



A CHILD IN SCHOOL HAS A FUTURE

WE back with music in its heart and a bigger cause at its core

Mumbai, August 20: When the curtains went up at Mumbai's iconic Royal Opera House on Sunday, the audience watched with bated breath as 72 young artists from 23 of Mumbai's best schools and colleges took to the stage. For the fifth consecutive year, WE – the hit charity music concert -- lived up to the audiences' expectations and proved once again that music and art can make a difference to the lives of so many.

This year, the concert was even grander than before with a higher influx of talent as students from prestigious city schools like Bombay International School, Cathedral & John Connon School, Aditya Birla World Academy, Jamnabai Narsee School, Navy Children School, Dhirubhai Ambani International School, B.D. Somani International School and DSB International School took part. Performing alongside were the children from Salaam Bombay. From rock to pop to jazz western pieces and the very popular Bollywood section, WE spread magic as children from two very different worlds came together on a common stage for a common cause.

Mumbaites, including celebrities Diana Penty, Bollywood Singer Shaan Mukherjee, Nikita Gandhi and other eminent personalities were present in large numbers to cheer the children as they recommitted themselves to the cause of underprivileged kids growing up in the city's slums.

Said celebrity Diana Penty, *"I was blown away with what I saw today...the atmosphere, the excitement, the performances. But what is incredible is the hours of dedicated effort put in to create not just a performance of such high standards but one with such a heart. It's rare to find children today with such a sense of commitment and engaging as responsible, contributing young adults."*

Said Aditi Parikh, VP, Communications, Salaam Bombay Foundation, *"Since the past five years, WE has played a very big role in bridging the gap between children from completely different backgrounds. It is indeed a great thing that these children have been at it together for so long for one common cause and this year many more have joined them. The Salaam Bombay Academy of the Arts, has always believed in leveraging innovative education tools such as Dance, Theatre, Sports, etc, to teach children life skills such as teamwork, discipline, respect and leadership necessary for them to lead better, healthier lives. WE has provided talented and deserving underprivileged children a chance to receive advanced training in their chosen vocation, bringing them one step closer to their dream. WE has played a stellar role in improving their lives."*

WE was born in 2013 when then seventh grader Mrinalini Somani put across the idea of collaborating for a musical concert with the children from Salaam Bombay Foundation to her Cathedral friends. They immediately got on board and five years later, WE is going from strength to strength.

Mrinalini, now a 11th standard student, said, *“WE till now has made an impact on the lives of 530 children and our next target is 1,000 children. I came up with the idea after my interaction with the students of Salaam Bombay Foundation when I realised that although we belonged to different backgrounds, we were similar on so many levels. The biggest difference, though, was that I had opportunities and they didn’t. WE was driven by the idea of making a difference to the lives of the children who have ample talent, but no opportunities.”*

Meanwhile, the children from the Salaam Bombay Academy of the Arts are over the moon after having performed to their heart’s content. **Sujata**, who performed at the concert this year, could not contain her excitement. *“I am extremely lucky to have got a chance to perform today. I am grateful that my talent has been recognised. I know that my performance is going to make a difference to the lives of many children like me.*

The evening ended on a high note as a contented audience went home with a tune on their lips and a promise to make the world a better place.

About Salaam Bombay Foundation

UNLOCKING THE POTENTIAL OF UNDERPRIVILEGED CHILDREN THROUGH INNOVATIVE EDUCATION

Salaam Bombay Foundation started in 2002 to work with children in Mumbai’s slums. These children live in extreme poverty and in “at risk” environments. They drop out of school facing the risk of child labour and substance abuse, tobacco use in particular. Given these ground realities, Salaam Bombay Foundation (SBF) has harnessed the ability of alternate, innovative education tools to teach team work, discipline, respect and the coping skills necessary to ensure that children develop into well rounded personalities and are able to meet the challenges they face and take leadership roles within their communities. Our in-school programme develops strong leadership and advocacy skills in children and enables them to say “no” to tobacco while campaigning for their right to a tobacco-free environment. Over 50,000 Salaam Bombay children in Mumbai city alone and over 14 million children across six states in India are change agents at school and in their communities. Our after-school academies and skill-development initiatives focus on teaching children vital life and work skills so they can stay in school, contribute to their families, refuse tobacco and other drug use, and grow their worth and identities as capable, confident leaders and citizens.
