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Reap what you sow

Freedom was the recurring theme at Václav Havel's lovely concert in Prague on Sat. in celebration of the 20th anniversary of the Velvet Revolution. There was no mistaking the vague political message of Joan Baez's rendition of "We Shall Overcome," but what in the world was Lou Reed trying to say? His opening tune, "I'm Waiting for the Man," could be understood as an allegory for the arrival of Havel two decades ago to save the day, until one recalls that it's about a drug addict waiting for his dealer. His second tune, "Dirty Boulevard," is about the ugly underbelly of freedom: "Give me your hungry, your tired, your poor, I'll piss on them." Even Lou's "Perfect Day," made more perfect by the incomparable Renée Fleming, is about suppressing our darker side. If Lou Reed had a message, perhaps this was it: We have only ourselves to blame if we allow freedom, once gained, to be taken away from us.

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