Miriam Riverlea, "Entry on: Orpheus and the Underworld (I Love You to Bits) by Luke Jurevicius, Nathan Jurevicius", peer-reviewed by Elizabeth Hale and Daniel A. Nkemleke. Our Mythical Childhood Survey (Warsaw: University of Warsaw, 2020). Link: http://omc.obta.al.uw.edu.pl/myth-survey/item/1139. Entry version as of October 31, 2026.

Luke Jurevicius , Nathan Jurevicius

Orpheus and the Underworld (I Love You to Bits)

Australia (2002)

TAGS: Cerberus Charon Eurydice Hades Katabasis Orpheus Persephone Sisyphus Styx Tantalus Tartarus Underworld





We are still trying to obtain permission for posting the original cover.

General information	
Title of the work	Orpheus and the Underworld (I Love You to Bits)
Studio/Production Company	Vishus Productions
Country of the First Edition	Australia
Country/countries of popularity	Australia, United States of America
Original Language	English
First Edition Date	2002
First Edition Details	*Orpheus and the Underworld (I Love You to Bits)*. Directed by Nathan Jurevicius. Music by Luke Jurevicius, Vishus Productions, Flash animation by Square i, 2002, 3:33 min.
Running time	3:33 min
Available Onllne	vishusproductions.com (accessed: October 19, 2020)
Genre	Animated films, Cartoons, Short films
Target Audience	Crossover (Children/Young Adults)
Author of the Entry	Miriam Riverlea, University of New England, mriverlea@gmail.com
Peer-reviewer of the Entry	Elizabeth Hale, University of New England, ehale@une.edu.au Daniel A. Nkemleke, University of Yaoundé 1, nkemlekedan@yahoo.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.

Creators



Luke Jurevicius by Betsy spine. Retrieved from Wikipedia, licensed under CC BY-SA 4.0 (accessed: February 1, 2022).

Luke Jurevicius (Composer)

Luke Jurevicius is a composer, director, producer and voice actor from Adelaide, Australia. In 1998 he began illustrating children's books, and his work features in more than 400 titles. Working with Blake Publishing and E-Learning, he is the lead voice and narrator for the company's Australian content. Since joining the ABC's New Media division in 2004, Luke has been involved in a variety of capacities in a long list of successful projects, and is the owner of Vishus Productions. The award winning *Figaro Pho* (2009) and its offshoots, *The Adventures of Figaro Pho* (2012) and *The New Adventures of Figaro Pho* (2015), have aired in over 140 countries. In 2019 Luke was headhunted to direct the feature length animation *Arkie*, based on Nathan Jurevicius' *Scarygirl*.

Sources:

vishusproductions.com (accessed: October 19, 2020).

screenaustralia.gov.au (accessed: October 19, 2020).

Bio prepared by Miriam Riverlea, University of New England, mriverlea@gmail.com

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Nathan Jurevicius , b. 1973
(Animator, Director)

Nathan Jurevicius is an Australian artist and illustrator. Born in Bordertown, South Australia, he has Lithuanian heritage. After graduating from the University of South Australia in 1994 he began working as a freelance designer, and has created a range of animations, illustrations, online games and designer toys for adults. One of his best known projects is *Scarygirl*, the story of a cute but odd little girl in search of her origins. The brand has spawned a comic, toys and other products, and an animated feature film is in development. He has travelled extensively, living in London and the United States, and is now based in Toronto, Canada.

Nathan Jurevicius regularly collaborates with his brother, Luke, a composer who wrote the song that features in the *Orpheus* animation. In 2012 they created *Peleda*, a fantasy series and game for the Australian Broadcasting Commission.

Sources:

Official website (accessed: October 19, 2020).

Apostolos Mitsios, *Nathan Jurevicius talks to Yatzer*, yatzer.com, published February 19, 2009 (accessed: October 19, 2020).

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Additional information

Summary

In the animation's opening scene, teenage Orpheus sits on a beanbag, strumming his lyre and singing. It is simultaneously an interior and external space, featuring a TV and overhead lighting as well as trees and wildlife. A host of strange creatures are gathered around him, enchanted by his music. Orpheus and Eurydice are a young emo couple, depicted with elongated heads and sad, tired eyes. He has red hair, a five o'clock shadow, and wears jeans, hoodie and headphones. Eurydice's black hair is adorned with strange flowers that match her pretty red dress. As Orpheus sings the first line of the song, "I – believe – in you – and me – forever...", she is shown being pursued by a hulking black beast; at the same time, a snake bites her ankle. From the wound a cloud of poison spreads, and she dies. On the TV screen, her monochrome corpse, now dressed in skull t-shirt and jewellery, spins into a vortex. Accompanied by his little record player, a feline pet, Orpheus gets into his flowery red and pink van. He drives across an endless landscape before suddenly hurtling off a cliff into a tunnel, in which he is menaced by spooky ghosts.

Orpheus wakes up in the black and white underworld. It is a colourless and dismal place, with strange trees (his van can be seen caught in the branches) and bones buried beneath the ground, which is shown in cross-section. His little record player, which had landed on its back with its legs kicking in the air, flips itself over and follows Orpheus as he begins to walk. On the shoreline he meets Charon the boatman, a haggard bikie figure with sunglasses, handlebar moustache, scars and tattoos. He joins Orpheus in his song, echoing "forever" as he punts across the Styx, with his backpack lantern lighting the way. The river is full of strange skeletal fish, and odd monsters watch their progress from the riverbank. On the other shore is three headed Cerberus, who leers hungrily as Orpheus approaches. But a simple refrain on the lyre lulls the huge beast to sleep.

Via elevator, Orpheus descends deeper into Tartarus. The viewer catches glimpses of the other residents of this hellish place, locked in their eternal punishments. Sisyphus uses his distended skull to push the boulder up the slope; hungry Tantalus snatches at a dangling fruit which is always just out of his reach, and an unknown figure (could it be Arachne?) keeps weaving while a little dog chews at the other end of her handiwork, destroying what she has made, as a spider crawls by.

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Finally, Orpheus reaches the chamber of Hades and Persephone. They sit on grisly thrones, attended by ghosts and monstrous plants. Like Orpheus, they are emo; Hades has a goatee, skinny black jeans and a skull t-shirt, while Persephone has a radical haircut and a dog collar round her neck. From it hangs frozen organ (or is it a fruit?), which, as Orpheus sings and she joins him in a duet, begins to melt. With a pointed look from his wife, Hades joins the song, and Eurydice is brought forth to return to the upper world with her lover.

Holding hands, the couple ascend in the lift. The colour on Eurydice's face is slowly returning as smiling Orpheus turns to look at her. As the other melodies fall away it is clear that she is singing "goodbye forever". A tear trickles down her cheek as she returns to the void. Orpheus returns to the Styx but pauses on the riverbank, looking dejected. His limbs and head suddenly separate and fall away, and he collapses, having literally loved Eurydice (and perhaps himself?) to bits.

Analysis

The *Orpheus* film was commissioned as part of the *Winged Sandals* project, an online educational platform about classical mythology developed by the New Media and Digital Services arm of the Australian Broadcasting Commission in conjunction with staff from the University of Melbourne Classics and Archaeology Department including Chris Mackie, Chris Gribbin and Annabel Orchard. It included several short animated films as well as interactive games, a three dimensional maps of Athenian acropolis, even a fortune telling oracle. Hermes, the god of movement, the only figure with the ability to traverse the boundaries between Olympus, Earth and Hades, was the guide. The website won a number of new media awards, including the "Best of the Best" Aimia Award for Best e-learning or Reference in 2003, the New York Festival's Interactive Awards Gold World Medal in the Education category in 2004, and the Best Storytelling award at the 2004 San Francisco Flash Forward Festival. Sadly, the website, which was a popular resource used in many schools throughout the world, is no longer operational.

One of the film's didactic intentions was to convey the concept of katabasis. In his van, Orpheus enters the underworld through a kind of tunnel vortex, then later descends in an elevator to the depths of Tartarus, where the king and queen of the Underworld sit on their throne. Like Jurevicius' other projects, the animation has an appealing

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psychedelic aesthetic. The narrative cleverly reframes the myth's traditional elements within contemporary emo subculture. Orpheus is moody yet winsome. He has the look and accoutrements of a modern teenager, but plays upon a traditional tortoiseshell lyre. The quirky creatures that are enchanted by his performance are at once disturbing and endearing, with oversized eyes, hybrid elements and lopsided features. Colour is used to great effect in the film, with a bold palette of green, brown, red and blue dominating the opening scene. In the Underworld, Orpheus' bright red hair and blue clothing are conspicuous in the monochrome setting. Eurydice remains a remote figure; an object of Orpheus' grief and longing rather than a character in her own right.

The realm is evocatively depicted as a place both living and dead, with skeletal fish swimming in the River Styx and forests of grim trees covered in twisting vines. A swarm of buzzing flies testifies to the more corporeal aspects of death and decay. As Orpheus traverses a series of weird, dismal subterranean spaces, he encounters the key characters of Hades – Charon, Cerberus, Sisyphus, Tantalus, Persephone and Hades himself, cast in the same punky, emo style. Some of them join Orpheus in performing the simple lyrics of Luke Jurevicius' tragic love song. It is fitting that this myth, about the power of music, is told through lyrics rather than spoken words. The final shocking scene, in which his body falls apart, references to the story of his brutal dismemberment at the hands of the Maenads, but is here rendered as a romantic gesture, as in the film's subtitle, "I love you to pieces".

Classical, Mythological, Traditional Motifs, Characters, and Concepts	Cerberus Charon Eurydice Hades Katabasis Orpheus Persephone Sisyphus Styx Tantalus Tartarus Underworld
Other Motifs, Figures, and Concepts Relevant for Children and Youth Culture	Boys Death Desires Emotions Ghosts Humour Innocence Journeys Judgement Life Loss Love Reincarnation Relationships Religious beliefs Romance Sacrifice Soul Success and failure Teenagers Travel Youth

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Addenda	ABC New Media and Digital Services and University of Melbourne: *Winged Sandals*, 2004 (devised in consultation with Prof. Christopher Mackie and Dr Christopher Gribbin, accessed: July 9, 2020).

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