Anna Mik, "Entry on: The Goddess of Spring by Wilfred Jackson", peer-reviewed by Elżbieta Olechowska and Elizabeth Hale. Our Mythical Childhood Survey (Warsaw: University of Warsaw, 2018). Link: http://omc.obta.al.uw.edu.pl/myth-survey/item/311. Entry version as of November 01, 2026.

Wilfred Jackson

The Goddess of Spring

United States (1934)

TAGS: Hades Persephone Pluto / Plouton





The Goddess of Spring [frame] under the Wikimedia Common Rights, Date: 22 May, 2014, Source: Own work, Author: Miss Tinkertrain (accessed: August 17, 2018).

General information	
Title of the work	The Goddess of Spring
Studio/Production Company	Walt Disney Productions
Country of the First Edition	United States of America
Country/countries of popularity	Worldwide
Original Language	English
First Edition Date	1934
First Edition Details	Distributor: United Artists, music by Leigh Harline, November 3, 1934.
Running time	8:58 min
Format	DVD, Blu-ray

This Project has received funding from the European Research Council (ERC) under the European Union's Horizon 2020 Research and Innovation Programme under grant agreement No 681202, *Our Mythical Childhood… The Reception of Classical Antiquity in Children's and Young Adults' Culture in Response to Regional and Global Challenges*, ERC Consolidator Grant (2016–2021), led by Prof. Katarzyna Marciniak, Faculty of "Artes Liberales" of the University of Warsaw.

Date of the First DVD or VHS	DVD: Snow White and the Seven Dwarfs: Platinum Edition; DVD: Walt Disney Treasures: More Silly Symphonies; Blu-ray: Snow White and the Seven Dwarfs: Diamond Edition
Genre	Alternative histories (Fiction), Animated films, Fantasy fiction, Mythological fiction, Short stories
Target Audience	Crossover (In the 30s many shorts by Walt Disney Productions were just technical experiments. Usually they were presented before the main feature movie, often for adults. Later, it was issued along with other animations from the “Silly Symphony” series, so it is hard)
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Creators



Wilfred Jackson , 1906 - 1988
(Animator, Director)

Wilfred Jackson was an American animator, director and producer. Fascinated by the art of "moving pictures", he decided to approach Walt Disney and offer him to work for his company for free. As the time in business was difficult, Disney hired the young excentric who much later was hailed a Disney Legend. Apart from being an animator, he had a very useful skill: he knew how to perfectly synchronize sound and picture, a technique developed (among other productions) in several *Fantasia* sequences. After assisting Ub Iwerks (the legendary creator of Mickey Mouse), he got promoted and became a director/co-director of many classic Disney movies, such as: *Snow White and the Seven Dwarfs*, *Peter Pan* or *Sleeping Beauty*. Poor health forced him to retire in 1961.

Source:

Smith, Dave, ed., "Wilfred Jackson" (entry); in *Disney A to Z: The Official Encyclopedia*, 4th ed., Glendale: Disney Books, 2015.

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Additional information

Summary

Jackson's short animation re-tells a classical mythological story about the origins of seasons. It opens with an idyllic scene where animals, dwarfs and flowers dance around a beautiful girl, called in the song "The Goddess of Eternal Spring". Crowned with a floral coronet by birds and sitting on a throne among nature (in the central position of the frame), she is shown as the most important (in an anthropocentric way) character in this picture. The situation changes when the earth opens and Hades/Pluto (presented as the Christian devil) appears with a demand: "I've chosen you to be queen of my kingdom". He kidnaps the goddess and forces her to live in the Underworld. Persephone gets depressed, which not only causes winter on Earth, but also upsets Hades, who wants to cheer her up by giving her jewellery. That does not work. Eventually they come to an agreement, that Persephone can come back to Earth, but only for half a year, the other half she will spend in the Underworld. When she comes up to the surface, the frozen nature melts, everything comes back to life and celebrates the goddess' return. And as the song sums up: "So now you know the reason, Why there's a winter season, Instead of eternal spring […]."

Analysis

The short is kept in the convention of operetta, mixed with jazz sequences performed in the Underworld. All dialogues are sung by characters, which exaggerates the dramaturgy of the events. The plot lacks the character of Demeter, so the conflict is set only between two characters: Persephone and Hades. The reality is polarized between the feminine and the masculine power represented by their kingdoms. The feminine is represented here by nature and life, the male element – by darkness, destruction and death. The confrontation of these two worlds brings harmony to nature: there has to be the time of winter (death), so the spring would be able to bring back the sun (life).

"Silly symphonies" in general served as an experimental platform for bigger productions – and this one is no exception. *The Goddess of Spring* was a test for Disney's first full-length animation *Snow White and the Seven Dwarfs* released in 1937. In the short we can spot many analogies with the movie: colorful setting, playful animals, dwarfs that accompany the goddess. Some even claim that because of the existence of this animation, Snow White has to be deprived of the title "the first Disney princess", as it is Persephone who deserves it. It can

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	also be claimed that many visual motifs from *The Goddess of Spring* were later used in other animations, such as *Fantasia* from 1940. Even though Disney's story about Persephone is not the most popular one, it had a great impact on later, more successful productions and served as basis to create many different fairy-tale worlds with strong mythological backgrounds.
Classical, Mythological, Traditional Motifs, Characters, and Concepts	Hades Persephone Pluto / Plouton
Other Motifs, Figures, and Concepts Relevant for Children and Youth Culture	Death Gender Life Nature Values
Further Reading	Blackmore, Erin, *Snow White Wasn't the First Princess. Dwarfs, meet Persephone*, "Smart News", smithsonianmag.com, February 4, 2016, (accessed: August 17, 2018). Bradley, Edwin M., *The First Hollywood Sound Shorts, 1926–1931*, Jefferson: McFarland, 2009. Cavalier, Stephen, *The World History of Animation*, Oakland: University of California Press, 2011. Cohen, Karl F., *Forbidden Animation. Censored Cartoons and Blacklisted Animators in America*, Jefferson and London: McFarland & Company, Inc., Publishers, 1997. Hayes, Elizabeth, "The Persephone Myth in Western Literature", in E. T. Hayes, ed., I*mages of Persephone: Feminist Readings in Western Literature*, Gainesville: University of Florida Press, 1994, 1–19. Meritt, Russel and J. B. Kaufman, *Walt Disney's 'Silly Symphonies': a companion to the Classic cartoon series*, Gemona: La Cineteca del

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Moen, Kristian, *Film and Fairy Tales. The Birth of Modern Fantasy*, London, New York: I.B. Tauris, 2013.

Smith, Dave, ed., “Wilfred Jackson” (entry); in *Disney A to Z: The Official Encyclopedia*. 4th ed., Glendale: Disney Books, 2015.

Addenda

Many language versions.

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