**FRANCE PREŠEREN, THE GREATEST POET OF THE SLOVENE NATION**

France Prešeren was the greatest Slovene poet and has also been acknowledged by some as the greatest Slovene writer. Born in Vrba, a small village in the northeast of Slovenia, in 1800, he luckily had a family that could provide him with a good education. Prešeren's talent for poetry was noticed in childhood, and he was encouraged to develop his skills and learn languages like German and Latin, especially since German was then the language of high culture and education.

When he was twelve years old, he was sent to Ljubljana to attend a gymnasium. There he became friends with Matija Čop, a boy from the same village, who would later become his tutor and one of his best friends. He then went on to study law in Vienna, although his mother's wish was for him to become a priest. During this time he wrote humorous poems, often filled with playful irony and mockery. His life was full of optimism, which can be seen in his poems.A lot of his work during that time has been lost, since he often wrote short poems or lyrical anecdotes on small pieces of paper or napkins. Many of his poems from that period became popular, and two of those are *Povodni mož (''The Water Man''),* his first ballad, and *Dekletom (''To Maidens'')*, a satiric poem intended for Slovene girls and their pride.

After earning his law degree he returned to Ljubljana, where he applied several times for a license to practice law independently but was always rejected. He lived in poverty and shame due to his inability to become self-employed, which resulted in calmer, but more pessimistic poems, including one of his most important, *Slovo od mladosti (''A Farewell to Youth'')*, in which he proposes that youth is deceitful and only leads a man away from life's truths and into corrupt qualities of human society. Under the watchful eye of Matija Čop, and using eight-line stanza, he reached a level of poetic artistry that could be found in literature in the rest of Europe. He was active in the Romanticism movement. In one of his greatest works, *Sonetje nesreče (''Sonnets of Misfortune''),* a cycle of six sonnets, he criticized the way society treats poets and the lower classes. He is considered to be one of the greatest European Romantics, along with Goethe, Byron and Pushkin, to name a few.

In 1833, he met Julija Primic and fell in love with her immediately, but since he was poor, she rejected him. Prešeren never truly made peace with his unrequited love for her and continued to compose poems which praised her beauty and showed that he saw her in the best light possible. He dedicated one of the best works of his life to her, *Sonetni venec (''Wreath of Sonnets'').* It is truly a masterpiece, a cycle of fifteen sonnets all linked by repeating lines and an acrostic that forms the words ''Primicovi Julji'' – ''to Julija Primic''.

The year 1835 was a horrible year for Prešeren – one of his best friends, Andrej Smole, died in the poet's arms, Julija Primic married a wealthy merchant, and his tutor and old friend Matija Čop died, drowning in the river Sava. Prešeren blamed Čop's death on himself, and having lost his tutor and advisor, he decided to dedicate an epic to him. The fruit of the poet's labor was *Krst pri Savici (''Baptism on the Savica'')*, now considered theSlovene national epic, which finally gave the Slovene nation an identity and recognition in broader Europe.

Prešeren went on to publish a complete collection of his poems, titled *Poezije (''Poems'')*, which was issued in 1846 and has been translated into many languages, such as English, French, German, Serbian, Italian, Spanish and even Mandarin.

An interesting fact about Prešeren is that he was once so well-known and admired among European Romantics the Germans claimed that he was of German origin and were very proud of his work. Maybe they aren't to blame for being proud, since besides being a great scholar, a gentle, honorable and generous person, Prešeren was also a human link that brought the Slovene people together and reawoke a national identity.