

# 'Dance into the Light'

## The Story of Ceres and Proserpina

### by Meliesa Judge

The story of Ceres is the story of transition, from dark to light, from winter to spring, from loss and grief to recovery and joy.

Like so many of the ancient myths the story was intended to encompass many layers of meaning and human experience. Ceres grieves for her lost daughter and the world is thrown into winter. She is the goddess of grain, the custodian of the fertility of the land so while she grieves nothing grows on the earth. She searches the world for the child, not finding her, she goes down to the underworld still searching. There the beloved child is found and Ceres brings her back, rejoicing. Spring returns and the world is abundant and full of new life.

It is an ancient story, here we use the Roman names Ceres and Proserpina that replaced the Ancient Greek names Demeter and Persephone for the same story, which itself reaches back to the earliest days of human agriculture. The (secret) rites and rituals that surrounded the early temples codified the knowledge so essential for the survival of agrarian communities. Demeter was responsible for maintaining the fertility of the land that allowed crops to grow and communities to survive. Her role in sustaining the life of vegetation as a whole meant that she was regarded as critical to the existence of all life on earth. Knowledge and human experience inextricably link in these ancient myths in such a way that science and soul are inseparable, each contributing to civilisation in equal measure, therefore Ceres/Demeter is both the custodian of all knowledge about grain and agriculture as well as symbolic of the love of a mother for her child.

The sculpture depicts the moment of return, joy as Spring leaps forth. Ceres dances and Proserpina dances with her, protected but not constrained by the parent, the child is depicted as independent but shielded by the mother's robe that wraps around them both.

The sculpture is a gift, lovingly given by the Jenner family to the Waite Arboretum in memory of Norma. The idea for the theme of the work links Colin's life work, researching - the accumulation of sugar and starch in developing cereal grains and related topics at the University of Adelaide Waite Institute, with Norma's academic career as a dancer and dance educator, their lives together echoing the theme of science and soul combining to contribute to the great human endeavour of civilisation.

Given a free hand to work within the theme, I was able to pursue my own passion for movement and energy within a figurative sculpture. The first idea for the concept

came from a photograph of Norma surrounded by dancers at a ballet school in England. The idea of including the child developed from a book that Norma wrote about teaching dance to children. The freedom and joy in the faces and movement of the children underpinned the decisions we made regarding the relationship between the two sculpted figures. The sculpture was never intended as a portrait and does not depict Norma's face.

I enjoy sculpting drapes as loose, almost abstract forms that dynamically counterpoint the realistically modelled figures. On Colin's suggestion we incorporated wheat into the robe itself, using several wheat varieties, cast directly into the metal. The sculpture is mounted on large slabs of Kanmantoo bluestone, the local stone blending with the designed walls and pathways of the gardens, the layered slabs add to the concept of layers of meaning within the work.

The sculpture was made, moulded and cast into bronze at our studios in Lynton.

For further information about Meliesa Judge, please visit

[www.liquidmetalstudios.com.au](http://www.liquidmetalstudios.com.au)

