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This year, WE will rock online



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Ready to rock: The charity rock concert will be streamed live on Facebook on Saturday.

The global platform will, virtually, bring 150 children from diverse backgrounds together

The eighth edition of WE, a charity rock concert backed by Salaam Bombay Foundation (SBF), goes online this year. The concert, to be streamed live on Facebook on Saturday, will see the participation of 150 students.

Since its inception, the concert has raised over ₹1 crore, enabling more than 1,700 children to not only showcase their talent but also get into dance, theatre and music academies.

This year, the concert will involve young artistes from universities in the U.K. and U.S., which will be a global platform for hope and optimism – a stage that will, virtually, bring two sets of children from diverse backgrounds together.

It was in December 2013 that Mrinalini Somani, along with her friends from the Cathedral and John Connon School studying in Class VII formed WE, with a belief that all children are created equal – some just lack the opportunity to develop and showcase their talent.

The children from SBF – an NGO started in 2002 to work with 12 to 17-year-olds growing up in Mumbai’s slums where they live in extreme poverty and in an ‘at-risk’ environment – attend municipal schools that do not have the resources to give them individual attention, career guidance or access to activities that stimulate the mind.

Ms. Somani said, “This is about bringing people together and this time by having it online we’re bringing together 150 students from all over the world. This is about helping kids who are just as old as us but don’t have the resources we do. This year, you will see them perform from their homes with the biggest smiles and determination because every single participant really truly cares about the cause and what we stand for.”

Aditi Parikh, vice-president, communication, SBF, said WE 2020 was going online because of the unique circumstances created by COVID-19. “To date, 2,500 scholarships have been raised through WE and these make world class training in arts available to poor youths growing up in urban slums. This year’s focus for fund raising has been slightly different. The funds raised will go towards ensuring essential supplies and dry ration to the children and their families. At the same time we want to ensure that there is continuity of their education,” Ms. Parikh said.

Kashish Saroj, a student of Salaam Bombay Academy of the Arts, said during lockdown she had been practising at home. “I was very excited when I came to know that the concert will happen this year. Though I faced a few difficulties while recording my dance at home, I didn’t give up. Lesser space and community noise was a hindrance to my recording. I had to make multiple recordings to get the best out of me. I always look forward to the concert, as it gives a platform to students like me, to showcase their talents,” she said.