars are functional.

When we launched this project just over a year ago we were warned that this was the hard way of doing the job, but for us it was the only way, simply because of the impossibility of raising the money required, with little chance of Arts Council funding. (Puppet theatres which do not normally employ actors in an acting capacity have only recently come within the area of subsidy and, at the moment, very little money is available for new projects.) So, the offer of £30,000 from the Manpower Services Commission for giving work experience to previously unemployed youngsters labelled as 'low achievers' was accepted in both hands and this, put with other money raised from local industry, enabled work on the project to be started. Now, twelve months later, the total income towards the scheme including gifts in kind, exceeds £80,000.

We still have a long way to go — money is required for the emergency lights system, sound and intercom system, stage fittings etc., but with a fair measure of continued support we should be open this year.

Meanwhile, the Manpower Services Commission are delighted with the success of the project from their point of view and have agreed to an extension of the scheme for a further three months. Jobs for the youngsters have been given as much priority as getting the theatre built and, so far, the scheme has enabled seventeen youngsters to leave and take up permanent employment.



*Hansel and Gretel.*