MINUET IN G

Certain melodies can break your heart just seeing them on the page their plump ovals bobbing like sea gulls on the surface of some moonless tide . . .

and this bent corner conjures the broad hand of Mr Herbert whose crescented thumbnail seemed wide as my wrist when he pressed it down saying Next week Peter we make acquaintance with Mr Ludvig van Beethoven my mother hovering tugging her slender fingers as if to say Grow Peter you can do it Concentrate while outside my friends whooped slapping a bald tennis ball against our stoop Mr Herbert murmuring Legato legato and I dreaming gondoliers and black-haired women with shadowy cleavage leaning from balconies singing my name Pietro Pietro . . .

the notes on their frail stems still skittering in clusters down the yellowing page like children playing "3 Steps to Germany" in Brooklyn one December evening 1941

(from LIQUID PAPER: NEW & SELECTED POEMS, 1991) Peter Meinke

Notes: One day I came across an old book of classical music from far back in my days of piano lessons. One page was folded over—Bethoven's Minuet in G— which led me back to those days in Brooklyn when I was a young boy reluctantly practicing the piano while my friends played outside.