**Media Release**

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**Celtic Connections Launches 30th Festival**

[**Images will be available to download here**](https://www.dropbox.com/sh/78zy3qte2sjgl27/AABpfTI-Q7ipQ3xiL0Fe2Fvxa?dl=0)

**Celtic Connections,** the home of world-class music, one-off collaborations, and genre-defying spectacles, is set to celebrate its 30th edition this January. The internationally renowned festival will mark this milestone with an ambitious and eclectic programme of music that will be showcased between **Thursday 19th January – Sunday 5th February 2023**.

The 30th festival will be a pinnacle moment for the festival as it recognises the advancements and achievements of the last thirty years and all that organisers have overcome to bring people together in a defining cultural celebration. It will also acknowledge and celebrate the resilience of the Scottish music scene, and the live entertainment industry, in the face of adversity.

It would be fair to say that there was a sense of apprehension for that very first festival back in 1994 – many questioned the idea of celebrating Scotland’s folk music on such a large scale during the dark month of January.

However, against the odds the first festival was hailed a huge success, staging 66 events across one venue and welcoming 27,000 attendees. Celtic Connections, which is delivered through Glasgow Life with funding from Glasgow City Council, is now internationally recognised as a world-class event and has grown to over 300 events across 30 stages, with an annual attendance figure of over 110,000.

With the global pandemic hitting in 2020, the festival team re-evaluated their output and were one of the first events to put on a completely digital-first festival, where organisers created unique content from specially commissioned projects and performances that were filmed across many of Glasgow’s much-loved venues. This unique footage culminated in 30 specially commissioned projects and performances available to view across a period of 19 days. Over 27,000 tickets and passes were sold for the online festival and viewers from over 60 countries tuned in.

**Donald Shaw, Creative Producer for Celtic Connections, said:** “Our 30th edition is a hugely important moment for the festival, especially considering the last couple of years. We will, of course, be paying homage to the musicians, bands and artists who have contributed, supported and inspired the festival over the last three decades, but importantly this is also a moment to look to the future. The last two years have been incredibly tough for so many musicians and the live entertainment industry in general, so Celtic Connections 2023 is an opportunity to commemorate how far the festival and the Scottish music scene has come, and to also celebrate the fact that we are still here.

“Celtic Connections is still showcasing some of the best music Scotland and the world has to offer, established and emerging musicians are still here creating and performing, audiences are still here enjoying the cultural exponents of our country and other nations from across the world. Sharing our music and our arts is a vital part of our human existence, connecting us and enriching lives, and we have missed that. I can’t wait to revel in a live festival once again and celebrate the resilience and the longevity of our sector.”

**Bailie Annette Christie, Chair of Glasgow Life, said:**“The launch of an exciting new Celtic Connections programme showcasing Scotland’s outstanding musical legacy across a variety of vibrant live events is always a real highlight. It’s particularly special and memorable this year, as we get ready to mark the 30th anniversary of the festival and celebrate just how successful it has become and the incredibly important contribution it has made, and continues to make, to Glasgow’s rich cultural offer.

“Since the curtain first raised on Celtic Connections in 1994, it has grown over the years and earned an exceptional, well-deserved reputation as Europe’s leading traditional music festival, attracting thousands of visitors to our city.  The superb range of entertainment next year’s 30th edition will offer to delight local, national and international audiences will, I’m certain, enhance and enrich the lives of everyone attending.”

**Culture Secretary Angus Robertson said:** “Celtic Connections has been lighting up the dark days of January for 30 years and it is good to see them back after the challenges of the pandemic with such a fantastic in-person line-up to celebrate this special anniversary.

“Over the years the festival has built up a reputation for staging world-class traditional music talent from Scotland and abroad and the Scottish Government is delighted to support it through the EXPO fund.”

The festival will pay homage to the last three decades with a variety of concerts that shine the spotlight on musicians or groups who have been involved with the festival since the inaugural event or have come together thanks to the Celtic Connections platform.

This year’s **Opening Concert** will celebrate the history of the festival with a panoply of artists who’ve featured prominently over the years, alongside those emerging from the vibrant folk scene - reflecting Celtic Connections' multi-generational breadth, its Internationalism and collaborative, cross-genre spirit.

This once-in-a-lifetime line-up includes **Karine Polwart**, **Sierra Hull**, **Basco**, **Peat & Diesel**, **TRIP**, **Fergus McCreadie & Matt Carmichael**, **Maeve Gilchrist**, **Rachel Sermanni** and many more including a unique ‘Big Band’ that was originally conceived for the 2021 digital-first festival’s Opening Night. This will be brought together in full live glory for this year’s Opening Concert and will feature many of the musicians who have lit up the Celtic Connections stages over the years with **Patsy Reid**, **Graham Mackenzie**, **Laura Wilkie**, **Michael McGoldrick**, **Hannah Fisher**, **Ross Ainslie**, **Anna Massie**, **Alyn Cosker**, **James Mackintosh**, **Duncan Lyall** and **Sorren Maclean**, alongside surprise guests.

This year’s festival welcomes a world premiere of **Moving Cloud** – an exciting collaboration of contemporary dance and traditional music created by Celtic Connections and **Scottish Dance Theatre** led by **Artistic Director Joan Clevillé** and featuring a new score performed by a 14 piece folk ensemble featuring the musicians of **TRIP** and **Sian**, along with **Greg Lawson** and **Alice Allen**.

A star-studded cast of internationally renowned artists will present **Celtic Odyssée**, in association with the Festival Interceltique de Lorient. The aim of this collaborative show is to foster new inter-Celtic encounters between artists from the eight European Celtic nations. **Musical Director** for the night is Breton virtuoso piper **Ronan Le Bars** who leads his all Breton band of **Liam Roudil** on guitar, **Pierrick Tardivel** on double bass, **Aymeric Le Martelot** on keyboards, and **Thomas Bessé** on drums along with 18 artists on stage: **Denez Prigent** (Brittany), **Karen Matheson** (Scotland), **Karan Casey** (Ireland), **Cerys Hafana** (Wales), **Fransy Gonzàlez** (Galicia), **Sylvia Quesada** (Asturias) and **Lauren Chandler** (Cornwall) on vocals; **Donal O'Connor** (Ireland) on fiddle, **José Manuel Tejedor** (Asturias) on pipes, **Tom Callister** (Isle of Man) on fiddle, **Adam Rhodes** (Isle of Man) on bouzouki, and **Niall Vallely** (Ireland) on the concertina.

Amongst many festival favourites returning to celebrate the 30th festival are the all women Irish-American powerhouse **Cherish the Ladies**, Scots ambassadors of strings **Blazin’ Fiddles** who will perform in the grandeur of Glasgow’s Theatre Royal, trad fusion powerhouse **Treacherous Orchestra** who will bring the Fruitmarket to life with their energetic piping lead arrangements and Scotland’s very own **Colin Hay**, best known as ex-frontman of Australia’s Grammy-winning Men at Work who sold more than 30 million records during the 1980s, will also be back to perform at this year’s festival.

Celtic Connections has become renowned for its one-off collaborations, its world premieres and its special performances. The 30th edition will be no different with a delectable array of unique concerts.

For the first time Celtic Connections will welcome the **Irish Chamber Orchestra** for the beautiful and innovative *Róisín ReImagined* a special project featuring award-winning singer **Muireann Nic Amhlaoibh’**s renditions of classic sean nós songs, bringing a new generation of listeners to these melodically complex and richly ornamented songs. This new project has breathed new life into the noble, classical songs of Muireann’s ancestors and it will pair her peerless vocals with fresh orchestral arrangements from the Irish tradition.

Similarly, the world class **Scottish Chamber Orchestra** returns for a unique collaboration with two of Scotland’s most internationally celebrated traditional musicians, **Chris Stout** (fiddle)and **Catriona McKay** (Clarsach) in a powerful marriage of contemporary folk and classical music.

A unique collaboration of African and Gaelic music will feature Malian superstars **Trio Da Kali** with special guests, including award-winning Gaelic singers **Jenna Cummings** and **Kim Carnie** (Mànran), piper & composer **Ross Ainslie**, and American Old-Time and roots musician **Dirk Powell**.

**Dreamers' Circus**, **Frigg** and **Kinnaris Quintet** will present **Celtic Runes** at this year’s festival. This exciting show will present music from some of the most in**n**ovative contemporary Scottish and Scandinavian folk bands around. Celtic Runes promises to deliver three sets of performers connected by a Scandi-Celtic fuse-wire who are connected by progressive modern arrangements of roots inspired music and neo-classical ideas.

A special show, entitled **Strands: 30th Anniversary Youth Concert** will be a joint celebration of Celtic Connections’ 30th edition and its pioneering education programme. Since 1999, over 200,000 children, from 70% of Glasgow’s schools, have taken part in Celtic Connections’ education events – often their first ever experience of live music. This unique show will see young musicians come together from regions across Scotland, showcasing their home traditions before premiering a brand-new ensemble composition from Treacherous Orchestra co-founder **John Somerville**.

**Duncan Chisholm**, one of Scotland’s most recognised and accomplished fiddle players and composers, has performed at almost every Celtic Connections festival since the inaugural event in 1994 when he performed with his band Wolfstone. He’ll return this year with the premiere of his incredible new album *Black Cuillin.* This new body of work draws inspiration from the mountain wilderness on the Isle of Skye, ‘Black Cuillin’ brings statuesque landscapes of sound together with pieces of exquisite and delicate beauty. For this premiere Duncan will be joined on stage by a seven piece band, a string ensemble plus special guests.

Celtic Connections prides itself on its international relationships and this year it will once again extend a hand of musical friendship to artists and audiences across the world. Stars of the World music scene will take to the festival stage, including **Rokia Kone** from Mali, known for her explosive performances with Le Amazones D’Afrique and performing from her award-winning new album with producer Jacknife Lee.

One of Africa’s most successful and popular musical exports **Amadou and Mariam** will also return to the festival with their all-star band.

Formed in Marrakesh, the Moroccan-French outfit **Bab L’Bluz** will also perform in an intoxicating brew of folk,rock and blues , headed by dynamic frontwoman Yousra Mansour.

Returning by popular demand after an incredible reaction at recent Glasgow appearances, **Orchestral Qawwali** will showcase a unique combination of Sufi poetry, Indian Classical dance and orchestral arrangements. Written and directed by composer **Rushil,** the Project features the soaring vocals of **Abi Sampa** (the UK’s first female Qawwali star) in an effortless combination with rich orchestral arrangements.

The much-loved pioneers of ingenious hypnotic instrumentals **- Penguin Cafê** will also play. Arguably the forefathers of minimalist folk orchestral tunes they were founded by Arthur Jeffes in 2009, bringing together a talented and disparate group of musicians as a continuation of his father Simon Jeffes’ project The Penguin Cafe Orchestra.

Austrian percussionist, composer and multi-media adventurer **Manu Delago** will present ***Environ Me,*** an immersive audio-visual journey combining instrumental composition, electronics and manipulated found sounds, performed with a tailor-made backdrop of accompanying films. Manu’s extraordinary hang drum playing has been instrumental in the recordings of artists like Bjork and Anoushka Shankar.

Among the many Hebridean artists appearing at the festival are Gaelic-blues-indie sensation **Peat & Diesel** who will celebrate their rise to fame over these last few years, since their Glasgow debut at Celtic Connections, by performing a headline show in the Glasgow Royal Concert Hall alongside Haitian voodoo blues rock singer **Moonlight Benjamin.**

Another fiddle-playing extraordinaire **John McCusker** will celebrate 30 years in the industry with the launch of his *Best of* album in 2023. His 30th celebration will culminate with this big gathering of musical pals. John has made his mark in many different settings and genres, playing his own music, playing with, or producing his peers. Longstanding membership of the annual Transatlantic Sessions house band and of Mark Knopfler's band are among the many highlights of John’s career. Joining John on the night will be a who’s who of Scottish folk music, including **James Mackintosh, Ewen Vernal, Ian Carr, Helen McCabe, Phil Cunningham, Simon Thoumire, Graeme Blevins** and**Tom Walsh.** Guests also include **Eddi Reader, Julie Fowlis, Karine Polwart, Kris Drever and Roddy Woomble.**

Celebrations continue with **Colin MacIntyre** weaving magic on-stage with his musical storytelling to celebrate 21 years of **Mull Historical Society**.

Skye’s Gaelic college **Sabhal Mòr Ostaig** will also be celebrating 50 years with a concert that showcases some of the incomparable Gaelic talent that has been further educated at the college.

Returning again for 2023 is the Celtic Connections **New Voices** strand, in which composers are commissioned to produce new pieces of music that they have composed and arranged themselves. This year’s world premieres will come from singer-songwriter and keyboard player **Beth Malcolm**, fiddle player **Eric Linklater** and fiddler and bagpiper **Malin Lewis**.

Americana will once again feature prominently across the programme. Tennessee’s singer-songwriter and multi-instrumentalist **Sierra Hull** will make a welcome return to the festival, sharing the bill with Nashville’s singer-songwriter and fiddle extraordinaire **Rachel Baiman**.

Canada’s **Lonesome Ace Stringband** will showcase their blend of bluegrass, folk and country while **Bonny Light Horseman**, made up of Americana royalty **Anaïs Mitchell**, **Josh Kaufman**, and **Eric D. Johnson**, will also perform.

Just days before her 70th birthday, triple Grammy-winner and revered Americana pioneer **Lucinda Williams** will play Celtic Connections 2023. **Beth Neilson Chapman** will also appear on this year’s programme while **Sammy Rae & The Friends** will make their festival debut and there will be a rare live appearance by neo-bluegrass pioneers **Nickel Creek**.

The Theatre Royal will be home to a spellbinding **Song Circle** show that will include the beautiful vocals of **Mary Chapin Carpenter**, **Karine Polwart**, **Julie Fowlis** and **Robert Vincent**.

Firm festival favourite **Transatlantic Sessions** will also return to celebrate its 20th Anniversary with an all-star line-up including **Martha Wainwright**, Hothouse Flowers frontman **Liam Ó Maonlai,** Capercaillie’s **Karen Matheson and Amethyst Kiah.** As ever, the show’s seasoned house band will be the crème-de-la-crème of Celtic and Americana roots talent, including **Phil Cunningham, John Doyle, Michael McGoldrick, John McCusker, Donald Shaw, James Mackintosh** and **Daniel Kimbro** and of course all will be helmed by joint masters of ceremonies **Aly Bain** and **Jerry Douglas**.

Gaelic talent will take centre stage at this year’s festival with the acclaimed contemporary Scottish folk band **Breabach** showcasing music from their recently released album ***Fàs -*** a Gaelic word meaning ‘growth’, ‘developing’ and ‘sprouting’ - with the album heavily inspired by the natural environment of Scotland***.***

Crowned Gaelic singer of the Year at the MG Alba Scots Trad Music Award and hot off the back of the release of her debut album *And So We Gather*, which received huge critical acclaim, the haunting vocals of **Kim Carnie** will also be heard at Celtic Connections 2023.

**Rachel Walker & Aaron Jones** will perform their new album *Despite the Wind & Rain*, which tells the story of inspirational women throughout Scottish history and celebrates achievement, courage, entrepreneurship and perseverance. The duo will be joined by some of the brilliant guests who feature on the album. This same show will feature renowned Uist singer **Gillebride MacMillan** who presents his new album alongside Mhairi Hall, Ewan MacPherson and Emma Smith.

The who’s who on the Scottish Gaelic scene will be part of a newly created show that will launch the reworked Gaelic song collection of **Frances Tolmie: Gun Sireadh Gun Iarraidh**. **Ainsley Hamill, Ceitlin Smith, Mischa Macpherson, Màiri Callan, James Graham, Rachel Walker, Mary Ann Kennedy, Seumas Campbell** and **Kenna Campbell** will all perform on the bill. Throughout many years teaching at The Royal Conservatoire of ScotlandKenna has passed this collection to her students who have subsequently carried the songs into their own repertoire and style, shaping each of their careers.

The iconic **Roaming Roots Revue** will celebrate its 10th Anniversary with a show that revisits themes from previous years, including tributes to The Band, Bruce Springsteen and Tom Petty, The Beatles’ Abbey Road and the music of Laurel Canyon. Curated once again by **Roddy Hart**, he will be joined by Ireland’s **Lisa Hannigan** and Glasgow’s own **Justin Currie**, fresh from a sellout tour with his band Del Amitri. Also featured are Sunderland art-rock darlings **Field Music** and Admiral Fallow’s **Louis Abbot** and **Sarah Hayes**.

The established stars and the emerging talent of the indie scene will also feature on the Celtic Connections line-up.

Five-piece folk-rock outfit **Matthew And The Atlas** will present music from their intriguing third album, *Morning Dancer*. Alt|pop outfit the **VanIves** will also return to the festival in a special double-bill with Glasgow Indie / Jazz star **Kitti** while festival favourite **Aoife O’Donovan** will make a welcome return to present her acclaimed new album and also a special performance of Bruce Springsteen’s iconic album *‘Nebraska’*.

Recently dubbed “the most exciting force in Scottish music”, **Hen Hoose** feature some of the country’s most talented musicians. Founded by **Tamara Schlesinger** (aka MALKA), this all-female/non-binary songwriting collective sees an array of artists from across the creative industries working together to produce ground-breaking new music. Featuring more than a dozen stars including **Karine Polwart**, **Emma Pollock**, **Jayda** and **Elisabeth Elektra**, their first album, *Equaliser*, has been ecstatically reviewed.

Celtic Connections will also showcase an array of bands at the cutting edge of Scotland’s thriving contemporary trad scene. Artists who continue to draw inspiration from the tradition while putting their own distinct mark on their music. Bands include **Ímar**, **Talisk**, **Gnoss**, **Siobhan Miller**, **Dallahan**, **Fras**, **Project Smok**, **Ciaran Ryan**, **Kim Edgar** and **Staran**, who are set to take to Glasgow stages across the 18 days.

Each year since 2000, Celtic Connections has partnered with a different country to create new international industry links and advance opportunities for their musicians through **Showcase Scotland**. 2023 will see **Brittany** showcased as international partners, alongside **Wales** who return again from last year, as the festival celebrates the folk traditions of two of Scotland’s closest Celtic cousins.

Tickets for Celtic Connections 2023 will be available from 10am on Wednesday 12th October at [**www.celticconnections.com**](http://www.celticconnections.com/).

**ENDS**

Media accreditation is now open and you can apply [here](https://www.celticconnections.com/press-accreditation/).

The festival will run from Thursday 19 January to Sunday 5 February 2023. 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 2023, please contact: Hannah Innes, Innes and Campbell Communications, hannah@innesandcampbell.co.uk, 07790 813 712 / Corrie Campbell, Innes and Campbell Communications, corrie@innesandcampbell.co.uk, 07900 981 073.

**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.

**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.

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