

Alexander Ostrovsky

(1823-1886)



1

¹ "Alexander Ostrovsky", Wikipedia, http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/File:Wassilij_Grigorjewitsch_Perow_003.jpg

Biography

Alexander Ostrovsky was born on March 31 [April 12, New Style], 1823, in Moscow, Russia. Being the son of a government clerk, Ostrovsky attended the University of Moscow law school. From 1843 to 1848 he was employed as a clerk at the Moscow juvenile court.

Ostrovsky wrote his first play, *Kartiny semeynogo schastya* ("Scenes of Family Happiness"), in 1847. His next play, *Bankrot* ("The Bankrupt"), later renamed *Svoi lyudi sochtemsy* (It's a Family Affair, we'll Settle it among ourselves), written in 1850, provoked an outcry because it exposed bogus bankruptcy cases among Moscow merchants and brought about Ostrovsky's dismissal from the civil service. The play was banned for 13 years.

In the 1860s, Ostrovsky wrote several historical plays. His main dramatic work, however, was concerned with the Russian merchant class and included two tragedies and numerous comedies, including the masterpiece *Bednost ne porok* ("Poverty Is No Disgrace"; 1853). His *Snegurochka* ("The Snow Maiden"; 1873) was adapted as an opera by Nikolay Rimsky-Korsakov in 1880–81. Ostrovsky is generally considered the greatest representative of the Russian realistic period.

Ostrovsky was closely associated with the Maly ("Little") Theatre, Moscow's only dramatic state theatre, where all his plays were first performed under his supervision. He served as the first president of the Society of Russia Playwrights, which was founded on his initiative in 1874, and in 1885 he became artistic director of the Moscow imperial theatres. The author of 47 original plays, Ostrovsky almost single-handedly created a Russian national repertoire. His dramas are among the most widely read and frequently performed stage pieces in Russia.

Ostrovsky died on June 2 [June 14, New Style], 1886, in Shchelykovo.²

² "Aleksandr Nikolayevich Ostrovsky", **Encyclopedia Britannica Online**, academic ed., www.britannica.com/EBchecked/topic/434486/Aleksandr-Nikolayevich-Ostrovsky

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