

Bigger ChildAid show this year at MBS theatre

■ BY ANG YIYING

CHILDAID, the annual fund-raising concert, will be staged at the end of the year at the Marina Bay Sands (MBS) Grand Theater, which makes it the largest-scale show in the concert's eight-year history.

The concert, which features performers aged 19 and below, is organised by The Straits Times and The Business Times in aid of two children's charities.

The ST School Pocket Money Fund helps children from low-income families with their school-related expenses, while the BT Budding Artists Fund gives an arts education to underprivileged but artistically gifted kids.

At a thank-you tea for last year's crew, performers and volunteers yesterday, ChildAid 2012 chairman Alvin Tay said: "It will be a rare opportunity for our artistically gifted children to perform at a world-class theatre while helping to raise funds for two children-related charities."

Mr Tay is BT editor and also chairman of the BT Budding Artists Fund.

The past seven editions of ChildAid have raised \$5.86 million in total for the two causes. This year's show will be held on Dec 7 and 8, and MBS has agreed to be the show's venue partner for at least three years.

Straits Times editor Warren Fernandez said: "Each year, this charity concert by the young and for the young gets bigger and better. The talents we have uncovered over the years have been just amazing. And the MBS Grand Theater will be a big platform to showcase these budding talents."

The 2,155-seat Grand Theater, where the hit musical *Wicked* is now playing, will be the biggest venue to host ChildAid to date. Last year, the show was held at the 1,600-seat National University of Singapore University Cultural Centre.

Mr George Tanasijevich, president and chief executive officer of Marina Bay Sands, said MBS is proud to have the opportunity to showcase talented young people at its Grand Theater.

"Our partnership with ChildAid is all the more meaningful as it provides disadvantaged youth with the resources they need to get ahead in life," he said.

Separately, MBS presented more than \$71,000 – raised via ticket sales to *The Chronicles of Narnia: The Exhibition* held over three months at the integrated resort – to the ST School Pocket Money Fund yesterday.

The creative reins of this year's ChildAid continue to be helmed by renowned local musician and Cultural Medallion recipient Iskandar Ismail, who has been with ChildAid since 2006.

Mr Iskandar said that with the Grand Theater's state-of-the-art lighting and sound systems, the pressure is on the creative team to deliver.

Mr Jeremiah Choy of Orangedot Productions is the show director for the second consecutive year. He said the new venue is an exciting playground for the creative team.

This year's ChildAid is expected to call for entries around April. Some past performers, like School of the Arts student Charlene Su, are already planning to apply. Charlene, 16, who sang in last year's ChildAid, said: "I felt it was very meaningful. We got to perform and help children."

For more information on ChildAid, go to www.straitstimes.com/childaid



School of the Arts students Charlene Su (left), 16, and Sophia Joe, 12, performing at the thank-you ceremony for last year's ChildAid crew, volunteers and performers, at the Singapore Press Holdings Auditorium yesterday. The two were performers at last year's ChildAid concert. ST PHOTO: JASON QUAH