



ROYAL  
ŁAZIENKI  
MUSEUM

# DEMETER AND PERSEPHONE

SCRIPT IN THREE ACTS  
FOR INDIVIDUAL PERFORMANCE  
ON STAGE OF THE  
"WHAT ARE THEY PLAYING HERE?"  
THEATRICAL WORLD OF  
STANISŁAW WYSPIAŃSKI"  
CREATIVE AREA  
IN THE OLD GUARDHOUSE

---



# DEMETER AND PERSEPHONE



**We invite you to play theatre.**

**This scenario refers, among other things, to mythological motifs of the “November Night” by Stanisław Wyspiański. You can use it on stage in the Old Guardhouse. You can also try to create your own scenario and perform it here. Take advantage of the props and costumes available in the creative space.**

**Have fun!**

Dramatis personae:

**DEMETER** – the goddess of earth’s fertility and abundance, mother of Persephone

**PERSEPHONE** – otherwise called Kora, the wife of Hades, ruler of the underworld, daughter of Demeter and Zeus

**HADES** – god of the underworld of the dead

**RUSAŁKA** – in Slavic mythology, a demon in the form of a young and beautiful woman

**SATYR** – a forest demon

**SUN** – mythological sun deity

**ZEUS** – the father of all gods, the most powerful god of the sky and thunder





## ACT I

*Demeter and her daughter Persephone are walking around flower meadows, holding baskets. Piano music in the background: 'Flower Meadow'.*

### DEMETER

Daughter, my sunshine. Look at the beautiful flowers. Pick some for wreaths and bouquets. But remember not to pick any narcissi. They are the flowers of the underworld god.

### PERSEPHONE

Very well, mother, very well. I will pick lots of other flowers.

### RUSAŁKA

*Sings to piano music: 'Rusałka 1'.*

O, Persephone, pick violets and cornflowers

Don't pick the narcissi as a tough God will come

He'll take you to underworld and never give you back to mother.

### SATYR

Pick violets and cornflowers!

Don't pick narcissi!

*Persephone stops by a narcissus flower, thinks for a moment and picks it. The underworld opens and Hades emerges from it. Hades pulls Persephone into his kingdom. Piano music in the background: „Abduction”.*

HADES

You will be my lady! In my kingdom I have a throne and a crown for you.

RUSAŁKA

Mother, Demeter! Save your child.

SATYR

Save your child! Save your child!



## ACT II

DEMETER

Have any of you seen my daughter, Persephone? I don't know where she's gone? She was here a moment ago, but she's disappeared. It's as if the ground has swallowed her. Persephone, where are you?

*Demeter looks for her daughter in different lands, with piano music in the background. 'Mother's Sorrow'.*

SUN

O, goddess, for months your daughter has been living with Hades in the underworld. She was kidnapped by the king of the afterlife when she picked a narcissus flower. The poor girl forgot about your warning.

DEMETER

Persephone, what shall I do to make you come back to your mother, whom shall I beg, who shall I bow to, what crops and gifts shall I give?

ZEUS

Sister, I can't bear to watch you suffer, how sad the earth is because of this, the flowers and the trees don't blossom and the fields are lying bare. Have mercy on the people. I'll order Hades to return Persephone to you. Hades, hear my command and give the daughter back to her mother.







### ACT III

*Persephone emerges from the underworld, holding a half-eaten pomegranate in her hand. She throws herself into her mother's arms. Music as in Act I – „Flower Meadow“.*

#### PERSEPHONE

Mother, mother, I don't know what happened, I didn't think about your warning, I shouldn't have, I know. Forgive me.

#### DEMETER

Come on now, all that counts is that you're here. I didn't care about the earth when you weren't around. I didn't care about the crops when you disappeared suddenly, I didn't take care of myself, I was constantly looking for you.

#### HADES

But make sure you give her back to me, goddess! The girl ate the pomegranate, so she has to come back to me. She will only be away from her mummy for a few months.

#### RUSAŁKA

*Sings with the piano music: 'Rusałka 2'.*

Since then, every year,  
When the daughter says farewell  
Leaves fall from the trees  
And the earth and river freeze.  
But spring will come for sure  
When Hades lets his lady go  
After spring there will be summer again  
After summer there will be autumn again.

SATYR

Spring will come for sure.

After spring there will be summer again

After summer there will be autumn again.







**Myth summary:**

Demeter and her daughter Persephone (otherwise called Kora) often went for walks in the lush meadows. The mother was the goddess of fertility, Earth and harvest. She made sure that the seeds sprouted, the rain sprinkled the parched earth, the flowers blossomed, and the birds woke up with joy every morning. Well, she was certainly a great goddess.

Persephone, her daughter, was extremely beautiful and was probably a teenager, when something happened that changed the face of the earth forever. The earth changed from fertile to capricious, changeable, and sometimes downright dangerous.

One day, when mother and daughter were picking flowers for wreaths and bouquets, Demeter, as always, warned the girl not to pick narcissi flowers, not even for the whole world; she could pick any other flower or plant, but not narcissi. But, as mothers tend to do, she did not tell her daughter why or maybe she did, but the girl did not hear.

As it sometimes happens with teenagers, Persephone, lost in thought or curious about the uniqueness of the flower, forgot about her mother's warning and picked the flower. Hades, the lord of the underworld, saw perfectly well what the beautiful girl had done and travelled to the earth in a smart chariot, kidnapped Persephone and took her with him. He prepared various delicacies, beautiful interiors, a throne and a crown for her. Although Persephone liked all this at first, over time she started missing her mother.

Demeter missed her daughter even more, so much so that all nature on earth stood still because of her sorrow. The fields did not produce any crops, the meadows dried up, the rivers turned into rivulets, the birds screeched at each other instead of singing.

Finally, Zeus, Demeter's brother, took pity on the suffering mother and ordered Hades to return her daughter to her. The ruler of the underworld was not happy about this, but agreed, provided that Persephone did not eat any fruit in the underworld kingdom. However, he came up with a trick and offered her a pomegranate. Tempted by her husband's fruit, the goddess returned to him every year and became the mistress of the underworld for several months.



Whenever Persephone appeared on earth, the world began to wake up to life, flowers blossomed, birds made their nests, rivers thawed. Demeter's joy at the return of her daughter was enormous. An abundant spring came, followed by a hot, colourful summer and equally colourful, shiny autumn. And when Persephone returned to the underworld, the nature died down, the days became shorter and shorter, and the grey skies blanketed the mornings. The earth felt the mother's sorrow, the streams froze, the trees lost their fruit and leaves, and the animals moved to other lands or went to sleep for many months. Winter was coming.

Text: Lidia Iwanowska-Szymańska

Music: Gaja Turecka

Children's voices: Laura, Aleksy Zagaj, A. P., M. P., Przemysław, M.Z., Iden – children from LAB Learning and Being

Music performance and improvisations: Antoni Jachniewicz

Sound engineer: Kacper Wąsiewicz

Graphic design: Zofia Zaccaria

Coordination: Zofia Zaccaria

Editing and proofreading in Polish: Cała Jaskrawość

Translation from Polish: *Eurotrad* Wojciech Gilewski

Creative area's animators: Anna Gajda, Zuzanna Pelczarska, Wigryna Dobosz

Temporary exhibition 'Wyspiański's Iconosphere. *November Night* in the Royal Łazienki' is presented in the Cadet School and in the Palace on the Isle.

Sponsor of visual and artistic materials in the creative area and on the workshops is the Royal Talens company.



