THE young grab the chance to take the stage in the Bubble Theatre tent. Picture: Simon Hildrew, AB/4244/3

United we stand

T O close its season in Bexley the Bubble Theatre gave its stage over to a performance of a community play.

The Amazing Bogsley Invention Competition brought together a broad range of people from the borough who do not usually have the opportunity to express themselves on such a public platform.

This type of work is part of the core work of the London Bubble which, each summer, tours the parks of London with its theatre tent to stage both community events and drama for adults and children. As well as the community play its Bexley season also featured a musical, a Shakespeare play, a show for children and a late-night cabaret.

Adrian Jackson, an associate director of the Bubble, explained the work behind the community play: "We aim to bring together sections of the community who do not have the means to do this for themselves. This year is the first time we have done this in Bexley and really we have been laying the

By DARRYL McCARTHY

ground for the future."

The play was launched with two or three core groups, including people with physical disabilities from the Whitehall Day Centre at Slade Green, who were introduced to the scheme through workshops before open workshops at Crayford Town Hall and Erith Sports Centre brought in more interested parties. Contacts were made in the Asian community also and, by the time the production hit the stage last Saturday, between 60 and 70 people had been recruited, either to act in the play or present other supporting entertainment. Sequence dancers from Slade Green and traditional Punjabi dance from the Belvedere Youth Club were other features.

"We deliberately concentrated on drawing in groups from the northern half of the borough

because that area seems to have less opportunity to do this sort of thing than the rest of Bexley. It has been a slow start and there is a problem in that the borough is so large and spread out but there will be much more next year," said Adrian.

The starting point for the play was the 19th Century Bexley inventor, Edward Butler, and this idea was developed by the team thinking about what sort of invention they would like most.

The answer was a machine which could make things go slower, freeze, or speed up. This particularly reflected the needs of disabled people for whom the pace of modern life is often too fast.

With plenty of music and a largely improvised script, the show looked at what happened when the go-fast-go-slow machine went into action at a meeting of Bogsley Council. It was knockabout fun but also said much about how people in different sections of society perceive life in Bexley.