

# Ivan and the Birds

## A Russian Fairytale

*By Alaska Reece Vance*

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## **STORY OF THE PLAY**

Ivan's greatest ambition has always been to learn the Language of the Birds. When he shows off his pet nightingale for show and tell at school, he is teased until he runs away. Seeking shelter in the forest, Ivan protects baby birds from a storm. In gratitude, the mama bird grants Ivan's wish and teaches him to speak Bird. When his parents Mama Lou and Papa Joe find out that Ivan not only can speak Bird, but is now speaking in a heavy Russian accent, Ivan promptly finds himself sold off as a cabin boy on a ship. A band of tough girl pirates soon takes over, and they sail the ship off to pillage Daisyland, a peace-loving, hacky-sack-playing port town. Happily, Ivan's ability to speak to birds saves the day! As Mama Lou sums it up, "If the world thinks yer nuttier than a pecan pie and you ain't making no more sense than a screen door on a submarine, don't let it get ya down. Go fer yer dreams and believe in yerself, like my Ivan done, and ya might just come out all right." Based on a Russian fairytale entitled *The Language of the Birds*. About 1 hour.

## **PREMIERE PERFORMANCE**

The Drifting Theatre and The Kingsport Theatre Guild  
Summer Actor Training Program, Kingsport, TN  
June 2013.

## **CAST OF CHARACTERS**

*18 - 50+ actors*

*(14-34+ females. 4 - 26+ males. Doubling is appropriate.)*

**MAMA LOU** (f): Ivan's mother  
**CHILDREN** (m/f): Children of Ivan's youth, any number  
**YOUNG IVAN** (m): Ivan as a young boy  
**PAPA JOE** (m): Ivan's father  
**FLORENCE THE NIGHTINGALE** (f): Ivan's pet and friend  
**SUGAR SUE** (f): Family friend  
**MISS MARTIN** (f): Teacher  
**IVAN** (m): The boy who would not give up his dream  
**CLASSMATES** (m/f): Any number including: HANK BOB (m)  
and MARY JO (f)  
**BABY BIRDIES** (m/f): Any number  
**STORM WINDS** (m/f): Any number including: STORM WIND 1  
**MAMA BIRD** (f): A grateful bird  
**PEDDLER** (f): Sells wares  
**FLOCK OF BIRDS** (m/f): Any number  
**SHIP'S CAPTAIN** (m): Looking for a new cabin boy  
**SAILORS** (m): Any number including: SAILOR 1 – 3  
**SEAGULLS** (m/f): Any number including: SEAGULL 1 - 4  
**PIRATES** (f): Any number including: CAPTAIN BLACKBEARD,  
CROSS-EYED KATE, TWO-LEGGED ANN, ARR, LONG  
JANE, BLACK DOG, BLUE DOG, GREEN DOG, PINK  
PUPPY, MAN-EATING MOLLY, BLOODY-GUTTY MARY  
**POLLY THE PARROT** (m): Also a pirate  
**RESIDENTS of DAISYLAND** (m/f): Any number including:  
SUNFLOWER MEADOW SMILE (m/f) FINCH COYOTE  
MOONBEAM (m/f) ECHO CREEK WOLF SONG (m)  
IMAGINATION IVY (f) STAR HAVEN FEATHER LILY (m/f)  
BUTTERFLY HARMONY (f) MYSTIC MORNING BLUE (m/f)  
JUSTICE QUEST (m) CLOUD MOUNTAIN BLAZE (m) FERN  
LUNA DAYDREAM (m/f) MOON DANCE MOON (m/f)  
JUNIPER FOX ANGEL (m/f) SAFFRON HAWK (m/f)  
**SASHA** (f): The princess of Daisyland  
**K.P.B. MEMBERS** (m/f): Ninja-like warriors, any number  
**QUEEN PEACE JOURNEY CLOVER LOVE** (f): Sasha's  
mother.

## **AUTHOR NOTES**

The “tweets” and “squawks” spoken by the birds and Ivan should be the word “tweet” and the word “squawk,” rather than trying to actually mimic the sounds of birds (*because, well, it’s funnier that way*). Ivan and Sasha speak in thick Russian dialects. Be creative with these over-the-top characters and have fun!

## **SETTINGS**

Scene 1 – School

Scene 2 – Forest

Scene 3 – Ivan’s Home

Scene 4 – The Ship

Scene 5 – Port Town of Daisyland

Scene 6 – Palace of Queen Peace Journey Clover Love

## **ORIGINAL CAST & PRODUCTION TEAM**

CAST: Hollie Rae Matthews, Emily Cross, Rebecca Firth, Jessica Franklin, Abby Underwood, Miles Williamson, Daniel Freeman, Claire Page, Brenna Greene, Lacie Black, Zak Schaftlein, Colin Morgan, Rebecca Latham, Jackson Fox, Mikaela Lifford, Lukas McCrary, Reilly Wild-Williams, Hailee Jo Heinz, Hannah Matthews, Adriana Shields, Christian Bell, Caroline Culligan, Abby Everett, Sunshine Hughes, Elissa J. Hurley, Claire Jones, Chloe LaPointe, Katie Long, Bethany Steele, Daniella Steele, Jacob Davis, Alex Rose, Farrah Carter, Ben-Giovanni Miller. TEAM: Chad Rasor, Linda Reece, Maggie Crowson, Chad Rasor, Trung Phan, RaChelle Cheeks, Courtney Rasor, Natasha Trombley, Rebecca Hartman. Directed by Alaska Reece Vance.

## **DEDICATION**

To Zak - Welcome home!  
And to Hailee - That was some first bow, buddy!

**SCENE 1 – School**

*(AT RISE: Empty stage. MAMA LOU enters.)*

**MAMA LOU:** Well, howdy there! I am Fairlight Henrietta Louchetta Ivy Sue-Ellen Washington. But you can call me Mamma Lou. I'm here to tell you a little story 'bout my one and only dear son, Ivan. Now I reckon we knew from the time Ivan was knee-high to a grasshopper that he was something, well, special. While other lil' boys were playin' with trucks or bugs or toy soldiers, Ivan was running around—

*(YOUNG IVAN enters and crosses the stage flapping and tweeting like a bird. He exits.)*

**MAMA LOU:** *(Cont'd.)* Doing that. And when the local youngsters hollered for him to come outside, ride bicycles, or play whirligigs—

*(CHILDREN enter and cross the stage calling to IVAN.)*

**CHILDREN:** *(Calling.)* Come 'long, Ivan! Come out to play! We're goin' to the ball field! We're gonna ride down the holler! Come on! *(Etc.)*

*(CHILDREN exit. YOUNG IVAN enters and crosses the stage flapping and tweeting like a bird. He exits.)*

**MAMA LOU:** Ivan was still doing that. He was so obsessed with them dagum birds that one day his Papa Joe, thinking it might shut the boy up a bit, gave in and surprised him.

*(IVAN and PAPA JOE enter. PAPA JOE hides FLORENCE behind his back.)*

**PAPA JOE:** Ivan boy, despite the fact that yer plain weird, you've generally been a right good son.

**PAPA JOE:** *(Cont'd.)* So I been a thinkin' that maybe it's time you had a pet, ya know, "man's best friend" and all... So said, here she is. A nightingale. I got her half price from the feller at the hardware store. Her name is Florence.

*(FLORENCE and YOUNG IVAN embrace and begin to flap and tweet together. They exit. PAPA JOE shakes his head.)*

**PAPA JOE:** *(Cont'd.)* The cheese done slid off that boy's cracker. *(Exits.)*

**MAMA LOU:** Instead of breaking Ivan out of his eggshell, so to speak, Ivan just holed himself up with Florence the Nightingale, trying his darndest to learn her language. When he couldn't on the life of him figure out a way to understand her bird-talk, he fell into a fit, cryin' and whinin' and becoming downright intolerable. The boy—

*(SUGAR SUE peeks her head out.)*

**SUGAR SUE:** Mamma Lou, can ya get 'long with the story? My hair's losin' its fluff.

**MAMA LOU:** You look fine, Sugar Sue. Right. So. Let's move forward a few years. Ivan! Miss Martin! All you young'uns get on out here.

*(IVAN, MISS MARTIN and CLASSMATES hurry onstage.)*

**MAMA LOU:** *(Cont'd.)* We're starting with Ivan's final show and tell, so you'll need to set up some school desks and things a' that sort.

*(IVAN, MISS MARTIN and CLASSMATES agree and quickly set up the classroom as MAMA LOU narrates.)*

**MAMA LOU:** *(Cont'd.)* Ivan never outgrew his dream to speak to birds. It wouldn't a' been such a problem if he'd a kept it to himself. But he had to share it with the world and that's what got 'im into trouble.

## **End of Freeview**

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