

Melbourne Festival a dream for kids

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EMILY PHILLIPS AND ARLO JACK IN THE HOUSE OF DREAMING.

PICTURE: MIKE KEATING HERALD SUN

THE young audience becomes the players in the world premiere of The House of Dreaming, a new dramatic concept created for Melbourne Festival.

Walking through a purpose-built 12m x 12m structure, the experience of the audience making their way through the sleeping house becomes an integral part of the narrative.

Interactive technology -- ranging from items as simple as fairground mirrors to hi-tech gadgets -- allows each audience to become part of a life-sized 3D storybook in which their playfulness and curiosity creates an individual experience.

Arena Theatre Company artistic director Chris Kohn assembled a team of artists who use robotics, architecture, performance, projections, audio, and light and sound-sensitive detectors to create a new reality for the audience.



Mr Kohn wanted to create an interactive arts experience for audiences as young as five, and as well as his creative team, devised the huge installation with the help of children from Diggers Rest Primary School.

"The idea is the house has fallen asleep. It's been empty for such a long time the house itself is sleeping and dreaming. As people move through the house they are a product of this house's dream," he said.

"As you move through, it's like you're a phantom occupying the space and at different points, using technology, we make it possible that you see other participants and yourself. We want people to almost float through it like they're in a dream."

He settled on the concept of interactive technology to engage young audiences.

"You don't have to say how it works. You just stumble upon it and find yourself moving in relation to it," he said.

Audience numbers are small -- 27 in each session -- and roam through the house in groups of three.

"Everything that happens in the room is partly determined by choice and by what they want to discover."