

Birds' Orchestra

Bobolink shall play the violin,
Great applause to win;
Lonely, sweet, and sad, the meadow lark
Plays the oboe. Hark!
That inspired bugle with a soul –
'Tis the oriole;
Yellow-bird the clarinet shall play,
Blithe, and clear, and gay.
Purple finch what instrument will suit?
He can play the flute.
Fire-winged blackbirds sound the merry fife,
Soldiers without strife;
And the robins wind the mellow horn
Loudly eve and morn.
Who shall clash the cymbals? Jay and crow;
That is all they know.
Hylas twang their harps so weird and high,
Such a tuneful cry!
And to roll the deep, melodious drum,
Lo! the bull-frogs come!
Then the splendid chorus, who shall sing
Of so fine a thing?
Who the names of the performers call
Truly, one and all?
Blue-bird, bunting, cat-bird, chickadee
(Phoebe-bird is he),
Swallow, creeper, cross-bill, cuckoo, dove,
Wee wren that I love;
Brisk fly-catcher, finches – what a crowd!
King-bird whistling loud;
Sweet rose-breasted grosbeak, vireo, thrush –
Hear these two, and hush;
Scarlet tanager, song-sparrow small
(Dearer he than all;
At the first sound of his friendly voice
Saddest hearts rejoice),
Redpoll, nuthatch, thrasher, plover gray –
Curlew did I say?
What a jangling all the grackles make!
Is it some mistake?
Anvil chorus yellow-hammers strike,
And the wicked shrike
Harshly creaks like some half-open door:
He can do no more.

~ *Celia Thaxter* ~