

Zdravljica

(A Toast)

by France Prešeren

*The vintage, friends, is over,
And here sweet wine makes, once again,
Sad eyes and hearts recover,
Puts fire in every vein,
Drowns dull care
Everywhere
And summons hope out of despair.*

*To whom with acclamation
And song shall we our first toast give?
God save our land and nation
And all Slovenes where'er they live,
Who own the same
Blood and name,
And who one glorious Mother claim.*

*Let thunder out of heaven
Strike down and smite our wanton foe!
Now, as it once had thriven,
May our dear realm in freedom grow.
Let fall the last
Chains of the past
Which bind us still and hold us fast!*

*Let peace, glad conciliation,
Come back to us throughout the land!
Towards their destination
Let Slavs henceforth go hand-in-hand!
Thus again
Will honour reign
To justice pledged in our domain.*

*To you, our pride past measure,
Our girls! Your beauty, charm and grace!
here surely is no treasure
To equal maidens of such race.
Sons you'll bear,
Who will dare
Defy our foe no matter where.*

*Our hope now, our to-morrow -
Our youth - we toast and toast with joy.
No poisonous blight or sorrow
Your love of homeland shall destroy.
With us indeed
You're called to heed
Its summons in this hour of need.*

*God's blessing on all nations,
Who long and work for that bright day,
When o'er earth's habitations
No war, no strife shall hold its sway;
Who long to see
That all men free
No more shall foes, but neighbours be.*

*At last to our reunion -
To us the toast! Let it resound,
Since in this gay communion
By thoughts of brotherhood we're bound.
May joyful cheer
Ne'er disappear
From all good hearts now gathered here.*

Slovenska Kultura (Slovenian Culture)

Prešernov dan

(Prešeren Day)



Slovenia is an alpine country located at the north end of the Adriatic Sea. For most of their history the Slovene people have existed within other nations while developing and maintaining a unifying culture. In fact, Slovenia is one of only a handful of countries that celebrate their own culture with a national holiday. France Prešeren is representative of the cultural identity of Slovenes and his importance has continued to grow since his death on February 8th 1849.



Near the end of WWII the Slovenia region of Yugoslavia declared the anniversary of Prešeren's death as a national cultural holiday to celebrate all things that make Slovenians Slovenian. Upon becoming a sovereign nation in 1991, this national cultural day gained even greater recognition as a day off of work.

Prešeren Day is an important national holiday that starts with activities the week leading up to February 8th. There are an abundance of cultural exhibits, events and educational presentations. School children frequently go on field trips to Slovenian art museums and other places where they can learn about Prešeren, Slovenia's history and its heritage. Museums and galleries across the country open their doors admission-free, as do some theatre productions, film projections and concerts.

In Ljubljana an annual recital takes place on Prešeren Square, at the foot of the large monumental statue of France Prešeren. Vocal groups and choirs perform all week before the holiday in various locations Prešeren used to visit in his time.



Slovenia promotes the continued growth of its culture by presenting the Prešeren Award (the so-called **Grand Prešeren Award**) to one or two eminent Slovene artists. On the same day the Prešeren Foundation Awards are presented to up to six artists. These are the highest national awards in the field of arts, selected and granted by the Prešeren Foundation.

France Prešeren was born into a farming family in December of 1800. As the oldest son his father wanted him to follow in his footsteps but his mother, who was more educated, had aspirations for him becoming a priest. She taught him to read and write and sent France off to learn from an uncle, who was a priest. Eventually he went to grade school in Ljubljana and eventually to university in Vienna.



France studied philosophy for three years in preparation for law school and became a Doctor of Law in 1827. During this time he also began writing poetry, which took many

forms over the course of his life. However, consistently underlying his work was a philosophy that he “could not stand stupidity and tyranny” in the form of censorship and oppression.

Prešeren was modestly known during his lifetime but his talent and potential legacy was recognized by a Slovene politician/national leader/publisher, Janez Bleiweis. Bleiweis put Prešeren on the literary and wider cultural map of Slovenia first by publishing his works in the Farmers' and Craft News. Prešeren's work has been considered the first and leading classic of Slovene poetry, classic not only in the national or regional sense, but also according to the standards of the “developed” European cultures.

A canny politician, Bleiweis correctly recognized that Prešeren might become famous one day and advocated for the erection of the first monument to him following his death. Over time, in addition to the Prešeren Square in the capital city, his image has adorned currency, coins and stamps.

Prešeren has become one of the most significant figures in Slovenian history and his poem ***A Toast*** became the Slovenian national anthem (Slovenia's Frances Scott Key!).

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 - University of Oslo Department of Literature
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