

## **COLLABORATION SUGGESTION FOR NORTHERN CONNECTIONS PROJECT FROM VÄSTERBOTTENSTEATERN**

**Pinocchio** / Our discussions have resulted in a suggestion to create a family event based on the story of Pinocchio. We believe this “educational tale” can provide us with a wide range of storytelling qualities. An audience of all ages can be amused, terrified and intellectually stimulated depending on their age and their reference frames. The story contains (such as good stories do) many layers of understanding. References to contemporary society are all over the place.

It’s our belief, that our collaboration will benefit from a material like this – where existential questions about love, humanity and belonging are being asked. It is a story open for philosophical, ethical and political discussions and comments.

Our ambition to create an unforgettable experience for audiences in both Sweden and Scotland, might be achieved by using this form of theatre. It allows us to play with the audience and with each other, and to use the big potential of talent and professionalism that the group carries. The combined skills of all participants can be put into the project.

The possibilities are of course endless, but just think about how we could experiment with acting styles, music, puppetry, mask, movement and different ways of creating set design. A tale such as this one also allows us to play around with different languages and so on.

Since the story has all the qualities of a “roadmovie” we can easily split production work up, (if we want to?) and prepare different aspects of the final performance in both countries. We believe it could work very well to produce like this even if a “held together”, concentrated result has to emerge when we all meet up to put things on stage. For example, it would be interesting to discuss the possibility of having more than one director for different parts of the story.

For those of you that heard of the earlier idea to look into the story of Kaspar Hauser – we decided it had to go. Mostly because it’s such a dark story that we felt it would not fulfill our desire to present a family oriented tale. Nevertheless, there are quite a few similarities between these two ideas. In the original story of Pinocchio, the evil forces of mankind are also represented in various ways. But even if both stories are examples of a storytelling tradition where our European culture history is presented in quite dark colours, there is of course more fun and games to be found in Pinocchio.

The final choice of artistic platform will be crucial for our ability to take on the challenge a collaboration such as this one offers. This material allows freedom within a given frame which we believe can create a supportive working climate, where we become strong supporters of each other. In such a collaboration we can all grow as artists, but also as human beings – just like Pinocchio.

Written by Robert and Birgit for Västerbottensteatern / 2006-05-30

## INFO ABOUT THE STORY

**The Adventures of Pinocchio** is a novel for children by Italian author Carlo Collodi. The first half was published in serial form between 1881 and 1883, and then completed as a book for children in February 1883. It is about the mischievous adventures of Pinocchio, an animated marionette, and his poor father, a woodcarver named Geppetto. It is considered a classic of children's literature and has spawned many derivative works of art, such as Disney's classic 1940 animated movie of the same name, and commonplace ideas, such as a liar's long nose.

The Adventures of Pinocchio is a story about an animated puppet, talking crickets, boys that turn into mules and other assorted fairy tale-like devices that would be familiar to a reader of Alice in Wonderland or Brothers Grimm — in fact earlier in his career Collodi worked on a translation of Mother Goose. However Pinocchio is not a traditional fairy-tale world, containing as it does the hard realities of the need for food, shelter and other basic measures of daily life, even the setting of the story is the very real Tuscan area of Italy. It was a unique literary melding of genres for its time.

Pinocchio draws from classical sources, such as Homer and Dante, but more significantly is a part of the Tuscan novella or short-story tradition which found its genesis in Boccaccio's Decameron (1353) — as Glauco Cambon wrote: "Storytelling is a folk art in the Tuscan countryside, and has been for centuries. Pinocchio's relentless variety of narrative incident, its alertness to social types, its tongue-in-cheek wisdom are of a piece with that illustrious tradition."

Collodi had not originally intended the work as children's literature; the ending was unhappy and allegorically dealt with serious themes. In the original serialized version, Pinocchio seemingly dies a gruesome death, hanged for his innumerable faults at the end of chapter 15. At the request of his editor, Collodi added chapters 16–36, in which the Blue Fairy rescues Pinocchio and eventually turns him into a real boy when he acquires a deeper understanding of himself, making it more suitable for children. The Blue Fairy, a female motherly figure, plays the dominant role in the second half of the book, versus the fatherly figure of Geppetto in the first part.

Children's literature was a new idea in Collodi's time, an innovation in nineteenth-century Italy (and elsewhere). Thus in content and style it was new and modern, opening the way to many writers of the following century. Collodi, who died in 1890, was respected during his lifetime as a talented writer and social commentator, but his fame did not begin to grow until Pinocchio was translated into English for the first time in 1892, but in particular with the widely read Everyman's Library edition of 1911. The popularity of the story was bolstered by the powerful philosopher-critic Benedetto Croce who had great admiration for the tale.

Several of the book's concepts have become commonplace, particularly the proverbial long nose for liars. The name "Pinocchio" is from Tuscany and means "pine nut" or "kernel". Its Italian language is peppered with Florence dialect features.

Pinocchio, in addition to a children's tale, is a novel of education, with values expressed through allegory. There are many ways to view these allegories. One is that they mirror the values of the middle class of the 19th century, in particular Italy as it became a nation state. For example do not follow schemes of the fox and cat (ie. thieving noble class) but instead work honestly for money and get an education so you are not treated like an ass (mule working class). Not surprisingly, although the book was very popular, in many upper class families of the period it was not a book initially regarded as suitable for "well-educated" children.

It is also an allegory of contemporary society, a look at the contrast between respectability and free instinct in a very severe, formal time. Behind the optimistic pedagogical appearance, the romance is a sad irony, and sometimes a satire, on that formal pedagogy and, through this, against the nonsense of these social manners in general.

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