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CLARION REVIEW ★★★☆☆ POETRY

Writings from the Spirit

Peter Benjamin
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Though the world is full of darkness, there is also light. The latter shines through in Peter Benjamin LeBuhn's poetry collection, *Writings from the Spirit*.

LeBuhn invites readers to take a step back and recognize and cherish all of life's blessings. From love won and lost, to finding peace in a hectic world, his poems are heartfelt and earnest. In "The Journey," he writes, the "journey has been long … now I am strong." This survivor mentality resonates in nearly every piece in the collection.

The best poems experiment with language. "Love in Many Languages" uses Spanish, French, and Italian to explain that one of the few universal truths is love. In fact, only the last three lines of the poem are in English. To write in other languages is bold, and the point LeBuhn makes is strong: Love rings true in any country, setting, and culture. The power of the last line echoes throughout the entire collection: "The one language we all understand is love."

Some of the poems read more like mini-essays than lyrical explorations; more images, word play, and descriptions could have been included to flesh out the complex and meaningful messages. For example, in "The Key to Your Heart," he writes: "Let me find the key to your heart so I can unlock your secret / chambers of love when I do find that key, I will lock myself in your heart forever …" The poem exudes emotion, but the reader remains on the outside looking in. It is not clear who "your" is or why this person is important. Hinting more strongly at the relationship behind the poem would make the piece more relatable.

Still, the poems in *Writings from the Spirit* celebrate life, love, and worlds seen and unseen. LeBuhn's work encourages readers to "sing a new song every day" and to acknowledge and honor the world's rich gifts. This poet is not afraid to wear his heart on his sleeve, which results in emotionally honest pieces.

Though the poems are sometimes repetitive and basic in form, the positive messages and earnest emotion behind them make the collection worthwhile and poignant.

LISA BOWER (February 20, 2012)

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