

Review: Pinocchio

By Su Carroll

***Pinocchio* at Theatre Royal Plymouth**

Spending some time with this wonderful theatre company has become a bit of a Christmas tradition in our family. My grandson's first theatre experience was to see their production of *The Elves and the Shoemaker* in the Drum Theatre. We've returned every year since and have seen *The Gingerbread Man* and *The Man Who Wanted to be a Penguin* with this year's treat the company's take on *Pinocchio*.

It's a story which, thanks to Disney's animated version, many young audiences are already familiar with. Lonely Geppetto carves a little wooden puppet for company and names him Pinocchio. All the tiny marionette wants is to become a real boy. A series of adventures are his chance to make his dream come true.

The story originated in Italy in the late 19th century and this Stuff and Nonsense version is true to the original storytelling – not a singing cricket in sight!

Stuff and Nonsense relish any opportunity to turn everyday objects into magical props. Here, a grand old house has been abandoned and our storytellers – grandfather, father and son – take shelter for the night. They decide to re-tell a story familiar to them all because the Grandfather is Geppetto and the Father is Pinocchio.

All the familiar elements are here – the nose that grows when you tell a lie, the travelling show where Pinocchio is a puppet without strings, turning into a donkey and ending up inside a great, big whale.

There is live music and magical puppetry with silliness and lots to smile at. The young audience members were thrilled with Grandfather scaling two enormous tables, one on top of the other, to transform into a very tall home for puppet performance. All I could do was marvel at the height involved and hold my breath.

The performance whizzed by (it's just over an hour) and was loved by the young and the young at heart.