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CELTIC CONNECTIONS 2016 COMES TO AN END... Almost

Celtic Connections once again continued to place Glasgow firmly on the map welcoming over 100,000 attendances to enjoy a spectacular array of artists and musicians invited to perform from all over the world. In total around 2,500 artists from countries including Argentina, Uruguay, Pakistan, India, Mali, Mongolia, Canada, America, Denmark, Germany, Ghana, Brazil, New Zealand, Australia, Norway, England, Senegal and Ireland and across Scotland gathered in Glasgow to perform around 300 events across 26 stages for Celtic Connections 2016.

Approximately 108 events sold out, including Bixiga 70, Lucinda Williams, John Grant, Skipinnish & Friends, Jason Isbell, Skerryvore, Bwani Junction, Rhiannon Giddens, BEMIS celebrates Burns, Gathering Stream, The Alt, Daimh, Islay Night, Dreamers Circus and Fara.

With the festival originally scheduled to run for 18 days from Thursday 14 January, the Monday performance of "Bert Inspired" on 1st February 2016 was added after the first date which took place at the Old Fruitmarket on Sunday 31 January, sold out in 4 days.

Highlights included the legendary Kris Kristofferson performing five songs as part of a world premiere collaboration, ending with *Me and Bobby McGee*, in an emotionally charged atmosphere in the Main Auditorium of Glasgow Royal Concert Hall at Roaming Roots Revue.

The backlit silhouettes of the string quartet during Lau's *The Bell That Never Rang* sent a tingle down many a spine, and after opening with two acapella songs, The Unthanks show came to a rousing finale with a full band where the singing was completed wonderfully by clog dancing.

One of many highlights at the Old Fruitmarket saw a packed crowd roaring along to *Mary* in an encore with RURA, The East Pointers & Aoife O'Donovan all onstage together, while back at Glasgow Royal Concert Hall the audience were on their feet to the second half of Malian kora genius Toumani Diabaté's concert with the Royal Scottish National Orchestra.

The world premiere of *Pilgrimer*, James Robertson's reimagining of Joni Mitchell's Hejira was among a raft of critically acclaimed shows, with a leading commentator writing, "Celtic Connections, the Mither Tongue, traditional culture and the artistic lives of all involved took a giant leap forwards with the staging of *Pilgrimer*..."

Celtic Connections award winning Education Programme once again was at the heart of the festival with five free morning school concerts by world leading Celtic acts including Les Poules a Colin with a total attendance of 9,000 children from across Scotland.

The response from pupils and teachers has been fantastic. One teacher commenting on the RURA school concert on Wednesday 27 January said: "Today, the children haven't stopped talking about it. The concert was wonderful and it was a fabulous experience for the children and a first experience of live music for many."

A range of more than 60 public workshops took place from Come&Try Spoons to a full weekend Ukulele School which were open to all ages and abilities with over 1,100 participants.

Celtic Connection's social media continues to engage with and reach new fans and festival regulars. The Celtic Connections Facebook page topped 30,000 likes and Twitter followers now stand at nearly 19,400.

The last weekend of Celtic Connections featured a major showcase of Scottish music, with 180 international music industry delegates from 26 countries in town to sample the cream of Scottish musical talent performing as part of Celtic Connections industry event "Showcase Scotland".

The largest gathering of the international music community in Scotland, Showcase Scotland – which is organised by Active Events on behalf of Celtic Connections - provides acts with the opportunity to perform in front of promoters, record labels and agents from countries all over the world. The exposure that artists gain can lead to record deals and overseas touring contracts, promoting Scottish music and artists to new audiences around the world.

Showcase Scotland also presented performances by an exciting range of musical talent from France - the partner country for Showcase Scotland 2016 – and artists with strong French musical connections, including Blick Bassy, Zoufris Maracas, Moussu T, Nolwenn Leroy, Cheikh Lô and Vincent Peirani & Emile Parisien.

Each weekend the Festival Club at The Art School, was - in the middle of a cold, windswept Glasgow January - a hotbed of music, meeting-up, celebrating, and rounding off another never to be repeated festival day with a glass or two!

Donald Shaw, Celtic Connections Artistic Director, said: “Celtic Connections 2016 has been as much an emotional as a musical journey. We have had raucous concerts where the crowd has been literally jumping, we have had moments of calm, where the voice of a single artist held an audience spellbound. We have celebrated tradition, and broken new ground.

“And throughout every part of this amazing festival we have sought to bring together musicians and traditions from across the world and to share the inspirational results with our fantastic Celtic Connections audience. Over eighteen days there have been around 300 events, and throughout every day thousands of unique moments, some shared, many truly personal. It has been incredible.”

Councillor Archie Graham OBE, Chair of Glasgow Life, said: “For eighteen amazing days Glasgow has welcomed musicians and audiences from across the world for Celtic Connections 2016. The virtuosity and energy of the musicians have dazzled music lovers at venues across the city.

“The festival’s wide ranging Education Programme has also given school children across the city fantastic opportunities to learn and enjoy Celtic music thanks to performances and workshop led by leading musicians

“Celtic Connections 2016 has been a triumph.”

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Notes to Editors

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