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The Penguin Book Of Russian Poetry (Penguin Classics)



Synopsis

An enchanting collection of the very best of Russian poetry, edited by acclaimed translator Robert Chandler together with poets Boris Dralyuk and Irina Mashinski. In the late eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries, poetry's pre-eminence in Russia was unchallenged, with Pushkin and his contemporaries ushering in the 'Golden Age' of Russian literature. Prose briefly gained the high ground in the second half of the nineteenth century, but poetry again became dominant in the 'Silver Age' (the early twentieth century), when belief in reason and progress yielded once more to a more magical view of the world. During the Soviet era, poetry became a dangerous, subversive activity; nevertheless, poets such as Osip Mandelstam and Anna Akhmatova continued to defy the censors. This anthology traces Russian poetry from its Golden Age to the modern era, including work by several great poets - Georgy Ivanov and Varlam Shalamov among them - in captivating modern translations by Robert Chandler and others. The volume also includes a general introduction, chronology and individual introductions to each poet. Robert Chandler is an acclaimed poet and translator. His many translations from Russian include works by Aleksandr Pushkin, Nikolay Leskov, Vasily Grossman and Andrey Platonov, while his anthologies of Russian Short Stories from Pushkin to Buida and Russian Magic Tales are both published in Penguin Classics. Irina Mashinski is a bilingual poet and co-founder of the StoSvet literary project. Her most recent collection is 2013's *Ophelia i masterok* [Ophelia and the Trowel]. Boris Dralyuk is a Lecturer in Russian at the University of St Andrews and translator of many books from Russian, including, most recently, Isaac Babel's *Red Cavalry* (2014).

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Customer Reviews

This book presents us with English translations of 376 Russian poems (or in some cases extracts from or fragments of poems) from 66 poets. The range is from Gavriila Derzhavin (1743-1816), who could be said to have 'discovered' Pushkin - and whose poetry directly influenced not just Pushkin but many another successor poet, including Mandelstam and Tsvetaeva - to Marina Boroditskaya (born 1954). It includes all the Russian poets most of us could think of, plus more than a few to whom we are now pleased to be introduced. The order of presentation of the poets and their work is by date of birth, and they are further marshalled into sections titled The Eighteenth Century, Around Pushkin, Pushkin, After Pushkin, The Twentieth Century and Three More Recent Poets. For each poet a short biography is provided, which serves also as an introduction to his or her poems. Robert Chandler explains in his Introduction that the number of pages given to a poet does not always reflect the editors' estimate of his or her importance. Their aim, he writes, has been to include only translations that work as poems in English. Given that we are turning to a volume that presents the poems only in English (very little Russian is found in the entire volume*), most of us will welcome that decision. When it comes to Innokenty Annesky (1855-1909), however, we cannot help but share the regret of the editors that although they 'would have liked to do more to expand his readership, [he] is exceptionally hard to translate'. So we are pleased to settle, with them, for six complete poems. Fortunately, most of the poets and their work are much more accessible. Perhaps the most accessible of all is Ivan Krylov (1769-1844).

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