



## The Poetry of Jaroslav Seifert

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This is the best translated and largest edition of poetry by the Czechs' only Nobel Prize-winning poet, Jaroslav Seifert (he won the prize in 1984 and died in 1986). The poetry is surprising in its simplicity, sensual, thoughtful, moving, comic in turns. Author Milan Kundera has called this collection “the tangible expression of the nation’s genius.”

## The Poetry of Jaroslav Seifert Details

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Author : Jaroslav Seifert , Ewald Osers (Translator) , George Gibian (Editor, Translator)

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## **From Reader Review The Poetry of Jaroslav Seifert for online ebook**

### **Phil says**

I've had this collection since I was a junior in college. While I was on my Kundera kick, a friend of mine brought back a copy of this book for me from Prague. I like to think of it as William Carlos Williams meets a Czech William Yeats.

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### **Leslie says**

For me, the poetry ranged from ones that I didn't like or understand to ones that I liked very much. What tipped the scale from 3.5 to 4\* was the selection of reminiscences at the end (entitled "All the Beauties of the World" & translated by George Gibian).

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### **Arielle says**

Just found this gem - had never heard of him before - at Old Harbor Books in Sitka, Alaska, where I am currently visiting. I am trying not to crack the spine as I read it but these poems are so good, I don't think I'll make it!

\* \* \*

Jaroslav Seifert's words are bound together with something otherworldly. His images come from the physical and angelic realms, and he is one of the only writers I have read who captures the nonseparation of the two. It is a connection between outer space, as he talks about Venus and the moon, or angels and ghosts, cemeteries and loneliness, and the day-to-day brilliance of walking and rain and love - but here, he is like Donne, weaving together flawlessly, so there is no seam, love and death, the heart and lips of someone in love with despair. The backdrop of people's lives, history and the city, work only to accentuate the temporal nature of human existence as he teases out from each single moment the truth and ecstasy of being. Amazing and moving, I only wish this volume contained the original Czech and that I could read it in Seifert's own tongue.

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### **Kristina Godfrey says**

Love Czech writers and poets....but my heart is especially attached to Jaroslav Seifert. His poems about Prague, the destructive war years in the Czech city overtaken by Nazis, and his romances are unbelievably touching, emotional and real. No other poet like him....

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### **Diana says**

Sus versos fascinan. «Canción de amor», «El tímido susurro de la boca besada...» y «Concierto de Bach» son mis poemas favoritos de esta colección.

«Nunca dormí hasta avanzada la mañana,  
me despertaban los tranvías matutinos  
y con frecuencia también mis propios versos.  
Me sacaban por los pelos del edredón  
y me llevaban a la silla,  
y apenas me limpiaba los ojos  
me obligaban a escribir.

Atado por dulce saliva  
a los labios de un momento único,  
no pensaba en la salvación de mi mísera alma,  
y, en vez de la gloria eterna,  
deseaba un breve instante de placer fugaz.

En vano las campanas me elevaban de la tierra,  
me agarraba a ella con uñas y dientes.  
Estaba llena de perfumes  
y misterios excitantes.

Cuando por la noche miraba al cielo  
no buscaba el cielo.  
Más bien me horrorizaban los agujeros negros  
situados en el límite extremo del universo  
que son más terribes aún que el mismo infierno.

Pero oí de pronto el sonido de un clavicémbalo.  
Era un concierto de Juan Sebastián Bach  
para óboe, clavicémbalo y cuerdas,  
¿De dónde venía aquella música?  
No lo sé, pero no era de la tierra.

Aunque no había probado el vino,  
me tambaleé un poco  
y tuve que agarrarme  
a mi propia sombra».

*Concierto de Bach*

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## Scott Cox says

Poet Jaroslav Seifert was the first Czech to win the Nobel Prize for literature in 1984. His poetry is worth reading, reciting, and memorizing for its rich texture. The following are my favorite lines from "If one could tell one's heart . . . Maybe it's possible to live without love - but to die without it is sheer despair."

## Michael says

maybe as good as herbert fantastic.....

september 18...update

sometimes I dont know, but sometimes, just sometimes....

and i wonder if 'canal garden' is not my absolute favorite poem ever....

its first stanzas are remarkable and lonely, and then he just goes rambling on in a way i dont know, i dont know..

but sometimes just sometimes.

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## R.K. Cowles says

3 1/2 stars

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## Offuscatio says

"Sólo una vez al año florece mayo, una vez en la vida sólo el amor." ~ Tierno.

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## Dewey says

Excellent poetry that is quite underrated, especially given his importance in modern Czech literature that has not only had a longer tradition in poetry but is relatively well-known thanks to guys like Kundera. The poetry touches on topics like romance but not in any cheesy way: apparently in the 20's or sometime around there, Seifert was a member of the Communist Party but his comrades were irritated that he'd write poetry about relationships among proletariats as opposed to, say, straight up ideological proclamations. He is described as a romantic, and the description fits; plus when a writer is a real romantic despite their reputation they're usually quite immune to cheesiness, a trait that applies just as much to Seifert as to the more well-known romantics. He's apparently hard to translate, which is why he's not as well known as other Czechs I guess and which being given a Nobel Prize has sadly not done anything to change that around. But Seifert's poetry is hella worth it, and those looking for good verse and pretty good translations will not be disappointed with this volume. Since this is probably the only volume there is in English, that's a good thing too. A must for anybody interested in Eastern European or Slavic poetry.

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## J.M. Hushour says

Mid- late-20th century Czech goodness, a lot of evocative, home-towney, nationalist stuff, but imbued with a folksy symbolism and off-kilter weirdness that keeps it from devolving into, say, Smetana-type bullshit.

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### **Katie says**

Very glad I read this. Definitely worth the read.

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### **Jason Mashak says**

Even in translation, this collection was well-written enough to warrant some serious consideration of my own writing. There is absolutely nothing contrived in Seifert's work. In fact, it apparently wasn't for him 'work' at all, as these poems read like postcards or letters to an old friend. And the voice is consistent, so the reader feels as if he/she *\*is\** that old friend. I will definitely revisit this book in a couple years.

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### **I. says**

my favourites: a hundred times nothing, when in the history books, how painful i would find it,  
SOMETIMES WE ARE TIED DOWN, halley's comet, once only..

i do like his poems, but the way he writes about women sometimes irritates me (attributing this to him being born in 1901, and me being hypersensitive)

note to self: try to find 'concert on the island' and 'halley's comet'

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