

# Volodymyr Ksenzytskii about the Ukrainian Agugugu Children's Channel

## "Children understand that a war is going on, but they have plenty of children's issues on their minds"

Is there a demand for children's programmes on television and theatre shows while a war is going on out there? Under such circumstances, how do you keep a focus on your work and your social mission? We asked director and producer Volodymyr Ksenzytskii, head of the Ukrainian Agugugu Children's Educational and Entertainment Channel.

Volodymyr Ksenzytskii: 15 years ago, me and two girls - Tutta and Niusia - embarked on our journey when releasing a children's programme called TELEMILITRIAMDIIA. Our start was challenging, none of us had any prior experience. Each of us acted as a director, which sometimes drove us in opposite directions. However, with time, things improved and we all found our best position in the team.

### What is yours?

Ksenzytskii: I took on the role of team leader. My strength lies in generating ideas, so my task is to come



up with creative concepts. Tutta focuses on finding the right people to bring those ideas to life, while Niusia handles scripts and props. We invested a lot into self-improvement. For instance, I learned the importance of active listening and understanding the needs and desires of my colleagues. Their aspirations included creative expression, touring with our work, and a strong desire to secure a place on TV screens. Meanwhile all this has been achieved.

**It started with producing TV programmes for children. Nowadays they are broadcasted on the national children's TV channel, you run a popular YouTube channel and your large-scale live shows for children travel around the country. What is the secret behind your success?**

Ksenzytskii: Always articulate the goals you have set and compare them with what you have achieved. You might be pleasantly surprised. In just the last 1.5 years, we have produced



two major shows, conducted tours in Ukraine and Germany, and produced over 500 episodes of various TV programmes. Last May our #Agugugu YouTube channel reached the mark of 15 million views.

**When the war started, you answered the call for voluntary work, to which you dedicated a vast amount of energy and time.**

Ksenzytskii: It started for a simple reason: my brother was at the front-line, where he was confronted with several pressing issues. We got together and pondered how to make ourselves useful. We connected with a volunteer centre for the distribution of humanitarian aid, and we found a playful way to deliver the goods to children. Subsequently, we started receiving calls for help from other locations. Then, a call came from Germany, suggesting to organise events for





children who fled their homes. Moreover, in order to occupy our heads with work, we started to record a new programme called DOCTOR LIKARCHUK. We had nurtured the idea for quite some time, and now the moment felt right to bring it to life. Work became a shield against depression.

**While touring through Ukraine and Germany last year, what is it that Ukrainian children came to tell you?**

Ksenzytskii: Children are still the same, both those who live in Ukraine and those who left. They don't talk extensively about the war. It's more the parents living abroad that are pushy about it. Of course the topic

is on their mind, but kids will always be kids – they talk about bright moments, about computer games... I believe, regardless of the circumstances, children should draw pictures of rainbows and the sun, they should embrace childhood things. Kids understand that a war is going on, but they do not dwell on it. They still have plenty of purely children's issues on their minds.

**How challenging was it emotionally to make this Ukrainian tour?**

Ksenzytskii: We always strive for delivering a high-quality product; it is our belief that children should be exposed to good aesthetics under

any circumstance. We firmly believe that working for children requires we must give it our all, and create a complete theatrical experience. During the tour, we had to travel a lot, and there were cases when the military wanted to serve summonses, right at the checkpoint. Not everyone understands the significance of our work. Another challenge is how to deal with air alarms. How to react and where to seek shelter? Surprisingly enough, during the two tours we did in Ukraine, only once in Chernivtsi were we confronted with an air alarm. Despite a two hour delay, the concert still took place.

**Nowadays, what do you like more: a live show with an audience or recording a TV programme?**

Ksenzytskii: For us, one cannot go without the other. Live encounters make it possible to come up with something new. From our contacts with children and parents, we understand what is relevant and needed at the moment. The joy of producing a television product is to watch how an idea grows into a final product, which gives a sense of creative satisfaction.

**You have been nurturing the idea of creating a children's TV channel for quite some time. How far along is**



**the plan, and how will it differ from existing Ukrainian children's TV channels like "Pixel" or "Plus plus"?**

Ksenzytskii: Unfortunately, we're only at the 'idea' level. The plan is very expensive and we still lack the resources. Nevertheless, I have several key principles in mind. Firstly, the content should be produced in Ukraine and in the Ukrainian language. Secondly, I want to give the existing children's studios, that already know how to create quality content, the opportunity to gain constant airtime. This will help them to grow. Ukraine boasts a vast number of children's studios, and it is vital to me that they can showcase their creations. This will act as a catalyst for the development of children's audiovisual creativity across Ukraine. Naturally, there will be a rigorous selection process, but it is crucial for children to see the top and understand the mechanism of how to reach it. This is the goal I have set and which I will now pursue step by step.

– Volodymyr Diagilev