

FROM THE DIRECTOR

I was about twelve years old when my cousin Becca first introduced me to the theatrical power of puppetry. She had started a small puppet ministry at our church and asked me to be a part of it. Our little shows acted out real life conflicts like family quarrels or well-known Bible stories like the Good Samaritan. We didn't have much money, so our puppets consisted of an old worn-out Big Bird puppet, a few nice Jim Henson style people donated from a traveling missionary, and a silly monkey my Grandma and Grandpa Ritter handed down to us. But when it comes to the magic of puppets, that's all you need to create a world.

It wasn't until years later that I would fall in love with the story of Pinocchio, the puppet who had no strings. Unlike many, I wasn't introduced to Carlo Collodi's tale through the well-crafted Disney version. I first read of the magical tale of Geppetto's almost real boy through a shortened version of the real story that my grandma Snow put in one of her special treasure boxes she gave me. Collodi's tale is actually remarkably different from the well-known Disney version. Oh, yes, there is a Blue Fairy, a Fox, and a Cat, and yes, Pinocchio's nose does grow and he does get swallowed by a great whale. And there is even a talking cricket in the original story (though in the real story, Pinocchio crushes it with a wooden mallet). But Collodi's original tale has its own magic and we hope to share that with you tonight.

Since I started directing theater many years ago, I have often dreamt of doing a stage version of *Pinocchio*. It wasn't until this last summer that I decided to do a musical version of it. We are very excited tonight to bring you this classic story of redemption and love, a world where dreams do come true and where unconditional family love is real.

