

BIG NEWS – Big Noise is coming to Wester Hailes

A new Big Noise programme is to start next spring in Wester Hailes.

Musicians will be put in place to work with The City of Edinburgh Council, Clovenstone, Canal View and Sighthill Primary and Nursery Schools, working with Primary 1 and 2 pupils. The programme will also involve children from nursery to Primary 3, which means around 400 children will be involved at first expanding to all school age children eventually as the years progress.

Big Noise is the children's education and social change programme run by Sistema Scotland within specific communities and has been very successful in Raploch in Stirling, Govanhill in Glasgow, Torry in Aberdeen and Douglas in Dundee. It is viewed as one way of tackling inequalities for the long term.

The symphony orchestra is a community through which children gain life skills and experiences developing confidence through music and performance. The Glasgow Centre for Population Health identified the benefits of taking part in the Big Noise programme underpinned by the long term relationship between musicians and children where the musicians act as mentor and role models. This programme is much more than music, it is about encouraging positive behaviour and life choices with early intervention and delivery over a number of years.

Benny Higgins, Chairman of Sistema Scotland, said: "Sistema Scotland believes that all children and young people have great skills, talents and potential. We also know that many of Scotland's communities face long-standing inequalities and

challenges that make it extremely difficult for children to achieve their hopes, ambitions and dreams. The impact of Covid-19 has greatly exacerbated these inequalities. Now more than ever, we must think and act creatively to ensure Scotland's children are given the opportunities and support that they deserve.

“Our charity is committed to ensuring that more children and communities across Scotland are able to take part in Big Noise and I am delighted that Wester Hailes will be the home of the next Big Noise programme.”



Sistema Scotland chief executive Nicola Killean, Rachel Odutona, Big Noise musician Elizabeth McColl, Jaxson Davidson, Alice Ajayi and Benny Higgins, chairman of Sistema Scotland.



Jaxson Davidson, Rachel Odutona and Alice Ajayi

Nicola Killean OBE, Chief Executive of Sistema Scotland, said: “We are greatly looking forward to starting a new Big Noise programme in Wester Hailes which will work in partnership with

children, young people, families, schools and the community for many years to come. We also hope to work alongside local charities and community groups to bring additional support and value to Wester Hailes.”

Cllr Ian Perry, Education, Children and Families Convener for City of Edinburgh Council, said: “I am extremely pleased to welcome Sistema Scotland to Edinburgh and very much look forward to seeing the Big Noise programme in action, working with and supporting children, young people and families within the Wester Hailes community.”

Nicola Benedetti CBE, internationally-renowned violinist and official Big Sister to the participants of Big Noise, said: “Sistema Scotland’s consistent dedication to quality and expansion is an inspiration to all of us and I am so excited that they are finally in Edinburgh with this new Big Noise programme at Wester Hailes.”

Sam Laidlaw, mother of three from Wester Hailes, said: “Big Noise coming to Wester Hailes is such a great opportunity. Taking part in Big Noise will help the children grow their confidence. I’m excited to see the joy in the children’s faces as they explore music and movement. They will also come away from the programme with the ability to play a musical instrument by the time they leave high school which is great. I think Big Noise will help bring the community together and bring people together from different areas of Wester Hailes. I think it will bring a sense of pride to the community.”

The programme will begin with children in Primary 1 and 2 gradually building on core skills of listening to music and appreciation of rhythm while learning to play an instrument in a group. After Primary 3 the Big Noise becomes an after school and holiday club. Big Noise children receive up to four after

school sessions of intervention and support each week during term time. During school holidays all children will receive up to four days per week of support and learning.

In April 2008 Big Noise began in Raploch with six musicians supporting 35 schoolchildren of all ages, Now there are almost 3,000 children and young people in the four cities who are involved.

While Sistema Scotland was inspired by the El Sistema in Venezuela it is an independent charity with no links to the South American organisation where there have been allegations of abuse. The charity states categorically that their work is “carried out in line with rigorous policies on child protection and safeguarding, recruitment and selection, and equality and diversity”.