

PLAYS FOR
New Audiences

A Division of Children's Theatre Company

Pinocchio

by Toby Hulse

Based on the story by Carlo Collodi

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Dramatis Personae

Actor One: A Donkey, Pinocchio, A Waiter

Actor Two: The Little Man, Geppetto, Mangiafuoco, A Cat, A Waiter, A Collier, A Bricklayer, A Milk Maid

Actor Three: A Donkey, A Panoply of Passers By, A Blue Cricket, Candlewick, An Audience Member, A Fox, A Waiter, A Blue Parrot, A Fisherman, A Barker, A Blue Tuna, The Blue Fairy

NOT LICENSED FOR PRODUCTION

Scene One

The Little Man enters on his coach, pulled by two strangely human shaped donkeys.

He sniffs the air – he has caught the scent of naughty boys and girls. Reaching behind him into the wagon he pulls out a fistful of large, garishly swirled lollipops. His beady eyes scour the audience.

Little Man I can see you all, looking at my coach. All you lovely boys and girls. Fancy, innit? Comfortable too. So, who fancies a ride then? Free. A free ride. It don't cost nothing, not a penny. First stop, only stop, the Land of Toys. Just think of that. The Land of Toys. I'll say that again. The Land of Toys. You can't even begin to imagine it. It's wonderful. You can do whatever you like. Play all day, go to sleep, wake up, play all over again. No being sensible. No school. No adults. No one telling you what to do. No one to spoil your fun. Come on. Who's going to join me for the ride of a lifetime? I'll even throw in a lollipop for the first ten boys and girls what climbs aboard.

No child (one sincerely hopes...) comes forward.

Little Man No one? Are you sure? Well, have a think about it. I'll be back. There's always room on the coach for them boys and girls that want to live in the Land of Toys...

The Little Man rides off, savagely whipping his donkeys.

Scene Two

Pinocchio enters, a real boy, cartwheeling, singing and dancing with the sheer exuberant joy of being alive. He sings a song that we are to hear later at the puppet theatre.

He is followed by Geppetto, who watches him proudly.

Pinocchio I'm alive! I'm alive!! I'm alive!!! Look at me, father, I'm alive.

Geppetto You certainly are, my dear little Pinocchio.

Pinocchio My fingers are alive, and my knees are alive, and my ears are alive, and my eyebrows are alive, and... and... and all of me, all of me is alive.

Geppetto Yes, Pinocchio, all of you is alive.

Pinocchio I can't believe it.

Geppetto Neither can I sometimes.

Pinocchio I must be the luckiest boy ever. Ever evereverever.

Geppetto And I am the luckiest old man. Ever everevereverever.

They hug. Geppetto takes out a harmonica and begins to play a tune we will hear many times in the ensuing action. Pinocchio dances. He suddenly breaks off from the dance.

Pinocchio Tell me again how it happened, father.

Geppetto Again? Aren't you bored of me telling that story by now, poor fool?

Pinocchio No. I could never be bored of that story. Never nevernevernevernever. Tell it to me again. And start with the bit about how everything can come to life. You missed that out last time.

Geppetto Trust you to have noticed. I can't get away with anything.

Pinocchio No, you can't. Nothing at all. Now, off you go. You've got to start, 'every object has the right to life'.

Geppetto I don't know if I can still do it. Not now.

Pinocchio Of course you can. Do it, father.

Geppetto Alright, alright. Take off your shoe, Pinocchio. *(Pinocchio does so.)* Now, every object has the right to life. Everything can, and probably should, be alive. There's a spirit in everything, and if we take our time, and watch, and listen, and believe, and imagine, then we can wake that spirit up. Give me the shoe, Pinocchio. *(Pinocchio passes it to him. Geppetto brings the shoe to life.)* First we watch it as it sleeps, and listen for its breath. Then we breathe at the same time as it. And now gently, oh so gently, wake it up. Let it look around. And there, there, it is alive. *(The shoe is undoubtedly alive.)* Look, it even has a tongue...

He throws the shoe back to Pinocchio. Yes, every object has the right to life. Pinocchio looks at his shoe.

Pinocchio It isn't alive any more. It's just a shoe again.

Geppetto Yes, you're right. It can only stay alive when we're playing and imagining. Stop imagining and it straight away dies. Keep imagining and it will live forever.

Pinocchio Forever? Forever 'n' ever 'n' ever 'n' ever 'n' ever.

Geppetto Yes.

Pause.

Pinocchio I haven't always been a little boy, have I?

Geppetto No.

Pinocchio Once I was a puppet.

Geppetto You were. I told you. Just a puppet. A toy.

Pinocchio And before that I was a piece of wood.

Geppetto To start with, yes, just a piece of wood, like any of the other pieces of wood lying around my workshop, waiting to be made into a toy. A beautiful piece of pitch pine, if I remember correctly.

Pinocchio But you were lonely, father...

Geppetto Yes, I was lonely. I was more lonely than you can imagine, poor fool.

Pinocchio And so you thought to yourself:

Geppetto [To us.] I have the best job in the world. I may not have any money, but I have the best job in the world. I am a toymaker. I love the sound of children laughing as they play. It fills me with such happiness that my heart skips. And yet I have no child of my own. It is too late for me to get married now, and who would want a grizzled grey-haired old fool like me anyway? But I am a toymaker. I will take this beautiful piece of pitch pine, and with it I will make myself a child to fill my heart with happiness. A little boy. And I will call him Pinocchio. 'Little Pine Seed'. Yes, yes, yes, I know he won't be a real boy, just a puppet, a toy, but I can always imagine. I'm a toymaker. Imagining is what I do best.

We have slipped back in time to the making of Pinocchio.

Scene Three

Geppetto (cont.) First of all I need a piece of wood. (He picks up a beautiful piece of pitch pine.) Pitch pine. Just look at the grain. Perfect. Every object has the right to life. First we watch it as it sleeps, and listen for its breath. Then we breathe at the same time as it. And now gently, oh so gently, wake it up. Let it look around. And there, there, it is alive.

The wood is undoubtedly alive. It is perhaps more alive than Geppetto anticipated. It wriggles and twists in his hands.

Geppetto My word, it is alive. I can hardly keep hold of it.

The wood tries to escape from Geppetto's hands. It slips between his legs. It runs away from him. It hits him over the head.

Geppetto The vice. I must get it in the vice.

After much struggling Geppetto secures the wood in his bench vice.

Geppetto Phew... (He stands in front of the vice. The wood pokes him in the backside.)
Ow! Who did that? Oh, it was you, was it? You're one of those cheeky pieces of wood. I'm going to have to watch you. You've given me a splinter in my bottom. I won't be able to sit down for weeks. Perhaps I shouldn't have imagined so hard. Now then, a puppet...

Geppetto gets a pencil and begins to sketch out the shape of Pinocchio on the wood. From it we hear Pinocchio's voice.

Pinocchio Oh, that tickles! Stop. Stop it. That tickles. It's making me laugh. And when I laugh I... *(The piece of wood sneezes.)* ... sneeze!

Geppetto Did you just sneeze? Come to think about it, did you just talk?

Pinocchio I did.

Geppetto Talk again. Or sneeze if you'd prefer.

Pinocchio No.

Geppetto Go on.

Pinocchio No. Shan't.

Geppetto That's fine by me. Don't talk.

Pinocchio I shall talk as much as I want.

Geppetto You've got a voice then?

Pinocchio That's what you've imagined.

Geppetto That's what I've imagined?

Pinocchio When you woke me up and brought me to life.

Geppetto You aren't real?

Pinocchio Of course I am, in your imagination. Keep imagining and I will live forever.

Geppetto What a thing...

Pinocchio What a thing indeed...

Geppetto I'd better get to work on making you into a puppet straight away. I imagine that you can hardly wait to walk around and run and laugh and play.

Geppetto picks up a chisel and mallet. And I imagine this is going to hurt a bit. Sorry.

Pinocchio Then simply imagine that it won't. Or, better still, imagine that your work is finished and I'm all finished, perfect in every detail, the best made puppet in the world.

Geppetto It would save a lot of time...

Pinocchio It certainly would.

Geppetto And then we could get on with the story.

Pinocchio Yes. (*Pinocchio positions himself behind Geppetto.*) I'm standing right behind you. Turn around... now!

Geppetto turns around, but Pinocchio, of course, ducks. Pinocchio catches him out again.

Pinocchio And again.

And then jumps out on Geppetto.

Geppetto Oh Pinocchio, you are perfect. The perfect puppet. The perfect toy. Just how I imagined you. Come here, my boy, let me hug you. (*They hug.*) Can I call you my boy, my boy?

Pinocchio Only if I can call you father, father.

Geppetto You can, can.

Pinocchio And you can, can.

They laugh and hug again.

Geppetto You could even call me daddy. When the time is right.

Pinocchio I will, when the time is right. Now I think I would like to run.

Geppetto Run?

Pinocchio I am going to run. I've never done it before.

At first it takes a bit of effort for him to work out how to do it, but eventually Pinocchio begins to run round and round in circles. Geppetto laughs with him.

Pinocchio This is fun. I like running. Where does that door lead to? What happens if I run through it?

Geppetto That door goes outside. To the wide world. You don't want to go through there yet.

Pinocchio Oh yes I do!

Geppetto Pinocchio, don't go through there.

Pinocchio Why not? Is it very scary? Is it very dangerous? Will I come to dreadful harm?

Geppetto No. It's just that I haven't made you any clothes yet! You're completely naked! Everyone will be able to see your... your... your joints!

But it is too late. Pinocchio is already outside, running naked down the busy street. Shouts of outrage, bicycle bells ringing furiously, cars sounding their horns. A Panoply of Passers By is variously shocked, amused and titillated by the sight.

Geppetto Pinocchio, come back!

Pinocchio I can't hear you!

Geppetto What?

Pinocchio I can't hear you! You haven't made me any ears.

Geppetto But you can hear me saying this.

Pinocchio No, I can't. You're just imagining it.

Geppetto Pinocchio, stop!

Pinocchio I can't hear you! No ears.

Geppetto Stop! You're heading straight for the...

Pinocchio I still can't hear you!

Geppetto ... river.

With a tremendous splash Pinocchio runs into the river. Geppetto rushes up, all concern.

Geppetto My son, are you alright? Please tell me you're alright. I would never forgive myself if you had drowned.

Pinocchio spits a fountain of water out of his mouth. Perhaps even a little fish.

Pinocchio Of course I am. I'm made of wood. I float.

Geppetto Yes, of course.

Pinocchio And I'm a toy. Which means I don't actually breathe, I have no breath, so I can't really drown.

Geppetto Yes, yes, of course.

Pinocchio And I'm not really alive, am I? Not like you are. So I can't really die.

Geppetto Yes, yes, yes, of course.

Pinocchio And I –

Geppetto Yes, I get it! Now come back home with me. *(Beat.)* Hang on a moment, how come you can hear me now?

Pinocchio I think the river must have washed my ears out.

Geppetto You said that you didn't have any ears.

Pinocchio Did I? I must have been mistaken. I've got a lovely pair of ears.

Geppetto How can you be mistaken about whether you have ears or not?

Pinocchio No idea. They're right here. Either side of my head.

Geppetto I knew I'd made you ears. I wouldn't forget something like that.

Pinocchio In fact, my ears are as plain as the nose on my face.

Geppetto That's silly.

Pinocchio Of course it is. And my feet are very wet. Can I dry them off when we get home?

Geppetto A good idea.

Pinocchio Before they split.

Geppetto A very good idea.

Pinocchio Or get warped.

Geppetto A very very good idea.

Pinocchio I'll just stick them in the fire.

Geppetto An excellent idea.

Pinocchio Yes, I'll just stick my wooden feet in the fire.

Geppetto A wonderful idea. *(Beat.)* No! Wait! Stop! You can't do that!

Pinocchio Why ever not?

Geppetto They're made of wood. They'd catch alight and burn right off. Remember this, Pinocchio, you're made of wood. You really shouldn't be around fires.

Pinocchio But you could make me some more feet...

Geppetto That's hardly the point.

Pinocchio ... and stick them on with glue.

Geppetto Pinocchio!

Pinocchio Perhaps you could make me shoes this time.

Geppetto Shoes!

Pinocchio Or shape them like bananas.

Geppetto Bananas.

Pinocchio Then I'd be wearing slippers!

Pinocchio laughs, and then sneezes. Geppetto laughs, and then sneezes.

Geppetto You've got me sneezing now! Oh Pinocchio, why do you say these things?

Pinocchio What things?

Geppetto All these silly things. All this nonsense.

Pinocchio I'm a toy. You can't expect me to be sensible. I'm meant to play. It's what I do. And anyway, you were laughing...

Geppetto Yes, I was. Laughing and sneezing, just like you. I'm a toymaker. So you can't expect me to be sensible either. What sensible person would have a job as a toymaker? There's absolutely no money in it. But what fun!

They hug.

Pinocchio I imagine that if you wanted me to be sensible, I'd have to be a real boy.

A sudden slowing of the pace of their exchange, as an idea begins to dawn on them.

Geppetto Would you like to be a real boy, poor fool?

Pinocchio A real boy?

Geppetto Yes.

Pinocchio Yes... I... would...

Geppetto Imagine it...

Pinocchio What a thing...

Geppetto What a thing indeed...

Pinocchio Do you think I could?

Geppetto I don't know. I just don't know. Can a wooden puppet become a real boy? It sounds impossible.

Pinocchio But impossible things can happen.

Geppetto Indeed. But only in stories.

Pinocchio But what a thing...

Geppetto What a thing indeed...

A reflective pause.

Pinocchio So what do I have to do to be a real boy?

Geppetto No, it won't work. A wooden puppet can't be a real boy.

Pinocchio Come on, father. We've got to try. So what do I have to do first?

Geppetto Well, first, I imagine that we need to get you some clothes.

Pinocchio suddenly realizes that he is naked.

Geppetto I haven't any money so paper ones will have to do. And I imagine that cleverly I made some earlier and put them in... *(He looks around and sees a toy chest.)* ... in this chest. Yes, here they are. Now, put them on. *(Pinocchio does so.)* Luckily it never rains in this part of Italy, otherwise we'd be asking for trouble. Everyone would see your soggy botty. *(They both laugh.)*

Pinocchio What now?

Geppetto Oh, I don't know... I suppose you have to go to school.