



## HORN'S GARDEN AND THE MONUMENT "THE LITTLE RAVEN" DEDICATED TO RAINIS AND ASPAZIJA 1

Majori, Jomas iela 35

Horn's Garden was the first plot of land on Jomas Street to be built on. Its first tenant was Alberts Horns, hence the name. In 1870, there was only a forested dune area covered with tiny pines, but by the end of the 19th century a hotel, a restaurant, a cinematographer, and a concert hall had already been built there, as well as an open-air concert garden that could accommodate more than 2,000 listeners, and famous symphony orchestras were giving concerts there.

On 31 July 1905, a concert of symphonic music by Latvian composers was held in the Horn's Garden, which had previously been mostly filled with German music, and the later Latvian anthem "God Bless Latvia" (*Dievs, svētī Latviju!*) was also performed there. In 1913, a major fire that broke out in a house on the corner of Jomas and Tīroņu Streets, all the buildings in Horn's Garden burnt down. In 1970, the cinema "Jūrmala", now Majori Culture Centre, was built there.

In 1990, on the occasion of the 125th anniversary of Rainis and Aspazija, a monument called "The Little Raven" (*Krauklītis*) was unveiled at Jomas Street to commemorate the great poets' performance at the event "An Evening of Poetry and Songs by Rainis and Aspazija" in Horn's Garden in July of 1905. The monument also symbolically commemorates their emigration to Switzerland, where in 1917 Rainis wrote his play "The Little Raven" (*Krauklītis*) which is also positioned at the top of the monument. Zigrīda Fernava-Rapa and Juris Tiščenko-Rapa are the authors of the monument.



## RAINIS AND ASPAZIJA SUMMER HOUSE 2

Majori, Jāņa Pliekšāna iela 5/7 (formerly Aleksandra iela 3)

Phone +371 67764295, +371 29239472; www.memorialmuzei.lv

**Opening hours:** Tuesdays to Saturdays, 10.00–17.00; from 1 June to 31 August on Wednesdays, 12.00–19.00  
**Ticket prices:** EUR 2, schoolchildren, students, and seniors: EUR 1, family tickets: EUR 3, group guide: EUR 5–7, audio guide – EUR 3

The Rainis and Aspazija Summer House is a museum dedicated to two outstanding personalities and it serves to preserve, promote, and remind about their contribution to Latvian culture.

Rainis bought the summer house in Majori in the autumn of 1926 and spent there the last summers of his life from 1927 to 1929. The house on Aleksandra Street, which was both a place of work and a summer retreat for the poets, was described in a newspaper of that time as follows: "It is a tiny street. One end on the asphalt of Jomas Street, the other in the sand of the dunes, and a couple of hundred metres in the middle. Thick trees on both sides." Rainis was not used to spacious rooms, so he rented out part of the cottage, and sometimes some of his friends lived there too. The poet longed for the proximity of the sea, so he often stayed in Jūrmala at a time unusual for summer holidaymakers, e.g. late autumn and sometimes even winter. Early morning swims and evening walks at sunset were part and parcel of these summers. "I love the silence, the clean, fresh air. Nowhere feels as good as here," said Rainis. His time in Riga was spent working in politics and cultural affairs, so it was the summer house in Jūrmala that opened up opportunities for creative work. Both poetry and plays were written here, such as "Love Is Stronger Than Death" (*Mīla stiprāka par nāvi*) (1927) and "The Witch of Riga" (*Rīgas ragana*) (1928). Aspazija worked here on her collection of poems "When Asters Arrive" (*Asteru laikā*) (1928).

Rainis died on 12 September 1929 while staying at the summer house in Majori.

In 1949, the Rainis Museum was opened in the summer house and the present museum ensemble with the summer house garden was created in 1969. The museum complex combines three buildings typical of the wooden buildings in Jūrmala. The summer house belonging to Rainis consists of two buildings built at the end of the 19th century: the street house is a single-storey wooden structure with a roof, carvings on the *façade*, and an Art Nouveau porch divided by small chests, whereas the other building is a small stone house deeper in the garden. A third building, the neighbouring house, was added later to the complex to expand the premises of the museum.

In 2016, after an extensive and thorough restoration, the museum buildings were restored to their former appearance. The upper floors of both houses are furnished with poets' rooms, authentic furniture, and other objects. The exhibition "Me and You" (*Es un Tu*) that is dedicated to the love and creative peaks of Rainis and Aspazija is on the ground floor of the summer house. The neighbouring house is particularly suited to the diverse activities taking place in the museum – the spacious ground-floor hall hosts a wide range of museum events and educational programmes, while the exhibition hall displays temporary exhibitions. The museum complex also includes a summer house garden.

## MONUMENT OF RAINIS 3

Majori, Jāņa Pliekšāna iela 5/7 (formerly Aleksandra iela 3)

On 11 September 1965, in honour of the 100th anniversary of Rainis' birth and to start the tradition of Poetry Days in Latvia, a monument to Rainis, designed by Otto Kalējs, was erected near the summer house of Rainis and Aspazija in Majori. The grey granite image shows the poet in a moment of solitude in his garden.



## MAJORI SECONDARY SCHOOL 4

Majori, Rīgas iela 3 (formerly – Majori-Dubulti Charity Society)

In autumn of 1879, the teacher Jānis Dumpis opened the first private school in a small wooden house in Majori which was supported by the Manor Board. In 1882, the Majori-Dubulti Charity Society was founded, one of its main activities being the maintenance of the school and raising of funds to give children from low-income families the opportunity to attend school. The Society organised concerts, theatre performances, literary evenings, and other events to enrich cultural life and raise donations. The Society worked hard to raise funds and in 1883 bought a plot of land. On 14 August of the same year, the foundation stone of the new school building was laid and, on 1 January 1884, the Majori Primary School started work in the new building. In 1899, as the school had no larger rooms for various events, the Charity Society carried out a major renovation and built a large hall with a stage on the second floor. This newly improved school was how Rainis found it on 17 June 1903, when a musical soiree, a literary evening with choral singing, was held in the society hall, which was in fact an evening of illegal tribute to Rainis and Aspazija on their return from exile in Slobodsk. For the first time ever, Rainis' poetry from his just published first collection of poems "Distant Moods On a Blue Evening" (*Tālas noskaņas zilā vakarā*) was read in public that evening, and Aspazija herself did the reading. Later, poetry evenings by Aspazija and Rainis were held both in Horn's Garden and at the Majori-Dubulti Charity Society. On 30 October 1905, a revolutionary rally was held in the school hall, at which Rainis also spoke.

The building's appearance remained almost unchanged throughout the 20th century. It was only at the end of the century, when it started to get so cramped – there were only eight classrooms and teaching had to take place in two shifts – that the idea of reconstruction was born. The academic year of 1990/1991 was the last one before the reconstruction and, on 1 September 1998, children resumed their studies in the new building of the Majori Primary School, the opening of which was attended by the President of Latvia, Guntis Ulmanis. In 2005, the reconstruction of the school's historic building was completed and President Vaira Viķe-Freiberga attended the opening ceremony. The school building preserves the auditorium and stage, as well as the historic staircase.

In the 19th century, Jūrmala had already become an attractive place of work and leisure for many creative personalities, and at the turn of the century, such classics of Latvian painting, writing, and music as Janis Rozentāls, Vilhelms Purvītis, Rūdolfs Blaumanis, and Emīls Dārziņš lived and worked here.

The young and talented playwright Elza Rozenberga (Aspazija) also called Jūrmala her summer home. Here, in Dubulti, there was both the nearby and familiar Lielupe River and the immensely empowering sea. The pine trees in the dunes, summer swims, and walks along the sea attracted the young Jānis Pliekšāns (Rainis), who was the editor-in-chief of the newspaper "Dienas Lapa" at the time (1894). And so, little by little, the city by the sea became theirs forever.

As the pleasant nature and atmosphere of the seaside town invited him to think about his own property in Jūrmala, in 1903 Rainis bought a plot of land in Jaundubulti, and by 1905, the poets' beautiful summer house was located at Aleksandra prospekts 16 (now Poruka prospekts 61), which immediately became a meeting place for the creative intelligentsia. The long years of exile in Switzerland could not dampen his love for the city by the sea. The return to Jūrmala started with a short summer break, only to buy a summer home here again.

From 1927 until 1929, Rainis' creative workplace was a summer house in Majori. After her husband's passing, Aspazija chose the building they had both once found in Dubulti as her haven of peace and creative work, where she was not disturbed by the proximity of the railway or the highway. The seashore and the pines of the dunes, the Lielupe River and the familiar places where the most beautiful moments of her life were enjoyed, became the poet's permanent home in the final years of her life, providing strength and inspiration for a productive, creative end to her life.



## HOUSE OF ASPAZIJA 5

Dubulti, Zigrīda Meierovica prospekts 18/20 (formerly Gončarova iela 13/15)

Phone +371 67769445; facebook.com/aspazijas.maja  
**Opening hours:** from 15 May to 14 September, Tuesdays to Saturdays, 10.00–18.00; Sundays 11.00–16.00; from 15 September to 14 May, Tuesdays to Saturdays, 10.00–17.00  
 Free admission; guided tour: EUR 8–15, audio guide: EUR 2

The House of Aspazija is an outstanding wooden architectural and historical monument of national importance. The building is located in the narrowest part of Jūrmala – on a strip of land between the sea and the Lielupe River. The poet spent the final years of her life in this charming house from 1933 until 1943, experiencing the events and political upheaval of the Second World War.

The building was built in 1903 as a summer home for the German-Baltic merchant Marija Kiršteine. Aspazija bought the summer house on 3 March 1933 for 11,500 lats and invested another 800 lats to make the house suitable for living in winter. "Now I am in Dubulti, in the house that my significant other and I used to want to buy, and we were discussing how to settle down," the poet wrote in her diary in the summer of 1933. Aspazija's faithful housekeeper Anna Rijniece, her brother's daughter Virēna Rozenberga, and the poet's pet cats moved with her from Riga to Jūrmala.

Living in Dubulti, Aspazija found solace and strength in the proximity of the sea and the Lielupe River, as well as in her close and trusted friends. During the first years after the move, Aspazija was often visited by the most prominent cultural figures of the time – writers Veronika Strēle, Andrejs Johansons, Antons Birkerts and Pāteris Birkerts, Kārlis Skalbe, Zenta Mauriņa, and composer Lauma Reinholde. With the outbreak of the war, the poet's life became much more solitary, but despite several invitations to return to Riga, Aspazija remained faithful to her Dubulti house and passed away here on 5 November 1943, after her death wishing to preserve it as a meeting place for creative personalities.

The Soviet authorities were in no hurry to honour her wishes. After the war, the House of Aspazija was at the disposal of the Jūrmala Executive Committee, which rented it out as a summer house to several families at the same time. In 1987, the municipality handed the building over to the Jūrmala Museum of History and Art.



In 1993, the House of Aspazija Foundation was established to support and promote the preservation and restoration of the house. Later, the foundation became the Aspazija Heritage Society. In 1996, upon the initiative of Jūrmala intellectuals, financial support from the City of Jūrmala and foreign compatriots, the House of Aspazija was opened to the public. In 2012, extensive reconstruction and restoration works began, including the opening of a historically valuable Jūrmala summer house with a preserved and restored summer kitchen to the House of Aspazija; the museum reopened to visitors as a two-building complex on 3 October 2014.

The House of Aspazija is a representation of the life and workplace of a creative personality of the 1930s. The rooms are decorated in a similar way to how they were when the poet was alive. The house displays Aspazija's personal belongings – stationery, books, artwork, and furniture. The library's collection includes more than 2,500 books, including first editions of works by Aspazija and Rainis, and books autographed by prominent personalities. In 2016, the museum opened an interactive exhibition "Aspazija Returns to Dubulti", incorporating elements of new technology into the historical interior.



## MONUMENT OF ASPAZIJA 6

Dubulti, Zigrīda Meierovica prospekts 18/20 (formerly Gončarova iela 13/15)

*When I go, I do not want to go like this, Go into the unknown. I want to stay in your memory, Oh, to stay in your love more... (Aspazija, "After Me" (Pēc manis), 1922)*

On her 130th birthday, the poet Māra Zālīte publicly mentioned the lack of a monument to Aspazija in Latvia. In 2006, the Aspazija Heritage Society invited sculptor Arta Dume to create a monument dedicated to the poet next to the House of Aspazija in Dubulti. The outstanding representative of monumental and memorial sculpture agreed to the idea, as she had already addressed the theme of Aspazija several times in her work. The monument is made of light grey granite because, as its creator says: "Aspazija is not made in the glare of fame, but in reflection on a life lived, curled up in heavy clothes with her friend – a dear little cat".

On 13 November 2009, the monument dedicated to Aspazija was inaugurated by the President of Latvia, Valdis Zatlers; its creation and installation was financed by the City of Jūrmala. Upon the initiative of the Jūrmala Pensioners' Association, in cooperation with rose breeder Guntis Valants, a rosarium was created at the monument in the summer of 2011. Many prominent Latvian women planted roses, confirming the contribution and importance of women in the country's social and cultural spheres. It has become a tradition to gather at the monument on Aspazija's birthday on 16 March and on Latvian national holidays, as well as to celebrate her birthday at the House of Aspazija.

## ASPAZIJAS IELA 7

Dubulti (formerly – Akas iela)

While living in Dubulti, Aspazija often went for walks along the Dubulti-Mariēnbāde promenade. Part of it can still be seen by walking from the House of Aspazija to the waterfront along one of the shortest and narrowest streets in the city which used to be called Akas iela and now bears the name of Aspazija.

The windows of the south veranda of the House of Aspazija offer a magnificent view of the Lielupe River, while the windows of the north veranda of the second floor offer a view of the sea in the distance. "I also live by the source of my health, the sea, but I have to limit myself to the pleasure of looking at it, because my health does not allow me to swim. Me and the lady are both going to the warm baths of Mariēnbāde. We also sometimes go for walks along the seafont along the promenade," wrote Aspazija's housekeeper Anna Rijniece in a letter to an old friend.

On the way to the sea, at Aspazijas iela 4, you can see the Dubulti Writers' House which is the oldest residence of writers in Latvia. During the Soviet era, it belonged to the USSR Literary Foundation and writers from all over the Soviet Union used to write and relax there. In 1970, a nine-storey building was built next to the historic wooden building – the Writers' House of Creativity and Rest. Now it is a private apartment building. The historical two-storey wooden building belongs to the Latvian Writers' Union and offers accommodation to writers, poets, and translators.



## SCULPTURE "ASPАЗIJA IN DUNES" 8

Aspazijas iela exit by the sea

In September of 2020, a sculpture dedicated to the great Latvian poet and playwright "Aspazija in Dunes" (*Aspazija kāpās*) was unveiled in Dubulti, in the dunes opposite Aspazijas iela. It was designed by sculptor Olga Šilova. In the sculpture, which is also visible from the veranda window of the House of Aspazija, Jūrmala artist Olga Šilova depicts Aspazija in the beauty of her youth. A cat has curled up at her feet, which not only reminds us of the poet's special love for her pets, but also adds a human dimension to the image. The bronze sculpture is placed on a wooden terrace and blends extremely well into the pine forest and dune landscape. It is reached by a wooden footbridge. During the daylight hours, the area is illuminated, creating a tranquil and romantic atmosphere.

## VIŘĒNA ROZENBERGA AND ANNA RIJNIECE'S GRAVESITE IN VECDUBULTI CEMETERY 9

Dubulti, Slokas iela 52

In the central part of the Vecdubulti Cemetery, the House of Aspazija in cooperation with the Jūrmala City Municipality and the Aspazija Heritage Society has installed a memorial sign to Virēna Rozenberga and Anna Rijniece – two women whose lives were closely linked with Aspazija and Jūrmala.

Virēna Rozenberga (1906–1956) was Aspazija's closest relative – the daughter of her brother Zāmuels. The poet helped Virēna get a good education in foreign languages and music, and throughout her working life she worked as a German and English teacher in Jūrmala's schools – Majori, Pumpuri, and Bulduri. The two lived together in the House of Aspazija in Dubulti until Aspazija's death in 1943. Virēna Rozenberga continued to live in the House of Aspazija until her death in 1956.

Anna Rijniece (1864–1945) was a domestic servant of Rainis and Aspazija and for more than 20 years she lived next door to the poets – at first both of them, but after Rainis' death she lived next door to Aspazija in Dubulti House for 10 years.

Neither Virēna Rozenberga nor Anna Rijniece had any heirs or close relatives; the Rozenbergi family died out with the death of Virēna, and Anna Rijniece, having lost both her husband and her son, became the surrogate family of the two great poets.

The story of Virēna Rozenberga and Anna Rijniece is included in the permanent exhibition of the museum "House of Aspazija". The museum continues to explore and study the life of the two women in relation to Aspazija, Rainis, and the City of Jūrmala.





## PINE TREES OF RAINIS 10

Jaundubulti, in the dunes opposite Amatas iela

Not far from the Rainis and Aspazija Summer House in Jaundubulti, on a dune at the end of Amatas Street, was Rainis' favourite resting and working place. Between 1903 and 1905, Rainis, living in Aleksandra prospekts (now Paruks prospekts), often visited the dune, sat in the shade of the pine trees and wrote poetry. After his emigration, this place became associated with the poet in the memories of his contemporaries, taking the name "Pine Trees of Rainis". In 1965, to celebrate the poet's 100th birthday, the tradition of organising Poetry Day events every autumn at "Pine Trees of Rainis" was started. By the beginning of the 21st century, the pine trees of Rainis' time had already begun to die, and the interest group planted new ones in an attempt to revive the site. In 2014, the sculptor Kristaps Gulbis' environmental object "Pine Trees of Rainis" was opened here.



## "RAIŅA SĒTA" 11

Jaundubulti, Poruka prospekts 61 (formerly Aleksandra prospekts 16)

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In 1903, after returning to Latvia, Rainis and Aspazija bought land in Jaundubulti, at Aleksandra prospekts 16, to build a summer house there. Jūlijs Pētersons and Ansis Vitols were hired as builders, but Rainis himself was actively involved in the purchase of materials and building materials, for which copies of documents have been preserved. Rainis and Aspazija spent the summers of 1904 and 1905 in their half-built summer house. Later, Aspazija remembered her time in Jaundubulti as the happiest, as a place where happiness was truly felt.

The summer house became a gathering place for poets, artists, and public figures. Friends and like-minded people, revolutionary intellectuals, teachers, gathered here. For some time, the poet Kārlis Skalbe stayed at the summer house, and Emīls Dārziņš often visited. The writer Augusts Deglavs and the incredibly young Biruta Skujeniece, an aspiring actress, portrayer of the characters created by Aspazija and Rainis, were guests. Rainis and his future biographer Antons Birkerts met for the first time at the summer house.

The poet Kārlis Skalbe wrote about life in the summer house\*: "I remember it was in the summer of 1904. At that time he built a summer house in Jūrmala (Melluži), rented out the ground floor and lived under the roof himself. I visited him here. I remember us walking and talking, climbing on the unboarded beams. They were preparing lunch on a kerosene brazier. How much poetic magic there was in this uncomfortable life! The sea was smoking outside and the whole air was full of big dreams and battle anxiety. I asked what he was writing – Operetta text.

Rainis dramatic poem 'Fire and Night' had a great run. After dinner, he carefully tucked me under his warm arm where I could feel fewer draughts. He also laid down right under the rafters, although he needed warm rooms because he complained of rheumatism in his shoulder."

No doubt the young visitors disturbed the poet, but from his manner and his sparkling wit, which sometimes involuntarily took the form of a rhythmic aphorism with all the necessary rhymes, it was not at all evident that he was being disturbed. It was the same with Aspazija. [...] In the evenings, there were small communal walks to the sea and along the sea – to watch the sunset."

However, the summer house was not just a place to rest. It was here that a passionate and intense period of creative work took place. "1905 gave political work not so much in newspapers as in speeches," wrote Rainis.

In December of 1905, the twenty-fifth performance of Aspazija's play "The Silver Veil" (*Sidraba šķidrāts*) took place at the New Latvian Theatre. This was interrupted by the tsar's gendarmerie, and it became dangerous for writers to be in Latvia. On the night of 31 December, Rainis and Aspazija left their homeland.

Rainis and Aspazija spent fourteen years, from 1906 until 1920, in emigration in Switzerland. At first, hoping to return soon, they tried to keep the summer house on their property, and Aspazija's mother Grieta Rozenberga and sister Dora lived there for a few summers. However, in 1911, financial difficulties forced the poets to sell the house.

During the Soviet era, a pioneer camp named after Rainis was established there. After Latvia regained independence, the building was privatised and changed owners several times. The house is currently owned by the Gavars' family. In 2019, after an extensive reconstruction, complex "Raina sēta" opened its doors here. On the ground floor, there is a 76-square-metre auditorium suitable for a variety of public events. A new commemorative plaque is attached to the building. Rainis' room on the second floor has also been renovated and a small museum with the works of Rainis and Aspazija has been set up.

\* Publication "Our great poet has passed away in eternal peace" ("Jauņākās Zīņas", 13 September 1929)

## MELLUŽI SUMMER HOUSE "GINGERBREAD HOUSE" 12

Pumpuri, Salacas iela 4 (formerly Melluži, 14. līnija)

Rainis rented the small house in Melluži during his years as editor of the newspaper "Dienas Lapa" (1891–1895). In 1894, Aspazija, who lived in Dubulti in the summers with the actress sisters Zēfeldes (stage names – Olga Ezerlauka, Marija Zēberga), was a frequent visitor here. It was Rainis and Aspazija's first summer together. The small house, which the poets called "Gingerbread House", became their oasis of happiness.

On 22 July 1894, in a letter to Rainis, Aspazija writes: "I can already see your veranda with its speckled stall from afar, and I am already at the gate. You come towards me with a radiant smile of happiness, your dear eyes look into me with such inexpressible sincerity, and we are so happy, so happy. The kettle is steaming on the table, the black cat has arrived, our neighbour is calling: "Eide und Leo, kommt – lernen!" And I love you so, so much. I feel as if I am climbing up an endless staircase, becoming more and more complete, bigger, happier."



Rainis, too, remembers the small house by the sea with warm feelings when he was in exile in Slobodsk: The sun is full of sea;

A small house, surrounded by forest: To a land of winter and frost, A warm wave of sighs.

On 10 August 1931, the entry in Aspazija's diary shows that even after Rainis' death, she had not forgotten the happy moments spent together here: "One day I went to Jūrmala to see the little house on 14th Line No. 2 Mellužu prospekts, where our first love and happy summer took place. The house is overgrown with grass. I only picked one nettle."

Today, the house, built in the second half of the 19th century, which tells the story of the architectural and building traditions of that time in Jūrmala, is privately owned.

## ĶEMERI 13

Robežu iela 20

In the summer of 1881, Rainis' older sister Līze Pliekšāne (1854–1897) was treated for rheumatism in Ķemeri. Jānis wrote letters to her, and in June of 1882, when Līze went there again for medical treatment, her sixteen-year-old brother went with her. For five years, the train was the only way to get to Ķemeri, and so it took the two Pliekšāns children through the city of Rīgas Jūrmala. Perhaps it was Rainis' first encounter with Jūrmala, when he looked at it through the train window with the eyes of a young man, still unaware that he would return there again and again throughout his life.



On 18 June 1882, in a letter to home, Jānis talks about Ķemeri and his daily life: "The park is small, the forest is big, but wet, swampy, I always get tired of reading, I have already walked through all the forests, I had gone as far as Jūrmala (5 versts from Ķemeri). At home, we live just as monotonously. I get up at 6 a.m., go to Gulbis' mother to drink milk, then walk until 9 a.m., until Līziņa gets up, we drink tea, Līziņa goes to the shed, when she comes, I go immediately, we eat dinner and spend the evening until 10 p.m., as we see it."

It is not known whether Līze Pliekšāne and her brother rented a room from the locals, or if

they lived in the house with 18 rooms for rent (the building burnt down in 1894). Time has taken many facts with it.

In the 1920s, Rainis often went to Ķemeri. In the summer of 1925, he stayed at a health resort to improve his health. Letters and diary entries attest to this: "I am taking 30 baths in Ķemeri. I am taking an apartment at 20 Robežu Street, near Kronkalns, 2,500 r. Food only 1,500, bath 5,000. You have to go to Riga often."

We can still see the building at this address today, and the oak tree in the courtyard must have seen Rainis too.



ASPAZIJA

Aspazija (born Johanna Emīlija Lizete Rozenberga, 1865–1943) – poet, playwright, public figure – was an extremely vivid, diverse, and controversial personality, who, right from her first poem published in the newspaper "Dienas Lapa", challenged society by signing it with the name of Aspazija, an ancient Greek feminist and beloved woman of the ruler Pericles.

Aspazija's biography still carries with it a tinge of mysticism and legend from her childhood and youth, both in terms of the year and date of her birth (only after the poet's centenary celebrations in 1968 did it become known that she was actually born three years earlier) and the "official" appearance of the name Elza (as stated in her first biographical essay).

Aspazija's childhood was spent in her parents' home "Daukš" in Zālenieki parish near Jelgava. In 1874, she started attending Dorothea Girls' School in Jelgava, and two years later she transferred to the Holy Trinity Girls' Gymnasium.



During her school years, the future poet became interested in classical literature and history and started writing poetry. However, her first play, "The Avenger" (*Atriebēja*) (1887), was banned by the censors.

In 1893, Aspazija was hired by the Riga Latvian Theatre as a "theatre writer", and in 1894 her "longing drama" "Vaidelote" was staged. It is a play about a woman who revolts against the dogmas and prejudices of the age in the name of love.

In the 1890s, Aspazija was the most visible Latvian woman in literary circles. Her poetry collections marked innovative directions of development in Latvian literature. They revealed the making of the modern woman, her struggle for her rights and social equality. By this time, the poet had already linked her life with Rainis, and she fully shared with him the dramatic fate of a political prisoner and exile, where creative "patronage", moral support, and practical help can hardly be overestimated. In 1894, their "romance of letters" began, which was most intense when Rainis was in exile in Pskov and Slobodsk, when Aspazija could only stay with her husband from time to time. The material from the letters has been used in numerous research and literary works, and in 2009 the unique correspondence between these two creative personalities was included in the Latvian National Register of the UNESCO Memory of the World Programme.

The summers of 1904 and 1905, Aspazija and Rainis spent in Jūrmala. At the end of 1905, Aspazija and Rainis went into exile in Switzerland, where they both stayed until the spring of 1920.

Aspazija's contribution to Latvian culture was recognised with the Order of the Three Stars (1927), the Second Class Cross of Recognition (1938), and the highest national award – the Fatherland Award (1939). In 1936, the Prague-based master work "Notable Women of Our Time" (*Mūsu laiku ievērojamās sievietes*) includes Aspazija among 64 women representing 26 countries.

Aspazija passed away on 5 November 1943 at her home in Dubulti. The poet's funeral procession, which was attended by hundreds of people despite the harsh war conditions, was held in the true Aspazija's spirit – it turned into a spontaneous demonstration of protest against the German occupation.

Rainis and Aspazija memorial museums have been created not only in Latvia – Tadenava, Jasmuiža, Riga, and Jūrmala, but also in places of exile – Slobodsk in Russia, Lugano and Castagnola in Switzerland.



RAINIS

Rainis (real name Jānis Pliekšāns, 1865–1929) was an outstanding Latvian poet, playwright, translator, theatre worker, social-democratic journalist, politician, and the spouse of the poet Aspazija. He has a lasting significance in Latvian history as one of the most prominent shapers of the cultural and national identity of his people during the collapse of tsarist Russia and the achievement of Latvian independence.

Born on 11 September 1865 in Varšlavāni, Dunava parish, Ilūkste county, in the family of a manor landlord. He graduated from the Riga City Gymnasium (1883) and the Faculty of Law of St Petersburg University (1888). From 1889 he worked at the Vilnius Regional Court as a judicial candidate, then in Jelgava as an assistant to the lawyer A. Šērste and wrote articles for the Encyclopaedia on legal and social issues.

From 1891 to 1895, Rainis was editor of the newspaper "Dienas Lapa". In 1897, when the arrests of members of the "New Current" (*Jauņā strāva*) started, Rainis was also arrested, accused of belonging to this organisation. From 1897 until 1899, Rainis was in exile in Pskov, and from 1899 until 1903 in Slobodsk, Russia. In the spring of 1903, he returned to Latvia, lived in Jelgava, Riga, and Jūrmala.

During his exile, Rainis translated a lot, mainly plays by world classics – Ibsen, Goethe, Pushkin, Shakespeare – and composed poems.



In 1905, during the revolution, Rainis gave speeches at rallies and meetings. On 31 December 1905, fearing new persecution, he emigrated to Switzerland with his wife Aspazija. They first settled in Zurich, then in Castagnola on Lake Lugano. It was the place where the most philosophical of his collections of poems and plays were written.

In April of 1920, after fourteen years in exile, Rainis and Aspazija returned to their homeland. With youthful enthusiasm, the poet became involved in building the new Latvian state: he was elected to the Constitutional Assembly, where he stood on the Social Democratic list, and was also elected to the Saeima. He was also made an honorary doctor of the University of Latvia, and the former Troņmantnieka bulvāris in Riga was renamed in the name of Rainis.

Rainis was the co-founder of the Daile Theatre (1920) and its first director, from 1921 until 1925 he was the director of the National Theatre, and from 1926 until 1928 he held the position of the Minister for Education, demonstrating the greatest understanding and organisational skills in this field of political activity.

In the last years of his life, Rainis actively participated in the preparation of his collective writings "Life and Works" (*Dzīve un darbi*) (1925–1931). In order to dispel his gloomy mood and improve his health, he often travelled to various Western European countries, Scandinavia, also Egypt and Palestine. However, a strong nostalgia kept drawing the poet back to Castagnola, where the long years of exile had been spent – Rainis visited it in 1921, 1926, and 1927. During his last visit, he wrote a book of memoirs, "Castagnola" (*Kastagnola*) (1928), in which he confesses his love for his second homeland, Switzerland, and expresses deep gratitude on behalf of himself and Aspazija to the land and people that gave him a safe political haven and at the same time became a place of spiritual growth and renewal.

On 12 September 1929, the day after his sixty-fourth birthday, Rainis suddenly passed away, never having completed his intended major work, "Modern Faust" (*Modernais Fausts*), leaving several collections of poems behind, and leaving the materials for more than a hundred unfinished plays in his archives. The most complete collection of his literary legacy to date is his "Collected Works" (*Kopoti raksti*) in thirty volumes and "Translations of J. Rainis" (*J. Raiņa tulkojumi*) in four volumes (1989–1990).

On 15 September 1929, Rainis was buried in the New Cemetery in Riga that was renamed after him on the same day. On 11 September 1932, a memorial colonnade designed by architect Pēteris Ārends was unveiled at the end of the cemetery's main avenue, and in 1935, the sculptural formation "The Waking of Genius" (*Ģēnija pamošanās*) by sculptor Kārlis Zemdegas was unveiled. Aspazija was buried next to Rainis in 1943, with a maroon granite plaque placed near the grave in 1958 that reads "Rainis. Aspazija".

On 11 September 1965, the poet's 100th birthday, a monument dedicated to Rainis was unveiled and the first Poetry Days event was held in Riga, at Esplanāde, establishing a long-standing tradition of public poetry readings.



# RAINIS AND ASPAZIJA IN JŪRMALA

