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Cathedral, Salaam Bombay kids put on power-packed show

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Students of the Cathedral and John Connon School, along with the Salaam Bombay Foundation Arts Academy, put up a power-packed show in Lower Parel's Blue Frog on Saturday, to raise funds for underprivileged children.

Bringing the house down with their rocking performances, 42 children from the Cathedral and 24 children from the Salaam Bombay Foundation presented the fourth edition of their hit charity music concert, WE. The concert, initiated by the then Class VII students of Cathedral, was first held in 2013, to raise funds for the children studying in the Arts Academy and coming from underprivileged backgrounds.

This year, the two-hour show brought together different genres of music, including jazz, pop and contemporary. It was a testimony to the children recommitting themselves to the cause of under-

privileged kids growing up in Mumbai's slums. It also aptly showcased the role that art plays in the development and overall growth of children.

Aditi Parikh, vice-president of Communications and Development, Salaam Bombay Foundation, said, "This initiative has been instrumental in bringing children from two different sections of the society on the same platform. From a personality change to a career choice, music and dance are an intrinsic part of the lives of children from both institutions. Our Arts Academy builds confidence in kids, fosters creativity and creates different vocations in arts. We have been working tirelessly to empower children with an active education in arts, along with an academic focus."

It all started in December 2013, when 25 Class VII students of the Cathedral School formed a group called WE. The brainchild of the then seventh grader, Mrinalini Somani, the idea was born out of a volunteering experi-

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Students of Cathedral and John Connon School as well as Salaam Bombay Foundation Arts Academy perform at an event to raise funds for underprivileged kids, in Lower Parel on Saturday —Abhinav P. Kocharekar

ence with the Salaam Bombay Foundation. An inspired Mrinalini mooted the idea to her batchmates, who instantly got on board. The rest, as they say, was history.

After the group enthralled the audience with their performance, an elated Mrinalini, now in Class X, said,

"We believe all children are created equal — some just lack the opportunity to develop their talents and showcase them. So, our group from Cathedral is working hard to set this right. We have felt so encouraged after the tremendous response that the concert received in the last three years. The appreciation and warm response has encouraged us to put up a bigger show this year."

The funds raised in the musical galas have directly benefited the academy, by providing nearly 500 talented and deserving underprivileged children an opportunity to receive advanced training in their chosen vocation, bringing them one step closer to their dream.

The children of the Salaam Bombay Arts Academy, too, were basking in the glory of their highly appreciated performances. Devendra Shakya (15), a student of the Salaam Bombay Foundation Academy of Dance, who performed at the event, had been a part of it last year as well.

Speaking about his experience, Shakya said, "When I joined the academy four years ago, my father was not very supportive because he wanted me to focus on my studies. But after he saw my passion for dance, he became my biggest fan. Performing at the concert is such a wonderful experience, because it is a great platform for us to showcase our talents and it is such a great cause."

The boy from Jogeshwari has been a part of Shaimak Davar's choreographed productions and has also worked in Marathi film Por Bazaar.