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Dramatic Publishing

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Bird Brain

Comedy by Richard Vetere



Bird Brain

Comedy. By Richard Vetere. Cast: 2m., 3w., up to 15 either gender, extras as desired. The Queen of Starlings has decided to bully all the other birds in order to steal their food and take away their nesting homes. Everyone, including wise Screech Owl, Robin, Red-Bellied Woodpecker, Blue Jay, and two sparrows, Pretty and Gino, are ready to fly away instead of facing the intimidating, sleek, British-speaking starlings. Undaunted, Sparrow fights off the first wave of bullying with his wit and speed. This angers the queen, so she decides to send her beautiful daughter, Corinne, to disarm him. However, Corinne is immediately charmed by engaging and courageous Sparrow and, seeing his courage and intelligence, she decides to help him. Corinne explains that the only way to impress her mother is to confront her brain to brain. So Sparrow, with his sidekick and nervous cousin, Gino, go on an adventure, with the help of hawks and a cardinal, and fly to the starling empire. Despite Gino's constant fainting when they meet the queen, Sparrow keeps his cool and, using his brain power, shows that love and caring can dispel destructive bullying. In the end, it is the queen who asks for Sparrow's friendship allowing all the different birds to live together in harmony. To celebrate, an oriole from Baltimore arrives in time to give Sparrow a Bird of the Year award for his good work! *Flexible set. Approximate running time: 1 hour. Code: BH1.*

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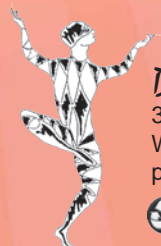
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BIRD BRAIN

By
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(BIRD BRAIN)

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“Right after dusk I saw a lone sparrow flying bravely into the quiet twilight. Dodging telephone wires and tree limbs he flew through the darkening alley as if on a mission. I wondered to myself, where is that sparrow going? It was then I realized I had to write about him.”

— Richard Vetere

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BIRD BRAIN

CHARACTERS

- **SPARROW:** Intelligent with a youthful, pleasant demeanor, an appealing face, intelligent eyes, light brown feathers, black beak and tail.
- **PRETTY:** Stylish and hip sparrow with a beguiling edge to her.
- **GINO:** A sparrow, with the cool gliding motion of a hip ladies' man, devil-may-care attitude with backward cap, small fedora and/or shades.
- **BLACK AND WHITE SEAGULL:** Flaps his wings with ease and grace and carries an umbrella, wears goggles when it rains.
- **SCREECH-OWL:** With large knowing eyes stays perfectly still, sounding educated and professorial. Could wear old-fashioned academic gown.
- **QUEEN OF STARLINGS:** Powerful, British aristocratic to the point of exaggeration with long golden lines running down her frame and wings. She can wear a crown or a long queenly robe.
- **CORINNE:** A princess. She is dutiful and speaks and flies with grace and elegance. She can wear a beret with a golden brooch.
- **PHILIP & GEORGE STARLINGS:** Cousins and British aristocrats, athletic bodies. They wear stylish uniforms.
- **RED-BELLIED WOODPECKER:** Cranky with long black and white feathers and a red cap and hard hat.
- **ROBIN:** All-American smile with varsity sweater and cheerleader personality.

- **BLUE JAY:** Bright blue feathers with gray. Concerned, alert, energetic. Could have binoculars, security company hat and blue jacket.
- **CROWS NICK & JACK:** Dressed in black, dark sunglasses, black fedora's and black leather trench coats.
- **CARDINAL:** Speaks with authority. Can wear a cardinal's scarlet beanie or red scarlet gown.
- **LAUGHING GULL:** Clownish, long flapping wings, hearty annoying laugh and wears crazy, funny sunglasses.
- **WARBLERS SIDNEY & LOUISE:** Tiny, yellow birds, perky, energetic, dressed as tourists with cameras, sunglasses, bright yellow outfits and hold maps that they refer to.
- **RED-TAILED HAWK:** Has menace in his deep, dark brown eyes. Predatory, he wears a military uniform with emblems for valor, courage, campaigns.
- **BALTIMORE ORIOLE:** Looks like a politician, always ready to hand out a proclamation or plaque. Dressed in brilliant orange with black hood and tail, wears glasses.

There will be many birds onstage; some will be nonspeaking roles others will be onstage either asleep or hiding, and some other birds will just appear and then quickly leave just like in nature.

AUTHOR'S NOTES: Other than when specifically mentioned, the birds can be played by male or female actors. Some actors can double up and play more than one bird.

The backdrop for *Bird Brain* can be just a white or blue scrim, or just a wall with lights. The important thing is that the kids can use their imagination to create the birds they play by having fun creating their simple costumes.

BIRD BRAIN

SCENE 1

(LIGHTS UP. We see a bird's-eye view of telephone wires, tree branches, a weathervane, chimneys, rooftops, lampposts. Shades of brown and green, silver, white, brick red, gray and some beige and yellow.

Bright sunlight from a setting sun showers layers of light through the warm air, and the city noises in the distance from passing cars, trucks, jet planes merge into an impressionistic canvas as seen from the perspective of the birds.

The light plays a big part. There will be bright sunlight during the day and sometimes the sun will go in and out of clouds changing the light.

There could be an image of a city in the distance seen with the moon hanging in the sky, either full, crescent or half, and sometimes, an abundance of stars or, only darkness. During the day, bridges and skyscrapers, billboards, telephone wires, rooftops, chimneys and trees can be seen far off in the distance.

Off R is a SCREECH-OWL sitting on a branch in the shade, low to the ground and completely still. The OWL is asleep only to awaken when the sun sets.

BIRDS ENTER, fly by and don't stop while others ENTER, perch, look around, eat worms and insects then race off.

Our hero SPARROW ENTERS.)

SPARROW. I'm a young sparrow and I'm hungry! But there's no food! The starlings are eating all the berries, worms and flies! Now to the wire! Move quickly, sounds of things below, all puffy white above! Into the warm air from tree to tree! My wings help me zip and zap, rush and race, through the wind!

(SPARROW stops on a telephone wire when a large BLACK AND WHITE SEAGULL appears wearing goggles and holding an umbrella. He glides across the stage.)

SEAGULL *(slowly)*. It's going to rain. It's going to pour. Be prepared to get wet. Duck weather approaching due south. It's going to rain.

(SEAGULL flies by SPARROW and EXITS.

Another sparrow, PRETTY, appears.)

SPARROW. Hi, Pretty!

PRETTY. Hey! *(She alights on the wire next to him.)*

SPARROW. Is it going to rain?

PRETTY. The gulls are always right.

SPARROW. Where were you? I missed you before.

PRETTY. I just came from there. (*Behind her.*) The *starlings* ate all the berries and worms. Everywhere you fly. There they are!

SPARROW. I noticed that. They take what they want and push us around. Here...I found some berries and worms before and saved some for you. (*He shows her some berries and worms. She quickly pecks at them.*)

PRETTY (*slowly*). Thank you. You're so sweet to me.

(LIGHTS SLOWLY DOWN as night approaches. A FULL MOON appears off in the sky. They both look up.

The STREETLIGHTS pop on.

Just then, SPARROW's stomach GROWLS.)

PRETTY. What was that?

SPARROW. My stomach. I'm starving.

PRETTY. You should have eaten those berries for yourself.

SPARROW. No, it's okay. I saved them for you.

(The OWL opens its eyes and stirs.

A FLASH OF LIGHTNING.

The OWL HOOTS.)

SPARROW (*cont'd., whispers*). Oh boy, an owl. Stay close.

PRETTY. I will. (*She leans against SPARROW and closes her eyes. She snuggles and he smiles happily that she is with him.*)

(*A FLASH OF LIGHTNING followed by a BLAST OF THUNDER and OWL HOOTS again.*)

SPARROW. Nothing is safe in the dark. Owls eat mice and small birds. We must be very tasty to an owl.

PRETTY. Shhh...be quiet.

(*PRETTY smiles and falls asleep. SPARROW sees and gently leans against her, warmly.*)

The OWL opens his eyes.)

OWL (*quietly*). I know you're there.

SPARROW (*scared*). No you don't.

OWL (*grins*). Oh yes I do.

SPARROW (*pleading*). But it's too dark to see me.

OWL. I hear you. Breathing. (*SPARROW tries to stop breathing.*) Now I hear your little heart beating. Faster and faster.

SPARROW. Stop talking to me. If you're going to eat me, just eat me. But don't touch Pretty.

OWL. To tell you the truth I'm not hungry. I just had a delicious mouse. However, I need to talk to you.

SPARROW. Who?

OWL. No, *you* don't say Who. I say "Who." *Who... who...*

SPARROW. You want to talk to me about what?

OWL. Before we start, I'd like to introduce myself in the proper way. I'm Professor Wiseinhimer. I have a B.A.,

M.A. and Ph.D. in owlness. So what I have to say to you is the honest truth. These conceited starlings, with their sleek bodies and their gold streaks in their wings, who the heck do they think they are? Eagles or something? I know they look down at me, a lowly screech-owl.

SPARROW. Why are they a problem now? Weren't they always here?

OWL. No. They weren't always here.

SPARROW. Oh. So, why are they here now?

OWL. Humans brought them.

SPARROW. Humans?

OWL. Those down *there*. Those who aren't cats or dogs or bugs.

SPARROW. Now I know why they call you the wise old owl. Why did the humans bring them here?

OWL. No one knows why humans do what they do. But they brought them here many suns and moons ago from the other side of the great waters due east. *Who...who...*

SPARROW. Owl, what can we do?

OWL. I'm just one owl against many starlings. But I am wise. So, I'll tell you this, *do something*.

SPARROW. Do something? That's it? I know I have to do something! (*Stops.*) But what do I do?

OWL. I don't know "what." I only know "who" and I know that the who is you.

SPARROW. Me?

OWL. You! (*The OWL spreads his wings and slowly flies away.*) This time I won't eat you. But next time, be careful. If I'm hungry, you're dinner. (*Then.*) *Who!*

SPARROW. Me?

OWL. Yes! You.

(OWL EXITS and SCREECHES in the distance. SPARROW looks at PRETTY who continues to sleep.)

SPARROW *(to PRETTY)*. I miss you, Pretty, when you're not around. *(He's surprised when she smiles with her eyes still closed. He looks up when he feels a drop of rain.)* Here comes the rain. The seagulls are never wrong.

(We hear RAIN FALLING.)

LIGHTS SLOWLY DOWN.)

SCENE 2

(MORNING SUNLIGHT SLOWLY COMES UP on the STARLING empire and the center of all the attention—the QUEEN. She has a British accent.)

THE SINGING from HUNDREDS OF STARLINGS, THOUSANDS, fill the stage.)

QUEEN. I am the queen of the starlings!

STARLINGS. She is the queen!

QUEEN. Puff, puff, how do you do?

STARLINGS. Puff, puff, how do you do?

QUEEN. I don't care! I am the queen!

STARLINGS. She doesn't care, she's the queen!

(They all turn to her and bow.)

QUEEN. Corinne! Get over here!

(CORINNE flies over and stands before her. She has a British accent.)

CORINNE. Yes, Mother.

QUEEN. Did we bully robins and the tree swallows and the dusky flycatchers?

CORINNE. Yes, Mother.

QUEEN. Did we bully the bluebirds? Did we smack down the cowbirds, the woodpeckers and white-eyed vireo?

CORINNE. Yes, Mother.

QUEEN. Did we take all the food away from the warblers and thrashers? Are we kicking out the chickadees and the winter wrens?

CORINNE. Yes, Mother, yes. Yes and yes.

QUEEN. So why am I *not* happy!

CORINNE. Don't know, Mother.

QUEEN. Well, I'll tell you why I'm not happy. I know that everywhere I look to the west and to the north and south, is mine!

(All the STARLINGS move to the east, west, south and north when the QUEEN says the direction.)

QUEEN (*cont'd*). But you haven't told me about the east. I won't be happy until everywhere is mine! So, what about the east? Is it mine yet?

(All the STARLINGS wait in anticipation of her reply.)

CORINNE. Well...not *exactly*.

(The STARLINGS stop, frozen in fear that the QUEEN is angry.)

CORINNE *(cont'd)*. There's one little section we haven't taken.

QUEEN. And why *not*!

CORINNE. Because we haven't gotten there yet.

QUEEN. No excuse. Get there!

CORINNE. Yes, Mother.

QUEEN. What kind of bird is in the east? Blue jays?
Hawks? Crows?

CORINNE *(softly)*. Sparrows.

(The QUEEN frowns then slowly breaks out into a mad laughter.)

QUEEN. Ha...ha...ha...ha! Sparrows. *(She turns to her STARLINGS.)* HA!

STARLINGS. Ha! Ha! Ha!

QUEEN. Quiet! *(They shut up. She moves among her STARLINGS then points to two of them.)* You! And you!

(PHILIP and GEORGE stand at attention.)

QUEEN *(cont'd)*. Fly to the east and bully a few sparrows. I want them to know what's in store for them. I won't be happy until I stomp those stupid, meek little creatures down to bird feathers. *(They fly off and EXIT.)* I am the great!

STARLING. She is the great!

QUEEN. Beautiful and brilliant!

STARLING. Beautiful and brilliant!

QUEEN. Did I say beautiful?

CORINNE (*sarcastically*). Yes, Mother. You did.

QUEEN (*smiles*). Beautiful Queen of the Starlings!

(*LIGHTS OUT.*)

SCENE 3

(*SUN SLOWLY RISES over the horizon. First it's red, then orange until the sky slowly turns purple, then dark blue then soft blue and it's dawn.*)

Suddenly we hear a RED-BELLIED WOODPECKER.

LIGHTS WIDEN to reveal WOODPECKER knocking away at the side of a tree.)

WOODPECKER. *Churr...churr...knock, knock...churr...
Knock...*

(*SPARROW is asleep perched on a branch right next to WOODPECKER. The noise wakes him up.*)

SPARROW. Hey! You woke me up?

WOODPECKER (*with major attitude*). Sue me. *Churr...
knock, knock... (Then.)* If you don't like my noise, move
your little feathered wings to somewhere's else.

SPARROW. But I don't want to move.

WOODPECKER. Want to or not, I have to. I'm just
knocking down my place right now. Those starlings are
taking woodpecker nests north, south and west and I

don't want to leave them mine. They'll probably be here any day now. (*WOODPECKER continues knocking the side of the tree and collapsing his nest.*)

(*PRETTY flies by SPARROW and WOODPECKER.*)

SPARROW. Hi, Pretty! You got up early!

(*She perches next to him.*)

PRETTY. I was so hungry I couldn't sleep. I only found a couple of worms for us. (*She quickly shares them with him.*)

SPARROW. Thanks. Can I kiss you?

PRETTY. If you can catch me!

(*SPARROW and PRETTY fly around the stage, wing to wing, having a good time laughing and playing tag as WOODPECKER goes back to banging his beak into the tree.*)

(*PRETTY stops, and frowns.*)

SPARROW. What's wrong?

PRETTY. I thought flying around would get my mind off of food. It didn't.

(*ROBIN, demure and clearly working to stay happy despite her sadness, flies by and sings.*)

ROBIN. "Cherrily-cherry up-cherrio..." (*Eats a fly.*)
"Cherrily-cherry up-cherrio."