

## BEHIND THE SCENE OF THE HARMONIYA THEATRE

*Rendered and edited by Iryna Perelyha, April 2018*

Theatrical stage. Open backstage. The girls and boys dance, sing and move with ease on the stage dressed in nice bright suits. Then they can hear the applause from the thrilled audience.

At least once in their lives, children imagine themselves as actors, heroes from beautiful fairytales with miraculous transformations on a great stage with an orchestra. This is possible thanks to the children's musical and drama theatre "The Harmoniya" (meaning "harmony") where the opera company and the orchestra are real.

The children's musical and drama theatre "The Harmoniya" has been on the stage for more than 10 years and is located in Kherson music school №1. Olena Mladzievska established it in 2002. She is a talented, energetic and creative person.

Children's opera is a very interesting and at the same time a very serious art genre. Musical theatre always gets children and adults to create another reality and gain new experience, to delve into the creative search for their individual manner of performance while working in a team. All kinds of creative activities such as singing, dancing, playing a musical instrument and acting can be the key that makes children's soul sensitive to the world of art and improves their natural skills. Performing a harmonic play is a very difficult thing. It requires communicative skills, listening to others and understanding their minds, working in the team and demonstrating great respect and tolerance to each other. Musical theatre applies higher standards of quality to all the creative tasks and forms, the habit of perfection in everything. Olena Mladzievska considers: *"Theatrical art has infinite potential in shaping a child's personality. A child learns and finds his/her place in this world through playing games. Acting is a game"*.

Olena Mladzievska created her own unique curriculum programme. There are such subjects as the Basics of the Art of Acting, the Basics of Dramatic Speech and the Basics of Dramatic Movement, Rhythm and Dancing, Solfeggio and a few optional subjects.

It started in 1999 when Olena Mladizievaska proposed to establish a new musical and theatrical class on the basis of Children's Music School №1 in Kherson. The headmaster Volodimir Kovalenko and the school administrator Nelli Levchenko as his advisor both supported that idea. Gradually, willing teachers began to appear in the team: the concertmaster Milada Stepura, the choreographer Galina Tarabarova, the vocal class tutor Tamila Duzheva, the violinist Larisa Chesakova, the cellist Lilia Stepanova, the concertmaster Svitlana Belyaieva, the costume designers Tetyana Manzhosova and Svitlana Bondarenko, the choreographer Olena Shkodenko. Thanks to the chamber orchestra "The Hileya" of Kherson's Regional Philharmonic society (headed by Vladislav Belyavskii), the theatre reached a new level of performance.

The repertoire of "The Harmoniya" is very interesting and diverse. The junior pupils prepare to show musical tales and musicals. The senior pupils participate in the staging of opera performances. "The King's Breakfast" by the composer Georgii Portnov and "Leliya" by Lesia Ukrainka (music by Evhen Karpenko) are especially loved by the audience.

The high level of performing makes this theatre an invariable favorite in all theatre festivals and contests. The first victory was the diploma of the Laureate of the First Degree in the regional contest "The Theatrical Spring" in 2010. That same year, the group received the Diploma of the Laureate in the nomination "The Best Musical Performance" in the Open International Festival of Youth and Children's Theatres "The Southern Masks" in Mykolaiv. They also won in the International festival-contest of youth and children's creativity "Danko" in Odesa and the VI International festival-contest "The Autumn's Stars" and received the Diploma of the Laureate of the Second Degree. The highest prize – the Grand-Prix, was awarded to the theatre "The Harmoniya" for the opera performance "The King's Breakfast" in the regional contest of youth and children's theatrical groups "Melpomenochka".

**Based on:** *«Займайтеся дитячою оперою – і у вас це вийде!» Олени Матлашевської*

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