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)