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6. Anirudh Nair

Theatreperson and musician, 24

Even off stage, one is struck by Anirudh Nair's tremendous energy. "Energy" underlines and explains all that Nair has done so far: from being a founding member of the band Half Step Down (he's currently not connected with it) to being co-founder of the theatre group Wide Aisle Productions. The common thread running through his ventures is a sense of fun. Wide Aisle's popular Shakespeare in Schools project, for instance, uses minimal props and song and dance to introduce children to the

Bard's works. "Shakespeare did not write so that he could be studied in classrooms, he wrote to be played!" Nair said. "And that is exactly what we endeavour to do."

But Nair mixes this playfulness with rigour. Recently, he trained in the ancient theatre tradition of kutiyattam in Kerala and studied theatre practice at the University of Exeter in the UK. Apart from creating "exciting yet simple theatre", he hopes to see Wide Aisle Productions playing its part in helping to preserve Indian classical theatre and dance forms.



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7. Edward Lalrempuia

Fashion stylist, 27

When Edward Lalrempuia arrived at the National Institute of Fashion Technology in 2002, he had no idea what he wanted to do. In fact, before leaving his home in Mizoram, Lalrempuia had even considered sitting for the civil services examination. "I loved fashion," he said, "but I didn't expect to be involved in it. Then, I discovered styling in my second semester."

Since then, he's put in the leg work and the sweat and it's all paying off. Lalrempuia went through the grind of being backstage at fashion shows. He started off helping the choreographer duo of Aparna [Bah] and Tanya [Lefebvre], until noted fashion photographer Vishesh Verma gave him his first break in 2004, styling the Nokia ad campaign. After that, while he was still at

NIFT, he worked for some of the best photographers in the field: Prabuddha Dasgupta for Numero Uno, Bharat Sikka for LG and Tarun Khiwal for Unistyle.

"I think that I brought a different perspective to styling and fashion. For me, it's not 'work', it's what I love," Lalrempuia said. "Being young is also a privilege – you have more time, fresher ideas and more drive." He worked at Elle for four years and is currently with Vogue. At Vogue, he's been a stylist for shoots by photographers like Jean François Campos and Pascal Chevalier. Lalrempuia plans to take time off soon to study accessory design. His ideas include "more custom jewellery. I think that's really missing here."

But all these are stepping stones. Lalrempuia is extremely ambitious. "I want to be like Anna Wintour [editor of American Vogue]," he said. "She's the most powerful lady in fashion. I want to be very important, and I want to make an impact both in India and internationally."



8. Faridkot

Band, youngest 21, oldest 29

Yes, we know this isn't a person. It's a band. But we're going to count it as one hydra-headed person in the hope that this talented bunch of youngsters will stick together or, in the eventuality that they don't, their individual sounds will be built on the foundation of what exists today.

The band Faridkot came together in January 2008 in a completely organic



fashion. Each of its members has been on the circuit for a while now, doing his own thing. Keyboardist Akshay Raheja (21; also part of the rock band Frequency) started jamming with guitarist Rajarshi Sanyal (21; also part of the blues and funk band Hypnosis) as they wanted to start a new project. Sanyal knew bassist Gavin Pacheco (29; also of Hypnosis) and tagged him. The trio needed a singer and they all thought of Indian classical singer Inderpreet – or IP – Singh (24), who was part of Artists Unlimited. Singh, in turn, roped in drummer Reuben Narain (28). They came to be Faridkot, because everyone “liked the name, that’s all”, as Raheja put it.

Of the many bands in the capital, we picked this new entrant because their music is truly melodic, the lyrics are fantastic (they sing in Hindi) and it’s really difficult to box the band into a genre. (The band describes its music as confused pop.) Faridkot also won plenty of fans when it made it to the finals of Channel V’s Launch Pad show in Mumbai.

There’s one other factor here, and a chuckling Pacheco put it best: “It’s our sex appeal. The way we sprout our chest hair... We take care to nurture it. We’re all older women kind of guys.”



9. Govind Singh Environmentalist, 25

That a botanist would receive news of the felling of around 1,000 trees in Delhi with concern shouldn’t be surprising. But, since March of 2007, when all those trees were cut down in Delhi University’s North Campus, Govind Singh hasn’t exactly been wringing his hands. The Delhi Greens blog (www.delhigreens.com) was an outcome of the events of that month. That was a collaborative effort, and the blog survives. The organisation itself took shape and was registered in April 2008.

Since then, in May last year, Singh coordinated the Delhi Youth Summit on Climate, and Delhi Greens was associated with the public arts project 48c.Public.Art.Ecology late last year. They provided all the volunteers for the festival (around 80). Singh is particularly proud of the initiative that Delhi Greens came up with for the festival, the Urban Ecotour. “The underlying idea [of the tours] is to connect the people of Delhi back to the city,” he said. The tours themselves threw up urban situations of the most piquant sort, such as people who thought they knew the Connaught Place area being flummoxed when they saw Agrasen Ki Baoli, and hardened Dilliwalas admitting they’d never actually been down to the Yamuna. Outside Bhuli Bhatiyari Park (near Jhandewalan), some policemen tried to stop the group from entering. The people in the tour just waved the cops aside, to Singh’s delight, asserting their right to enter a “public space”. These tours have ceased for summer, but will be back once the weather improves. His vision for Delhi Greens is intimately connected with his plans for Delhi’s future. Down the line, he wants to be part of an “effective urban planning watchdog”, working to ensure that “the only development Delhi witnesses is sustainable”. He’s committed to Delhi in the long term. As he said of this city, “I simply cannot think of an alternative – that exists or may ever exist!” The good news is that he’s currently studying Environmental Studies, right here at Delhi University. He’s serving his apprenticeship where he hopes to work, and that can only be a good thing.



10. Gautam Bhan Queer activist and urban planner, 28

You wouldn’t quite expect Gautam Bhan to be on this list, accomplished as he is. Is he really that young? He’s been around for what seems like forever. He’s editor of the well-appreciated Sexualities series by Yoda Press, up to nine books now and counting. (Bhan called it the best job in the world, “being able to publish the work you admire”.) He has worked with the sexual rights advocacy group PRISM, and was one of the people who came together to form the Nigah Media Collective. He was part of the team that organised the various editions of QueerFest, Delhi’s big queer arts festival, and the Queer Pride Parade, a big success last year.

Then, he’s an urban planner, and a very serious one. He fought to bring to popular attention the gross

injustice of the Delhi government's resettlement plans for residents of the Yamuna Pushta slums. "We keep talking about making a world-class city. To me, that [a world-class city] should be one where the urban poor have some sense of dignity," Bhan said. "In Delhi today, that dignity is impossible and it should shame us." He's now working to finish a PhD on urban studies. Meanwhile, he said, he's also part of "a very exciting new endeavour to build a new university focusing on urbanisation and urban studies in India".

In the queer scene, he said, being young and irreverent was actually a strength. "Queer activism gave me the faith that things can change if you fight, and change fast. Seeing [the pride parade] last year was also a moment when I felt deeply proud of Delhi as a city," he said. "I would say that the queer movement has done far more for me than I have for it." Working to influence policymakers may have been a little harder. "I wish we took younger people more seriously in India. There is something to be said about learning the ropes slowly and what you learn from experience, but there is also something very important about the irreverence and tradition-shaking instinct that younger people have," Bhan said.

He'll be bringing all of that energy back to Delhi as soon as he has his doctorate. Then on, he'll be "in Delhi, finding something new to fight about and organise around! For better or worse, this city is under my skin and I love it."

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