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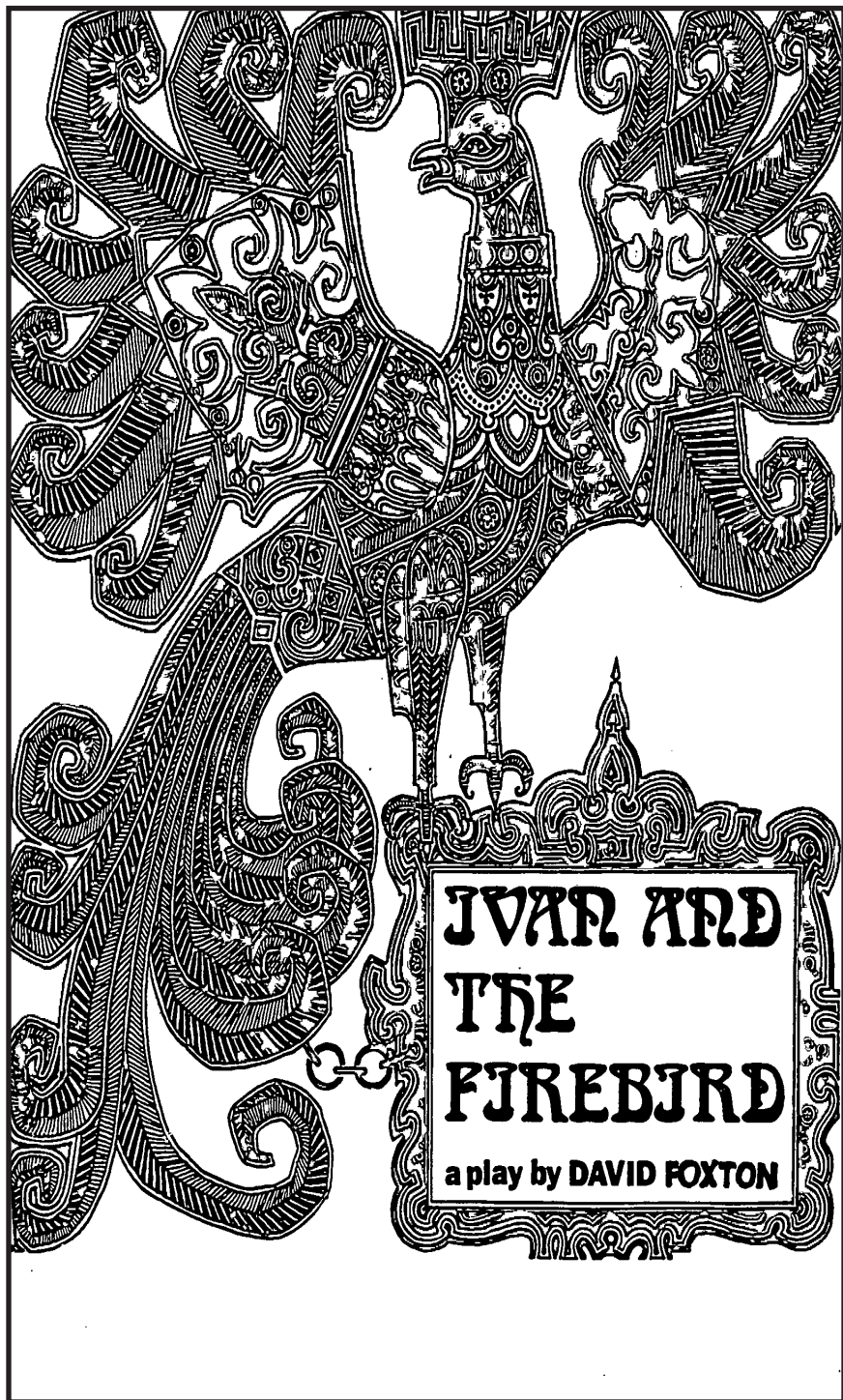
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Family Plays



**IVAN AND
THE
FIREBIRD**

a play by **DAVID FOXTON**

Ivan and the Firebird

Russian folktale. Adapted by David Foxton. Cast: 15m., 4w., with doubling, or up to 25+ (19m., 6w.) plus extras. This adaptation is a tale of a thrilling and amusing chase to catch the fabulous Firebird and release her from the wicked Czar. A puppeteer and his assistant begin their performance of *Ivan and the Firebird* but switch to using the full stage when it becomes apparent that the puppets are too small for the audience to appreciate. Czar Vyslav, nagged incessantly by his wife over their country's shortcomings, is overjoyed when his gardener, Simeon, produces an apple tree bearing golden fruit. Before he can use this "miracle" to his country's good, the golden apples are stolen by the Firebird. Vyslav's three sons undertake to retrieve the apples, and the victor is promised that he will be heir to the throne. Their adventures are chronicled by the puppeteer, who controls the action of the play throughout, frequently "freezing" the performers to change the course of the storyline. Here is an action-filled play with considerable opportunities for audience involvement and participation. *Three specific sets plus a common area to all. Costumes: Russian folk style. Approximate running time: 90 minutes. Code: IB6.*

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Ivan and the Firebird

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By

DAVID FOXTON

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DEDICATION

To Judith

NOTES on the Play

"Ivan and the Firebird" has been staged many times since its first production by Dewsbury Arts Group and in a wide variety of venues. The first performance was an open-stage production with a large thrust apron, with the audience therefore on three sides of the lower acting area and a great number of possible entrances to the acting areas both through the audience and across the main stage. Since the first performance the play has been staged on a more conventional stage, notably by Brighouse Children's Theatre (twice), and by schools - both Junior and High Schools as well as by amateur theatre societies. It has also been presented as a touring show by both High Schools and by the M.A. (Theatre Studies) students of Leeds University.

The play does allow for a considerable amount of audience participation, as well as including a 'control' mechanism whereby the action of the play can, if necessary, be halted at any time to enable the Storyteller and his Assistant (Peter) to calm any over-enthusiasm. The play can be staged with a minimum of setting, even in the round - but should capture the spirit of 'fairytale' Russia in the costuming.

"IVAN AND THE FIREBIRD" was first produced by the Dewsbury Arts Group with the following cast:

STORYTELLER	- Andrew Madden
PETER	- Martin Clarke
CZAR VYSLAV	- Robert Williams
CZARINA	- Felicity Clive
HERALD	- Graham Ingram
COOK	- Pamela Dooley
SOLDIERS	- David Pollard
	John Arran
SERVANTS	- Louise Ragan
	Sue Harker
	Christine Pritchard
DIMITRI	- Graham Douglas
VASSILY	- Colin Brannan
IVAN	- Stephen Truelove
SIMEON	- Leslie Midwood
FIREBIRD	- Gillian Gaskin
BRIGAND CHIEF	- Ernest Spurr
VLADIMIR	- Mike North
SERGEI	- John Arran
ZOLTAN	- David Pollard
ILYA	- Henry Swallow
BORIS	- Graham Ingram
CZAR DOLMAT	- Kieran Ormston
URSUS	- David Wood
PRINCESS NATALYA	- Mary Ann Whitfield.

Directed by David Foxton

Settings designed by Ivor Westwood

Lighting designed by Arthur Wade

Costumes by Margaret Payne, Pam Arran, Anne Green, Pam Tinker and Rachel Kemp.

CAST

STORYTELLER

PETER: his assistant

CZAR VYSLAV: a good czar

CZARINA VYSLAV: his wife

HERALD: Servant to Czar Vyslav

COOK: Servant to Czar Vyslav

SOLDIER I

SOLDIER II

DIMITRI : Czar Vyslav's eldest son - a bully

VASSILY : Czar Vyslav's second son - a coward

IVAN : Czar Vyslav's youngest son

SIMEON : Czar Vyslav's gardener

FIREBIRD

BRIGAND CHIEF

VLADIMIR: Brigand

SERGEI: Brigand

ZOLTAN: Brigand

ILYA: Brigand

BORIS: Brigand

CZAR DOLMAT : a bad czar

URSUS : Czar Dolmat's wrestler

PRINCESS NATALYA

ACT ONE

Two acting areas: a background on a top level, and an area below, or an avenue with audience all down both sides.

Music.

Enter the STORYTELLER (a puppeteer) and his assistant, PETER (a clown) with a barrow of properties. They set up the puppet theatre.

STORYTELLER: Come along Peter - hurry, we'll never be set up in time - how can we put a show on if the puppet theatre isn't set up, eh? There will be no money for us - and no money means no supper - for you - and none for me. Come along I'll give you a hand.

(continues in this vein as they erect the theatre)

- and just the last touch now and all is done - don't you think Peter (*PETER nods*) - is it good? (*PETER nods*) - well now I'll try it out. Tell me if you can't see well enough (*he goes behind screen, then out again*) - or if you can't hear well enough!

(He goes behind the theatre and begins the play with two puppets)

PUPPET 1: I am the Czar of all the Russias, King of the vast empires beyond the snowy mountains.

PUPPET 2: Quiet Vyslav ... you know you're only Czar of a small part of Russia

PUPPET 1: Yes my dear ... but

PUPPET 2: But nothing Vyslav ... you're a little Czar, an unimportant Czar

(PETER bangs the floor with his hammer)

a most unimportant Czar ... why I married you

(PETER continues to bang. STORYTELLER comes out from behind the screen)

STORYTELLER: What's the matter?

(PETER mimes seeing)

Who can't see?

(PETER indicates audience)

Dear me, perhaps they can't - I'll hold the puppets higher
..... *(makes to go)*

(PETER bangs and mimes hearing)

Who can't hear?

(PETER indicates audience)

Dear me, perhaps they can't.

(He looks at puppets)

They are a little small.

(He looks at theatre set up)

And it is a long way away. Oh dear, dearie me - what can I do about it Peter?

(PETER mimes - telling the story)

What? Me? Me tell the story first ... Oh I wish you could speak, Peter, then you could do it for me. I can't possibly do it ... can I?

(PETER nods)

STORYTELLER: All right I'll try This is a story about Russia ... Russia a long long time ago ... about a little kingdom, ruled over by a Czar ... who had a palace

(PETER bangs cymbal and the palace is lit up)

and look here it is - not a very big palace, but pleasant and comfortable, yes very comfortable - mm - now, where was I - oh yes - the Czar who had this palace and who had servants

(PETER bangs cymbal and servants take up positions)

a cook, and a herald, and one or two soldiers, servants, etc. - for it was a small province ... and who had a throne

(PETER bangs cymbal and a throne is set from the puppet theatre)

and that was comfortable too *(sitting on it)* His name was Czar Vyslav

(PETER bangs cymbal and CZAR walks on. STORYTELLER moves out of the throne.)

He also had a wife - the Czarina

(PETER bangs cymbal and CZARINA walks on)

Czar Vyslav was a good quiet man but his wife, the Czarina, - well she was far from being quiet - just the opposite in fact ... listen ... and you'll hear what I mean

(PETER bangs cymbal ... the scene lives ...)

CZARINA: Why I married you I can't think ... I should have paid attention to what my father said ... he always said you were worthless ... always said you'd be a small unimportant Czar ... I could have married Afron, he's ruler of all the southern provinces now ... oh yes I could, don't you dare deny it

CZAR: No my dear!

CZARINA: What do you mean 'no.' I could have been really wealthy now, really comfortable, really somebody ... instead of the wife of the ruler of the smallest Czardom in all the Russias ... and don't you dare say I'm wrong, don't you dare tell me I'm wrong ...

CZAR: I won't my dear!

CZARINA: Won't what? Won't what indeed. You never do anything ... I must be the laughing stock of all the winter palaces

(STORYTELLER signs to PETER who bangs cymbal and they freeze)

STORYTELLER: Phew! You see what I mean. Poor Czar Vyslav he couldn't get a word in edgeways - he never had a moment to himself ... oh, by the way - did you notice that when Peter bangs the cymbal that she stops, that everything stops ... that's one of our tricks, isn't it Peter?

(PETER nods)

We can stop and start the story whenever we want to ... watch ... *(he nods to PETER who bangs the cymbal).*

CZARINA: ... yes, I will, the absolute laughing stock ... I never go anywhere, I never see anyone new or interesting ... and how long is it since my parents came to stay ... years! They won't be seen in such a small Czardom, why it's not worth their while packing to journey to this small province ... why, I blush every time there's a messenger sent, just think of the stories he must take back after being here ... just think

(STORYTELLER signs to PETER who bangs cymbal - she freezes.)

STORYTELLER: Thank heavens for that! Well now the Czar and Czarina had three sons, Dimitri, Vassily and young Ivan ... no, don't bang the cymbal yet, Peter, let's move the Czarina first, then we can get on with our story in peace.

(STORYTELLER goes onto the stage and moves the CZARINA off, he carries her. As soon as he is off stage with her, PETER bangs the cymbal and the action begins)

HERALD: His royal highness Prince Dimitri.

(Fanfare, DIMITRI enters. Bows to his father and takes up position)

His royal highness Prince Vassily.

(Fanfare, VASSILY enters, trips on cloak. Bows to his father, walks into DIMITRI who threatens him.)

His royal highness Prince Ivan.

(Fanfare, IVAN enters, bows to his father and takes up position)

(The cymbal is banged - PETER may well get a member of the audience to do it, the actors on stage should ad. lib. in case there is a time delay - CZAR rising to his feet. All freeze when the cymbal is banged.)

STORYTELLER: Well, phew, that's got rid of her ... now where was I? Oh you've met the princes have you? *(He walks among them.)* Dimitri, he's the eldest, big and strong - he's also mean, and he's got a terrible temper. Vassily, well he's quite likable really, *(trips over his foot)* but he's terribly clumsy, and a bit of a coward too ... Both of them are favorites of the Czarina. But Ivan, is the youngest - he thinks his father should rule the province, and not let his mother dominate him. He's right too you know ... listen

(Sign to PETER for cymbal bang - or a member of the audience so to do)

- CZAR: Yes! Yes! I know how you feel Ivan, but your mother is a very strong-willed woman, and I ...
- IVAN: But you are the Czar, the ruler of the province
- DIMITRI: Careful what you're saying Ivan, mother would be angry if she knew
- VASSILY: Yes very angry if she knew
- DIMITRI: Besides she's right, this is a small unimportant province.
- VASSILY: Unimportant province
- DIMITRI: Everyone laughs at us
- VASSILY: Everyone.
- IVAN: Laughs at you perhaps
- DIMITRI: *(threatening)* What do you mean?
- VASSILY: Yes, what do you mean?
- CZAR: Quiet, quiet! All three of you. How can I think when you're constantly making such a noise with all your arguing. You're as bad as your mother.
- DIMITRI AND VASSILY: *(protesting)* What do you mean? Mother's right ... etc.
- CZAR: All right ! All right! Don't start again. I know this is a small province, it always has been... and I know it's quiet sometimes - and, well, rather unimportant
- DIMITRI: Always!

CZAR: But I have taken steps to alter this. We're not going to be unimportant much longer, we're not going to be the laughing stock of the provinces any more

DIMITRI: We're not?

VASSILY: We're not?

CZAR: No, we're not.

DIMITRI and VASSILY: How? Why? What are you going to do about it? How come? ... etc.

CZAR: I'll tell you. Simeon has solved our problem for us

DIMITRI: Simeon - who's Simeon for heaven's sake?

VASSILY: Yes, who's Simeon?

IVAN: Simeon, the gardener do you mean father?

CZAR: Yes, Ivan, Simeon the gardener.

DIMITRI: A gardener! A gardener is going to make this province famous. A gardener is going to make us important. That's a joke. Ho! Ho! That is indeed a joke! *(laughs)*

VASSILY: A joke indeed! *(laughs)*

IVAN: Quiet you two! Quiet! *(DIMITRI almost draws his sword but thinks twice, VASSILY traps his finger in his attempt to draw his sword.)* Explain father, how can Simeon the gardener help us.

CZAR: Well, Simeon has grown a special tree - an apple tree

VASSILY: An apple tree ... ho! ho! *(DIMITRI stamps on his foot)* oh! oh!

CZAR: An apple tree that grows golden apples.

DIMITRI: Never! I don't believe it.

VASSILY: Nor do I!

CZAR: But it's true ... absolutely true.

IVAN: Solid golden apples?

CZAR: Solid gold! Four golden apples!

DIMITRI: Well let's see them ... let's see these golden apples

VASSILY: Yes, let's see them.

DIMITRI: Now!

CZAR: Very well. Call Simeon the gardener - and tell him to bring his special apple tree.

HERALD: Call Simeon the gardener!

(General chatter)

Simeon Mihailovitch, gardener to Czar Vyslav.

(SIMEON enters bows to the CZAR)

CZAR: Now Simeon, ... but where is your apple tree

SIMEON: Well I *(pause)*

CZAR: Come on, Simeon, I've told them about the apple tree that bears the golden fruit ... the four golden apples.

SIMEON: Well

DIMITRI: Come on show us!

VASSILY: Yes! Show us!

SIMEON: My lord I can't

CZAR: Can't! Why ever not?

SIMEON: Great Czar, the day before yesterday my tree was a wonder to behold for it had four beautiful golden apples. Solid gold, Prince Dimitri, I assure you ... (*DIMITRI 'pah'*) ... solid gold, prince Vassily ... (*VASSILY 'pah'.*) But it's true, and then yesterday when I went to the garden, only three apples were there - one had been stolen

CZAR: Stolen! One golden apple stolen?

(DIMITRI and VASSILY laugh scornfully)

SIMEON: It's true, great Princes ... so I decided to hide in the garden and perhaps catch the thief. So I hid next to the tree last night to keep watch

DIMITRI: And what happened?

VASSILY: What happened?

CZAR: Tell us!

SIMEON: Nothing happened ... until after nightfall. I was cold and hungry, and almost prepared to give in

DIMITRI: Get on with it.

VASSILY: Get on with it.

SIMEON: ... well, suddenly there was a rush of wings, a sudden warmth, and a great bird all aglow and sparkling arrived, lighting the garden with its brilliance, and striking golden sparks from the apples on the tree. Before I could do anything to stop it, the Firebird plucked a golden apple and flew away. And so I no longer had a tree with three golden apples - only two, great Czar.

(Two SERVANTS bring in the tree in a tub - bearing two golden apples.)

DIMITRI: Great steppes! They are gold.

VASSILY: *(counting them slowly)* And there's only two apples.

CZAR: Then two have been stolen. If the Firebird has my golden apples - what shall I do?

DIMITRI: Father, don't be taken in by this story - there is no such bird. The only thief here is Simeon, he made up the story to cover his own dishonesty.

VASSILY: Yes, that's it!

SIMEON: Lord Czar, it is not so! I swear the Firebird took the gold.

DIMITRI: Enough! Shall I kill him now father, or shall we first persuade him to hand back the apples he stole.

SIMEON: But I stole nothing.

DIMITRI: Quiet I say ... or I'll cut out your tongue. *(draws sword.)*

CZAR: No! Dimitri, no!

IVAN: Stay your sword, brother!

DIMITRI: But he is a thief.

IVAN: So you say. But ... suppose his word is true. Suppose the apple was in fact taken by this Firebird ...

DIMITRI: Nonsense!

VASSILY: Rubbish!

IVAN: Is it? Listen, if what Simeon says is true, then it seems more than likely that the Firebird will return again - for another golden apple