Lenten Song

By Phillis Levin

That the dead are real to us
   Cannot be denied,
   That the living are more real

When they are dead
   Terrifies, that the dead can rise
   As the living do is possible

Is possible to surmise,
   But all the stars cannot come near
   All we meet in an eye.

Flee from me, fear, as soot
   Flies in a breeze, do not burn
   Or settle in my sight,

I’ve tasted you long enough,
   Let me savor
   Something otherwise.

Who wakes beside me now
   Suits my soul, so I turn to words
   Only to say he changes

Into his robe, rustles a page,
   He raises the lid of the piano
   To release what’s born in its cage.

If words come back
   To say they compromise
   Or swear again they have died,

There’s no news in that, I reply,
   But a music without notes
   These notes comprise, still

As spring beneath us lies,
   Already something otherwise.

Source: Poetry (July 2013)