



2012 London Olympics

Daisy Ayliffe
29.09.08

Billy Bragg helped to kick off the first full weekend of the Cultural Olympiad with an open-air busking session at the Royal Festival Hall.

The musician played guitar on a balcony while the notes of the songs were held aloft to encourage the crowds to strum along.

Many of the audience, who brought their own guitars, managed to play along with Bragg, 51, at the Big Busk - one of more than 300 events held in London across the weekend.

The cultural showcase was part of the run-up to the 2012 Games and is designed to promote the arts London and the rest of Britain have to offer alongside the sporting events.



Strum and bass: Billy Bragg leads a crowd of guitarists and singers at the Big Busk at Royal Festival Hall, as part of London's Cultural Olympiad Weekend

Other events in the capital over the weekend included "ballet for beginners", with members of the public taught how to pirouette by professionals from the English National Ballet.

Many of those who attended the introduction workshops in Kensington said they thought the Cultural Olympiad was a great idea.

Mark Taylor, a 34-year-old stockbroker from Mayfair, said: "I saw the free ballet classes advertised and thought it seemed a great opportunity to work at a prestigious school."

Xanthe Grey, 24, of Lewisham, said: "I had to learn to walk again after surgery in 2006 and ballet helps keep me strong. When I heard the open weekend was on, I was so keen to come along. It was awesome. Free events are always good."

In St James's Park, children and parents got their hands dirty at a vegetable fair organised by the Mall Galleries, Churchill Museum and Cabinet War Rooms.

Rationing and recycling were taught as younger Londoners were introduced to the austerewar-time "make do and mend" ethos. As the credit crunch forces families to tighten their belts, lessons in how to save on food bills were warmly received.

Buzz Stokes, 41 of Clerkenwell, said: "I own a shop selling buttons so the make do and mend approach has always been important to me. With the economic situation as it is, we should be doing more to be a bit more frugal."

Hundreds of other events were held elsewhere in the country to mark the start of four years of events leading up to the 2012 Games.

The Cultural Olympiad was officially launched last week at Tate Britain with London Olympics chief Sebastian Coe and a host of Olympic athletes donning their running shoes and sprinting through the gallery as part of artist Martin Creed's specially designed Olympic installation.

Link to:

[Reader Views \(0\)](#)

No comments have so far been submitted.

[Add your comment](#)