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Ceilidh-The exhilarating theatrical experience

American theatergoers are about to get an opportunity to experience a living Scottish tradition in a brand new, uplifting, exuberantly theatrical context, when *Ceilidh*, an original musical, arrives at the M&T Bank Exchange at the France-Merrick Performing Arts Center in Baltimore on Sept. 6.

A traditional Celtic gathering

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A ceilidh (pronounced KAY-lee) is a traditional Celtic gathering that combines dancing, music and storytelling to emphasize human connection and community, with a “caller” spinning narratives that bring both friends and strangers together. For *Ceilidh*, acclaimed Scottish writers Scott Gilmour and Claire McKenzie have crafted a buoyant, boisterous score and a robust, heartwarming book that, as Gilmour tells it, weave “a generational tale, about a family that are

linked together through ceilidh.”

Gilmour, who will play the role of the caller for the Baltimore run, explains that the musical—helmed by red-hot Broadway director and choreographer Sam Pinkleton, fresh off his Tony Award win for *Oh, Mary!*—“is, at its heart, a celebration of the power of tradition and heritage, but what interested us is physically connecting people now. It’s quite an ancient thing, ceilidh, but it has made its way through time by adapting to the people who are doing the dances.”

Immersive format



Scott Gilmour.

Those people will now include audience members: *Ceilidh's* immersive format blurs the line between performance and party, inviting anyone to participate—if they wish. “You can join in the dances, or you can just sit and watch,” notes McKenzie, who met Gilmour when she was studying composing and he was an acting student at the Royal Conservatoire of Scotland. “Ceilidhs in Scotland are like that; I’ve been to one

where there was an 80-year-old grandmother sitting on the side, having a great time.”

Gilmour adds, “You get up and give it a go if you fancy, or if you just want to sit on the side and enjoy it that way, that’s OK too.”

While *Ceilidh* relays a particular story involving a family—a journey of belonging, identity, and rediscovery through music and movement—Pinkleton notes, “The ensemble of performers can also put on characters and take them off, if that makes sense. It’s as if the audience is being hosted by this family, so there are specific characters with names, but they’re also just people we’re dancing with.”

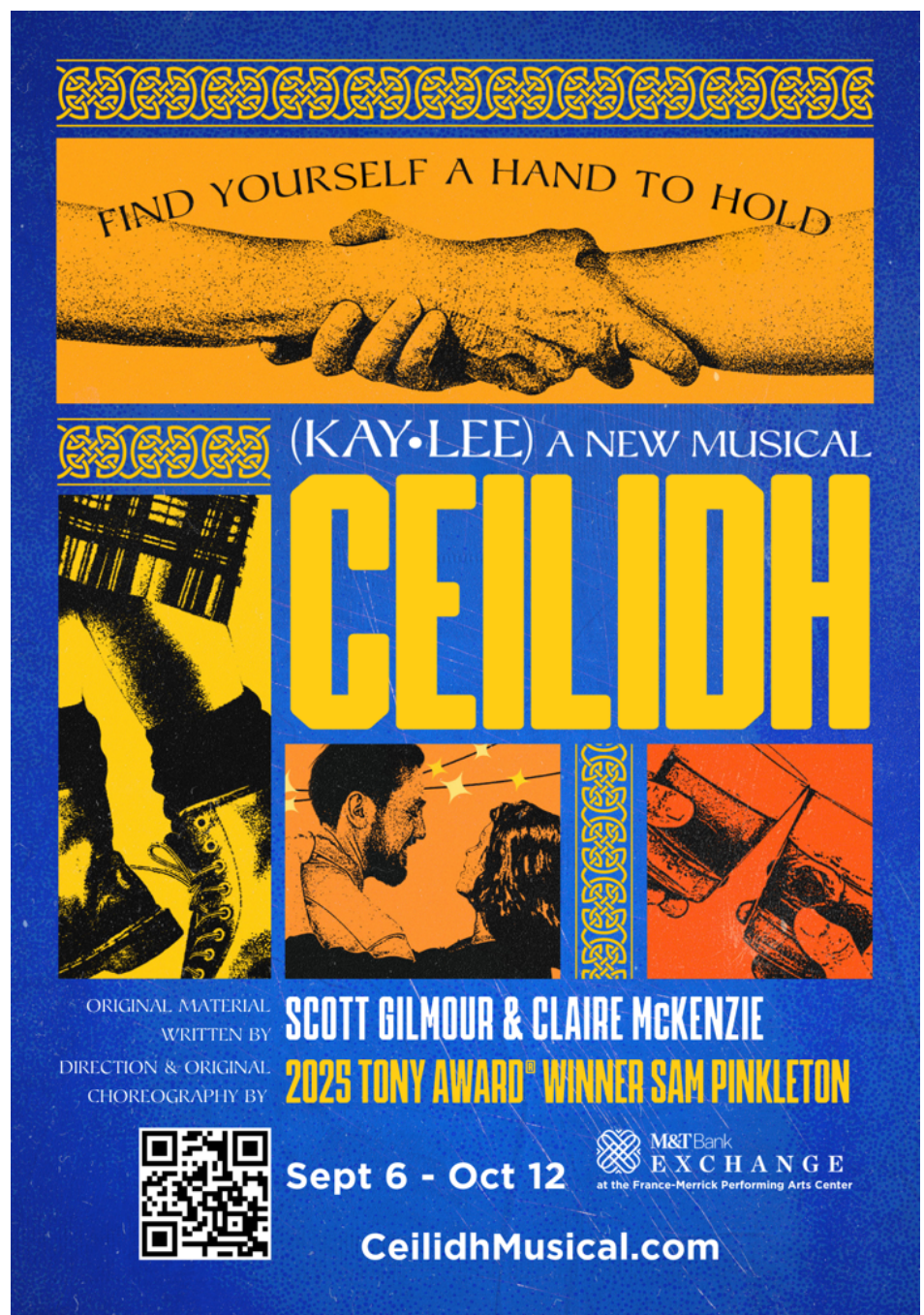
Welcoming people

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The director, whose credits also include choreographing the celebrated musical *Natasha, Pierre & the Great Comet of 1812*—for which Pinkleton earned his first Tony nomination—muses, “I’ve spent a lot of time making shows where the boundaries between actors and musicians and, frankly, performers and civilians are quite blurry. This is a very different show than *Natasha*, but what’s the same is that we want the audience to feel surrounded by the making of music and the telling of a story.”

Pinkleton adds, "I believe every act of theater is welcoming people into a thing, wanting them to have a nice time in our house. And I think *Ceilidh*, more than anything I've done before, essentializes that act of hosting strangers. I hope the magic of it is something that is much deeper and more ancient than us bickering at each other, as we love to do in 2025s, and simply asking, what do we share? How can I help you? Even if it's as simple as looking at somebody and saying, 'Can I have this dance?'"

Ceilidh the Musical is headed to Baltimore's M&T Bank Exchange at the France-Merrick Performing Arts Center 9/6-10/12! Visit: www.ceilidhmusical.com

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