



**Media Release**

**Thursday 16 January 2025**

## **Celtic Connections banishes winter blues as it begins in Glasgow**

***“World’s biggest traditional music session” gets going***

[Opening day images available to download here from 12 noon today](#)

[Images from across the festival will be updated here](#)

**Celtic Connections** in partnership with **Innis & Gunn** will transform Glasgow into a global epicentre of traditional, folk, world and roots music, as the premier winter festival gets underway today with household names, secret line ups, debut performances, unique collaborations and the piloting of a new venue.

The UNESCO City of Music will welcome “the music of the people” to the biggest possible stages for thousands to enjoy over the next 18 days as the 32nd edition of the world-renowned festival, delivered by **Glasgow Life**, gears up to do what it does best – banish the January blues.

The festival’s home of Glasgow marks its 850th birthday in 2025 and the celebrations will kick off in style tonight at the Glasgow Royal Concert Hall with the much-anticipated **Opening Concert**. The sold-out show will honour the city’s love affair with music, pay homage to its reputation for producing music and poetry of an exceptional scale and calibre, and feature a surprise list of talent representing the past, present and future of Glasgow’s cultural community.

Headline names from home and abroad will captivate audiences from today until **Sunday 2 February**, including Scottish sensation **KT Tunstall**, American legend **Lyle Lovett**, award-winning **Madison Cunningham** who will be supported by Admiral Fallow’s **Louis Abbott**, Afrobeat hero **Femi Kuti and the Positive Force**, soul superstar **Lady Blackbird**, folk royalty **Karine Polwart** and hundreds more.



The festival's bill spans 10 genres including indie, Americana, jazz and orchestral and many folkie festival favourites return with shows guaranteed to get audiences on their feet. **The Chair** and **Fara**, who along with newly added support act **Gnoss**, will showcase the very best in Orkney music, world-folk innovators **Croft No. 5** headline the Old Fruitmarket, transatlantic collective **the ollam** play SWG3 and **Peat & Diesel** will become the first band to play the Emirates Arena to a packed crowd of almost 5,000.

Indie favourites will be out in force together to celebrate the groundbreaking psychedelic folk music of David Crosby. Acclaimed artists including American songwriter **BC Camplight**, **Liam Ó Maonlaí** (Hothouse Flowers), **Kris Drever** (Lau) and **The Staves** will team up especially for the show's debut.

Beloved folk band **Breabach** will mark 20 years together with a special performance with the **Scottish National Jazz Orchestra**, while sonic poet **Aziza Brahim** unites the sounds of her Western Saharan refugee roots and Spanish base in Barcelona in what will be first Scottish headline show.

**Anna Massie** is set to direct a powerful line up of artists breathing new life into traditional music for **In the Tradition** at the Glasgow Royal Concert Hall; **John Metcalfe** brings a special rare audio-visual performance of *The Tree to Tramway*; and two influential instrumental folk groups unite for the symphonic collaboration of **Hawktail & Väsen** at City Halls.

A show-stopping line up of incredible Gaelic talent will mark 30 years of prestigious Uist music and language centre **Ceòlas** at City Halls. Gaelic greats from Uist, Scotland and Cape Breton form the line up including pipers **Seonaidh MacIntyre** and **Alana MacInnes**, Gaelic singers **Màiri MacInnes** and **Alasdair Whyte** and Canadian brothers **Kenneth and Angus MacKenzie**.

From the inclusion of 200 community choir singers in **Karine Polwart's The Back of Winter** and pipers from Palestine performing as part of **Bethlehem Calling**; to the host of song and music workshops scheduled including a new **People of Colour Trad Session** led by Sacred Paws' **Ray Aggs**,



and events like **Battle of the Folk Bands** and **Danny Kyle Open Stage** showcasing the next generation of talent; the 2025 Celtic Connections programme is as vast as it is inclusive.

Altogether, around 1,200 musicians and artists from 20 countries will perform at 300 events across 25 venues, with estimated attendances in the region of 110,000.

**Donald Shaw, Creative Producer for Celtic Connections, said:** “It’s with immense pride that we kickstart Scotland’s cultural calendar and mark the beginning of Glasgow 850. We hope it will be a fitting start to the year that showcases the sheer vibrancy and significance of our country’s cultural scene and once again raises the profile and potential of traditional music, in its many facets. This year we begin with a profound appreciation for Glasgow’s creative clout, before bringing renowned global talent to the city in the coming weeks. Months of hard work are realised today and we are grateful to our audiences and all those whose support make this event possible.

“Celtic Connections is like the world’s biggest traditional music session – everywhere you look there is music to be found. Folk music, the music of the people, is evident more than ever in the eclectic trad sessions across Glasgow throughout the year, and can be encountered on almost every stage across the city at Celtic Connections over the next 18 days.”

**Bailie Annette Christie, Chair of Glasgow Life, said:** “What a way to kick off Glasgow’s 850th birthday celebrations, with the iconic Opening Concert of Celtic Connections. The festival is a staple of our city’s enviable cultural calendar and shines a spotlight on Glasgow’s status as a UNESCO City of Music.

“With a diverse programme across a mix of genres, it’s easy to see why Celtic Connections is much-loved by audiences and musicians from near and far. This year’s event again promises outstanding live performances from international acts, homegrown talent, established artists and exciting newcomers.



“There is a buzz about Glasgow in January thanks to Celtic Connections warming up the dark winter nights. It is an annual highlight to see thousands of people visit the city and enjoy everything this wonderful festival has to offer.”

**Alan Morrison, Head of Music at Creative Scotland** says: “As Glasgow sets off on a year-long celebration of its 850<sup>th</sup> anniversary, its world-renowned winter festival is ready to let the city’s music flourish. This year, Celtic Connections stretches out even further, embracing the Emirates Arena as a performance venue while providing a high-profile platform for so many home-grown emerging and established acts on other city stages. Glasgow has a proud history of enriching its population with newcomers from other countries, whose cultures are then woven into the fabric of the city. The festival’s international dimension is a true reflection of the connections that continue to grow when music is shared between artists and audiences.”

**Culture Secretary Angus Robertson said:** “We’re delighted to support Celtic Connections once again through £100,000 from the Scottish Government’s 2024-25 EXPO Fund, which will help deliver this year’s festival, including the spectacular opening concert marking Glasgow’s 850th anniversary.

“Celtic Connections is an unrivalled celebration of Scotland’s cultural heritage, bringing together world-class talent and showcasing our rich musical traditions to a global audience.

“As Glasgow marks 850 years, this iconic festival is a shining example of the city’s creative spirit and enduring love of music. With thousands of musicians from 20 countries set to perform, this year’s Celtic Connections promises to be another unforgettable event that will inspire audiences at home and around the world.”

**Dougal Sharp, Master Brewer and founder of Innis & Gunn, said:** “Celtic Connections is Scotland at its best — brilliant music, great people and a true community spirit. Each year, more and more people get in on the action and we are proud to be part of the explosion of the festival, and of trad music in Scotland.



"This is a truly global event that gives Glasgow – and Scotland – a real boost during what is typically a difficult month for our industry, bringing people together through a shared love of live music. There's just nothing better, apart from, of course, when it's accompanied by a pint of Scotland's premium lager. What better way to brighten up those dark winter evenings!

"Our music is part of what makes Scotland special, along with breathtaking landscapes, inventive history, characterful people and a world-famous drinks industry. All of this combines to create a culture like none other; a truly unique place on the world stage. Like Celtic Connections, Innis & Gunn is Brewed by Scotland, for the world — that's why this partnership is a match made in heaven."

**Celtic Connections** first began in 1994 and has grown in size and ambition ever since, building an international reputation and making an unmatched contribution to the prominence of folk, traditional and world music.

The 2025 bill features world-renowned music, exciting new performances, unique showcases, one-off commissions and collaborations, ceilidhs, workshops, screenings, book launches, dementia-friendly performances, recitals, and talks.

**Celtic Connections 2025** in partnership with **Innis & Gunn** will take place from **Thursday 16 January to Sunday 2 February**. The programme can be viewed in full and tickets purchased at [www.celticconnections.com](http://www.celticconnections.com).

**ENDS**

**Media accreditation** will be open for the duration of the festival. [You can apply here.](#)

The festival will run from Thursday 16 January to Sunday 2 February 2025. Follow the conversation at @ccfest.

For further information, images, or to request an interview, please contact: Corrie Campbell, Innes and Campbell Communications, [corrie@innesandcampbell.co.uk](mailto: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**. The festival receives invaluable support from **Creative Scotland, The Scottish Government Festivals Expo Fund** and **CalMac**.

**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, see [www.glasgowlife.org.uk](http://www.glasgowlife.org.uk)

**Creative Scotland** is the public body that supports culture and creativity across all parts of Scotland, distributing funding provided by the Scottish Government and The National Lottery. Further information at [creativescotland.com](http://creativescotland.com). Follow us on [Facebook](#), [LinkedIn](#), and [Instagram](#). Learn more about the value of art and creativity in Scotland and join in at [www.ourcreativevoice.scot](http://www.ourcreativevoice.scot)

**Innis & Gunn:** Since the company was founded in 2003, Innis & Gunn has been determined to do things differently in the world of brewing. Starting with innovative oak cask maturation for our flagship beer, 'The Original', we have gone on to create a whole line up of boundary-pushing beers, including distinctive, limited edition and rare beers, and the Innis & Gunn Lager Beer which recently won gold at the World Beer Awards.

Innis & Gunn is now one of the UK's most successful beer brewers. Still pioneering, still innovating and still doing things differently, to excite and intrigue beer lovers all over the world. Innis & Gunn is the official beer sponsor of many iconic events including the Royal Highland Show, Royal Edinburgh Military Tattoo, Celtic Connections and Belladrum music festival in Inverness.



**Glasgow 850** is a yearlong celebration in 2025 marking the 850th anniversary of Glasgow's establishment as a burgh in 1175. Throughout the year the city will mark its 850<sup>th</sup> birthday by delivering, with partners, a yearlong, citywide, programme that celebrates and reflects on our recent past, our present and future. The programme of new signature events, enhancements to existing festivals, and community-based activities is being curated in a way that lets all those with a connection to Glasgow, at home and abroad, get involved to tell their stories, honouring our rich heritage, reflecting on our transformational growth, and inspiring ambitious change for the city's next fifty years. Marking this milestone acknowledges the contributions of generations who have shaped the city, gives a platform to grow a shared sense of belonging and invites people to guide our future. It also helps raise Glasgow's profile on the global stage and encourage visitors to explore our unique city. For more information and to get involved visit [glasgow850.com](https://glasgow850.com)