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SPARE**Times**

June 21-27

'Geppetto'

This is *not* the story of Pinocchio.

But "Geppetto," a new production at Here, shares more than a character's name and profession with that fairy tale. This play also focuses on a longing for magic, a wish for a transformative power that could kindle life where it is lacking.

Written and directed by Renee Philippi and designed and performed by Carlo Adinolfi, both artistic directors of Concrete Temple Theater, "Geppetto" was not created for young audiences. But the press material rightly recommends it for "adventurous children 8 and up." Although the play emerges as a meditation on grief — it soon becomes clear that Donna, Geppetto's wife and fellow puppeteer, has recently died — comic stage business and the script's wry humor save it from lugubriousness.

Recognizing that he needs to prepare for a coming puppetry festival, the bereaved Geppetto tries to practice his old shows with his hero and heroine, the puppets Omino and Jenny. But during an amusing rehearsal of "Perseus and Andromeda" — in which the sea monster the Kraken is played by a hilarious sock puppet with illuminated eyeballs — Geppetto's puppets fall, and Omino's legs are broken. Unable to repair the pup-



STEFAN HAGEN

pet, Geppetto saws off both its limbs, replacing them with ever more imaginative prostheses he fashions from tools, clamps and odds and ends. But he still finds it hard to produce anything solo except "Orpheus and Eurydice," a bitter reflection of his situation.

Although children may never have heard of the Greek myths in this hourlong production, they will understand Geppetto's frustration at being unable to recapture what he's lost. And Mr. Adinolfi, above, gives a compelling performance, enhanced by haunting cello music composed by Lewis Flinn and played onstage by Jeanette Stenson. After the show he passes around his inventive puppets as he answers questions and discusses his and Ms. Philippi's inspirations.

These include an NPR report about Hugh Herr, the biomedical engineer whose legs were amputated after a climbing accident and who now designs technologically advanced artificial limbs.

So will the play sadden young theatergoers? It celebrates human ingenuity too much to be depressing. The struggling Geppetto exemplifies, literally and figuratively, what we all have to do in the face of a shattering blow: pick up the pieces and move on.

(Through June 30. Friday, Sunday, Monday and Thursday at 7 p.m.; Saturday at 2 and 7 p.m.; Here, 145 Avenue of the Americas, at Dominick Street, South Village, 212-352-3101, here.org; \$20; \$15 for students and 65+.)

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Renee Philippi's hour-long play is not childish or silly, as you might expect of a low-budget show in which two out of three of the main characters are wooden puppets; in fact, it's romantic in an old-fashioned way—achy and overblown. This is partly because Carlo Adinolfi—who plays a puppeteer who just lost his wife and now has to put on their two-person puppet show all by himself—is Italian; under Philippi's direction, Adinolfi is not afraid to ham it up. His performance is so charming that you sympathize with him, especially when he treats his two lead puppets like lovers in pain. The puppeteer's angst is enhanced by Lewis Flynn's lovely music for solo cello, played well by Alon Fisk.

April 4 - May 31

SoHo Playhouse (<http://www.newyorker.com/goings-on-about-town/venue/soho-playhouse>)

**Excerpted quotes for
Geppetto: Extraordinary Extremities**

“Geppetto shares more than a character’s name and profession with that fairy tale. This play also focuses on a longing for magic, a wish for a transformative power that could kindle life where it is lacking.” - **The New York Times**

“It’s romantic in an old-fashion way...Carlo Adinolfi’s performance is so charming.”
- **The New Yorker**

“Adinolfi’s puppetry...transcends simple human emotion and stokes the imagination with its art and artistry...Poignant yet funny... **–nytheatre.com**

‘Part one-man show, part puppet theater, part musical performance, *Geppetto*’s unique storytelling elements makes its short hour-long run performance a special one. Lewis Flinn’s hauntingly beautiful score... highlights the mythic proportions of Geppetto’s journey into new selfhood.” – **LettersFromTheMezzanine.com**

“Renee Philippi’s tender script focuses Geppetto’s struggle...Art and life are one in this workshop of hand-made creatures and the very human being who creates them.”
- **Flavorpill.com**

“The transformational Mr. Adinolfi and his puppets bridge the gap between two venerable theatrical traditions in an entirely different and indeed more touching way...with its mix of human and puppet characters. *Geppetto* is a small, nimble, affecting show well worth a visit by puppet mavens and theater hounds alike.”
- **BlogCritics.com**

“Geppetto frees us with grace and whimsy and intelligence” -**New York Theatre Wire**