

# They're going all out to electrify

Everything about ChildAid 2012 this weekend has been scaled up, reports **CHRISTOPHER LIM**

**C**HILDAID always packs a punch in terms of young talent, but the annual charity concert is set to up the ante in its eighth year in terms of scale, energy and dazzling visuals.

This year's theme, *The Electric Edition*, hints boldly at what the audience can expect, but it could as easily be called The Big Edition because everything's been scaled up – from the size of the hall to the breadth of the programme.

Show director Jeremiah Choy said: "This is the biggest ChildAid by far, in terms of performers – we'll have more than 200 performers on stage. The venue is also the biggest by far."

He is a trained lawyer and theatre veteran who had directed the show for the first time last year.

"Biggest" also means longest, at more than 2½ hours. And for the first time, the show on both nights (Dec 7 and 8) will have an intermission.

Corporate sponsorships and ticket sales contributed to more than \$2 million being raised this year, trumping last year's record of \$1.88 million. ChildAid benefits The Straits Times School Pocket Money Fund (SPMF) and The Business Times Budding Artists Fund (BAF).

In terms of quality, it is going to be hard to fall asleep mid-show. ChildAid has always had a strong classical component to showcase young musicians playing pieces that would give some adult musicians headaches. This year's show balances that classical tradition with a strong contemporary note.

Mr Choy, 50, said: "We have curated more edgy and electrifying acts."

## Contemporary sizzle

One of the flashy highlights is Dice, an all-Korean boy band from NUS High School. Burning up the dance floor will be Hip Hop IG from Republic Polytechnic, comprising boys and girls aged 17 to 19. And Super Duper Junior, made up of boys aged nine to 12 from Anglo-Chinese School (Primary), will prove that youth is no impediment to prowess in hip-hop or K-pop dance moves.

This contemporary sizzle will not come at the expense of the classical programme, though, which will feature local flautist Ong Yi Ting, nine; Japanese pianist Nakajima Hidekazu, 17, an alumnus of last year's ChildAid Asia in Tokyo; and virtuoso Singaporean violinist Gabriel Ng, 18, who is



**Child power:** (Clockwise from above) Nine-year-old local flautist Ong Yi Ting will play a classical piece at the concert. Also performing at ChildAid 2012 will be (left to right) Ruth Mathews, Sarah Tan, Cheryl Bains, Hanis Nazierah, Siti Syakirah Noble and Isabel Graves. And busy practising dance moves for a mash-up of hits by Queen are ITE show choir members, including Nur Mariana Muhammad Ismaeil (in yellow).

studying music at London's Guildhouse School of Music and Drama, but will be back to remind everyone why he won the 2006 HSBC Youth Excellence Award.

Scale up to the groups: Siblings Jaz Loh, 14, and James Loh, 15, fit right into this year's *Electric Edition* theme, with their electric cello and violin respectively. Then there's the trio, Fireworks, on piano, cello and violin.

Speaking of trios, this will be the first ChildAid to feature three pianos on stage at the same time. A massive Steinway Model D grand will be flanked by two Model B grands; the \$298,000 Model D was bought by Keppel Reit from sponsor Steinway Gallery and will be used in ChildAid until 2014.

The three Steinways will be played by finalists from this year's inaugural Southeast Asia Steinway Young Piano Competition regional finals: regional grand prize winner Hsieh Wei-ting,



PHOTO: LIM YAOHUI/THE STRAITS TIMES

16, from Taiwan; Nguyen Le Binh Anh from Vietnam, 15; and Gun Chaikittiwatana from Thailand, 15. They will play Mozart's Piano Concerto No 7 in F major, K242, for orchestra and three pianos.

ChildAid music director Iskandar Ismail said: "It's rare to have works

written for three pianos, and it's a very exciting piece of music."

The 70-strong Orchestra of the Music Makers (OMM) will support the concert under the baton of OMM music director Chan Tze Law, but will get its own turn under the spotlight for a performance of *The Mothership*

by American composer Mason Bates, who also DJs under the moniker DJ Masonic.

This just scratches the surface of this year's programme. "*The Electric Edition* theme indeed comes across very well throughout the show," said Mr Iskandar.



PHOTO: DESMOND WEE/THE STRAITS TIMES

ChildAid 2012 will feature an LED screen for the first time, with lighting designer Roy Chooi working closely with multimedia artist Brian Gothong Tan to craft this year's look. The Show Company has sponsored the concert's production and multimedia set-up.

Mr Tan, relishing the opportunity to use the stage-spanning screen to craft visual backdrops for the performers, said: "We basically have 10 times more multimedia than we did last year. It'll really be like a professional pop concert. Although each item's multimedia design is unique, all of them will add to the overall *Electric Edition* theme, which is really about increased energy."

## Two helpful funds

These last few weeks, rehearsals have been taking place at SPH Media Centre in Genting Lane; from today, they will move to the actual venue at Marina Bay Sands (MBS) integrated resort, enabling work on the lighting, multimedia, staging and props to be fine-tuned.

The SPMF was started 12 years ago to raise pocket money for underprivileged children. Eligible primary school students receive \$55 a month each; those in secondary school get \$90. In January, the SPMF set aside \$1.5 million to extend financial assistance to current and past beneficiaries and their siblings to go on to junior college, polytechnic and the Institute of Technical Education (ITE).

The BAF was started by The Arts House in 2005 and has been adopted here by *The Business Times*. It aims to help children between the ages of seven and 19 explore their artistic talents. The cause is not just about producing child prodigies or arts professionals, but also about using the arts to inspire creativity and self-belief in underprivileged children. The Arts House set up the Little Arts Academy in 2008 with fees funded by BT BAF.

ChildAid 2012 is co-organised by *The Business Times* and *The Straits Times*. MBS is the venue partner, while Citi and HSBC banks are the main sponsors. The sold-out show will be held at MBS's Grand Theater on Dec 7 and 8, at 7.30 pm. Follow ChildAid on Facebook ([www.facebook.com/ChildAid](http://www.facebook.com/ChildAid)) for event updates.