

The Firebird Story

Although the children will only hear one small section of the Firebird's music in our concert, it will be fun for them to know the entire adventure.

.....**Long ago, in a distant land, there ruled a powerful King who had three sons.** They all lived together in a magnificent palace surrounded by a beautiful garden. In the middle of the garden stood a tree that grew apples of pure gold. One day the King discovered that a magical creature called the Firebird was stealing apples from the tree. The King promised half his land to the son who could catch the Firebird. The two eldest brothers tried – but failed, so young Prince Ivan set out on a magical quest.

Ivan travelled endlessly, day and night, with no sign of the Firebird. He searched his entire father's Kingdom but found nothing. His only option was to continue his journey into the forbidden forest ruled by the evil magician - King Kastchei.

After some time, Ivan stopped suddenly in his tracks. In the distance he saw a faint glow of yellow, orange and red. He knew the Firebird was nearby. Very slowly, he crept towards the colourful light. As it grew brighter, Ivan came towards a clearing, in the middle of which sat the magical Firebird surrounded by golden apples.

Ivan hid behind a tree and stood very still. The Firebird was his – well nearly - he just had to catch it first. He waited until exactly the right moment and then pounced on the Firebird. The Firebird furiously flapped its wings and flew up into the air. Ivan chased after it.

By a stroke of luck, the Firebird's huge red wing caught in the branches of a tree. Ivan jumped up and grabbed it. He held the magical creature tightly in his arms, already thinking of the reward from his father. He certainly didn't expect the Firebird to speak to him.

'Prince Ivan – set me free and I will give you a reward far greater than any other' said the Firebird. Ivan thought for a second, he held the bird tightly to his chest, but it began to glow and get incredibly hot. He couldn't really imagine how he would get this creature back to his father's kingdom so he let go.

'Thank you' said the Firebird. *'If ever you are in danger, just wave this in the air and I will rescue you.'* The Firebird flew upwards in a rainbow of colour like an exploding firework and disappeared. A single, bright red feather fell from the sky and landed in Ivan's hands.

In the distance Ivan heard the most beautiful music. He followed the sound through the forest, but arrived at a huge stone wall. He jumped up onto the wall, and looked over towards a dark and menacing castle. In the courtyard, 13 princesses were dancing in a circle. Ivan sprung off the wall and ran towards the most beautiful Princess he had ever seen.

The Princess told Ivan that King Kastchei had cast a spell on them; they would never be able to leave the castle while Kastchei was alive. She also warned that Kastchei would turn him into stone if he caught him.

'There must be a way' said Ivan *'I'll save you.'*

High up in the shadowy castle, Kastchei looked with rage towards Ivan the intruder. He ordered a troop of vicious monsters into the garden to capture him.

King Kastchei's henchmen grabbed Ivan and knocked him cold to the ground. They dragged him through the garden into Kastchei's castle.

Ivan saw his entire life flash before him.

He wondered if he was dead or alive. As he started to wake up, he remembered the Firebird's magical feather. He quickly pulled it from his pocket and waved it in the air.

Out of nowhere the Firebird appeared and said...

'In the corner of the room is a casket. It contains an egg. Inside the egg is Kastchei's soul. If you smash it, he will die.'

Ivan summoned all his energy to break free and immediately lunged towards the casket. He smashed it against the wall and Kastchei fell to the ground – dead.

As Kastchei hit the floor, all his evil magic began to undo itself; statues started to come to life, flowers bloomed, the sun returned to the sky and Prince Ivan was now free to marry his beautiful princess.