



Welcome to *The Birthday Feast*, a NEW Musical written by local author Scott Russell Sanders with music by Alex Crowley, also a Bloomington resident. Cardinal Stage Company **commissioned** this play (authorized the writing and production of) to fit the theme “Eat, Drink, Think: Food from Art to Science,” the theme of IU Themester 2014.

The story....

The Birthday Feast tells the story of Maddie’s quest to celebrate her mother’s birthday with a meal that she and her friends will prepare. Her adventures take her out and about – to a farmer’s market, her neighbor’s garden, into the kitchen and her friend’s yard – all in search of the ingredients for a happy birthday feast for her mom! Nutrition, sustainability and good food choices are all part of this adventure. Read the descriptions of the children (and pet) in the play and look for examples of these characteristics as you watch the play!

The characters in our production....

Maddie is about ten years old, plucky, smart, fond of grand schemes, good at planning, and fiercely determined once she sets her mind to something. She is a natural leader, confident and bold.

Jack is about seven years old, wildly imaginative and impractical, with a big appetite, a sweet tooth, and a wacky sense of humor. He’s a neighborhood friend of Maddie’s.

Isabella is about twelve years old, level-headed, caring toward others, also a neighborhood friend of Maddie’s. More practical and cautious than the younger kids, she is easily caught up in their schemes.

Mutt & Maddie’s mom (both played by one actress). **Mutt** is Maddie’s dog. He never speaks, but registers reactions with barks, growls, whines and yelps, as well as with facial expressions, many of them directed at the audience. So keep an eye on him!

Mrs. Allegri & Farmer, (both played by one actress)

Mr. Allegri, Farmer, Mr. Gonzales (Isabella’s father) (all played by one actor)

The music....has been written to add both to the story and to the mood.

What should you listen for when you see the play and hear the music?

Listen carefully to the **words** to see if they help you follow the **action of the story**. How does the music make you feel – **scared** or **excited** or **happy**? How does it help to describe the characters? Does it remind you of something? What?

About the Author

Scott Russell Sanders is the author of twenty books of fiction and nonfiction, including *A Private History of Awe* and *A Conservationist Manifesto*. His two most recent books are a collection of essays called *Earth Works* and a novel called *Divine Animal*. He is the author of a number of children's books, as well, including *Aurora Means Dawn* and *Warm as Wool*. He was a professor in the English Department at Indiana University for many years, and now he teaches writing workshops in places ranging from Vermont to Alaska. He and his wife, Ruth, a biochemist, have two grown children and five grandchildren. Two of those grandchildren live in Bloomington, and all five of them helped to inspire this play. (For more about Mr. Sanders, see www.scottrussellsanders.com.) Mr. Sanders has previously written for Reimagining Opera for Kids (ROK). This is his first work with Cardinal Stage Company.

From A Brief Interview with Scott Russell Sanders...

How did you decide on this topic for the story?

Our plan from the beginning was to link the play to Indiana University's fall theme, and so I knew that I would be writing about food. Everybody needs to eat. But where does food come from? How is it grown? How is it sold? How is it cooked? What foods are good for us, and what foods are bad for us? Those are some of the questions I tried to explore in the play.

Why did you want to write a play?

I've always loved live theatre, and I have especially admired the Cardinal Stage productions. So I thought it would be fun to work with Randy White and his colleagues. While I've written quite a few books, I have much less experience in writing plays, so I figured I would learn a lot in the process. And I have! I wanted to write *this* play because I want to help children understand more about food, and about healthy eating.

Why a musical and not just a "straight" play?

I've always loved to sing, although my children think I sound like a frog. And I've always loved to listen to music--all kinds--folk songs, hymns, operas, concertos, jazz standards, show tunes, lots more. So I welcomed the chance to write words for songs as well as dialogue. I also imagine that kids get more pleasure from a play that includes music, especially if they can hum or sing the songs for themselves. The songs help tell us about the characters, and help carry the story forward.

Why is this story important to you?

The Birthday Feast expresses ideas and values that seem important to me. I know that many children try hard to show their love for the people who love them, as Maddie strives to delight her mother. I know that children can help one another, as Isabella and Jack help Maddie, and that older kids can offer guidance to younger ones, and that neighbors, such as Mr. and Mrs. Allegri, can offer kindness and instruction. I wanted to suggest that gardening and cooking can be great fun, but they also require skill and effort. I wanted to celebrate Bloomington's marvelous farmers' market and our local growers, and all such markets, with their fresh veggies and fruits. Above all, I want children to grow up healthy and strong by learning, along with their parents and teachers, which foods are nutritious and which ones aren't. As Maddie sings, "Your body is made out of food and water!"

About the Composer

Alex Crowley is a Bloomington-based composer and songwriter. He composed and staged his first musical, *Home Sweet Home* (book/lyrics by Steve Mounkhal), in New York in 1990. He has subsequently composed songs and music spanning a wide range of styles, including writing incidental music for the Adobe Theater Company in New York, choral pieces for the St. Paul choir in Bloomington, chamber music in pursuit of his composition studies at the Jacobs School of Music, and perhaps most importantly, silly songs about nearly everything for his adoring groupies (his three children). Alex is indebted to his wife, Erin, and to his children, Aidan, Madeleine, and Anastasia, for their encouragement and support (and great ideas!) as he wrote the music for *The Birthday Feast*. He is thrilled to be part of this Cardinal artistic team and especially happy to have collaborated with Scott Russell Sanders on this terrific project. And in case you're wondering, no, the Ozzy Osbourne song is not about Alex.

Music Connections... *from a conversation with Alex Crowley*

...on what the composer is supposed to do...

"I think it's the composer's job to write songs and music that help develop characters and advance the story. For kids' musicals and especially musicals with strong ideas, the music should try to be memorable and 'singable' – this allows the story and the messages to live beyond the show."

...on what the music can do ...

"The songs aim to develop and reflect characters' individual traits – *Junk Food Jack*, for example. Songs also serve to get the story going – the song "Mama says to Me" launches Maddie's quest to figure out what she will do for her mom's birthday. Sometimes the songs imitate actions or the mood of the story. While each song is different from each other and can serve different purposes, they all have to hang together as parts of the same story."

Which came first?

In this case, most of the words were already written and the composer used them to shape the music. "Scott's words – called 'lyrics' in songwriting – are terrific and that made my job a lot easier. Great lyrics set a mood, have character, and move the story forward. That takes a lot of the guesswork out of writing the music."

About the Process of Bringing a New Play to the Stage

Randy White, Artistic Director and founder of Cardinal Stage Company had this to say about developing *The Birthday Feast*:

"When I first approached Scott Russell Sanders about writing a kid's play about food and nutrition, I knew that he would bring the right mix of conviction, ingenuity and fun to the project. I knew that as a parent, I wanted to use a play as a way to introduce (or reinforce) some important concepts about why it matters where our food comes from, and why we need to think about what we put into our bodies (we are what we eat!). Scott, along with composer Alex Crowley, has crafted just the clever, fun-loving, necessary musical I imagined at the outset. "

Writing Activities

Letter Writing...(*RL.2, RL.4, W.1, W.3, SL.3, ML.2*)

Write a letter from Maddie to her mom describing the different ways Maddie thought about for celebrating her Mom's birthday and how she ended up choosing to have a birthday feast.

Write a letter from Mutt to any of the kids describing what Mutt is feeling as he's accompanying them on their quest for birthday feast items. Is it making him hungry? What does he do when they go into the Farmer's Market where "no dogs are allowed?"

Story and Play Writing...(*W.1, W.3, W.4, W.5, SL.3, ML.2*)

The Birthday Feast is a NEW play based on an original idea. Sometimes plays are written based on a favorite book, like *Pippi Longstocking*, or a fairy tale, like *Beauty and the Beast*, or the story of a person's life, like *The Diary of Anne Frank*.

Here are two options for writing your own plays

1. (K-3) Choose a favorite chapter book and turn one of the chapters into a play. Suggested titles to use: *Poppleton and Friends*, *Mr. Putter and Tabby*, *Frog and Toad are Friends*, etc. Think about using a narrator, or just the dialogue that's written.
2. (4-6) In a group, write a different version of *The Birthday Feast* by choosing a DIFFERENT option for Maddie's mom's gift. Questions to think about: Will you still call the play *The Birthday Feast*? Do you want to add a song, or can you use a song from the show? Perform your play for the other groups and discuss why you made the choices you made for the way your story played out and how and if you used music.

Extend your understanding of fresh vegetables and where they come from through the fun book *Tops and Bottoms* by Janet Stevens. Try these sites for activities:

<http://www.scholastic.com/teachers/lesson-plan/tops-bottoms-lesson-plan>

<http://www.brighthubeducation.com/elementary-school-activities/103780-three-activities-for-tops-and-bottoms/>

Food and Nutrition

“I wanted to suggest that gardening and cooking can be great fun, but they also require skill and effort. I wanted to celebrate Bloomington's marvelous farmers' market and our local growers, and all such markets, with their fresh veggies and fruits. Above all, I want children to grow up healthy and strong by learning, along with their parents and teachers, which foods are nutritious and which ones aren't.” Scott Russell Sanders (from the interview in this guide)

There are now a number of websites that can help accomplish these *Birthday Feast* goals; the sites below offer activities and fun learning games as well as ideas for snacks and meals that help families make healthy and good-tasting food choices!

<http://www.choosemyplate.gov/kids/Champion.html>

<http://www.choosemyplate.gov/kids/ActivitySheets.html>

<http://www.nutrition.gov/life-stages/children/kids-kitchen>

The Local Grower’s Guild helps promote local foods and support growers. Their website, <http://www.localgrowers.org/what-we-do/> gives a glimpse of the local farms and food movement here in Bloomington and surrounding counties.

Books (especially K – 2)

The Apple Pie Tree (Hall)

A Gardener's Alphabet (Azarian)

Market! (Lewin)

If You Were a Farmer (Schomp)

To Market, To Market (McClure)

Your Healthy Plate: Vegetables (Marsico)

Pizza at Sally's (Wellington)

Eating the Alphabet/Fruits and Vegetables from A to Z (Ehlert)

Find these books and more at the Monroe County Public Library

mcpl.info

Activities (especially K – 2)

- Make vegetable print art
- Write to a local farmer and ask him or her to visit the class to present about their farm and what they produce
- Make a food journal for a week, draw pictures and add words if you can about what you eat each day. Compare as a class to the “Choose My Plate” website and see if you made good choices. Discuss changes that you can make to make better choices.
- Make a healthy grocery list for Mom and Dad. Draw, cut out pictures from magazines or grocery store ads, or add words.
- Create a **Healthy Food Café** menu. What would you include in your restaurant?

Apple Activities (science 2.3, 3.3)







Visit this website for apple activities – the life cycle of an apple, what an apple needs to grow and science experiments with apples! Here’s one!

<http://snippetsbysarah.blogspot.com/search/label/apples>



From seed to apple

1	2
3	4
5	6

	Pink or white flowers grow on the tree.		A seedling grows.
	A seed is planted.		Apples grow from the flowers.
	A seedling grows into a tree.		The flowers wilt away and the tree fills with apples.

Apple Recipes**Cinnamon Apple Chips**

Makes approximately 40 chips
Prep: 15 minutes; Bake 30-40 minutes

Ingredients

2 cups unsweetened apple juice
1 cinnamon stick
2 apples

Directions

1. Heat oven to 250 degrees F.
2. Combine apple juice and cinnamon stick in a pot; bring to a low boil while preparing apples.
3. Core the apples. With sharp knife, slice off 1/2-inch from top and bottom of apples and discard (or eat!). Saw gently crosswise into very thin (1/8-inch) rings, rotating the apple as necessary to get even slices.
4. Drop the apple slices into boiling juice; cook 4 to 5 minutes or until slices appear translucent and lightly golden.
5. With a slotted spatula, remove the apple slices from juice and pat dry with a paper towel.
6. Arrange the slices on cake-cooling racks, being sure none are touching.
7. Place the racks on the middle shelf in oven; bake 30 to 40 minutes until apple slices are lightly browned and almost dry to touch.
8. Let chips cool on racks completely before storing in airtight container.

Crockpot Applesauce

Serves 4
Prep: 5 minutes; Cook 4-6 hours

Ingredients

4 large apples
Juice from 1 lemon
1/2 teaspoon cinnamon
1 tablespoon brown sugar
1/4 cup water

Directions

1. Peel and core apples; cut into quarters
2. Add apples, lemon juice, cinnamon, brown sugar and water to crockpot.
3. Cover and cook on low 4 to 6 hours, until apples are very tender.
4. Mash with the back of a fork or potato masher.

In part to prove that our kids don't live on sugary sweets alone, and in part because this is one of our family's favorite fall meals, we're including our Apple Squash Soup, with the warning that not all kids will go for it.

Apple Squash Soup

Servings: 4
Start to finish: 1 hour

Ingredients

2 tablespoons butter
2 cups onions, chopped
3 teaspoons curry powder
3 pounds butternut squash, peeled, seeded, cubed (6 cups)
2 each granny smith apples, peeled, cored, cubed
3 cups chicken stock
1 teaspoon salt
pepper, freshly ground

Directions

1. In a large pot, melt the butter. Add onion and sauté until tender. Stir in curry powder.
2. Add squash, apples, chicken stock and salt. Bring to boil, reduce heat and simmer for 25 minutes or until squash and apples are tender
3. Puree the soup, return to pan.
4. Pepper liberally.



Imagination Activities and Theater Games

(try websites such as the one listed below or www.bbbpress.com/dramagames/)

"Duck, Duck, MUTT"

Duck, Duck, Goose becomes an acting game when the "Goose" is replaced with any creature the leader calls out (I started with the dog from the show). A great game to break down inhibitions and introduce the concept of "always saying yes." (from www.theatreteachers.com)

So here's where it gets fun! In this version, the leader can call out any creature (animal, bird, fish, spider - so on) after the usual "Duck" taps. The person who is selected has to take on the physicality and sounds of whatever creature he or she has been given and then chase the leader as that creature. The students CAN make allowances that let them move at a decent rate of speed - in other words, you can be a really fast snail! Once the person who was picked becomes the leader, they select the next creature as themselves, but they still have to run as their creature once the race begins. So it is common to have things like a dolphin chasing a platypus or a tiger running from a lamb. Reinforce the ideas of really taking on the physicality given by the leader and making a bold choice. Every group I've played this with seems to really embrace its silliness and just go for it. There is always a lot of laughter and it seems to be a great step toward letting students drop their inhibitions and just be free to create.

Playing the Parts...(SL.3, ML.2)*

Three of the actors in "The Birthday Feast" play more than one role. How do they make believe they are different characters? What do they change? What don't they change? Can you imitate them using a favorite play or story of your own?

Reader's Theatre - Make masks of the characters and reenact a pivotal scene from the play. Discuss Characters, Setting and Plot

***Media Literacy and Speaking and Listening standards**

(http://www.doe.in.gov/sites/default/files/standards/enla/k-5_ela_draft-7-7-14-et.pdf.) can be met by simply attending the performance.

**Music Extension Activities...**

(Music Standards 4, 5, 7, 8)

1. Write a letter to the composer – and wait for an answer! Our composer lives in town and he can answer your question!
2. If you could add one more song to the play, who would sing it, where would it come in the show and WHY would you add it?