

“We got so many claps!”

You can't help but love them. With their cute little smiles, innocence and unadulterated cuteness, the children of Teach For India lit up the Kala Ghoda stage

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Thirteen students (aged eight) performed a lively skit—and had the audience twirled around their tiny fingers. They were so little that they could barely be seen on stage, but they could be heard all right! (Kids have a habit of yelling into microphones, these little ones didn't disappoint us) Not a hint of nervousness was evident as they performed like veterans. The kids were deliciously humorous, at times unintentionally so. Without any fancy dialogues or costumes, they won our hearts!



Fresh after their performance, the children are bubbling with excitement. “*Didi*, did you see us? Was it nice?” they inquire noisily. Of course they know they were good, “We got so many claps!” They reveal that rehearsals for the skit began only the previous day. “We had to try very, very hard yesterday,” says eight-year-old Anchita, widening her eyes. But their school is well equipped with a microphone, so they could get comfortable before their Kala Ghoda outing.

Teach for India

The entire performance was put together by Teach For India. This is a nation-wide movement of college graduates and young professionals who will commit two-years to teach full-time. “Teach for India aims to educate the children living in poor homes. In Mumbai, nobody can be defined as poor, therefore these we call these children as ones hailing from low income households,” shares Vaibhav Mathur, an engineer turned teacher at Teach for India.

The scale of the movement is enormous. “We have over 87 classrooms in Mumbai which are spread over in different localities, mostly in slum areas. These children are from the Malad classroom. Each class has 45 students but we have brought only 15 children to perform this small skit,” reveals Mathur. The performance provided wonderful exposure to the children. “These children have never even visited a festival like this, forget performing on stage,” exclaims Mathur. “We just wanted them to be their original selves and let the performance flow,” he adds.

Beyond old school

“A very new concept of teaching that we have introduced in our classrooms is learning through movies. Like all Indians, these kids love cinema! This way, children don't lose interest in daily studies,” says Shveta Raina, a Teach for India fellow. And yes, the magic is working. The entire lot of kids absolutely adore school. “I never, ever miss school. My favourite class is geography and I like to play football!” exclaims an exited Gaurav.

In perhaps the best possible tribute to the Teach For India fellows, most of their students want to be teachers when they grow up. Teachers, take a bow!

(Pic: Mithila Mehta)