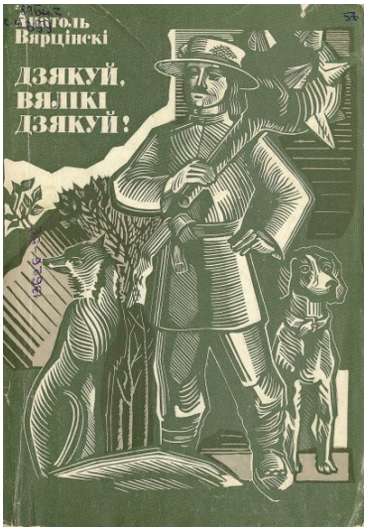
Maria Pushkina, "Entry on: Hephaestus – the Friend of Prometheus [Гефест – друг Праметэя (Hefest – druh Prametėia)] by Anatol' Viartsinski ", peer-reviewed by Elżbieta Olechowska and Elizabeth Hale. Our Mythical Childhood Survey (Warsaw: University of Warsaw, 2019). Link: http://omc.obta.al.uw.edu.pl/myth-survey/item/729. Entry version as of November 21, 2026.

Anatol' Viartsinski

Hephaestus – the Friend of Prometheus [Гефест – друг Праметэя (Hefest – druh Prametėia)]

USSR (1983)

TAGS: Aphrodite Bacchantes Briareus / Briareos Dionysus / Dionysos Hephaestus Hermes Oceanides Prometheus Satyr(s) Themis Zeus



Cover by Michaś Basalyha. Copyright © 1983 by Anatol' Viartsinski, © 2000–2022 by Kamunikat.org (accessed: December 30, 2021).

General information	
Title of the work	Hephaestus – the Friend of Prometheus [Гефест – друг Праметэя (Hefest – druh Prametėia)]
Country of the First Edition	Belarusian Soviet Socialist Republic, Union of Soviet Socialist Republics (USSR)
Country/countries of popularity	Belarus
Original Language	Belarusian
First Edition Date	1983
First Edition Details	Анатоль Вярцінскі, *Гефест – друг Праметэя* (Hefest – druh Prametėia) // *Дзякуй, вялікі дзякуй!: п'есы* (Dziakuĭ, vialiki dziakuĭ!: p'esy), Мінск: Юнацтва, 1983, 102 pp. [Anatol' Viartsinski, *Hephaestus – the friend of Prometheus // Thank you, thank you very much!: plays,* Minsk: Iunatstva, 1983, 102 pp.].
Available Onllne	Available online at kamunikat.org (accessed: June 15, 2018).
Genre	Drama

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.

Target Audience	Young adults (children from senior high school classes, young adults)
Author of the Entry	Maria Pushkina, National Academic Janka Kupała Theatre, maryiapushkina@gmail.com
Peer-reviewer of the Entry	Elżbieta Olechowska, University of Warsaw, elzbieta.olechowska@gmail.com Elizabeth Hale, University of New England, ehale@une.edu.au

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.

Creators



Anatol Viartsinski. Courtesy of Aleksandr Zhdanovich (budzma.by).

Anatol' Viartsinski , b. 1931
(Author)

Anatol' Viartsinski (Анатоль Вярцінскі) is a Belarusian poet, playwright, publicist, critic and translator. He was born in the village of Dziameshkava in Vitsebsk region. He graduated from the Faculty of Journalism, Belarusian State University (1956). In 1956-1962 he was an editorial board member in a number of district newspapers (in David-Haradok, Kamianets, Klimavichy, Rahachoŭ). In 1962 he moved to Minsk and collaborated with the local *Literature and Art* newspaper, was an editor of *Belarus* publishing house, and in 1986–1990 worked as an editor-in-chief at the already mentioned *Literature and Art*. Anatol' Viartsinski used to be a Member of the Writers' Union of the USSR (1964–1991) and is a member of the Belarusian PEN Center (since 1989). In 1990–1995 he was a deputy to the Supreme Council of Belarus, and acted as deputy chairman of the permanent Commission on publicity, mass media and human rights. Anatol' Viartsinski is famous for his poetry collections and journalistic works, he translated foreign plays for theater companies and wrote plays for children, e.g. *Thank you, thank you very much!* (1978), *Say your name, soldier* (1977), *Hephaestus – the friend of Prometheus* (1983, staged in 1984). Anatol' Viartsinski was awarded the State Prize of the BSSR.

Bio prepared by Maria Pushkina, National Academic Janka Kupała Theatre, maryiapushkina@gmail.com

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.

Additional information

Summary

The story begins with a poetic prologue where Prometheus briefly gives answers to some questions and tells his story: "While the audience is getting into the mood for the performance, while the lights are fading out and the tableau curtains are being slowly drawn apart (this time they are drawn apart all too slowly), the dialogue starts, a question followed by the answer. The questions are asked by our time, by our contemporaries, by ourselves; they come from somewhere near, this side of the ramp. The answers are given by the past and they come from somewhere out there, from upstage". After that the action is transferred to the forge of Hephaestus, where Prometheus tells his friend how difficult it is to live on earth and how people suffer after the mighty tyrant Zeus left them with no fire. Friends vow to each other with the strongest oath ("the sacred river") that they "will do everything to give fire to people and will continue to faithfully and eternally act in name of big deeds." Zeus decides to bring Hephaestus back to Olympus and first sends Hermes to him, followed by Dionysus with nectar and ambrosia and by Aphrodite. Hephaestus is tempted, he gets access to the Olympic hearth and immediately shares fire with his friend Prometheus, who decided to live among poor mortal people. Prometheus brings fire to people. Zeus becomes furious, he orders his new servant Hephaestus to chain his friend to the rock and pierce his belly with a cane every day. ("Later on, people's imagination will create an eagle that flies daily to the rock to peck Prometheus' liver. People love such beautiful sentimental stories, but there was no eagle in reality.") Prometheus takes all the blame, and Hephaestus chains his friend to the rock, defeated by the will of Zeus.

Analysis

The play presents a simplified version of the myth about Prometheus with a special attention to the conflict between authority and personality. The image of Prometheus is influenced by the rules of socialist realism (although the play doesn't belong to that period: he accomplishes a heroic deed in the name of human happiness. However, the author isn't focused on Prometheus. Hephaestus instead draws his attention. The rejected god faces a choice between friendship and blessings of Olympus that come along with subordination to the supreme power. The play clearly, though not directly, condemns the choice of Hephaestus who obeyed the tyranny of Zeus because of his love to the people.

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.

The world of mythological characters is supposed to be a representative combination of heroic and romantic features, but the characters' histories are modified for a greater probability of conflict between them (the main characters can be represented as general ideas). So Zeus is a pretentious, uncaring tyrant, Apollo is mentioned to be the ex-lover of Aphrodite, and Hephaestus is ordered to pierce Prometheus' body, which should sharpen the conflict of the play. Combining these generalized features of classical characters the author wants to talk with the younger audience about "true friendship" in difficult circumstance. The details add to creating the plausibility effect, e.g. Prometheus uses a piece of *ferula* to transport the fire. Poetic fragments in the text refer to choral traditions of ancient dramas, although the metrical foot does not correspond to traditions. One can distinguish a prologue with a short description of further events; parodos, which briefly describes the history of Hephaestus and creates the right sublime mood, and exodus with the departure of the main characters and the final words by Prometheus. The structure of society in the play reflects the model of the world that the young audience is supposed to fight against by using their friendship, courage, and selflessness. We could say, that the play didactically embodies the ideology of the times – late Soviet period with it's particular attention to the new generation and it's upbringing.

Classical, Mythological, Traditional Motifs, Characters, and Concepts	Aphrodite Bacchantes Briareus / Briareos Dionysus / Dionysos Hephaestus Hermes Oceanides Prometheus Satyr(s) Themis Zeus
Other Motifs, Figures, and Concepts Relevant for Children and Youth Culture	Conflict Friendship Heroism Hierarchy Individuality Journeys Justice Knowledge Morality Relationships Travel
Further Reading	Trafimchyk, Anatol [Трафімчык, Анатоль], *Беларуская дзіцячая драматургія* [Belarusian dramaturgy forchildren (Belaruskaia

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.

dzitsiachaia dramaturhiia)], Minsk: Памеры: [Pamery] 2012, 128.

Addenda

Genre: Mythological drama. Anatol' Viartsinski describes it himsef as a "mythological drama".

The book's title written with the use of the Belarusian Latin script, łacinka (latsinka): *Hefiest – druh Prameteja*.

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.