Hanna Paulouskaya, "Entry on: How Cossacks Became Olympians [Як козаки олімпійцями стали (Iak kozaky olimpiĭtsiamy staly)] by Boris Buevsky, Volodymyr Dakhno , Eduard Kyrych", peer-reviewed by Dorota Mackenzie, Elizabeth Hale and Elżbieta Olechowska. Our Mythical Childhood Survey (Warsaw: University of Warsaw, 2018). Link: http://omc.obta.al.uw.edu.pl/myth-survey/item/586. Entry version as of October 30, 2026.

Boris Buevsky , Volodymyr Dakhno , Eduard Kyrych

How Cossacks Became Olympians [Як козаки олімпійцями стали (Iak kozaky olimpiĭtsiamy staly)]

Union of Soviet Socialist Republics (1978)

TAGS: Ares Cyclops / Cyclopes Hades Mars Olympic Games Zeus



The DVD cover courtesy of Film Video Association “Крупный план” [Close-up (Krupnyĭ plan)] close-up.ru (accessed: February 4, 2019).

General information	
Title of the work	How Cossacks Became Olympians [Як козаки олімпійцями стали (Iak kozaky olimpiĭtsiamy staly)]
Studio/Production Company	Kyivnaukfilm
Country of the First Edition	Union of Soviet Socialist Republics (USSR)
Original Language	Ukrainian / Russian
First Edition Date	1978
First Edition Details	*Як козаки олімпійцями стали* [How Cossacks Became Olympians (Iak kozaky olimpiĭtsiamy staly)]. Directed by Volodymyr Dakhno, written by Volodymyr Dakhno and Eduard Kyrych. Composer Boris Buevsky. Kyiv: Kyivnaukfilm, 1978.
Running time	17 min 35 sec
Date of the First DVD or VHS	The series of animations about the Cossacks has been released by the Film Video Association “Krupny plan” (Close up) in 2010.
Awards	1979 – International festival of sports movies in Leningrad – bronze medal.
Genre	Animated films, Hand-drawn animation (traditional animation)*, Humor, Short films
Target Audience	Children (6+)
Author of the Entry	Hanna Paulouskaya, University of Warsaw, hannapa@al.uw.edu.pl

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Peer-reviewer of the Entry	Dorota Mackenzie, University of Warsaw, dorota.mackenzie@gmail.com Elizabeth Hale, University of New England, ehale@une.edu.au Elżbieta Olechowska, University of Warsaw, elzbieta.olechowska@gmail.com

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Creators



Boris Buevsky , b. 1935
(Composer)

Buevsky Boris (Буєвський Борис; Буевский Борис) – a Ukrainian composer of classical and popular music, author of music for ballets and cinema. His popular music was especially popular in 1960s and 1970s in the USSR. From 1993 he lives in Belgium.

Bio prepared by Hanna Paulouskaya, University of Warsaw, hannapa@al.uw.edu.pl



The portrait of Volodymyr Dakhno courtesy of kino-teatr.ru database.

Volodymyr Dakhno , 1932 - 2006
(Animator, Director)

Dakhno Volodymyr (Дахно Володимир; Дахно Владимир; Dakhno Vladimir) – a famous Ukrainian animator, director, People's Artist of Ukraine.

Volodymyr Dakhno studied architecture (1955) and came to animation in 1960s in collaboration with another architect, Mark Draitsun (also an animator of the "Cossack" series).

The most famous of his animations are movies from the series "Cossacks", which became a trademark of the Ukrainian animation studio "Kyivnauchfilm".

Bio prepared by Hanna Paulouskaya, University of Warsaw, hannapa@al.uw.edu.pl

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Eduard Kyrych , b. 1942
(Animator, Screenwriter)

Kyrych Eduard (Кирич [Кірич] Едуард; Кирич Эдуард; Kirych Eduard; Kirich Eduard) – a Ukrainian animator and a screen-writer. He was honoured with the title of a National artist of Ukraine (2004). He collaborated with Volodymyr Dakhno on the “Cossack” Series.

Bio prepred by Hanna Paulouskaya, University of Warsaw, hannapa@al.uw.edu.pl

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Additional information

Summary

The movie is the fifth in a series about the Cossacks produced by Volodymyr Dakhno between 1967 and 1995. The main heroes of the series are three Cossacks – Grai, the smartest and the tallest; Oko, the smallest one, but brave and a good shot (*oko* means "eye" in Ukrainian); Tur, the biggest and strongest, who is shy and sentimental (*tur* means "aurochs" in Ukrainian).

The movie starts with a scene when the Cossacks are preparing *kasha* (a traditional Slavic cereal omnipresent in fairy tales) in a huge pot sitting on the top of a mountain.

Meanwhile old Zeus is sleeping in his mansion on mount Olympus. He is disturbed by a loud noise from Earth. We see that the noise is produced by wars initiated by Mars.

Zeus, trying to restore silence and to stop the war, switches off the light in his mansion (and the night starts), he turns on the shower in his bathroom making rain and a flood on Earth, he pulls out the plug and drains the seas, but the war continues despite his efforts. (And the Cossacks eat the *kasha* despite the circumstances).

Then, smoking a pipe and looking at rings of smoke, Zeus decides to organize the Olympic Games (shouting "Eureka!"). The Cossacks see the rings and set out for Olympia.

Zeus builds a stadium with a football field inside and invites everybody to the games: *Ласкаво просимо* (Welcome, Laskavo prosymo). Warriors throw away their armour, undress and run towards the stadium. The Cossacks train preparing for the games.

But Mars intervenes another time and starts besieging the stadium.

Zeus, full of anger, calls Hades on the phone and asks him to lock up Mars in a far away cell. Two Cyclops bring Mars to the underworld, and he is put behind bars. However Hades hangs the key close to the cell and Mars asks Sisyphus, who rolls his stone in vain, to open the cell. Sisyphus helps Mars and is closed in the cell himself. Both are happy – Sisyphus can rest, Mars can go back to Earth.

Meanwhile the Olympics are about to begin, and the Cossacks go to

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Olympia to participate in them. They meet Mars, when he comes out through a manhole.

The Olympics start and teams from different cities are presented in the stadium. Zeus is watching through a telescope. We see teams of Attica, Sparta and Troy.

Mars has new plans to disturb the Olympics and the Cossacks try to stop him. They fence (Grai), wrestle (Tur), throw discus (Tur). The Cossacks win every time. Mars escapes in the river rowing on a log, and the Cossacks pursue him swimming and rowing. Mars leaves his helmet and tries to escape into the mountains. The Cossacks use the helmet as a sledge and run to Olympia after the god.

They meet him in an entrance of a temple in Olympia, and a boxing match begins between Oko and Mars. Zeus and the public come to see the competition. Oko wins.

At that moment Hades and the Cyclops come and take Mars to the underworld. The Cossacks receive three laurel garlands from Zeus.

Analysis

This was the first Soviet animated movie dedicated to the Olympics of 1980.* The movie uses the most popular topic in the USSR in the context of the Olympics – peace and war. The Olympics are established in order to bring peace, and the quarrelsome Mars tries to disturb them. The Cossacks are the heroes who stop Mars and allow the Games to go on. They do it not by fight, but by competing in sporting manner.

Choosing the Cossacks as characters is important. The first reason was that the Cossacks series was already famous in the USSR. Another important reason was the Ukrainian tradition of connections between the Cossacks and antiquity. There was a poem written by Ivan Kotliarevsky in 1798–1842 that was a burlesque interpretation of Virgil's *Aeneid*. It was written in Ukrainian and was extremely popular in Russia and Ukraine and became a classical text of Ukrainian literature. According to Kotliarevsky, Aeneas is a Cossack and all his adventures are presented in a satiric, parodic way. There was also an animation produced in 1969 by Nina Vasylenko based on this poem (*Пригоди козака Енея* [Adventures of Aeneas the Cossack (Pryhody

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kozaka Eneia)]). So Volodymyr Dakhno follows a tradition recognizable by the audience.

The movie is very simple and entertaining, and it has no didactic character.

However it is based on an assumed knowledge of the Greek mythology – for example, Sisyphus or Cyclops are introduced in the movie without an explanation.

The movie is silent, only subtitles are added in Ukrainian, however the title of the movie and titles are in Russian. The Cyrillic letters are stylized on the Greek alphabet to underline the character of the topic.

Though all the events are happening in Ancient Greece, the world of Zeus is very contemporary – there is a telephone, a lift or a sewage system.

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* Borodin, Georgyĭ [Бородин, Георгий], “Олимпиада как мультфильм” [Olympics as an Animation (Olimpiada kak mul'tfilm)], *Сеанс* [Seans (Seans)] (2004): 55–57, online resource http://seance.ru/blog/chtenie/olympics_animation/ (accessed on February 01, 2018) .

Classical, Mythological, Traditional Motifs, Characters, and Concepts

Ares Cyclops / Cyclopes Hades Mars Olympic Games Zeus

Other Motifs, Figures, and Concepts Relevant for Children and Youth Culture

Adventure History Humour Sport War

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Further Reading

Borodin, Georgyĭ [Бородин, Георгий], “Олимпиада как мультфильм” [Olympics as an Animation (Olimpiada kak multfilm)], *Сеанс* [Seans (Seans)], (2014): 55–57, online resource http://seance.ru/blog/chtenie/olympics_animation/ (accessed February 01, 2018).

Paulouskaya, Hanna, “Vergil travestied into Ukrainian and Belarusian”, in *The Afterlife of Virgil*, in Peter Mack and John North, eds., *Bulletin of the Institute of Classical Studies*, Supplement, 136, London: Institute of Classical Studies, 2017, 101–122.

Pushkina, Maria, "Entry on: Aeneid. Travestied Inside Out into Little Russian language by I. Kotliarevsky [Енеида. На малороссійскій языкъ перелиціованная И. Котляревскимъ (Eneida. Na malorossiĭskiĭ iazyk perelitsiovannaia I. Kotlarevskim)]," peer-reviewed by Elżbieta Olechowska and Susan Deacy, in *Our Mythical Childhood Survey,* Warsaw: University of Warsaw, 2018. Link: http://omc.obta.al.uw.edu.pl/myth-survey/item/513.

Addenda

The Remaining Production Credits

Art director – Ivan Mazepa,

Animators – Adolf Pedan, Efrem Pruzhansky, Nina Churylova and others,

Sound director – Ihor Pohon,

Camera man – Anatoliy Havrylov,

Composer – Boris Buevsky.

Information about the film in movie databases:

www.kinopoisk.ru (accessed: January 31, 2022),

www.imdb.com (accessed: January 31, 2022),

kino-teatr.ru (accessed: January 31, 2022),

animator.ru (accessed: January 31, 2022).

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