



Media Release

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Thousands of children and young people experience the thrill of live traditional music at Celtic Connections schools concerts

Celtic Connections long-established learning programme has once again enabled thousands of school pupils to enjoy exciting performances by leading Scottish and international musicians at the world-renowned festival.

Four special free concerts have given 6,900 children and young people from schools across Scotland an opportunity to experience and enjoy live music in the impressive surroundings of Glasgow Royal Concert Hall's Main Auditorium.

A stand-out selection of acts performing at Glasgow's world-renowned annual music event have taken part in the schools concerts staged for pupils ranging from Nursery to S6 classes.

The special shows got underway on 19 January with a double-billed show. It featured **Sian**, a trio of gifted Gaelic singers – Ceitlin Lilish, Eilidh Cormack and Ellen MacDonald – accompanied by multi-instrumentalist Innes Whit, and **The Fridays** – a vibrant band which has performed for Celtic Connections audiences on a number of occasions.

The following day's schools concert featured acclaimed indie trad fusion band **Dlù** and the dynamic, multi-talented **St Roch's Ceili Band** to provide exciting entertainment for pupils from all over Scotland.

Yesterday, **Celtic Fandango** – an extraordinary collaboration celebrating Mexican and Scottish music and dance, took to the stage. Supported by the British Council, it brought together outstanding musicians from Mexico and Scotland in a joyous show combining the traditional sounds of both nations.

The final schools concert today, 28 January, saw BBC Radio 2 Folk Award winners **Ímar** – a lively Irish/Manx/Scottish quintet – entertaining children from nursery classes to P3.

Celtic Connections Creative Director, Donald Shaw, said: "Since its establishment in 1999, our festival's learning programme has seen over 300,000 children and young people taking part in events designed to nurture their love of music.

"Giving children and young people an opportunity to enjoy the thrill of live traditional music is so beneficial to them, so our learning programme is something we feel really privileged and proud to be

hosting once again as part of Celtic Connections. Music has the power to enhance lives in so many ways, so it's incredibly important to nurture an appreciation for it – and the cultural connections music encourages and enables.

"For so many of the kids attending the schools concerts, this is their first-ever chance to come to a major venue and experience a live performance. And I know, from personal experience, just how inspirational and impactful that can be.

"As a boy, a class visit to a music concert in Glasgow that my teacher arranged was a powerful and pivotal moment for me. It really sparked a lifelong love of music and definitely was the catalyst that drove my ambition to become a musician.

"Celtic Connections aims to offer opportunities for everyone to experience and enjoy live music. So our programme includes events and activities – like Gaelic Lullabies, Ceilidh Tots and Mini Manoeuvres – for even the very youngest of children so we can engage and inspire future generations."

Crianlarich Primary in Stirlingshire was among more than 40 schools at yesterday's captivating Celtic Fandango concert.

Head Teacher, Pete Waugh, said: "None of our pupils have been to Glasgow Royal Concert Hall before, or to a festival as important as Celtic Connections, so it's fantastic for them to have this opportunity to experience a unique showcase of superb professional talent."

P7 pupil, Evey, commented: "I'm really excited to be here. We do traditional Scottish music at school and have been learning about Mexico, so it's great to see all the musicians playing together and hear the mix of different instruments."

One of the Glasgow schools attending the Celtic Fandango concert was **Jordanhill Secondary School**.

S3 pupil, Hamish, said: "The combination of traditional Scottish and Mexican music was really fun."

British Council Scotland Head of Arts, Norah Campbell, said: "Music is such a brilliant way to spark curiosity about other cultures, sounds, and ideas – and Celtic Connections learning programme does exactly that. We're proud to have supported the wonderful Celtic Fandango collaboration this year – and to help bring international artists and Scottish musicians together for these young audiences."

In addition to the free schools concerts, Celtic Connections works in partnership with Glasgow Education Services CREATE team to deliver a series of music workshops for P7 classes in every Glasgow Primary 7 school, benefitting thousands of children.

Designed to develop musical skills and introduce children to Scottish traditional music and instruments, the interactive sessions – led by traditional musicians – focus on Scots and Gaelic song, and involve bodhran and pipe band drumming, tin whistle, chanter and fiddle playing, and Scottish stepdance.

Delivered by Glasgow Life, Celtic Connections 2026 runs until Sunday 1 February. For more information on the festival and the full range of the programme's events, visit www.celticconnections.com.

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For further information, images or interviews, please contact:

Ellen Drummond, Glasgow Life Communications Officer

M: 07801 820757; E: ellen.drummond@glasgowlife.org.uk

Notes to Editors

Celtic Connections began in 1994, when it offered 66 events at one venue. Since then, the festival has grown more adventurous, experimental and diverse each year – and it is now renowned worldwide.

The 2026 festival, it's 33rd edition, runs to 1 February and features an outstanding line-up of home-grown and international established and emerging talent – with over 300 events staged at 25 venues across Glasgow.

Celtic Connections is delivered with funding from Glasgow City Council through Glasgow Life. The festival receives invaluable support from Creative Scotland and The Scottish Government Festivals Expo Fund. It is also supported by sponsorship, and its headline sponsor is Innis & Gunn.

For more information on the festival and the 2026 programme, visit www.celticconnections.com

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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