

## **The Concert**

John A. Williams, May 2008

As I sit outside the back door sipping my morning tea, I hear two or three nasal meows and a prolonged rasping note. The catbirds, the catbirds are back. One is flitting back and forth in the brush and leafy branches. I can only catch a glimpse now and then.

“Stop mewling,” I say, “Let’s have your burbling song, I want some melody.” At once the catbird begins an aria worthy of Puccini.

“Who are you talking to?” asks Ginger from the back door.

“The catbird,” I answer.

This was yesterday during our visit to Connecticut. When we get back to Long Island the catbirds are here, waiting for us, including our personal back yard catbird. He perches on a small curved branch, a dead branch hanging out over our deck. I had to stop the tree trimmer from pruning that branch.

The branch is a catbird recital hall. In early summer we have a concert series, with a performance each day just before dark. The catbird expects us to be there, listening.

And what performances we hear! The repertoire is extensive, varied. Some of the melodies seem to be plagiarized but always beautifully rendered. We know that the concert is for us, because the catbird is sitting on the branch, not flitting and hiding in the trees further toward the back of the yard.

Our catbird is always impeccably dressed in gray and black, sleek and smooth, in contrast to its burbling melodies, which remind us of cold water, tumbling recklessly over the rocks.