

SIMPLE, BUT VERY POWERFUL THEATRE

Theatre review: Pinocchio by Taurus Voice, Ariel Centre, Totnes

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It's not surprising that Taurus Voice won Best Children's Show Award last year.

The company's new production of Pinocchio, which came to South Devon last week, is brilliant in the simplicity of its approach.



The basic premise is that the audience sit down to find the stage unready. A group of Italian painters and decorators turn up and are aghast to find an audience waiting to see Pinocchio.

Amid much giggling and laughter from the children, they decide they will have to tell the story, using only their scaffolding, planks, dust sheets and decorating paraphernalia for props.

The only colour is Pinocchio's little red bolero.

In the scene where the little puppet's nose grows whenever he tells a lie, a roll of wallpaper is used to brilliant effect. It is stretched and stretched with every new fib.

I can't tell you exactly why, but it was a more powerful retelling of the original Pinocchio story than any all-singing, all-dancing, Technicolour Disney production.

To add to the fun, children at the Ariel Centre in Totnes joined in a short workshop before the show.

And at a previously planned moment they all jumped up and ran up to join the cast on stage, playing the children in the theme park.

Based on the book by Carlo Collodi, the show is written and directed by acclaimed director Greg Banks, with songs by Adrian Brett.

The naughty wooden puppet sets out on a touching quest to become a "real boy", he meets fairies, assassins, talking animals and even gets swallowed by a whale.

The company's first children's show - The Snow Queen - won the Best Children's Show Award at the Brighton Fringe Festival last year.

If they come back to South Devon, make a point of getting to see them.

COLLEEN SMITH