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**"Delightful!"**

Nicholas Schager,  
Slant Magazine /  
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**"Brodsky is  
adorable  
and  
cunning."**

Edward Guthmann,  
San Francisco Chronicle

**"A  
surprisingly  
memorable  
film"**

Maria Garcia,  
Film Journal International

**"A  
soothing  
comedy."**

Stephen Holden,  
The New York Times



**AUTUMN SPRING**

**A COMEDY FOR THE AGED.S**



This delightful movie confronts society's stereotypes of the elderly, and concerns a pensioner who amuses himself by concocting elaborate practical jokes. A spirited ode to people of all ages, this Czech film is a celebration of living life to the fullest.

CZECH REPUBLIC • 2002 • 97 mins • Color • In Czech with English subtitles

# 'Autumn Spring': Brodsky Gets His Last Laughs

DESSON HOWE

"AUTUMN SPRING," an intriguing amalgam of cynicism and sentimentality, introduces you to an unforgettable mischief-maker. He's a 76-year-old Czech named Franta (short for Frantisek), who makes it his personal business to remain an overgrown, impulsive kid – to the despair of his wife and family.

When we meet Franta (Vlastimil Brodsky), he's posing as a wealthy retired opera star who is looking to buy an expensive mansion. He inspects the house solemnly, asks to see the spacious grounds, then drives away in his limo, bound for his room at the Hilton. In reality, he's a poor old fellow who loves to escape his apartment – which he shares with his devoted but exasperated wife, Emilie (Stella Zazvorkova) – so he can con people with his pal, Eda (Stanislav Zindulka).

Their con games are mostly harmless. Seeing a trio of attractive young women at the train station, for instance, Franta and Eda pretend to be ticket inspectors. The women don't have tickets. Can't you overlook it, this time? They plead. The old men decide to let it go this time. Of course, they wouldn't mind a kiss from all three.

But Franta's problem is he has no sense of reality. He doesn't know where or when to draw the line. His shenanigans as the opera singer run him into expensive trouble when the man who took him around threatens to sue for the limo and other expenses. Suddenly, Franta is running around town, trying to find a way to pay his debt. But there's only two ways he can make money: scamming or stealing from Emilie's savings, most of it earmarked for the couple's funeral expenses.

When Franta hatches a ruse to pretend he's dead, just to incur his wife's sympathy, he pushes Emilie over the edge. She files for divorce after 44 years of this.

Though the story line seems grim at times, it's always made lighter by Brodsky's gentle, often hilarious presence. He's not impervious to the bitterness and anger he causes; he's hurt and surprised. But being a romantic, he brushes these negatives aside and continues doing what he does best: being himself.



On a more tragic note, Brodsky took his life in 2002, shortly after he made this picture. Thus, "Autumn Spring," which deals with issues of death and living life to the fullest, attains an even more powerful dimension. As one of the stalwarts of the Czech cinema (he was also Jakob in the original, 1975 East German-made "Jakob the Liar"), Brodsky is more than one old actor who tired of this mortal coil. He's the embodiment of a national cinema that flowered in the 1960s and 1970s. Here, then, is a chance to see his final act of charm.

## AUTUMN SPRING

Directed by Vladimir Michalek; written (in Czech, with English subtitles) by Jiri Hubac; director of photography, Martin Strba; music by Michael Lorenc; art director, Jiri Brozek; produced by Jaroslav Kucera, Jiri Bartoska and Jaroslav Boucek. Running time: 97 minutes. This film is not rated.

WITH: Vlastimil Brodsky (Frantisek Hana), Stella Zazvorkova (Emilie Hanova), Stanislav Zindulka (Eda), Ondrej Vetchy (Jara, the Son), Zuzana Fialova (Erna), Juraj Johanides (Dr. Rysavy), Zita Kabatova (Maruska Grulichova), Lubomir Kostelka (Vondracek), Jiri Labus (Estate Agent) and Katerina Pindejova (Judge).

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