

Media Release

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Celtic Connections to shine bright this winter as 2025 programme unveiled

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The world's leading folk, roots and world music festival **Celtic Connections** has unveiled its ambitious, multi-faceted programme for 2025.

The premiere winter festival and international celebration of Celtic music will illuminate stages across Glasgow from **Thursday 16 January to Sunday 2 February**, eclipsing dark winter nights with a kaleidoscope of internationally-renowned music, exciting new performances, unique showcases and one-off collaborations.

Demonstrating just why Glasgow is a **UNESCO City of Music**, the festival, delivered by **Glasgow Life**, will fill around 25 venues on both sides of the Clyde with around 300 events across 18 days, anticipating around 110,000 visitors and an estimated 1,200 musicians and artists.

Now in its 32nd year and almost five times the size it was when it began in 1994, **Celtic Connections** continues to push the envelope of artistic programming and ambition.

The festival's 2025 bill spans a myriad of genres, from acoustic, traditional, Americana and orchestral to indie, jazz, blues, experimental and more. The event will welcome artists from around 20 countries around the world including Australia, Sri Lanka, India, Pakistan, France, Italy, Nigeria, Spain, Wales, Ireland, Republic of the Congo and many more.

This year will also see the launch of a new under-26s pass, giving young music fans an opportunity to access rolling discounts on a mix of shows and ensuring the magic of the festival continues to be accessible to as wide a range of audiences as possible.

Glasgow's much-loved venues, famous for having the "best fans in the world", are set to give artists a welcome warm enough to heat the chilliest of evenings. Iconic locations the length and breadth of Glasgow are involved, including The Old Fruitmarket, Barrowland Ballroom, SWG3, Saint Luke's and

Kelvingrove Art Gallery and Museum. **Celtic Connections** will also make history when **Peat and Diesel** become the first band ever to play at the Emirates Arena in the city's east end.

General tickets for the festival go on sale at **10am, Wednesday 16 October 2024** at www.celticconnections.com.

Celtic Connections 2025 programme highlights include:

- The festival's iconic annual **Opening Concert** will once again raise the roof with an epic marking of **Glasgow 850**, heralding the start of the city's year-long 850th birthday celebration. 'Let Glasgow Flourish' is the motto on the city's coat of arms, and this unique concert will pay tribute to the city's rich artistic heritage and flourishing future through a special night of surprises incorporating music, spoken-word, dance and film. Celebrating the scale and calibre of incredible musicians, artists and poets Glasgow has produced and inspired, and how this has fed into the very bloodstream of Celtic Connections, the concert will feature unique collaborations from well-kent faces, emerging stars of the future, surprise guests and commissioned performances and film.
- Multi GRAMMY-award-winning Americana singer **Lyle Lovett** will make his long-awaited debut at the festival when he headlines this January. The revered singer-songwriter will perform at Glasgow Royal Concert Hall with his acoustic group for what is sure to be a spectacular show from the American icon.
- More women than ever before will lead high-profile shows this year, reflecting the continued growth and wealth of incredible female talent, both new and emerging. Among many, these include: **KT Tunstall**, who reflects on 20 years of her beloved album *Eye to the Telescope* with a night at Glasgow Royal Concert Hall and an already sold-out show at the Barrowland Ballroom; the young Grammy award-winning American artist **Madison Cunningham**; the powerful jazz and soul singer-songwriter **Lady Blackbird**; Scots Singer of the Year **Beth Malcolm** will showcase her forthcoming new album with a headline show at Barony Hall; and sensational Sufi singer **Abi Sampa**, who fronts the captivating **Orchestral Qawwali Project** uniquely combining Sufi poetry, Indian classical dance and orchestral arrangements.

- Homegrown female talent in the form of **Karine Polwart** and **Julie Fowlis** will also bring landmark shows to the 2025 festival. Multi-award-winning Scottish songwriter, folk singer and storyteller **Karine Polwart** will have a headline show at Glasgow Royal Concert Hall for the very first time in her 25-year career. Karine will create a 300-strong choir made up of choral singers from across Scotland to fill the stage and choir stalls for this dream show arranged by choirmaster **Stephen Deazley**. Celebrated Gaelic singer **Julie Fowlis** will undertake her first orchestral commission at the festival with the **Scottish Chamber Orchestra** and her Scots-Irish quartet **Allt** which, alongside her, features **Zoë Conway**, **Éamon Doorley** and **John McIntyre**.
- Western Isles wonders **Peat and Diesel** will play their biggest ever show and make history as the first band ever to play at the Emirates Arena in the city's east end; while much-loved Glaswegian indie pop legends **The Bluebells** will have the Barrowland Ballroom crowd feeling 'young at heart' for their first ever outing at the festival.
- Iconic folk band **Breabach** will perform a specially commissioned show with the **Scottish National Jazz Orchestra (SNJO)** featuring brand new arrangements by Big Band arrangers from around Europe. The SNJO will also host a night entitled **Nu-Age Sounds: PLANET WORLD** at The Old Fruitmarket, showcasing up and coming Scottish jazz acts including Mercury Prize nominated pianist **Fergus McCreadie** and jazz singer **kitti**. Elsewhere, SAY Award shortlisted **corto.alto** will bring their electronica and folk-infused jazz to Barrowland Ballroom, backed by a lauded bill of the most promising jazz talent in Scotland including **Bemz**, **Pippa Blundell**, **Becky Sikasa** and **JSPHYNX**.
- The very best in world music acts will once again be welcomed to the Celtic Connections line up. Fronted by London-born Nigerian singer Eno Williams, **Ibibio Sound Machine** will play the Tramway. A clash of African and electronic elements, the outfit is inspired by the golden era of West-African funk and disco and modern post-punk and electro. **Femi Kuti & The Positive Force** will also bring their iconic live show to Scotland. The eldest son of afrobeat pioneer Fela Kuti, Femi will showcase his jubilant energy and distinctive voice to a Glasgow Royal Concert Hall audience.

- Scottish folk four-piece **Malinky** will stage a special 25th anniversary concert, with a host of special guests lovingly performing their extensive back catalogue of material, which importantly carries the flame of tradition, cherishing folk songs, ballads and stories and the lessons they convey.
- Finnish band **Frigg** present their extraordinary mix of Scandi folk and traditional tunes in a unique collaboration with the **BBC Scottish Symphony Orchestra**, and **Jim Sutherland's** multi-award-winning score *When Fish Begin to Crawl* will be performed by the **Royal Scottish National Orchestra** in a celebration of the Flow Country's recognition as a UNESCO World Heritage Site. Rising stars of the Glasgow trad scene **TRIP** perform a headline show with extended line-up in The Old Fruitmarket, as well as featuring in the acclaimed show **Moving Cloud** at The Theatre Royal, alongside **Scottish Dance Theatre** and special guest **Brighde Chaimbeul**.
- Gaelic music, language and culture will be at the forefront of celebrations for **Ceòlas @ 30** as one of Scotland's most prestigious national Gaelic organisations celebrates its 30th summer school on the island of South Uist. This crossover night of Gaelic song and Hebridean music and piping will light up The Old Fruitmarket on the festival's final weekend.
- Transatlantic connections will be upheld when American folk-roots pop singer-songwriter **Josh Rouse** celebrates the 10th birthday of his famous album *Nashville*, Bluegrass sensations **Hawktail** appear for the first time at the festival, and **Lake Street Dive** fly in from Boston to share their avant-garde Americana sound with Celtic Connections fans. **Transatlantic Sessions** celebrates 30 years since the first TV episode aired, with its' familiar irresistible foray into the roots of Americana music with an all-star house band, led by **Aly Bain** and **Jerry Douglas**, and featuring guest vocalists **Loudon Wainwright III, Julie Fowlis, Larry Campbell and Teresa Williams** and Ireland's **Niall McCabe**.
- Following on from last year's televised sold out shows, **Roddy Hart's Roaming Roots Revue** returns with **Icons Vol. 1**. Backed by a 60-piece orchestra of students from the **Royal Conservatoire of Scotland** and Roddy's own house band **Roddy Hart and the Lonesome Fire**, this year's show at Glasgow Royal Concert Hall will welcome **Yola, Villagers, Nadine Shah**,

Hamish Hawk, Ed Harcourt, Jill Jackson, Withered Hand & Kathryn Williams, and Phil Campbell as they celebrate greats like Elton John, The Beatles and Bowie.

- A host of familiar faces of much-loved traditional music talent will have crowds jumping across the 18 days, including beloved Gaels **Trail West** who return to the festival for the first time in a decade as they mark the beginning of 15 years as a band; the progressive **Elephant Sessions** whose live show is famed for its electrifying atmosphere; beloved Orkney stomp purveyors **The Chair** will headline the Barrowland Ballroom; and **Dervish**, who will perform a special **Irish Songbook** show, with support from folk rock duo **Indigo Girls**. In a unique triple bill concert across the generations, the opening weekend at the Barrowland Ballroom will feature **Mec Lir, Kinnaris Quintet** and **iconic Irish band Four Men and a Dog**.
- Celtic Connections' **New Voices** strand each year commissions groundbreaking new bodies of work from three emerging Scottish artists. The honour this year goes to BBC Radio Scotland Young Traditional Musician of the Year 2021 pianist **Michael Biggins**, Skye-born and Glasgow-based exciting young harpist **Ciorstaidh Beaton** and hugely promising tenor banjo talent **Ciaran Ryan**.
- Scotland's Celtic cousins **Ireland** will be the partner country for this year's **Showcase Scotland** – a part of the festival which fosters international collaboration. With support from **Culture Ireland**, the very best in traditional and contemporary Irish music will be celebrated across the festival's stages including **Niamh Bury Trio, Nuala Kennedy & Eamonn O'Leary, Córás Trio, Fiárock, Grainne Hunt** and **Leonard Barry Trio**.
- Other favourites across the festival will return including the **In the Tradition** series, dementia-friendly concerts, ceilidhs, late night sessions, and pop-up performances at the Festival Club, screenings, workshops, the Scottish National Whisky Festival and a thriving education programme including children's concerts that will benefit thousands of youngsters across Glasgow.

Donald Shaw, Creative Producer for Celtic Connections, said: "We are incredibly proud of Celtic Connections' place as an ecosystem for new music and art. In 2025 we are bringing together

international icons with emerging acts to create career-defining performances and never-seen-before collaborations, not to mention great nights out for our audiences.

“Celtic Connections went from being primarily a Glasgow festival, to a national festival, to an international flagship event. Like many acts on our line up, we have expanded in size and ambition over the years, drawing inspiration from the old tradition and the boundless possibilities of contemporary music. Through it all, Glasgow remains at our heart, so to open the festival in celebration of our city’s artistic clout is incredibly special. Audiences can expect a night of secret surprises that we hope will bring a real sense of magic and anticipation to the first night of the festival, setting the tone for the weeks ahead.

“As a forward-thinking festival which always looks to embrace new opportunities and spaces for performance, we’re very excited to be staging a pilot music event in the Emirates Arena, creating a new experience for audiences and extending our reach into the east end of the city.

“In the last 20 years traditional music has entered the mainstream, it’s embraced in our pubs and biggest venues, and we will once again drive the genre’s appeal, profile and potential forward in our 2025 artistic commissions. If you think Glasgow in January isn’t the place to be – you just haven’t ever been to Celtic Connections.”

Bailie Annette Christie, Chair of Glasgow Life, said: “Celtic Connections is always an outstanding part of Scotland’s cultural calendar when Glasgow welcomes superb musicians from across the globe to showcase their wealth of musical abilities. Spectacular performances warm up the winter nights at many of Glasgow’s most loved, and sometimes surprising, music venues. The festival helps enhance Glasgow’s status as a UNESCO City of Music and the city’s reputation as a world-class cultural destination.

“This year’s ambitious programme features a diverse line-up of homegrown and international artists and ranges from emerging talent to award-winning acts. Celtic Connections will have something for everyone, from intimate performances and exciting one-off collaborations to impressive large-scale shows. None more so than the Opening Concert, which will kick off Glasgow’s 850th birthday celebrations in style.”



Creative Scotland Head of Music, Alan Morrison said: “If there’s one thing to look forward to as the nights start to draw in, it’s the knowledge that tickets will soon be on sale for next year’s Celtic Connections. A peek at the highlights of the 2025 edition is enough to prove why this has become one of the world’s largest and most important winter music festivals. Local talent stands tall alongside incredible international artists, as a global beat crosses over our own traditional tunes. Creative Scotland is proud to support such a heady mix of wonderful music.”

Culture Secretary Angus Robertson said: “Celtic Connections continues to grow its global reputation as one of Scotland’s foremost festivals and an event we are proud to support, bringing together world-class talent and showcasing the very best in folk, roots, and international music.

“This year’s programme unites artists, traditions, and audiences from around the globe in a truly unique celebration. The festival continues to innovate and inspire musical and cultural collaboration, offering something extraordinary for everyone and I’m excited about what’s on offer in Glasgow.”

Celtic Connections 2025 will take place from **Thursday 16 January to Sunday 2 February**. General tickets go on sale at **10am, Wednesday 16 October 2024**, with advance tickets on sale now for Celtic Rovers festival supporters.

The programme can be viewed in full and tickets purchased at www.celticconnections.com.

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[Media accreditation is now open and 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, 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.

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

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