

Concert with a Cause

Not every concert can change lives, but WE can.

“The playlists on my phone confuse people,” says 18-year old Mrinalini Somani, and they would, especially when Mozart, The Wombats and Sufi music play one after the other. Somani though, is no scatterbrain teenager. Instead, for the last several years, she has been responsible for organising a concert that shares its vision with the broader vision of the NCPA – keeping the arts alive, and not just for a privileged few. WE is a unique music concert that brings together students of Mumbai’s private schools and the children of Salaam Bombay Foundation on one stage to put together a world-class showcase of music and dance. It gives participants a chance to train with experts, share the stage with celebrities and most of all, to make a difference.

WE began as a small event in 2013 by the then-12-year-old Somani, to raise a few hundred rupees for the talented children of the Foundation, along with her classmates. “I have been helping out at Salaam Bombay for a long time,” she says. “In 2012, I had the opportunity to work with the students of the arts academy. Through this interaction, I realised that we were very similar and they had just been dealt a different hand when it came to circumstances. Therefore, I decided I wanted to make a bigger impact and WE was born.”

The initiative supports resource-poor children who attend the Foundation’s academies. So far, WE has raised over a crore in the past seven years. This is a significant amount that has helped 1,728 children perform on stage and get into academies for dance, theatre and musical training. Some of them have even found their vocation and professional paths in film, television and media. Somani seems to have found her calling too. Initially trained in Hindustani classical music, she fell in love with Western classical music over time. “I started learning jazz, musical theatre and classical forms of singing in Western music. Two years ago, I moved to the UK where I continued learning and performing,” she says. She has been part of The Madrigal Society at Sherborne Girls, a prestigious group of the best choral musicians that has performed in a variety of places – from small churches



Here and below:
Snapshots from
previous WE concerts



The initiative supports resource-poor children who attend the Foundation’s academies

in the village of Yetminster to the large cathedrals of Vienna.

Every WE concert has been bigger and better than the one before. This year the Somani is excited about the future. “It has taken us seven years to get here and I couldn’t be more thrilled to perform at the NCPA,” she says. “It’s been the most amazing experience and I have learnt so much, not only in terms of stage equipment, lighting, sound but also how to be a leader, interact with people and manage a show of this scale. I’m really grateful that at the age of 18

I have had the opportunity to have this experience.” This year, WE will feature a large number of participants from private schools in Mumbai. The SOI Academy Orchestra will also be performing. The styles of music performed ranges from rock, pop, jazz, classical and alternative, to Bollywood and world music. What remains unchanged is the passion to give it all. WE will make it count.

WE The Musical Concert will be presented on 17th August at the Jamshed Bhabha Theatre.