

Theater Reviews / Friday, May 13, 2011

The Assassins Chase Pinocchio

Immediate Medium

By Sarah Lucie

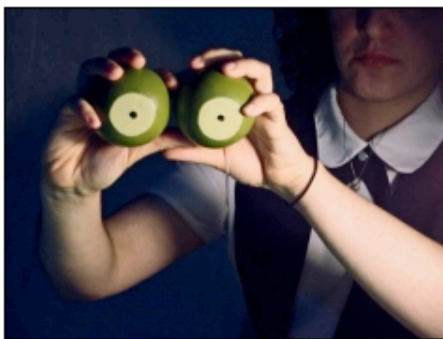


Photo: Maki Takenouchi

Immediate Medium's new experimental production of the classic coming-of-age tale *Pinocchio* is like nothing you've ever seen. The show is created for kids of all ages, based in the idea that children are capable of handling abstract thought and art in unique and powerful ways. What results is a multimedia mash-up including projections, a long-nosed mask, original music, and silly string. Yes, silly string — get excited.

Max Dana's conception is rooted in the original, and far darker, story of *Pinocchio* written by Carlo

Collodi, where the marionette starts out an all-out bad boy who can't be convinced to go to school. The big bad shark (no gentle whales here) has asthma, and (spoiler alert!) Jiminy Cricket doesn't stand a chance against Pinocchio's fist. This fun, zany version keeps you on your toes, and has the feel of a familiar but inexplicable dream. And, despite some dark undertones, the show is ideal for children, even allowing the children's participation, which, I might add, introduces an entirely new and terrifying level to the avant-garde. But the kids seem to love it — dancing on stage and getting so into it that some shouts to Pinocchio might escape throughout the show.

Immediate Medium is ingenious in innumerable ways, successfully finding tactics for a shark's belly, talking cats, fairies, and a marionette-to-donkey transformation to naturally appear on stage, often thanks to a creative use of camera and projection and the production design by Maki Takenouchi. The audience is able to see both the actor producing the image and the magical image onscreen simultaneously. The outcome is so imaginative and organic that all disbelief is suspended. The entire audience, no matter what age, can't help but embrace the wide-eyed awe of childhood.

The ensemble of actors includes Max Dana as Pinocchio, Liz Vacco as the Blue Fairy and Siobhan Towey and Lisa Clair as the energetic, madcap storytellers Dittalini and Polpettina. The group is uninhibited, physical, creative and honest in even the craziest moments. They enter this play world with such ease that you can't help but get on board.

This is a company, and a production, that is worth keeping your eye on. With such passion and ingenuity, more good things are sure to come.

*The Assassins Chase Pinocchio; Immediate Medium; Conceived by Max Dana
Clemente Soto Velez Cultural Center; 107 Suffolk Street at Rivington*