

Pinocchio!

By Dan Neidermyer

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Pinocchio!

CAST OF CHARACTERS

(Eight men and three women, some roles interchangeable, total female cast possible)

GEPETTO

A very kind, white-haired woodcarver.

PINOCCHIO

A just-finished-today wooden puppet who wants to be a real boy.

BLUE FAIRY

Gracious guardian of the forest and, in this instance, a recently-carved wooden puppet.

STERLING

A scallywag without equal.

CANDLEWYCK

Sterling's rapsallion cohort.

MARIGOLD

A beautiful dancing puppet with the Great Puppet Theatre, her hair and dress the color of the sun.

KELSO

Also a puppet with the Great Puppet Theatre, a grand and glorious clown.

ZAK

A ragamuffin bully.

ZEKE

Zak's fast-talking comrade.

ZED

A nonsensical follower of Zak and Zeke.

MAMA LEONI

The town's know-all, see-all bag lady with an ominous, authoritative appearance.

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SYNOPSIS OF SCENES

Act one

Scene 1: Gepetto's toy shop.

Scene 2: The Great Puppet Theatre.

Act two

Scene 1: The Great Puppet Theatre.

Scene 2: Along a street, away from the Great Puppet Theatre.

Scene 3: Gepetto's toy shop.

THE PLACE...

A woodcarver's toy shop and nearby areas in a small European village.

THE TIME...

Only yesterday.

COSTUMING

At the director's discretion, costuming can be as simple or elaborate as desired. The most colorful of characters, Pinocchio, should wear a bright shirt and a dazzling pair of shorts accented with brilliant, stand-out suspenders. Brown circles drawn with an eyebrow pencil on his elbows and knees give the appearance of wooden joints. A green hat sporting a long feather and lots of freckles add flair to this wooden puppet carved only yesterday and finished earlier this morning.

Gepetto is poor and as such dresses in long-since new black pants and shoes with a flouncy white shirt topped by an open vest. Small spectacles sit atop his nose and add character to a most happy, even charming, bubbly gentleman.

Adorned completely in blue, the Blue Fairy wears a sparkling tiara and carries a golden wand. Beauty, grace, and elegance complement her long-flowing gown and are the first qualities noticed by anyone suddenly found in her presence.

Pinocchio!

The scallywags, Sterling and Candlewyck, wear black unless they are perceived to be rather foppish clowns by the director. Then, whatever color accents their antics are certainly most acceptable.

Simple accessories – an old cane and pocket watch with fob chain for Gepetto; a mustache and derby for Candlewyck and Sterling; shiny silver buckles on Pinocchio's shoes and a powder blue wig for the Blue Fairy – are fun and if available, add pizzazz to costuming that is both functional and enjoyable for cast and audience alike.

PROPS

Gepetto

Make-up to use in finishing the puppet. An old cat, also for the puppet

Marigold

Broom and mop

Kelso

Broom and mop

Sterling

Broom and mop

SET

Like costuming, the set can be as simple as a bare stage with several props or quite elaborate. The toy shop can be suggested by a table on which several wooden toys and/or woodcarver's tools are placed. An old chair is placed center stage on which Gepetto places the wooden puppet to complete his work

The areas utilized by Sterling and Candlewyck could be a bare stage or designed to look as if they are a part of the Great Puppet Theatre.

During rehearsals, some offbeat ideas might surface. If you like them, by all means use them. For both sets and costuming, creativity is only limited by your imagination, availability of resources, and what works for your particular production.

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Act one, Scene 1

The work area of a toymaker's shop where dreams come true and where toys – with a little imagination – indeed become real. GEPETTO, a kind, white-haired gentleman whose skilled hands have carved toys to the delight of hundreds of children for many years, enters. He is slow of stride, but has a twinkle in his eyes that belies a most fun-loving and genial spirit. And today, he has created something new! Something he is most proud of. Something he deeply loves. . .

He walks toward the audience, a most happy, beaming, proud woodcarver. He speaks directly to the audience.

GEPETTO: Hello. *(Expecting an appropriate response from the audience. If there is none, he repeats, with a grin) Hello. (when the audience responds, he nods and with a warm smile acknowledges this audience greeting, then)* How good of you to visit my wonderful toy shop today. I was hoping you would. Because today- yes, today – after such careful peeling and polishing for weeks and weeks, I have completed a new—

Oh did I tell you my name? *(Expecting an appropriate response, then acknowledges such)* My, my, I'm so excited about my new little wooden one, I'm forgetting a proper introduction. My, what you must think of me. I'm usually not like this, but today *(throws up his hands, a gesture itself saying, "Oh, my!")* My name *(Taking a slight bow)* is Gepetto. And I am a woodcarver. Not just any woodcarver. No, no. This woodcarver, *(Pointing to himself)* me, I carve special things, toys, for children. All kinds of toys. Dolls, games, wood blocks.

Pinocchio!

I begin with a block of wood. Often times, a piece of wood someone else has thrown away. But I see something special in that block of wood! And then, I use a lot of imagination to keep my fingers *(With appropriate actions as he describes his work)* whittling and carving *(Moving about his shop as if conducting a tour, pointing out various toys he has made)* dolls, games, wood blocks, sometimes even cuckoo clocks. But today, I have made a – But rather than my telling you, let me show you. *(He turns and moves toward the exit, then as if remembering something, he turns back to the audience)* I'm getting this special something for you. You won't go away? I'll only be a moment. It's in my workshop. You'll see why I'm so excited. *(Exits to pick up his latest creation: a wooden puppet which he now carries as best as he can onto the stage. As he enters, carrying the puppet, he speaks to the audience)* Here it is – my new wooden puppet. Such a lot of work but it is *(Placing the puppet on a chair)* almost finished. *(Taking some rouge from his work table)* In fact, with a few little touches *(adding round circles of color to the puppet's cheeks)* here and there, this wooden one is – finished!

(Admitting to the audience) Sometimes, as I've looked at the little wooden head these last few weeks, *(He glances at Pinocchio)* I know this puppet will make some child very happy because to me, this little puppet looks, *(Pinocchio waves to the audience while Gepetto speaks directly to the audience, his back to the puppet)* of course my eyes aren't what they used to be, *(Pinocchio waves again, but as soon as Gepetto turns to look at him, Pinocchio is motionless)* but to me, this little wooden puppet looks so life-like, almost real, almost as if *(Moving toward the audience and away from the puppet)* it could talk!

PINOCCHIO: But I do talk

GEPETTO: *(Startled; his back still to the puppet)* What? *(Then speaking directly to someone in the audience)* Did you say something to me? *(to yet another)* Did you say something to me?

PINOCCHIO: Of course they didn't, toymaker.

GEPETTO: *(Again startled)* What? I know I heard someone say something. Who - ? *(Pointing to someone in the audience)* Are you sure you didn't say something?

PINOCCHIO laughs quite joyfully.

GEPETTO: Now I heard someone laughing at me!! (*speaking directly to someone in the audience*) Did you laugh at me, a poor old woodcarver?

PINOCCHIO: (*Indicating the audience. NOTE: Gepetto's back is still to the puppet*) Those children would never laugh at you, Gepetto. They are too kind. They have better manners than to laugh at an old woodcarver.

GEPETTO: (*Talking to himself*) Yes, that's true. These children are quite well-mannered – (*Suddenly realizing he's talking to air!*) Who am I talking to?!

PINOCCHIO: To me, of course.

GEPETTO: (*Listening carefully*) Say that again.

PINOCCHIO: To me, of course.

GEPETTO: To (*Turning around, facing the puppet*) you??!

PINOCCHIO nods his head and grins, almost impishly, but certainly most innocently. After all, he's quite young.

GEPETTO: You were talking –

Another nod and grin from the wooden one.

GEPETTO: - to me?

PINOCCHIO: Is there anyone else in this toy shop?

GEPETTO: NO . . . but . . . I don't believe you can talk.

PINOCCHIO: Believe it, Gepetto! I can talk.

GEPETTO: You know my name?!

PINOCCHIO: How often have I heard it while you were carving me? Only every time some happy child trotted into your toy shop. And that was hundreds of times! Little children love you, Gepetto!

GEPETTO: (*Very kindly*) It's my toys they love, my toys which bring them so much happiness.

PINOCCHIO: And so will I.

GEPETTO: What? (*With disbelief*) I can't believe this. I must be hearing things. A wooden puppet talking?

PINOCCHIO: (*Bragging*) But I can talk, laugh, cry, yell, and sing... cha-cha-cha!

GEPETTO: No, that's not possible. In fact, it's impossible!

PINOCCHIO: Why?

GEPETTO: Because I carved you out of a block of wood!

PINOCCHIO: And wood can't talk?

Pinocchio!

GEPETTO: Not usually. (*Turns to the audience*) Does wood talk? (*Responding to the audience's answer*) There, you see, even they agree. Wood can't talk.

PINOCCHIO: But, Gepetto, I am not your usual block of wood.

GEPETTO: How right you are, my little wooden head. You're special, very special, because I carved you with very special care, with very special love.

PINOCCHIO: And you did a good job, Gepetto, a very good job. I look so real.

GEPETTO: I almost thought you were so often as I was carving you. But wait . . . wait a minute . . . I can't believe what I am doing – carrying on a conversation with a wooden puppet!! I must have the flu.

PINOCCHIO: No, you don't have the flu, you don't have a cold or pneumonia, and you're not hearing things. I can talk, laugh, cry, yell, and sing . . . cha-cha-cha! Everything can talk.

GEPETTO: Everything?

PINOCCHIO: If you listen. In the mornings, you can hear the birds in the trees talking to each other. They're discussing where to find the fattest and the tastiest worms and where to find twigs and the best pieces of string for their nests. And all day long you can hear dogs talking, barking to each other about where the cats hang out. He bees mingle while the ants decide which picnic to invade –

GEPETTO: But you're a toy!

PINOCCHIO: SO!

GEPETTO: So toys can't talk!

PINOCCHIO: Never heard a doll cry, "Mama?"

GEPETTO: Only when there's a special voice mechanism built inside them. I didn't put a voice box inside you.

PINOCCHIO: I've got a brain.

GEPETTO: (*Flabbergasted*) A brain!

PINOCCHIO: Yes, I'm smart, too!

GEPETTO: A wooden puppet that talks and has a brain! Now I know I've lost mine!

PINOCCHIO: Don't forget –

GEPETTO: (*Wearily*) You can also laugh, cry, yell and sing . . . cha-cha-cha.

PINOCCHIO: And I can walk too.

GEPETTO: Now you walk, too? A puppet without strings walks??!! NO, no, no, no, no.

PINOCCHIO: (*Playfully*) Yes, yes, yes, yes, yes.

GEPETTO: I haven't put strings on you yet!

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PINOCCHIO: I don't need strings.

GEPETTO: Every puppet has to have strings to walk.

(Pantomimes a puppet walking as he pulls a string upward while saying) You pull the string up, the puppet takes another step. You pull two strings, the puppet jumps. *(As he pantomimes pulling two strings and jumping.)*

PINOCCHIO: Not me.

GEPETTO: Even you.

PINOCCHIO: Remember, I'm not your usual puppet, Gepetto.

Look, *(As he struggles to stand)* I can stand *(Though he is a bit wobbly.)*

GEPETTO: Well, so you can.

PINOCCHIO: And now, as you will also see, I can walk. *(Tries to take a step, struggling to maintain his balance, and finally, takes one step, then while trying to take another, lifting his leg, becoming very shaky, he falls.)*

GEPETTO: *(Amused)* But I thought you could walk.

PINOCCHIO: *(From the floor, looking upward with big sad eyes)*

I could if you would teach me.

GEPETTO: Me? Teach you how to walk?

PINOCCHIO: Sure. Doesn't every parent teach his young child to walk?

GEPETTO: *(As he carefully picks the puppet up and places him back on the chair)* I'm not a parent, my little wooden one.

PINOCCHIO: You carved me, didn't you?

GEPETTO: *(Thinking)* Yes –

PINOCCHIO: *(Quickly)* Then you're my parent. Please, Gepetto, as my parent, teach me to walk.

GEPETTO: But you're a puppet.

PINOCCHIO: Please.

GEPETTO: A puppet without strings!

PINOCCHIO: But a heart that wants to learn.

GEPETTO: A heart now too?

Pinocchio vigorously nods while pointing to his heart.

GEPETTO: *(Giving up as if giving in)* Well, perhaps someone could teach you how to walk. *(Speaking directly to the audience)* Is there anyone here who feels they could teach this little wooden puppet to walk?

Pinocchio!

Appropriate ad libs as audience members respond. All in fun, Gepetto selects someone from the audience and asks that individual to come to the staging area and teach the puppet to walk. Spontaneous ad libs of encouragement from a kindly Gepetto as the individual teaches the puppet to walk. During the first moments of instruction, Pinocchio listens intently, then tries to do what he is being taught. A step, and he falls. Gepetto graciously encourages the “walking teacher” to try again and asks that person to “demonstrate” how to walk. Following a few moments of further instruction, Pinocchio through trial and error does indeed learn how to walk and walks. Gepetto thanks the “walking teacher” and suggest the individual to return to the audience. Please remember: fun is the operative word!

GEPETTO: So now you know how to walk, my little wooden one.

PINOCCHIO: (*Putting his hands on his hips*) Gepetto, I'm not a “little wooden one.” I have a name.

GEPETTO: Now you have a name? (*Pinocchio nods*) How is that possible? I haven't named you yet. I've barely even finished making you.

PINOCCHIO: I've always had a name.

GEPETTO: You have?!

PINOCCHIO: Since I was in the forest.

GEPETTO: When you were in the forest, you were part of a tree. How could you have a name?

PINOCCHIO: Magic, Gepetto.

GEPETTO: Magic?

PINOCCHIO: (*Nodding, with pleasure, introducing himself*) I'm “Pinocchio.”

GEPETTO: Pinocchio?

PINOCCHIO: Pinocchio.

GEPETTO: (*To the audience*) Pinocchio?? Is that a good name for a puppet? (*Interacts with the audience, finally with the audience's agreement, he turns to the puppet*) Then, “Pinocchio” you shall be.

PINOCCHIO: Gepetto, I am hungry.

GEPETTO: Hungry?! NO, no, no, no, no – you may talk, you may walk, you may even have a name from the forest when you weren't even a puppet, BUT, Pinocchio, a wooden puppet does not get hungry.

PINOCCHIO: Don't you get hungry?

GEPETTO: I'm human, I'm not a wooden puppet.

PINOCCHIO: Neither am I.

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GEPETTO: Oh . . . no?

PINOCCHIO: (*Triumphantly, though innocently*) I'm a boy!

GEPETTO: Now I know my mind's playing tricks on me. (*Moving towards the exit*) I best lie down and get some rest before I lose the little bit of my mind I have left. Now the wooden puppet's a boy!! No, no, no, no, no –

PINOCCHIO: (*Rushing to the exiting Gepetto*) I want to be a boy, Gepetto. I want to run and jump and climb trees and do all the things other boys do.

GEPETTO: (*Exasperated*) You're a puppet!

PINOCCHIO: Now.

GEPETTO: Wood is not alive.

PINOCCHIO: It was once.

GEPETTO: That was when you were part of a tree. This is now when you're a wooden puppet. And wish as you might, you'll always be a wooden puppet.

PINOCCHIO: Please.

GEPETTO: I'm a woodcarver, what do you want me to do?

PINOCCHIO: Make me a real boy.

GEPETTO: I can't

PINOCCHIO: Please.

GEPETTO: I may be able to carve you to look almost real, but never, never, ever, Pinocchio, can I make you real.

PINOCCHIO: There must be something you could do.

GEPETTO: Not to make you real.

PINOCCHIO: Won't you even try?

GEPETTO: What would I try?

PINOCCHIO: (*Shrugs his shoulders*) You're the toymaker.

GEPETTO: Yes, of course, toys, that's what I make: toys. Not boys!

PINOCCHIO: Use your imagination, Gepetto. Surely you can think of something.

GEPETTO: I used my imagination when I carved you, Pinocchio. But no amount of imagination will ever make you real.

PINOCCHIO: Please, I want to be a real boy, I want to do all the things real boys do.

GEPETTO: (*Suddenly, perhaps he's found an answer to Pinocchio's begging to be a real boy. Now being shrewd and with a gleam in his eyes*) ALL the things a real boy does?

PINOCCHIO: (*Most definitely*) Yes.

GEPETTO: ALL the things, Pinocchio?

PINOCCHIO: (*Vigorously nodding*) Yes!

GEPETTO: Including "going to school?"

Pinocchio!

PINOCCHIO: Going to school?

GEPETTO: Of course. All little boys go to school.

PINOCCHIO: But I'm not a little boy.

GEPETTO: (*Pretending to be surprised*) OH! (*Then understanding*) All "big" boys go to school.

PINOCCHIO: Why?

GEPETTO: To become smart.

PINOCCHIO: But I am smart already. I've got a brain.

GEPETTO: (*Thinking for a moment*) Yes, of course, but school can make your brain "smarter."

PINOCCHIO: Why?

GEPETTO: Pinocchio, you must go to school (*Now speaking directly to the audience, as if enlisting their help*) to learn how to – (*Waits a moment for the audience to shout out something like "to read"*) yes, you must go to school to learn how to read . . . and to learn how to – (*Again, asking the counsel of the audience, which might respond "to write", etc.*) – write and how to – (*Again, seeking an appropriate response from the audience and repeating such*) yes, yes. That is why you must go to school

PINOCCHIO: Do I really need all that stuff?

GEPETTO: Do you want to become a real boy?

PINOCCHIO: Yes.

GEPETTO: Then you need "all that stuff."

PINOCCHIO: Well, okay. I'll go to school.

GEPETTO: (*Pleased his plan has worked*) Good. Then it's all settled. First thing tomorrow morning, after you get up, you'll go to school.

PINOCCHIO: First thing tomorrow morning? I'm really not that much of a morning person.

GEPETTO: Right after you get up.

PINOCCHIO: But it's cold in the morning, and I have no coat to wear to keep me warm.

GEPETTO: Yes, you're right, Pinocchio.

PINOCCHIO: (*Convinced he has Gepetto outwitted*) So I guess I can't go to school.

GEPETTO: You must still go to school even if you don't have a coat.

PINOCCHIO: I'll freeze.

GEPETTO: I know, my poor Pinocchio.

PINOCCHIO: So whatever shall I do?

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GEPETTO: I don't know. (*A beat while he thinks*) Oh, yes. I've got an idea. A friend of mine is a tailor. His shop is only a few doors down the street. I'll quickly go down to his tailor shop and ask him to trade me a coat he has made for a toy I have made.

PINOCCHIO: Trade? What is "trade?"

GEPETTO: (*To the audience*) Ah, you see, he doesn't even know the meaning of "words." (*To Pinocchio*) Indeed, that is why you must go to school, my Pinocchio, to learn the meaning of words and so much more.

PINOCCHIO: Okay.

GEPETTO: (*As he's exiting*) Now, Pinocchio, I'm only going several doors down the street. Not far, and I won't be gone long. You wait her for me.

PINOCCHIO: I will.

GEPETTO: Promise?

PINOCCHIO: I won't move a limb.

GEPETTO: Promise?

PINOCCHIO: Cross my heart.

GEPETTO: And hope to die?

PINOCCHIO: And hope to die.

GEPETTO: Stick a needle in your eye?

PINOCCHIO: Stick a needle in my eye, but it won't hurt, Gepetto.

GEPETTO: Maybe not, but breaking your promise will.

PINOCCHIO: Don't worry, Gepetto.

GEPETTO: (*Happily, as he's exiting*) All right, I won't worry. You stay right there, Pinocchio. I'll be right back from the tailor's with a new coat for you. Ph, I'm so happy, my little wooden Pinocchio. (*Exits.*)

Now alone, PINOCCHIO considers his position.

PINOCCHIO: (*To himself*) Do I really want to go to school? Do I really need to learn all that stuff? (*To the audience*) What do you think? Do I really need to go to school? (*Usually, the audience responds with "yes"*) Really?! (*Again, another "yes"*) Why? (*Listens to the various answers, then rather impishly*) No! I'm smart enough. I don't want to go to school. I don't need to learn the meaning of words or how to count or how to read. So, I think I'll just strike out on my own. Gepetto can make another little wooden puppet, but as for me, I'm going to see the world!!!

Pinocchio!

Determined, PINOCCHIO moves toward the exit, very much the little and foolish adventurer. The BLUE FAIRY enters.

BLUE FAIRY: *(Kindly)* And where do you think you're going?

PINOCCHIO: *(Taken by surprise; quickly)* I'm going to see the world!

BLUE FAIRY: A wooden puppet . . . alone . . . running away?

PINOCCHIO: I'm not running away.

BLUE FAIRY: What else would you call "leaving without telling Gepetto?"

PINOCCHIO: Gepetto doesn't care.

BLUE FAIRY: Oh, yes, he does. Gepetto cares very much. He'll be very sad if he returns from the tailor's shop and finds you gone, Pinocchio.

PINOCCHIO: You know my name?

BLUE FAIRY: *(Nodding)* Yes.

PINOCCHIO: How? Who are you?

BLUE FAIRY: Surely you already know.

PINOCCHIO: I do?

BLUE FAIRY: When you were in the forest –

PINOCCHIO: *(Proudly interrupting)* I was part of a tree.

BLUE FAIRY: Just as I was the fairy of all the trees in the forest.

PINOCCHIO: You're the "Blue Fairy?!" *(Blue Fairy nods and smiles)* WOW! What are you doing here?

BLUE FAIRY: I hope to keep you from doing something most foolish.

PINOCCHIO: Foolish! Me??

BLUE FAIRY: Yes. Running away from Gepetto's toy shop would be –

PINOCCHIO: But I'm not running away. I only want to see the world.

BLUE FAIRY: Without asking Gepetto first?

PINOCCHIO: *(Too quickly)* He wouldn't let me. He'd say I have to go to school.

BLUE FAIRY: *(Amazed)* A wooden puppet going to school?

PINOCCHIO: That's what I think too, Blue Fairy.

BLUE FAIRY: Pinocchio, you must not run away. Gepetto will worry too much.

PINOCCHIO: No, he won't. I'm only a puppet.

BLUE FAIRY: Gepetto will be concerned. Very concerned.

PINOCCHIO: About a block of wood?

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BLUE FAIRY: That can talk (*Pinocchio proudly shakes his head "yes"*) and can walk (*Another big "yes"*) and could get into trouble!

PINOCCHIO: (*Which abruptly stops the preening Pinocchio*)
What kind of trouble would I get into? I'm only wood.

BLUE FAIRY: (*Very kindly*) You want to be a real boy?

PINOCCHIO: Oh yes, Blue Fairy, more than anything. Blue Fairy, you could do it.

BLUE FAIRY: Do what?

PINOCCHIO: Make me a real boy.

BLUE FAIRY: How could I do that?

PINOCCHIO: I don't know exactly, but you fairies can build castles in the air.

BLUE FAIRY: Not quite.

PINOCCHIO: (*Not giving up*) You could twirl your wand, say a few special "magic words," and poof (*Snapping his fingers*) I'd be a real boy!

BLUE FAIRY: Just like that?!

PINOCCHIO: Just like that! What'd ya say? Will you do it? Will you make me a real boy?

BLUE FAIRY: If you deserved it, perhaps.

PINOCCHIO: If I deserved it?

BLUE FAIRY: If you were a good boy –

PINOCCHIO: You think I'm not?

BLUE FAIRY: Running away is not –

PINOCCHIO: But I'm not running away.

BLUE FAIRY: And you'll go to school?

PINOCCHIO: (*Walking towards the exit*) I'm on my way now.

BLUE FAIRY: Without telling Gepetto first?

PINOCCHIO: That's what he wanted me to do – go to school.

BLUE FAIRY: He wanted you to stay here. In that chair. Until he returned from the tailor.

PINOCCHIO: Ah, gee, Blue Fairy, you know everything. Okay, I'll wait here, in that chair, until Gepetto returns. Then I'll rush off to school, and you'll (*Snaps his fingers*) Make me a real boy.

BLUE FAIRY: Perhaps.

PINOCCHIO: Perhaps?

BLUE FAIRY: You must always tell the truth.

PINOCCHIO: ah, that's simple.

BLUE FAIRY: Good. Then do it, Pinocchio. Always be truthful.

PINOCCHIO: If it makes me a real boy, you got it, Blue Fairy.

BLUE FAIRY: Telling the truth won't make you a real boy, Pinocchio. Telling the truth is the mark of a real boy.

Pinocchio!

PINOCCHIO: Okay, whatever, but you'll do it, right?

BLUE FAIRY: If you'll do –

PINOCCHIO: I know, I know – stay here and wait for Gepetto, then go to school to learn how to read, how to write, and how to count –

BLUE FAIRY: And many other things.

PINOCCHIO: Okay, okay – and learn many other things – and then – then, you'll make me a real boy. (*Blue Fairy shakes her head "No"*) But you promised!

BLUE FAIRY: Have you forgotten already?

PINOCCHIO: (*Thinks and thinks, then*) Oh, yes, something so simple. I must always tell the truth. (*Blue Fairy nods, happily*) Blue Fairy, (*Extending his hand*) You've got yourself a deal.

BLUE FAIRY: (*Shaking on it*) I do hope so, Pinocchio. (*As she exits*) I do hope so.

PINOCCHIO: When will I see you again, Blue Fairy?

BLUE FAIRY: When you have proven yourself. (*And she is gone.*)

PINOCCHIO: Which I will do, most definitely. (*Seats himself and is content for a few mere seconds. He begins to fidget, then questions himself*) But do I really want to go to school? How will the Blue Fairy even know if I go to school? Except she seems to know everything, but that's impossible unless someone tells her. And who would tell her? Who cares about a block of wood? (*Seeking the counsel of the audience*) Do you think I should go to school? (*Interacts with the audience for several moments. Finally, regardless of what the audience says*) No, I don't think I should! I want to see the world! I will see the world! I'm going to have a good time . . . on my own!

PINOCCHIO exits, certainly much too bravely for a little wooden puppet who doesn't understand what could happen to him "out in the world."

GEPETTO hurries in, pleased and excited with his trade. He carries a coat. Not realizing Pinocchio's gone.

By Dan Neidermyer

GEPETTO: The tailor, he traded me this wonderful new coat for a doll, Pinocchio. He wanted the doll for his daughter even as I wanted the coat for my Pinocchio. (*Realizing Pinocchio is no longer in his shop*) Pinocchio? (*Looking around*) Pinocchio? (*Calling*) Pinocchio? Where are you, Pinocchio? (*After a few moments, Gepetto, very concerned, asks the audience about Pinocchio and interacts with them. Finally*) Oh, dear, my little Pinocchio has run away from home! Whatever shall I do? I must try to find him before anything happens to him. (*Exits the staging area, calling*) Pinocchio! Pinocchio! Pinocchio!

Act One, Scene 2

The Great Puppet Theatre near GEPETTO'S toy shop

At the Director's discretion, a colorful song and dance performed by various puppets open this scene. Or perhaps a magic show.

Then, offstage:

MARIGOLD: No, Kelso! No, no, no!

From the sound of their voices as they enter, MARIGOLD and KELSO, both puppets, have been having a real go-round about something!

KELSO: Won't you even consider it for one moment?

MARIGOLD: If I do, then it'll be two moments, then five moments, then fifty moments, and before you know it, we've gotten ourselves into very deep trouble! With no way out!

KELSO: We've got to run away, Marigold!

MARIGOLD: How can we? We're puppets!

KELSO: Running away is our only hope! Please, please, Marigold, think about our situation: you want to stay enslaved to this Great Puppet Theatre forever!

MARIGOLD: But as Puppets, what choice do we have? Every time they pull our strings, we've got to jump to it! (*He pantomimes someone pulling his strings with the appropriate reaction: he "jumps" to it!*) Five shows a day. Seven days a week. For how many weeks has it been? No, Marigold, how many years has it been? Without a break!

MARIGOLD: We were carved to do that.

Pinocchio!

KELSO: (*Trying to get her to listen to reason*) We were made to entertain children. Not work our feet and hands to the bare screws that hold us together.

MARIGOLD: We do entertain children, every day. They laugh. They clap.

KELSO: For the ten minutes a day that we make children happy, we have ten hours a day of misery, ten hours of being thrown around by Sterling and Candlewyck.

MARIGOLD: They'll cut our strings if they know we're talking like this!

KELSO: So?

MARIGOLD: So what'll we do then? End up thrown into a heap, left to collect dust in the stage wagon's closet? Never see the light of day!

KELSO: When have you had new paint on your shoes or even your hair? When have you had a new dress, Marigold?

MARIGOLD: (*Looking at her costume*) Never.

KELSO: They don't care about us. To them, we're just blocks of wood.

MARIGOLD: We're just blocks of wood to ourselves.

KELSO: I'm doing it, Marigold, running away. Whether you come with me or not. But please come with me.

MARIGOLD: I can't.

KELSO: I'm getting out of here.

MARIGOLD: Please, don't. If you do, I'll be left all alone. I won't have anyone to talk to if you run away.

KELSO: What'd'ya call the other hundreds of puppets in this show?

MARIGOLD: But none of them have your heart, Kelso. Please don't leave me alone.

KELSO: Then you only have one choice, Marigold.

Suddenly, quite loudly, from offstage.

STERLING: Hurry, hurry, hurry! Step right up! Be the first –

And entering, a most colorful fop, STERLING, hawking his wares, very much the carnival barker. But don't ever let his salesman's smile fool you! Underneath all, STERLING'S a real scoundrel. The two puppets immediately hush themselves and straighten up!

By Dan Neidermyer

STERLING: - to see one hundred dancing puppets in the most exciting show on earth! None finer! None more exciting! No where else but here: the Great Puppet Theatre. A show performed by the most colorful and most delightful puppets in all the world! And all for only twenty-five cents! At the Great Puppet Theatre! Hurry, hurry, hurry! See Marigold, the dancing puppet with poise and grace that would shame the world's prima ballerinas! See Kelso the clown do amazing stunts, acrobatics, and if your lucky, he'll even disappear in a blaze of smoke! But only at selected shows! Yes, hurry, hurry, hurry, see the most beautiful puppets in the whole wide world performing just for you! Hurry, hurry, hurry! Step right up! Don't miss the greatest puppet show in all the world! Hurry, hurry, hur –

Seeing the two puppets, STERLING, for no apparent reason becomes suspicious.

STERLING: You two! What are you doing here? (*Crossing to them, angrily*) When you should be getting ready for the next show!

KELSO: Please, Sterling –

STERLING: (*Interrupting, imitating Kelso*) "Please, Sterling," can only mean something disgusting. What?

KELSO: Could we have a break from the next show?

STERLING: A break?! I'll show you puppets a break. (*Moving about the stage, searching*) Where's my saw?

MARIGOLD: (*Frightened*) No! We've worked so hard, so long, please, Sterling –

STERLING: You're puppets. You don't mind hard work. You don't mind anything. Including what I told you to do two hours ago! I wanted this stage floor swept and mopped cleaner than clean so my new puppet's shoes won't get dirty. (*Reaching down to touch the floor*) And did you do it? (*Wiping his finger across the floor, apparently finding a speck of dust, then looking at his finger, seeing the speck of dust, and with delight, saying*) No!

MARIGOLD: We did the best we could.

STERLING: Which is bad, downright lousy. Honestly, when I'm not here to pull your strings, nothing gets done! I'm warning you, both of you, you'll do as you're pulled or you won't be hanging around here anymore!

Pinocchio!

PINOCCHIO enters, very innocent, and catches STERLING'S eye.

STERLING: (*Changing his demeanor immediately*) Oh, hello, little mister. Coming to our show?

PINOCCHIO: (*Innocently*) I'm on my way to see the world.

STERLING: After seeing our show I hope.

PINOCCHIO: Your show?

STERLING: The greatest show on earth.

PINOCCHIO: (*With wide-eyed wonderment*) The "greatest show on earth!" All the earth?

STERLING: (*The braggart*) None like it anywhere.

PINOCCHIO: WOW!

STERLING: (*Thrusting out his hand*) Only a quarter.

PINOCCHIO: A quarter?

STERLING: Ya didn't think you'd get in for free now, did ya?

PINOCCHIO: For "free?" I don't know what that means.

STERLING: Don't play dumb, kid. To get in to see this great show costs money. Usually fifty cents, but for you, today, because you look like a nice kid, I'll cut you a break – only a quarter.

PINOCCHIO: (*Who has no money*) Not today.

STERLING: Something more important doing today?

PINOCCHIO: Yes.

STERLING: What?

PINOCCHIO: I'm off to see the world.

STERLING: So you said. Our show is the world.

PINOCCHIO: Well, I mean, I'm on my way to – (*Hesitating*)

STERLING: (*After a beat*) To - ?

PINOCCHIO: - to -

STERLING: Yes? I'm waiting. You're on your way to –

PINOCCHIO: The grocery store.

STERLING: (*Snidely*) To get your mother some groceries perhaps.

PINOCCHIO: Yes, that's it. I'm on my way to the grocery store to get my mother some groceries.

From offstage:

BLUE FAIRY: Pinocchio.

PINOCCHIO: (*Looking around*) What?

STERLING: Well, little mister, the grocery store is –

PINOCCHIO: I've got a name.

By Dan Neidermyer

STERLING: Really!

PINOCCHIO: (*Happily*) Yes.

STERLING: Is it “Squirt?”

PINOCCHIO: No, (*Even happier*) it’s “Pinocchio.”

STERLING: Well, Pinocchio, if you’re going to the grocery store, you’re going the wrong way.

PINOCCHIO: Actually, I’m on my way to the library.

From offstage:

BLUE FAIRY: Pinocchio.

PINOCCHIO: (*Responding to the Blue Fairy*) But I am on my way to –

STERLING: Nowhere!

PINOCCHIO: Nowhere?

STERLING: There is no library in that direction.

PINOCCHIO: Maybe I’m mixed up.

STERLING: You’re not mixed up, kid, you’re running away.

PINOCCHIO: No.

STERLING: And I’ve got just the place for you to run “to!”

PINOCCHIO: I’m not running away!

STERLING: Ah, come on, Pinocchio, do you think I was born yesterday?

PINOCCHIO: I was.

STERLING: What?

PINOCCHIO: I mean I helped make a puppet yesterday.

STERLING: You help make puppets?

PINOCCHIO: (*Proudly*) I am one!

MARIGOLD and KELSO, who have been sweeping and mopping the floor, upon hearing PINOCCHIO’S proud outburst, gasp!

STERLING: (*Quickly turning to the astonished puppets; sharply*) Silence! Or the saw! (*Back to Pinocchio*) So, you’re a puppet.

PINOCCHIO: Of course.

STERLING: But you’ve got no strings!

PINOCCHIO: I’m not your usual puppet! I don’t need strings.

See . . . I can walk without strings!

Again, the two puppets gasp! Which is silenced in mid-gasp by an angry look from STERLING, who then turns to PINOCCHIO and rather nicely, even apparently impressed, says:

Pinocchio!

STERLING: And you talk!

PINOCCHIO: And I've got a brain.

STERLING: Which you're not using since you're running away.

PINOCCHIO: What?

STERLING: *(Thinking to himself yet directed to the audience)* A wooden puppet who walks without strings . . . and a wooden puppet who talks . . . and a wooden puppet who is running away from home . . . ah, yes, this could certainly bring good fortune . . . for me . . . and this wooden puppet who talks and walks without strings could be worth quite a fortune to the Great Puppet Theatre!

PINOCCHIO: What's that you're saying?

STERLING: I said, "Such a smart puppet would surely like to see the grandest show on earth at our Great Puppet Theatre."

PINOCCHIO: Perhaps. But I don't have time today.

STERLING: A wooden puppet going nowhere doesn't have time to see our show?

PINOCCHIO: But I am going somewhere.

STERLING: Yes – *(Grabbing Pinocchio)* With me!

PINOCCHIO: No! No!

CANDLEWYCK, another rascalion from the Great Puppet Theatre, enters. Even as KELSO and MARIGOLD become terribly concerned.

CANDLEWYCK: What is this, Sterling?

STERLING: *(Still clutching Pinocchio)* An uncooperative little wooden puppet.

CANDLEWYCK: Ah! An uncooperative little wooden puppet, eh?

STERLING: Most uncooperative, Candlewyck.

CANDLEWYCK: *(Shaking his head)* Ah, too bad. *(Also clutching the puppet)* You know what we do with most uncooperative little wooden puppets?

PINOCCHIO: Please, I don't want to be here.

CANDLEWYCK: We get a saw –

PINOCCHIO: NO!

CANDLEWYCK: - and saw off a leg, then we –

PINOCCHIO: You wouldn't!

MARIGOLD AND KELSO: They would!

CANDLEWYCK: *(Agreeing with the puppets)* Yes, we would.

PINOCCHIO: I want to go home.

STERLING: Obviously not. You ran away.

CANDLEWYCK: He ran away?

By Dan Neidermyer

STERLING: Yes, Candlewyck, this little wooden puppet – who has no strings –

CANDLEWYCK: No strings?

STERLING: None.

CANDLEWYCK: How interesting.

STERLING: How good for us.

CANDLEWYCK: For us?

STERLING: (*Rubbing his fingers together, thus indicating money, lots of money*) Everyone will want to come to see a puppet “without strings.” We’ll be –

CANDLEWYCK: Rich!

STERLING: Very!

CANDLEWYCK: And quickly!

STERLING: Easy money. Made easier because he – the puppet – ran away.

CANDLEWYCK: Then no one is looking for him.

PINOCCHIO: Gepetto is.

CANDLEWYCK AND STERLING: (*Most sarcastically*) Gepetto? Who’s Gepetto?

PINOCCHIO: The toymaker who carved me.

CANDLEWYCK: And who’ll never find you.

PINOCCHIO: Gepetto’s looking for me.

CANDLEWYCK: Why would he be looking for you?

PINOCCHIO: I was supposed to stay in the toy shop.

STERLING: But didn’t, huh? (*Pinocchio sadly nods*) Remember that, Candlewyck. This puppet’s not to be trusted.

PINOCCHIO: Gepetto’s probably looking for me right now.

CANDLEWYCK: Right now? (*Motioning Sterling to join him in a secret discussion, several steps away from the puppet*) Sterling.

STERLING: (*Joining Candlewyck*) Yeah?

CANDLEWYCK: A puppet without strings that walks and talks –

STERLING: Pretty nifty, huh.

CANDLEWYCK: We could become famous with this puppet –

STERLING: And rich.

CANDLEWYCK: Very!

STERLING: And quickly!

CANDLEWYCK: I can’t wait.

STERLING: We won’t.

Pinocchio!

CANDLEWYCK: I've got an idea. (*Rushing back to clutch Pinocchio*) Sterling, you hide this puppet while I look around outside for Gepetto. Then, we'll take this puppet with us. (*To Pinocchio*) You'll see the world, wooden head, just like you wanted to. And we'll make a fortune, just like we want to!

PINOCCHIO: No!

CANDLEWYCK: (*Exiting*) Back soon.

STERLING: Now, puppet, come this way.

STERLING ad libs as he seeks to hide PINOCCHIO. He can hide PINOCCHIO onstage or somewhere in the audience (perhaps behind several children). He even asks the audience to help him hide the puppet.

MARIGOLD: Oh, that poor puppet.

KELSO: Maybe not.

MARIGOLD: Maybe not?

KELSO: He's got no strings.

MARIGOLD: I never saw a puppet without strings before.

KELSO: And a puppet who can move on his own. He could be of great help to us.

MARIGOLD: How?

KELSO: Ssh – you'll see.

GEPETTO: (*Entering, calling, searching*) Pinocchio! Pinocchio! Where are you, Pinocchio?

STERLING: (*To the being-hid Pinocchio*) I'm warning you, puppet, keep quiet!

GEPETTO: (*Noticing Sterling*) Oh, excuse me, kind sir. Could you be of help to me?

STERLING: (*Most kindly*) Certainly, sir.

GEPETTO: My name is Gepetto. I'm a woodcarver. I make toys for children.

STERLING: How nice.

GEPETTO: Just today I finished a wondrous toy, a puppet.

STERLING: A puppet?

GEPETTO: (*Proudly, fondly*) A most unusual puppet. A puppet who can talk and walks without strings.

STERLING: I'd agree with you, a "most" unusual puppet.

GEPETTO: Have you seen such a puppet? His name is Pinocchio?

STERLING: No, can't say as I have.

By Dan Neidermyer

GEPETTO: He's about this (*Gesturing the appropriate height*) tall. He's got round cheeks and (*Gives a description of Pinocchio consistent with your actor.*)

STERLING: No, sorry. Haven't seen him.

PINOCCHIO: (*From his hiding place, muffled cries*) Gepetto. Gepetto. Here I am, Gepetto.

GEPETTO: (*Thinking he's heard his Pinocchio*) Pinocchio. (*Moving in the direction of the muffled cries*) Pinocchio? Pinocchio?

STERLING: (*Quickly moving to Gepetto's side*) He's not here. No puppet like you've described has been here.

GEPETTO: You're certain?

STERLING: Would I kid you, Gepetto?

GEPETTO: (*Uncertain*) I guess not.

STERLING: Your puppet's nowhere here.

GEPETTO: Nowhere?

STERLING: Nowhere.

GEPETTO: If you do see my little Pinocchio, you will –

STERLING: Let you know immediately. Of course, I'd feel the same way if I'd lost one of my puppets. I'd want to know right away.

GEPETTO: Oh, thank you, thank you. You've been so kind. (*Exiting, calling*) Pinocchio! Pinocchio! Where are you, Pinocchio?

STERLING: (*Moving to the hidden Pinocchio, whom he pulls from the hiding place*) So, Pinocchio, you thought that old wood carver would find you, did you? Well, he didn't. And he won't. Because you're coming with Candlewyck and me.

PINOCCHIO: No.

STERLING: Yes! And now! But until we leave you're going to work. (*Pulling Pinocchio from his hiding place to the front of the staging area*) You'll clean the floor of our Great Puppet Theatre (*As he's getting a mop*). And after that, you'll work, lots of work. Cinderella will have nothing on you! (*Laughs loudly at his own joke as he pulls Pinocchio offstage. Candlewyck yanks the other two puppets offstage as*):

The curtains fall.

Pinocchio!

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