Dawn Chorus

By Sasha Dugdale

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Every morning since the time changed
I have woken to the dawn chorus
And even before it sounded, I dreamed of it
Loud, unbelievably loud, shameless, raucous

And once I rose and twitched the curtains apart
Expecting the birds to be pressing in fright
Against the pane like passengers
But the garden was empty and it was night

Not a slither of light at the horizon
Still the birds were bawling through the mists
Terrible, invisible
A million small evangelists

How they sing: as if each had pecked up a smoldering coal
Their throats singed and swollen with song
In dissonance as befits the dark world
Where only travelers and the sleepless belong

Notes:
The epigraph of this poem was originally omitted in the changeover to the new website. Because of this, reciting the epigraph is optional for the 2019-2020 Poetry Out Loud season.

Source: Poetry (May 2011)

Poet, playwright, and translator Sasha Dugdale was born in Sussex, England. She has worked as a consultant for theater companies in addition to writing her own plays. From 1995 to 2000, she worked for the British Council in Russia. She is author of the poetry collections The Estate (2007), Notebook (2003), and Red House (2011) and has translated Russian poetry and drama, including Anton Chekhov’s The Cherry Orchard.