



Sistema Scotland – Big Noise Raploch

End of Year 3 Report

Looking back over the first three years of its existence, this programme has come a long way and we are proud that it is now an integrated part of life in Raploch. Of the 3,000 people who constitute the community of Raploch, 460 children are now active participants in a programme which has at its heart the desire to effect generational change and transform lives with music. Year 3 of Big Noise Raploch saw some substantial and exciting developments and this report provides a snapshot of the year: the highs and some of the challenges we have faced as we encourage the children to deepen their engagement in the programme and their commitment to work hard and celebrate the increased confidence and pride in the community which is becoming evident. A Deaconess from the local church recently remarked that those in Raploch appear to walk with their heads that bit higher these days. We have well and truly set off on our journey but, in comparison to the Venezuelans, we still have far to go!

Consolidation and Development of our Core Programme

Our dedicated team of 16 professional, talented and charismatic musicians deliver our core programme throughout the year. 74% of the children of the Raploch Community Campus are now involved in our core programme, with the remaining 26% receiving a half hour musicianship session once a week.

After-school club runs 3 nights per week for 2 ½ hours each night. There are now 150 children signed up with an average attendance of 114 every night. We now have four orchestras: Purple, Red and Rinconada string orchestras, and the Big Noise Symphony Orchestra!

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All 40 **Primary 1s** in Raploch Community Campus receive 2 Big Noise sessions every week, each lasting 40 minutes.

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Our **Special Educational Needs** strand has continued to develop, with all 30 children from Castleview School taking part. One child is now a regular member of our after-school orchestra. He uses an alternative notation system known as Figurenotes in order to be able to participate alongside the other children.

The Noise, our **Adult Orchestra** has gone from strength to strength, with over 30 members. This orchestra consists of parents, grandparents, volunteers and members of staff from the schools. We even have one of the head teachers learning to play the clarinet!





Our **Holiday School** programme ran 5 days a week throughout the October half term break and Easter, and for 6 weeks of the Summer Holidays. As well as terrific musical fun and learning we also gave children a free breakfast and hot lunch each day.



The **Volunteering Programme** has expanded, with volunteers coming from as far away as Canada as well as Edinburgh and Raploch. Our committed team helps with the enormous task of setting up our after school club each afternoon, and assists the musicians in a variety of ways during and between sessions. Our volunteers were thrilled to be named “Volunteer Team of the Year” by Stirling Council.

48 **Take a Musician Home for Tea** living room concerts took place this year. This popular series sees families, friends and neighbours treated to a performance by Big Noise musicians and their own children in their own homes.



Since August 2011 **Individual Lessons** for Primary 2 to 7s attending school in Raploch have taken place during the school day. Each child receives a half hour individual lesson once per week. At the same time, children from their class who are not currently signed up to take part in Big Noise are involved in a half hour Big Noise musicianship class. It is expected that this additional contact will allow us to engage or re-engage with those not currently participating, encouraging them to join the after-school and holiday programmes.

Expansion of the Programme – A Full Symphony Orchestra!



At the end of year 2 we had just recruited a new team of musicians, specialising in Woodwind, Brass and Percussion instruments, with the aim of expanding from a strings only programme into a complete symphony orchestra.

We offered these instruments to the P6s who had not yet opted in to Big Noise, and to the P7s who had not previously had the opportunity to be involved. Towards the end of August 2010 the new team began working with these children during school time three times a week beginning every session with a performance. The first sessions focused on discipline, turn-taking, listening and rhythm. Soon the children were asked to choose the instruments they would like to play, and started to receive tuition. These children were invited to attend the Big Noise October School. At the end of 5 long days they joined the existing string players, forming the Big Noise Raploch Symphony Orchestra for the first time, playing a version of the Can Can. Our new recruits have

since been part of the Big Noise After-School Orchestra.



Growing the model to a full Symphony Orchestra has not been without its challenges and we encountered some of the same behavioural challenges we had seen during the first months of the strings programme. As these children joined the programme at an older age, this behaviour is more engrained, and as they are bigger, we have had to cope with displays of greater aggression, and sometimes violence. However as time goes by, our efforts to reward and encourage good behaviour are taking effect and we are beginning to see a difference in these young people's attitudes and confidence.



In expanding the number of children we work with, we had to increase the amount of space we have access to within Raploch Community Campus. We are grateful to our colleagues there for helping us to access additional storage space for instruments, and additional spaces in which to work with the children. We now teach in spaces including one of the head teacher's offices, and in the campus gym halls (requiring us to procure rolls of carpet-like floor covering to project the floors from being scraped by chairs or instruments). Set-up for our after-school programme has now become an industrial scale operation, with a huge number of chairs, carpets, instruments and music stands being conveyed to the far reaches of the building and packed away again each evening. This required us to develop our pool of volunteers, without whom this task would be a great deal more challenging.

Expansion of the programme also required us to find additional office space from where our musicians could conduct their planning. Our partners at Stirling Council helped us to identify some under utilised space in an ideal location, and our 2nd office was officially opened in October 2010 just opposite the Campus.

In order to be able to deliver the programme consistently we have recruited a number of 'cover musicians', individuals who have the same skills and experience as our permanent musicians (and include the only two musicians to have left Sistema Scotland's employment) who can step in to cover our team in case of absence due to professional engagements, illness or other reason. These cover musicians have been inducted into our programme of work and provide a valuable source of support.

Organisational Development

With the new team in place we set our sights on the future, and on developing the musical excellence within the programme.

We are very pleased to report that virtuoso violinist **Nicola Benedetti** has become increasingly involved with the programme. She has continued to act as **Big Noise's Big Sister**, making regular visits and providing one to one tuition and master classes for our children. She has also joined the board of the charity, providing some great musical intelligence. She has been joined by Berlin Philharmonic French hornist Fergus





McWilliam, investment banker and former professional violinist Paul Jourdan, and professional musician and educator Kathryn Jourdan; 4 appointments which have greatly strengthened our board.

The end of year 3 saw us search for a person to help lead the continued expansion of the programme, to consolidate the model and to inspire the children and our team to reach their full potential. We are delighted to have appointed **Francis Cummings** as our new **Director of Music**. Francis is an extremely experienced musician and teacher, and comes to us from the prestigious St Mary's Music School in Edinburgh, where he was Director of Music.

Big Noise for Tiny People

As well as expanding our age range upwards with the introduction of woodwind, brass and percussion for the older children, we also expanded downwards with the introduction of **Baby Noise**. This weekly class involves children from birth to 3 years old, and their carers, in lots of singing, shaking, drumming and musical games. There are 40 babies currently signed up to this class.

Big Noise for Bigger People

Our oldest children have just become the first generation of Big Noise members to make the transition from primary to secondary school. Big Noise is designed as a programme which provides pathways from birth to adulthood, so we recognised that this transition was crucial for the longer term success of the programme. We have been working with the high schools to consider how we can best continue to support these children and encourage them to stay involved. We have also consulted with these children about how Big Noise should change for them as they grow. Currently we have 20 children in S1, and early signs are good that these children will stay the course and keep coming.



Big Noise in Performance

The opportunity to perform is fundamental to this model, and there have been no shortage of these over the last year. Perhaps the most significant was in April 2011, when we combined forces with our partners at the **BBC Scottish Symphony Orchestra** to perform a **Side by Side** concert in Glasgow's City Halls. 54 members of the Big Noise Raploch Symphony Orchestra took part in this concert including many of the woodwind, brass and percussion players who at that point had only been learning to play their instruments for a little over 6 months. The children played simplified arrangements of pieces including as Holst's *Mars & Jupiter*, and *Also Sprach Zarathustra* by Strauss, whilst their BBC Buddies played the full parts.



Other highlights of the year included 2 concerts at Stirling Castle, including one in the presence of Her Majesty The Queen, and a memorable performance at the Scottish Parliament. Closer to home our children participated in performances to their families at October, Christmas, Easter and the end of Summer. Groups of children went further into their communities performing at an Open Gardens Day and for the residents of a local care home. Big Noise's 3rd Birthday Concert in Stirling's Albert Halls featured 110 children and 40 adults including friends from the BBC SSO, and an inspiring performance by our Adult Orchestra.

Visits, Visitors and Venezuelans on Video

Year 3 started with a 6 week residency by the **Millennium Quartet**. These 4 musicians are some of the finest educators which the Venezuelan El Sistema has produced. Through a partnership with Enterprise Music Scotland, the quartet undertook a concert tour of Scotland the proceeds of which went towards the cost of their flights and accommodation. This allowed the quartet to stay for an extended period of time during which they worked intensively with the children, and with our teachers, injecting their irresistible energy into our work and helping us to consider our future development.



Further Venezuelan inspiration came through a partnership with the **Southbank Centre** London. When they hosted the Teresa Carreño Youth Orchestra of Venezuela, we organised a live link up, streaming video of the concert in real time to a lecture theatre in Stirling University from where children and their families were able to watch the show loud and close up.

Our newly recruited brass players did not have to rely on a live link when the Venezuelan Brass Ensemble (part of the Simón Bolívar Symphony Orchestra) performed in Manchester. We took them down to watch the performance and members of the orchestra gave a master-class afterwards.

In February 2011 we took a group of our oldest string players on the first Big Noise residential. The children all stayed in a bunkhouse near Loch Lomond, where they spent an intensive two days and one night rehearsing, playing and outdoor fun. This was a great success and we are hoping to build on this experience in future.



Wider links

Sistema Scotland has continued to engage and share our learning with the wider sector. We have presented and performed at conferences and events at the invitation of organisations including The Scottish Association for Music Education, Children in Scotland, and Drake Music Scotland (sharing our learning about the Figurenotes notation system). We have also continued to open our doors for Learning Visits – opportunities for interested people to observe our work in action, ask questions and learn about our history and aims for the future.

Our partners from El Sistema in Venezuela continue to support our model and encourage international visitors to Raploch. We have also travelled in order to share our learning. Sistema Scotland Chief Executive Nicola Killean has spoken at conferences in Sweden and South Korea. In July 2011 Big Noise musicians Joëlle Fenna and Verónica Urrego travelled to New Zealand to help launch Sistema Aotearoa with whom we have a partnership agreement. Their director Dr Joe Harrop has also spent some time with us in Raploch.

Evaluation

At the end of year 2 we reported that the Scottish Government had commissioned an evaluation of Big Noise Raploch. The results of this year long study were published in March 2011 and were extremely positive. The evaluation stated that our model is being successful at meeting its short to medium term goals and, if sustained, “has the potential to bring about social transformation”. I hope you have already received a copy of the evaluation but if not, please ask and we will send you one, or you can download it at <http://www.scotland.gov.uk/Publications/2011/03/16082812/0>

Thank you!

The development of this programme would not be possible without the commitment of every one of our supporters. We are enormously grateful to all trusts, foundations and individuals who have shown your belief in our work through your continuing support. Thank you for your collaboration on this exciting journey!

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