**MEDIA RELEASE**

**FRIDAY, 21 JANUARY 2022**

**CELTIC CONNECTIONS 2022 OPENS**

[*Images and video clip from Opening Night available to download here*](https://www.dropbox.com/sh/31bcy80v2v4bbb6/AABEQ9txJwax-esL3Hjpzyysa?dl=0)

Europe’s premier winter music festival **Celtic Connections** opened in Glasgow last night, Thursday 20 January, showcasing uplifting performances from some of folk’s brightest emerging talent.

The Opening Concert **‘Neath the Gloamin’ Star** was staged at Glasgow’s Royal Concert Hall in front of 200 lucky audience members. Named after a beloved old Scots love song, the show marked a poignant opening moment for the much-loved roots festival as it celebrated how precious heritage is being taken forward into a new tradition.

This year’s hybrid Celtic Connections programme spans around 60 lively in-person concerts, a number of intimate filming sessions, an exciting digital offering and a number of talks and exhibitions, with more than 500 artists involved across the festival.

Tickets for live in-person shows are already [**on sale now**](https://www.celticconnections.com), while tickets for online festival passes go on sale at **3pm today**. Digital passes will give audiences from around the world access to more than 12 hours of exclusive performances available to watch from Wednesday 26th January.

Artists involved include Dublin-based quartet **The Jeremiahs,** flute / whistle genius **Brian Finnegan**, world-folk sensations **Dallahan,** Nordic-inspired folk group **Stundom** and Gaelic singer **Megan Henderson**. Magnificent duo performances from **Heal and Harrow** (**Rachel Newton** and **Lauren MacColl**) and **Ross Ainslie** and **Tim Edey** are also on the bill.

The **New Tradition: Rejuvenation** show will showcase young emerging artists, led by musical director **Rory Matheson** and a **New Voices** commission from singer songwriter **Jack Badcock** will also be available to enjoy as part of the pass.

This weekend will also see two specially-commissioned **Shetland 550** shows filmed for the online programme in front of limited-capacity audiences. 550 years on from the islands becoming part of Scotland, **Norn Voices** and **A Peerie Foy** - part of the festival’s **Whisper the Song** strand for **Scotland’s Year of Stories** - will celebrate Shetland’s unique cultural history and identity.

Saturday night’s Shetland spectacular will open in style with a celebratory **Viking torch-lit march** through the streets of Glasgow. A group of more than 30 male and female Vikings, will journey to the bottom of the steps of the Royal Concert Hall to welcome audiences with flaming torches, cheers and songs celebrating Up Helly Aa. The spectacle will mark an unforgettable start to an evening involving Shetland’s foremost cultural ambassadors.

From Monday 24th January, live music in front of in-person audiences will take centre stage, breathing life and joy into venues across Glasgow - from Mackintosh Church to The Old Fruitmarket - with the usual dynamic array of traditional folk, roots, Americana, jazz, indie, soul and world music brightening up the city for two weeks.

Highlights include the renowned British Indian sitar player and composer **Anoushka Shankar** who will perform her father’s iconic Concerto No.3 with the **Scottish Chamber Orchestra** on Friday 28th January in the Royal Concert Hall. Support comes from the incredible **Orchestral Qawwali Project** featuring the soaring vocals of **Abi Sampa**, the UK’s first female qawwal, together with tabla player **Amrit Singh**, and singer/composer **Rushil,** who combine the ancient Sufi devotional tradition of qawwali with modern orchestral arrangements.

Elsewhere, the iconic Mitchell Theatre will play host to some exciting events putting Scotland’s rich oral traditions in the spotlight for the [Year of Stories 2022](https://celticconnections.com/scotland-s-year-of-stories/). **The Scottish World**, featuring writer, performer and broadcaster **Billy Kay** and singers **Siobhan Miller** and **Robyn Stapleton** will look at how tales of Scotland travelled with and were reimagined by the Diaspora, while **Sing Me a Story** will see the storytelling tradition of the Gàidhealtachd championed.

Grammy-nominated, Brooklyn-based Pakistani composer, songwriter and vocalist **Arooj Aftab** - who names Barrack Obama among her legion of fans - will bring her critically-acclaimed sound to the Mackintosh Church, and sparks are set to fly when the mighty **RURA** play The Theatre Royal.

Maverick musical duo, **Nae Plans**, aka fiddler **Adam Sutherland** and pianist/flautist/singer **Hamish Napier**, will perform as part of the festival’s **Tradovation strand** supported by **The Scottish Government Festivals Expo Fund.**

With support from polish-born cellist **Justyna Jablonska** and South Indian violinist **Jyotsna Srikanth,** multi-award-winning Scottish pianist **Fergus McCreadie** will treat fans to his brilliantly original music, rooted in Scottish folk and international jazz. Additional **New Voices** commissions come from harp player and vocalist **Esther Swift** and fiddler **Ross Couper**.

**Donald Shaw, Creative Producer for Celtic Connections, said:** “The opening weekend of Celtic Connections is always a memorable moment for us but this year, we are particularly proud to lift the curtain on our 29th edition. The festival has never shied away from ambition and we’re very excited to still be able to present such a vibrant programme, covering live shows, filming sessions and digital content. Despite the challenging environment we’ve been operating in, we have been driven by our passion for Scottish music and culture and opportunities for unforgettable collaboration. We look forward to reconnecting with our audiences at home and around the world over the next few weeks.”

**Councillor David McDonald, Chair of Glasgow Life and Depute Leader of Glasgow City Council, said:** “We’ve been working hard to retain an exciting programme and live festival experience for Celtic Connections this year, which continues to meet the Scottish Government’s guidance and ensures the safety of our audiences, artists, staff and suppliers. The importance of Celtic Connections to profiling Scotland’s cultural and musical legacy to the rest of the world cannot be understated, and it’s testament to the efforts of everyone involved that this year’s programme presents a rich and diverse mix of content; from some 60 in-person concerts to an extensive digital offer, which will delight global and local audiences alike.”

**Culture Minister Jenny Gilruth said:** “We welcome Celtic Connections’ plan to stage live indoor events at this year’s festival following the First Minister's announcement of a relaxation in restrictions.

“Live performances are not only exciting for audiences, but they are important to maintain the festival’s visibility and support the development of our emerging artists. They are also crucial in driving our cultural recovery from the pandemic.

“We will continue to work closely with Celtic Connections to plan for the remainder of the festival, after the 24th January.”

The safety of audiences, artists and suppliers has been put at the centre of all the plans for this year’s festival, with all necessary public health measures in line with Government guidelines in place.

To see the full programme for Celtic Connections 2022 and buy tickets visit: [**www.celticconnections.com**](http://www.celticconnections.com/).

**ENDS**

The festival will run from Thursday 20 January to Sunday 6 February 2022. Follow the conversation at @ccfest.

For the programme line-up and to purchase tickets please go to: [www.celticconnections.com](http://www.celticconnections.com)

For further information, images, or to request an interview with any of the acts performing at Celtic Connections 2022, please contact: Corrie Campbell, Innes and Campbell Communications, [corrie@innesandcampbell.co.uk](mailto:corrie@innesandcampbell.co.uk), 07900 981 073.

Apply for [media accreditation here](https://forms.gle/qmdkm5C5PbEzxwTn6).

**Notes to Editors**

**Celtic Connections** began in 1994, when it offered 66 events at one venue. Since then it’s grown more adventurous, experimental and diverse each year and now offers thousands of events in locations across Glasgow.

Celtic Connections is delivered with funding from **Glasgow City Council** through **Glasgow Life**. **Creative Scotland** and **The Scottish Government Festivals Expo Fund**continue to provide invaluable support to Celtic Connections. A strand of this year’s event - **Whisper the Song** - is supported by **EventScotland** as part of the **Year of Stories 2022.**

The festival is delighted to be sponsored by **Caledonian MacBrayne**, **La Bonne Auberge and Holiday Inn Glasgow Theatreland**, **Drygate**, **CalMac** and **Rathbones**. **The BBC** has supported Celtic Connections since its first year and the festival is pleased to collaborate once again with them for 2022.

**Glasgow Life** is a charity working for the benefit of the people of Glasgow. We believe everyone deserves a great Glasgow life and we find innovative ways to make this happen across the city’s diverse communities.

Our programmes, experiences and events range from grassroots community activities to large-scale cultural, artistic and sporting events which present Glasgow on an international stage.

Our work is designed to promote inclusion, happiness and health, as well as support the city’s visitor economy, in order to enhance Glasgow’s mental, physical and economic wellbeing.

For more information on our work, see [www.glasgowlife.org.uk](http://www.glasgowlife.org.uk)

**Creative Scotland** is the public body that supports the arts, screen and creative industries across all parts of Scotland distributing funding provided by the Scottish Government and The National Lottery. Further information at [creativescotland.com](https://www.creativescotland.com/). Follow us on [Twitter](https://twitter.com/CreativeScots), [Facebook](https://www.facebook.com/CreativeScotland) and [Instagram.](https://www.instagram.com/creativescots) Learn more about the value of art and creativity in Scotland and join in at [www.ourcreativevoice.scot](http://www.ourcreativevoice.scot)

**Scotland’s Year of Stories 2022** will spotlight, celebrate and promote the wealth of stories inspired by, written, or created in Scotland.

Led by VisitScotland, the Year of Stories 2022 will sustain and build upon the momentum of preceding Themed Years, showcasing a nationwide programme of major events and community celebrations.

From icons of literature to local tales, Scotland’s Year of Stories encourages locals and visitors to experience a diversity of voices, take part in events and explore the places, people and cultures connected to all forms of our stories, past and present.

Scotland’s Year of Stories will encourage responsible engagement and inclusive participation from the people of Scotland and our visitors.

Join the conversation using #YS2022 and #TalesOfScotland.

Following an industry consultation, Themed Years will take place every second year to enable more time for planning and collaboration. The next Themed Year will take place in 2024.