

# Sing as if everyone's listening

Catch the annual children's choir festival by The Stop-Gaps Cultural Academy's weekend show with over 400 talented young singers



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THE kids are back, and they are ready to dazzle and dazzle you with their talent. The Stop-Gaps Cultural Academy's fourth edition of its annual children's choir festival Younger Than Springtime 2023 presents a new theme Mad About Musicals at a Bandra venue this weekend.

Set to take the stage are nearly 405 children from over 12 city choirs, from schools and institutions including Don Bosco International School, Happy Home & School for the Blind, Symphony Voices Juniors Choir, Villa Theresa High School, The Stop-Gaps Junior Choral Ensemble and the Ektaal Children's Choir all the way from Goa.

These young stars arrive with big dreams and bigger voices that unravel year after year on The Stop-Gaps stage. Children's choir conductor Premila Coutinho tells us, "The children look forward to showcasing their vocal capabilities as they rehearse challenging pieces for this year's festival, including Johnny one note from Babes in Arms, and Ease down the yellow brick road from The Wizard of Oz and the Wiz; both fit in perfectly with the theme."

Mehli Mehta Music Foundation's (MMMF) The Singing Tree Choir will bring onstage over 50 students from its strength of 125 junior, middle and senior group singers. Led by conductors Rohini Basu and Khursheed Printer, the group has put up a range of shows including performances with maestro Zubin Mehta. After recently concluding their annual concert, the ensemble of 11 to 18-year-olds is keen to take up their next concert here this weekend. Basu remarks,

"We will be performing two very different pieces from the musicals Wicked and The Greatest Showman, which will showcase the diverse and extensive range of the choir's repertoire." Returning to the festival for their fourth consecutive performance, the choir will be accompanied by 12 musicians from MMMF's Senior String Ensemble who will switch roles between the performances, from singing to playing instruments.



Rohini Basu



Felix Hug

**"The children look forward to showcasing their vocal capabilities"**

Premila Coutinho



Speaking about a diverse range of genres, The Beatz Crew from Kanakia International School, Chembur are no strangers to switching up their performances. Led by conductor Felix Hug, who moved to



(Clockwise from top) The Stop-Gaps Juniors ensemble; The Beatz Crew, Kanakia International School; Ektaal Children's Choir from Goa

Mumbai in 2008 from Germany, the choir has sung blues at the Mahindra Blues Festival earlier this year, and composed a rap song as a tribute for COVID-19 warriors in 2020. This festival, they will "use music as a tool for change," as Hug says in their rendition of songs from Sarafina!, a South African musical about the 1976 Soweto uprising, and Les Misérables. Following the school's motto to 212° The Extra Degree that encompasses the effort to go the extra mile, Hug tells us that the children are dedicated to rehearsals while juggling extracurricular activities, studies and extra classes.

Similarly, The Stop-Gaps Juniors meet every Sunday for rehearsals where they begin with vocal exercises before shifting focus to singing in harmony. "Once the groundwork is done, the pieces are then put together along with choreography. Finally, we fine-tune the output with emphasis on quality and consistency," Coutinho shares.

While the sheer effort put in by these young performers ensures the audience of a great show, the festival also offers more exposure for the choral groups. "We are excited to interact with other choirs backstage and see them perform onstage; both are great learning opportunities for young musicians," Basu concludes.



Children from the choir group, The Singing Tree, Mehli Mehta Music Foundation, perform at a concert

ON September 9: 6.30 pm  
AT St Andrew's Auditorium, Bandra West.  
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