His Master’s Voice

for Jacob Porter

Walking in Piccadilly with my son
I see a familiar image of a gramophone
With a dog listening at the horn

And find my time has come round to explain
How strange all that once seemed,
Sound trapped on plates, the silent run

Of the thorn point in from the edge
To where mad dogs and Englishmen
Walked in the mid-day sun, Prokofiev’s

Bird ascended in a flute
Stalked by clarinets in morning suits,
Where with each winding of the spring
Abdul Abulbul bit his scarf
And died for me, again, again, again.

It was such simple magic, anyone
Who’d felt the skin jump on a drum
Could understand how music, fed to wax,
Could live in album leaves like photographs,

The mystery was why it took so long
With hardly anything in the machine
That couldn’t have been fashioned in the bronze
Age, or that of Brahms, Liszt, Schumann, Chopin.

It seems we inhabit islands lapped by time,
Each scarcely linked to each, though your delight
As the hi-fi belts out disco hits just might
Be a passing wave to mine at the horn’s rim.

Ben Thompson

White Tulip

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