

Reviews



Two of the young performers who braved the elements to help deliver a memorable performance in the Raploch last night

Encore – a triumph for music in the community

MUSIC

**SIMON BOLIVAR SYMPHONY
RAPLOCH COMMUNITY
CAMPUS, STIRLING**
★★★★★

BEFORE a sea of billowing London 2012 ponchos, and despite the often driving rain, what was surely one of the most inspirational concerts that Scotland has seen carried on regardless – and what a show it was.

To mark the beginning of the Olympic cultural celebrations, Venezuela's remarkable Simon Bolivar Symphony Orchestra and its charismatic conductor Gustavo Dudamel joined forces in an open-air celebration with the Big Noise children's ensemble from Raploch, near Stirling, a community orchestra founded by former Bishop of Edinburgh Richard Holloway in 2008, using the same El Sistema project promoting music as an agent of social change that launched the Bolivars' careers.

Conditions were clearly less than ideal – even leaving the weather aside, most of the audience were so far from the performers that they had to rely on video screens, and on amplified sound from enormous banks of speakers.

But that was hardly the point. What was important was what this meeting of musicians meant. The Big Noise group, involving children of all ages who have learnt to play their instruments by learning to play together, gave a spirited performance of the Rondeau from Purcell's *Abdelazer*, whose theme returned in Britten's *Young Person's Guide to the Orchestra*, delivered with energy, power and remarkable detail by the Bolivars, who went on to give a thrilling account of Beethoven's *Eroica* Symphony and a raft of encores. But this was a real community event, with the whole of Raploch seemingly involved, and that's what made it truly inspirational.

DAVID KETTLE