

# Special Children Create A Pulsating Evening

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There was foot-tapping music, an eclectic audience and a celebrity singer, but what made the concert different was the cause behind it.

In its fifth year, the Action for Autism (AFA) Benefit and Awareness Concert is an

attempt on the organisation's part to spread consciousness about autism among people.

As the founder, Merry Barua said: "Autism is not mental retardation, it requires special treatment, training and counselling for the families and the autistic children. We are trying to reach out to people who need support, and also fight for the recognition of the disorder."

Present at the concert was Sushmit Bose, unfortunately down with laryngitis. Sushmit is known for his inimitable style of music that can be termed as urban folk. And though he could barely speak, he performed a song specially composed for the autistic children.

"I met this autistic child and was delighted at how positively he took life. The song is for all children like him," Sushmit revealed, before performing the lilting number, *My golden high*. Sushmit has been known to lend his voice for various causes — he believes that celebrities should advocate social causes and "bring about some change somewhere".

Autism is a disorder of the brain that causes a lifelong developmental disability, affecting a person's communication and social abilities. Yet, it was the autistic children who stole the show. Egged on by the audience, consisting largely of family, friends and well wishers, and in spite of their serious disabilities, the kids had the atmos-

phere charged and pulsating as they sang many popular numbers.

A little one, who saw a mike for the first time, seemed completely fixated by it. While another little girl, suffering from severe visual

overstimulation, actually had to cover her eyes with a cape.

Amitava Basu, a senior student of the special school run by AFA, with a high degree of autism, was a delight to hear and even had Sushmit remarking: "He is absolutely marvellous and the way he is picking up the octaves, it's really great".

Photo: SANJEEV VERMA



Autistic children perform at an awareness concert