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The Woodpecker Band

Mary Graham Bonner

The invitation went out to every bird in the wood: rehearsals starting this morning, first concert of the season at sunrise, Mr. Robin Redbreast conducting.

It had been Mr. Hairy Woodpecker's idea. He'd noticed that spring that he and his kind were already drumming on tree bark each morning — searching for insects, mostly, but making a magnificent noise in the process. Why not make something of it?

The drum section assembled: Mr. Hairy Woodpecker himself, Mr. Red-Headed Woodpecker, Mr. Downy Woodpecker, Mr. Sapsucker, the great Mr. Crested Woodpecker, and Mr. Flicker. Six drummers, six trees, and the finest percussion in the wood.



For melody and chorus: the warblers arrived, and the vireos, and the goldfinches. The mockingbirds came with their extraordinary range. The bobolinks, the chickadees, the pewees, the phoebes, the orioles, the thrushes, and the song sparrows appeared. The whippoorwills came last, as they always did.

And of course the robins — almost the most important of all.

Mr. Robin took up his little baton and faced the bandstand — a broad branch high in a sycamore — and the rehearsal began.

It was magnificent from the first note. Some bands have only instruments; some only voices. This band had both, woven together, and the combination was unlike anything the wood had produced before.

They practised all day. That evening, before tucking their heads under their wings, they sent word to every corner of the wood: *First Concert of the Season. Tomorrow at sunrise. Mr. Robin Redbreast conducting.*

The concert was a tremendous success. The people in the nearby houses opened their windows and listened, and one of them said what they all felt: "It's really and truly springtime now."

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