



The Children's Hour

kids public radio

Falu

TCH CREW: What makes pirates such good singers?

TCH CREW: I don't know, what?

TCH CREW: They can hit the high Cs! [Laughter]

TCH CREW: It's time for the Children's Hour, Kids Public Radio!

[MUSIC, Joy Spice Soul (ft. Falu & Fyütch), Lucy Kalantari & The Jazz Cats]

[00:03:42]

KATIE STONE: This episode was originally recorded in 2022. Joy Spice Soul. That's brand new from Lucy Kalantari & The Jazz Cats. On that is also Fyütch and our guest, the Grammy winner for this year for Best Children's Release, Falu, who is with us today on the Children's Hour. We're so excited. Hello, it is the Children's Hour. I'm Katie Stone. I'm here with a whole lot of great kids on Zoom. Hello, kids.

TCH CREW: Hello. Hello. Hello. Hello.

KATIE STONE: And who's with us today?

TCH CREW: Hello, it's Cade. Hi friends, it's Melissa. Hi, it's Sonia. Hi, it's Ethan. Hi, it's Lily Mae. It's Soray. Hi, it's Beth. Hello, it's Amadeus.

KATIE STONE: Well, thank you all for being here, all of you listeners out in listener land and all these great kids on Zoom. Today on the Children's Hour, we have a Grammy winner, the winner of this year's Best Children's Release. It's Falu, and her release is called A Colorful World, and Falu is a beloved raga musician from India, and she is transforming Indian music with a brand new genre: children's music.

She's also a performer who goes back eleven generations and she's with us today on the Children's Hour right after her Grammy win. We're thrilled she's here. We cannot wait for you to meet her. But first we want to play something for you just so you get a sense of what she sounds like. This is Falu right here on the Children's Hour.

[Music, My Train, Falu]

[00:09:19]

KATIE STONE: This is the Children's Hour, and our guest today is Falu. Welcome to the Children's Hour!

FALU: Thank you.

KATIE STONE: Thank you so much for being with us. The kids have a lot of questions for you. Let's go over to Sonia.

TCH CREW: How many songs do you play, and what's your favorite?

FALU: In one album or just generally?

TCH CREW: Generally.

FALU: Well, I practice every day, right? And I think I've, I must have played at least 20,000 songs in my life.

KATIE STONE: What!? Wait, you must have done much more. You have two kids CDs that I know of. I bet you've done a lot more than that. Tell us more about what you did before you did kids music.

FALU: So I, you know, I was born and raised in India. And I grew up there and I studied music since I was three years old. So Pre-K and every day I sang, scales sometimes, sometimes melodic ragas, which are the Indian scales, sometimes just fun songs made for children in my language, Gujarati. And then, you know, as I grew up, I started doing Indian classical music along with American pop rock music. So I drew freely from both and then made my own genre called Indie Hindi, wherein the songs are in English, but they're always based on some kind of Indian ragas or melodic scales.

And when I came to America, I got a great chance to learn songwriting. So I started writing my own songs, what I felt, the emotions that only music could express, and how I could say it with music and words rather than just speaking. So I started making music like that, and I have three or four albums for grown ups. Before I released my children's album, you can check them on Spotify or any streaming services. One is called Falu, one is called Someday, one is called Forest Road, one is called Nearly Home. And the other two are the children's albums: are Colorful World and Falu's Bazaar.

KATIE STONE: We're going to play something off Forest Road. This is our guest Falu right here on the Children's Hour. Lots more coming up.

[MUSIC, Hori, Falu, Sita Ram Sita Ram, Krishna Kumar]

[00:19:14]

KATIE STONE: This episode was originally recorded in 2022 when Falu won the Grammy for Best Children's Release.

TCH CREW: You're listening to the Children's Hour. Kids Public Radio. We'll be right back.

[BREAK]

[00:20:00]

[MUSIC, Masala, Falu]

[00:22:27]

KATIE STONE: Masala is from Falu's first children's record, which was called Falus Bazaar. Over the break, Indian Spices was Pottington Bear and Sita Ram, Sita Ram. That's a whole lot of fun. That is an oldie but goody, that's Shantanu Moitra and Krishna Kumar. Falu is our guest today. She just won the Grammy for the Best Children's Release. That's her release called A Colorful World. We'll hear more from that later, but we still have a lot more questions from the kids in our crew. Let's go to Amadeus.

TCH CREW: What inspired you to start making children's music?

FALU: Becoming a mom. When I became a mother, you know, in our culture, there is a saying, when a child is born, a mother is born, right? So they are both born at the same time. And my kid went to preschool and came home with questions like, Mom, "Why is our food yellow?" And that's obviously because we use lots of spices. And lots of tumeric and we have a lot of aroma in our food and he didn't understand it when he was four years old, so he wouldn't take the yellow rice that I would make for him to school because he was like my friends are saying "What is this yellow rice?"

So I didn't have any way to answer to him that this is a South Asian culture, which is so old, three, four thousand years old, and you have inherited it so beautifully. Then he would say, "Why am I brown?" And I'm like, "Because we come from a country called India. And all of everybody who was born there have brown skin and black hair." So all of these questions led me to

start writing songs as answers to all of his questions that he brought home from preschool. And that's how my journey of writing music for kids started because of all the questions that my boy asked me.

KATIE STONE: I love that. What a gift you're giving all kids, doing that. And all of us who listen to you because your voice is so beautiful. I want to play something here. The Hulululu Bus.

[MUSIC, The Hulululu Bus, Falu]

[00:28:15]

KATIE STONE: Isn't that beautiful? That's our guest Falu, who's with us today on the show. She just won the Grammy for the Best Children's Release. Oh, I love that.

FALU: You know what you like about that song is the microtones. So in our music, there are more than 12 notes. Notes that are not on the piano, between the white and the black key. We have them. For instance, you will hear a minor, minor third. Let me show you how that works, right? So, [Singing] la la la, all of those microtones, I have incorporated and brought it to my kids albums. So kids can hear more than 12 notes. So in Hulululu, you will hear the nuances of that style of music that I've learned. So, [Singing] Bus goes to Hulululu, Hulululu, lu lu lu.

KATIE STONE: Yeah, it's not really all the way down a half step.

FALU: Order steps, right? So, [Singing] Bus goes to Hulululu, Hulululu, township. In the bus, bus, bus. All of those things, they are very subtle nuances from the eastern part of the world. And I wanted to introduce those to you guys, to kids, to make you aware of scales that are not always played in America. But that they exist in the other part of the world that there are more than 12 notes. In Indian music there are 22 notes and in Arabic music there are 44 and more notes. So out there, there's a lot of

notes that we don't even know how to listen to. The first album was just a little introduction to explore the different notes from the world.

KATIE STONE: And, and maybe could you do a scale of 22 notes?

FALU: Yeah, yeah. Of course. Of course. Okay. So let me demonstrate you the very, very minor third and the very, very minor sixth. So if you have [Singing] Do, Re, Mi, Fa, Sol, La, Ti, Do, right? That's your scale. A normal scale. Everybody knows [Singing] Do, Re, Mi, Fa, Sol, La, Ti, Do, right? In Indian language, the name of that solfège is a little different and we call it, [Singing] Sa Re Ga Ma Pa Dha Ni Sa. That is how we sing. I'll do it one more time. [Singing] Sa Re Ga Ma Pa Dha Ni Sa. In those third and the sixth. Okay, so [Singing] Sa Re Ga Ma Pa Dha Ni Sa.

KATIE STONE: Beautiful! You're listening to The Children's Hour. That's Falu. She's our guest, and we're going to play a lot more from her. This is coming off of her Grammy winning release, A Colorful World.

[MUSIC, Crayons Are Wonderful, Falu, Homeward Journey, Satish Vyas]

[00:38:30]

KATIE STONE: In the background from a CD called Puttamayo Presents India. This is Satish Vyas with Homeward Journey, and you heard Asha Bhosle and Mahendra Kapoor. That's from a movie soundtrack, in case you couldn't tell, called Purab Aur Pachim. And that was Twinkle Twinkle Little Star, done Bollywood style. And before that, from the Best Children's Release this year on the Grammys, that was Falu. And the release is called A Colorful World. That was Crayons Are Wonderful. We've got a lot more with Falu right after this.

You're listening to the Children's Hour. We'll be right back. The Children's Hour produces learn along guides that cite and meet national education

standards for many of our episodes. Find them at ChildrensHour.org/podcasts.

[BREAK]

[00:40:00]

[MUSIC, Yara, Falu & Karyshma]

[00:43:29]

KATIE STONE: Yara is Falu & Karyshma. That's from a CD called Someday. And you're listening to the Children's Hour. Our guest is Falu. She just won the Grammy for the Best Children's Release. And we're just delighted she's with us right now. The kids still have a lot more questions for you.

TCH CREW: How old were you when you started writing music?

FALU: When I started writing music, I was 18. When I started singing, I was three.

KATIE STONE: Did you come from a musical family that knew that you had talent at three years old, or did you just come out singing like an angel and your family said, "Wow, Falu has talent."

FALU: No, my mother is a singer. So yes, I come from a very musical family. My mom was a classically trained singer and she used to sing in a national radio, like NPR in India. And my grandma was also a singer, but she never made - In that time, those times - they couldn't like sing, you know, publicly. So she used to sing and coach my mom. And then my mom started singing professionally. And then she, the minute I opened my mouth and I sang seven notes, she's like "Done!" She's going to be my disciple and she's going to learn. And then she started training me since I was - I was not even speaking when I started singing. I was that young.

KATIE STONE: Wow, that is really a baby practically. Did you have children's music that you listened to growing up in India?

FALU: Let me share with you something really shocking. Children's music genre does not exist in India. I'm the first one to introduce it to my country.

KATIE STONE: What?

FALU: No, there is no concept like that. We, we have nursery rhymes that we are passed on from generations to generations. Grandma singing goes to us in our languages, but there is not a community of artists that will sit down, keeping kids in mind and write for them, It does not exist.

And my, I have been interviewing with a lot of Indian publications because I want to bring this genre to India. To my own country because Children there listen to Bollywood music, and sometimes it is not always appropriate for their age with the lyrical parts of what they're listening. So I'm trying to completely shift the paradigm and have them think about what their kids are listening. Because when we give them parts of unity, diversity in mind, inclusion, acceptance and tolerance. This world is going to be better place because they are the future citizens. And the values we give them in their childhood blossoms and makes this place better for everybody. So I'm trying my hardest to present and introduce and inspire young artists like myself to write music for kids in my country.

TCH CREW: What is your favorite part about singing?

FALU: My favorite part about singing is that I totally forget the world. I go in my own little world of seven notes, 12 notes, 22 notes, whatever you may want to call it. And I forget about the war that is going on, the COVID that's infecting us, the problems that everybody has in their daily lives. When you go to music and listen and you absorb the positive energy that musical notes give you. Everything else is okay. Life is okay. And the peace and happiness that I get when I sing is something I never want to lose.

KATIE STONE: Speaking of happiness, this is Falu's song, Happy, from the Grammy winning CD, A Colorful World, right here on the Children's Hour.

[MUSIC, Happy, Falu]

[00:50:30]

KATIE STONE: That's Falu, she's our guest. That's the Grammy winning release called A Colorful World. Melissa has our next question.

TCH CREW: What are you doing to keep the traditional cultural music into kids to not only American kids, but also the kids in India?

FALU: So our way, the way we learn music is not anything like an American kid would learn music. You know, here you have schools, they go to Berkeley School of Music and there's institutions. It's just now that India is starting to have schools. But our music traditionally, since 5,000 years have been handed and passed on from one generation to the other. I am the 11th generation of carrying on this traditional classical North Indian music, and I am passing it to my son, who is a 12th generation, a kid from America, New York, born at Cornell hospital. He is actually really learning and deeply putting himself in this ocean of Indian classical music because if he doesn't do it, he will not be able to pass it on and my school of music will die. So it is a responsibility of anybody who learns this music to pass it on.

We do it orally. We do not write our music. So you know how Mozart's compositions can be passed on by just reading. We don't read, we memorize everything. So I know a thousand scales and improvisation of those scales on the spot. And that is what we learned. So in, for instance, you have a major scale, right? [Singing] Sa Re Ga Ma Pa Dha Ni Sa. What computations and combinations you can spontaneously create and improvise in that scale is what we are trained for. A little bit like jazz, but not really jazz. So for instance, if you take four or five notes, [Singing] Sa Re Ga Ma Pa, what can you do in the four-four beat? 1, 2, 3, 4, 1, 2. [Singing]

Anything like that, right? So that is our training because we don't read and we don't, we're not allowed to repeat a variation or a permutation or a combination. So if I do [Singing] Sa Re Ga Ma, I cannot repeat that again.

KATIE STONE: So you're not allowed to repeat in the same song?

FALU: If you are taking a combination of notes, right, [Singing] Sa Re Ga Ma, one time in that whole song, you cannot repeat that. You have to be creative and innovative and make combinations and create permutations and phrasings that are different. You have to put your emotion, aesthetics, your imagination, it's called Khayal, imagination of what you think that scale can look like.

KATIE STONE: Our guest today on the Children's Hour has been the extraordinarily talented Falu. Her recent release, A Colorful World, won the Grammy for Best Children's Release just a couple weeks ago. Falu, before we let you go, do you have any parting advice for the kids listening?

FALU: Yes. My son wants to be an astronaut and he wants to go to the space and he wants to bring Mars, make Mars the best tourism, uh, next center for tourism. Right. And I want him to become an Indian musician. So he says, Mom, I'm going to sing on space in the, in the stars and in Mars. And why is that not nice.

Then I think about it and I say, yes, for a child to go anywhere, there should be no limit for music to just be bound on earth. Music is universal and it has no boundaries. So for all of you, your life has should have no boundaries, should have no limits. Don't feel afraid to pursue your dream. If a girl from Mumbai can come to America, learn the language. Learn the culture. Learn how to write songs in English. Learn how to keep her heritage and share everything else that she has imbibed. You can do it too. Dream big. Never give up. The sky is also not the limit, but the universe is here to listen to your voice. So if you have a story, please share it. Say, don't be afraid. Take the risk. Go, go far, go far. And if you fall, We will be here to hold you.

KATIE STONE: Great advice from Falu, our guest, the Grammy winner this year. Thanks for being with us, Falu.

FALU: Thank you for having me.

KATIE STONE: This is Nicodemus with Falu, right here on The Children's Hour. This encore edition of The Children's Hour was recorded in 2022 when Falu won the Grammy for Best Children's Release.

[MUSIC, Didibina (feat. Falu & Quantic), Nickodemus]

[00:56:58]

TCH CREW: The Children's Hour is produced by the Children's Hour Incorporated, a New Mexico non profit. Our show was written by Katie Stone with lots of help from all of us on the kids crew. You can find photos, links, learn along guides, and more about us at ChildrensHour.org.

KATIE STONE: Many thanks to Falou for being with us on the show today.

[CREDITS]